

Aruba, February 12, 2015 - Shortage of water and funds has cities and towns across the country cancelling or hedging plans – even for the world-famous Carnival of Rio

Severe drought and an ailing economy have forced cities and towns across Brazil to abandon or scale back their plans for Carnival, which is due to start on Friday.

In Brasília, the capital, the local authorities have cancelled the samba school parade for the first time since 1983, in an attempt to plug the R\$4bn (£900m) hole left in the accounts by the previous administration.

“It was a really unpleasant surprise,” said Geomar Leite, the president of Brasília’s Union of Samba Schools, said. “We had all the programme ready; the music, the costumes. We feel really frustrated.”

Even the world-famous Carnival of Rio de Janeiro is not immune. The state oil company, Petrobras, though mired in a massive corruption scandal, has promised to continue its funding of the main samba schools. But this year’s street parties, known as blocos, which rely on private-sector funding, will be more modest affairs.

Rita Fernandes, the president of Sebastiana, an association representing street parties in Rio’s wealthy southern zone, said there had been a massive reduction in the interest of sponsors this year. “We have suffered a lot. Normally brands are desperate to be associated with us. This year that didn’t happen.” As a result, the organisation has had to cancel two dance events.

Elsewhere in Brazil, the shortage of water is the main problem. The south-east is experiencing its worst drought in 80 years, and its two most populous states, São Paulo and Minas Gerais, have seen the biggest cutbacks, with 10 towns cancelling celebrations.

In the town of Cordeirópolis, whose water supply has come from a mining pit for the past three months, the council issued a statement arguing that using water to clean up after the party would be “even more controversial” than cancelling.

In Itapecerica residents have been without running water for up to five days each week. Although supply has now been restored, Welliton Cruz, the town’s tourism secretary, said the decision to cancel came after the local utility company said it could not guarantee water to the thousands of tourists that usually visit each Carnival.

Read more/ Source:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/11/brazilian-cities-scale-back-carnival-drought-economy>