



World Food
Programme

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de Alimentos

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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

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Climate Change, the World's Hungry and WFP

- Debate continues about the impact of climate change, but there's no disputing this: Extreme weather events are both more frequent and more severe. The recent floods in Africa are but one example. Increasing numbers of people are at risk: 2.6 billion in the past decade compared with 1.6 billion the decade before, according to the World Bank.
- Over the last century, the average surface temperature around the world has increased by 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures since the 1950s are the highest ever recorded.
- Ecologists predict that for every 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit that temperature rises, grain production will fall by about 10 percent.
- Annual precipitation has become more erratic, increasing 5-10 percent over the past century across North America, Northern Europe, and northern and central Asia, while decreasing over most of sub-Saharan Africa between about 20 to 30 percent.

How does climate matter to the world's hungry?

The poorest and most vulnerable communities are heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture and water resources. FAO estimates that 95 percent of agriculture in Africa is rain-dependent. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts yields from rain-dependent agriculture could be down by 50 percent by 2020.

Erratic weather affects agricultural productivity, contributing to chronic hunger and food shortages. Lack of food makes the longer-lasting sustainable solutions we all hope for harder to reach. When food is scarce, subsistence farmers may sell livestock; exchange their land for food; sell firewood, leading to further deforestation; consume seeds; take children out of school; migrate in search of food or work.

What does WFP do about it? First we feed people, then we bridge to the sustainable solutions that help people feed themselves.

1) Because WFP has people, transportation logistics and technology in most remote and disaster prone countries, we are best positioned to provide first-order help when severe weather strikes. Fast and timely deliveries of food and non-food items can help avert the selling of family assets when droughts or other disasters occur. People must first satisfy their daily needs before they can consider longer-term plans.



- WFP has greater **logistical power** and a larger transport network than any other player. On any given day, WFP has 30 ships, 70 aircraft and some 5,000 trucks delivering assistance.

- **Hi-tech methods:** Satellite data to monitor climate and weather conditions. Crop failures and agricultural losses can be detected early and appropriate measures taken before disaster strikes. WFP is helping governments and communities build and improve **emergency preparedness and response** through vulnerability assessment, mapping, early warning systems, contingency planning and risk management.

- 2) **WFP provides community-based food assistance that helps people adapt to and mitigate against climate change.** As we feed people, we also look for ways that will help people shift from subsistence farming or dependency to more sustainable livelihoods. We try to improve productivity and prevent degradation of natural resources as we go. How do we do this? Through:
 - **Water conservation** and management to reduce seasonal droughts and erosion caused by excessive runoff.
 - **Improved soil management** to create favorable conditions for seed germination, root growth, plant development and grain formation and helps combat erosion-induced degradation;
 - **Introduction of improved crop species**, focusing on of pest and drought-resistant varieties; and

Other examples of how WFP helps the poor brace against climate change include:

- A weather-based insurance pilot project in **Ethiopia** to insure against catastrophic drought.
- **Restoring 300,000 hectares of soil and land** eroded after decades of drought, floods, deforestation and over-farming in Ethiopia.
- **Planting more than 5 billion trees over the last decades** in food-for-work projects worldwide.
- Building 27 kilometres of flood-control dykes in **Sudan** in exchange for food.
- Irrigating and rehabilitating 14 kilometers of canals, digging 32 wells and protecting 380 hectares of farmland from soil erosion throughout **Somalia**.
- Digging 227 water wells and rehabilitating 652 water reservoirs throughout **Afghanistan** -- all in exchange for food.

Feeding people is the first and most fundamental step in coping with severe weather. WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency: on average, each year, we give food to 90 million poor people to meet their nutritional needs, including 58 million hungry children, in 80 of the world's poorest countries. WFP – We Feed People.

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