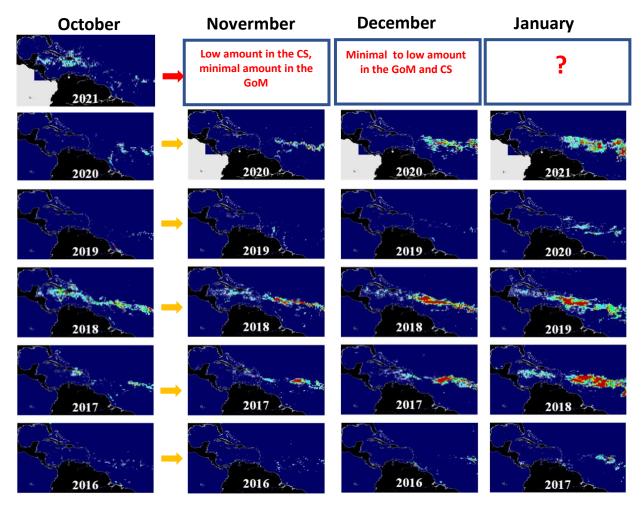


Outlook of 2021 *Sargassum* blooms in the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico* October 31st, 2021, by University of South Florida Optical Oceanography Lab (huc@usf.edu, szhang26@usf.edu)



The maps below show *Sargassum* abundance, with warm colors representing high abundance. In October 2021, the overall *Sargassum* amount continued to decrease from September (a drop of 61%) across the Central West Atlantic (CWA, i.e., the region east of the Lesser Antilles in the maps below), Caribbean Sea (CS), and the Gulf of Mexico (GoM). Despite the decrease, moderate amount was still observed in the northeastern CS, with most of the southern Caribbean largely free of *Sargassum*. Most of the GoM is free of *Sargassum* in October 2021. However, compared with previous years, the total amount in October 2021 is only second to October 2018.

Looking ahead, the reduction in the *Sargassum* amount is expected to continue but the amount may still be higher than the same months of most previous years. Additionally, due to the considerable amount of *Sargassum* in the east tropical Atlantic (not shown in the maps below), the westward transport of *Sargassum* by the ocean current may lead to increased *Sargassum* in the CWA in December 2021 or January 2022. According to history, next two months will be critical to determine whether 2022 may be another major *Sargassum* year for most regions. We will keep a close eye on how *Sargassum* in the CS and the tropical Atlantic may evolve in the next two months. More updates will be provided by the end of November 2021, and more information and near real-time imagery can be found under the *Sargassum* Watch System (SaWS, https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html).



Disclaimer: The information bulletin is meant to provide a general outlook of current bloom condition and future bloom probability for the Caribbean Sea. By no means should it be used for commercial purpose, or used for predicting bloom conditions for a specific location or beach. The authors of this bulletin, as well as USF and NASA, take no responsibility for improper use or interpretation of the bulletin.