

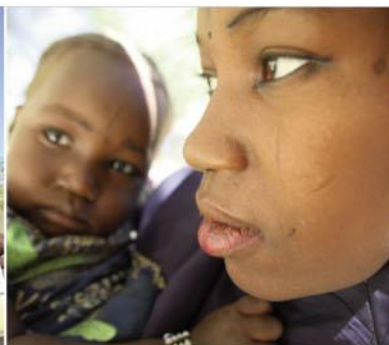


World Food Programme

Fighting Hunger in the Sahel



- Drought has returned to the Sahel region of West Africa following an erratic and late 2011 rainy season, bringing hunger to millions in the region for the third time in the past decade. In an area of the world where most people live only on what they can grow, inconsistent rains, failed harvests and dying animals mean that hunger is a fact of life for many.
- The increasing frequency of droughts in the Sahel has given communities little time to recover from the last food crisis -- savings are exhausted and livestock herds have not been rebuilt. Food prices are abnormally high across the region, further heightening food insecurity.
- WFP is purchasing food stocks and deploying specialized teams to the region for the peak hunger season, which runs from June to September, to ensure that food is available for the most vulnerable – especially women and children.
- WFP plans to reach more than 9 million people in the coming months with over 500,000 metric tons of life-saving food assistance:
 - 3.8 million people in Niger
 - 1.5 million people in Chad
 - 1.3 million people in Mali
 - 860,000 people in Senegal
 - 1.1 million people in Burkina Faso
 - 510,000 people in Mauritania
 - 260,000 people in Cameroon
 - 200,000 people in the Gambia
- WFP is working closely with governments, non-governmental organizations and other UN agencies to ensure an immediate and comprehensive response to food insecurity in the Sahel. The total cost of WFP's response is over US\$800 million. The humanitarian needs are huge and the time for action is now.



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Drought and food crisis, again

Although droughts in 2005 and 2010 were felt most in Niger and parts of Chad, **this year's food crisis is affecting a broad swathe of countries** across the Sahel region. Moreover, food prices in the region are much higher than they were in 2010, making access to food even more difficult for vulnerable households.

Grain production is below the five-year average in Mauritania (down 46 percent), Chad (down 37 percent), Niger (down 23 percent) and Burkina Faso (down 14 percent).

Many households have not yet recovered from the food crisis of 2010. When households lack coping mechanisms to carry them through hard times, they may resort to selling off their few remaining assets, taking children out of school or migrating to urban areas or neighbouring countries in search of food.

Conflict in Mali has resulted in refugee movements and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, complicating the challenge to provide humanitarian assistance.

A regional drought response

WFP is purchasing food stocks in advance, using its **Forward Purchase Facility**. This dramatically reduces the time it takes to move food into the remote areas where it is needed most. WFP is committed to purchasing from the region but is looking at all options to ensure that rations can be provided as planned.

Malnutrition rates in the Sahel are generally high, especially among young children, and the problem increases in the lean season. WFP plans to provide special food assistance to 3.5 million children and pregnant and nursing women most in need. WFP plans to distribute 43,000 metric tons of **new nutrition products** including Plumpy'sup, Plumpy'doz and Super Cereal Plus. This is nearly twice the amount of specialized nutrition products WFP mobilized for the 2011 Horn of Africa response.

Where markets are functioning, WFP plans to distribute **cash transfers and vouchers** to 1.6 million people. This helps local economies and gives people a greater variety of food to choose from.

In **Niger**, WFP has supported more than 1.5 million people since its scale-up in November, and a new emergency operation focuses on children under two. At the height of the June-September hunger season, WFP plans to reach 2.6 million people with food and cash.

Recent assessments in **Chad** have shown that 3.6 million people are food insecure and malnutrition rates are above the "serious" threshold in the whole country. WFP's response focuses on nutrition and Food-for-Work activities. Airlifts have delivered almost 200 metric tons of Plumpy'doz to Eastern Chad.

In **Mali**, WFP is implementing an emergency operation to support 1.3 million people until the end of 2012. WFP is working with local NGOs to provide much-needed food assistance in the north of the country where access is limited.

A recent assessment in **Mauritania** showed that 25 percent of households are food insecure; as 75 percent of food is imported, food prices strongly affect food security. WFP has launched an emergency operation to reach the most vulnerable through cash transfers, targeted food distributions, nutrition and cereal bank support.

As part of its Sahel crisis response, WFP is launching a **regional emergency operation** to provide food assistance to 555,000 people displaced by the conflict in northern Mali - 300,000 internally displaced people in Mali and 255,000 refugees in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania.

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