

FAO and WFP launch joint appeal to protect 8.8 million people from extreme weather events

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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have launched their first-ever Joint Anticipatory Action Appeal, seeking \$202 million to protect nearly nine million people from the potential impact of a strong El Niño weather pattern across 22 high-risk priority countries.

The Appeal calls for urgent, flexible funding ahead of anticipated climate shocks that could threaten food security, livelihoods and agricultural production across the world's most vulnerable regions through this year and next.

El Niño is forecasted to strengthen during the period covered by the outlook, leading to drier-than-average conditions in some areas and wetter, flood-risk conditions in others. This can disrupt planting, growing seasons, harvests, pasture, and water availability. Strong El Niño conditions in the second half of 2026 are predicted to increase the likelihood of drought, floods and storms across parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The forecast comes at a time when millions of people are already facing acute food insecurity driven by conflict, economic instability, displacement, recurrent weather-related shocks, and economic disruptions linked to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

FAO and WFP are already positioned to provide anticipatory action for 1.2 million people projected to be affected by El Niño.

With an additional investment of \$167 million, the two agencies are positioned to rapidly expand support to a further 7.6 million people across 22 priority countries, bringing the total coverage to 8.8 million people.

The joint appeal builds on strong evidence that anticipatory action is both highly effective and cost-efficient. Every dollar invested in anticipatory response can result in up to \$7 in avoided losses and response costs.

"Experience consistently shows that early action is more effective and less costly than responding after a crisis has escalated," said FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol. "We have the data, the tools and the evidence to identify risks before they become emergencies. The challenge is ensuring that financing is available early enough to act. When resources are available before trigger thresholds are reached, countries can protect food production, reduce humanitarian needs and help families safeguard livelihoods before critical planting, harvesting and livestock production windows are lost."

"We cannot afford the fallout of another food crisis," said Carl Skau, WFP Acting Executive Director. "With El Niño on the horizon, we have a narrow window to act so families are not forced into impossible choices later. We now have the tools to anticipate these events, what matters is how we act with that knowledge. Early action keeps food on the table and protects those at most risk. With the right resources, we can act faster, reduce costs, and reach people before the crisis escalates."

Funding will support a package of proven anticipatory actions tailored to individual local contexts. These include cash assistance, the distribution of drought-tolerant and/or flood-resistant seeds, livestock protection measures, water harvesting and storage systems, flood protection infrastructure, agricultural advisories and the dissemination of early warning information.

Planned interventions will help vulnerable households protect livelihoods, stabilize food consumption, safeguard agricultural production and strengthen resilience to future shocks.

Priority countries

The appeal focuses on 22 countries, balancing key considerations such as risks based on meteorological forecasts of El Niño and its possible impact, historical weather patterns, agricultural calendars, existing levels of food insecurity and operational readiness. The targeted countries by region are:

Africa: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Philippines and Timor-Leste.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Venezuela.

From forecast to action

The Appeal comes as humanitarian needs continue to rise while global aid budgets face increasing pressure.

During the 2023–2024 El Niño event, FAO and WFP supported more than three million people through anticipatory action, delivering assistance months before peak impacts occurred. Capacity has since expanded, but overall coverage remains well below identified needs, highlighting the importance of scaling up financing and preparedness ahead of the 2026 event.

FAO and WFP reiterate that the systems, partnerships and operational plans needed to act are fully in place and coordinated for immediate action. What is needed now is the financing required to deliver anticipatory action at the scale that current forecasts demand.