



World Food Programme

SAVING
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WAR IN UKRAINE DRIVES GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

Hungry world at critical crossroads

A global food crisis fuelled by conflict, climate shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic is growing because of the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine driving rising prices of food, fuel and fertilizer. Millions of people across the world are at risk of being driven into starvation unless action is taken now to respond together and at scale.

There is now a very real risk that global food and nutrition needs across the globe may soon outstrip the capacity of the United Nations World Food

Programme (WFP) or any organization's ability to respond.

WFP therefore is calling for coordinated action to address its funding gap, build an all-inclusive multi-stakeholder approach in partnership with governments and food systems actors, ensure trade is open, invest in strategic development solutions and commit to political solutions to secure stability and peace.

Global needs must be met

We are all at a critical crossroads: either we rise to the challenge of meeting immediate needs, or we face the consequences of even bigger problems down the line. Without resources to address growing hunger, the world will pay an even higher price in terms of supporting the displaced, rebuilding communities and recovering from what has been lost as the results of decades of support for development are reversed.

In response, WFP is activating a global corporate emergency, scaling up its direct food and nutrition assistance to prevent famine and death. Due to the unprecedented overlap of crises, WFP's annual operational requirements are at an all-time high of US\$22.2 billion, with confirmed contributions so far at US\$4.8 billion (22 percent).

Faced by funding gaps and rising prices, WFP uses data and analytics to adapt and optimize operations, implementing mitigation measures and shifting programme modalities to prioritize those most in need.

Driven by the ripple effects of the conflict in Ukraine, the number of people who are acutely food insecure or at high risk has soared to a record high of 345 million people in 2022 in 82 countries with WFP operational presence and where data is available. This is an increase of almost 200 million people compared to pre-pandemic levels.

An estimated 50 million people across 45 countries are in Emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 4+ including severely food insecure based on WFP's CARI methodology). Without urgent life-saving action, these populations will be at risk of falling into famine or famine-like conditions.

Record highs of malnourished

The number of acutely malnourished people is also increasing, reaching record highs in places. Globally, 60 million children are acutely malnourished as of 2022, compared to 47 million in 2019 before COVID-19.



In the Sahel, 6.3 million children are affected by acute malnutrition in 2022, the highest figure ever recorded for the region. Meanwhile, in the Horn of Africa, 7 million children are acutely malnourished due to the combined effects of drought and conflict.

In response, WFP is prioritizing emergency action to prevent millions from dying of hunger and help build and stabilize national food systems and related supply chains. In the first quarter of 2022, WFP reached 83 million people, and transferred US\$997 million in cash-based assistance between January and May 2022.

Faced by this unprecedented global food crisis, WFP is stepping up its operations to prevent starvation and death. WFP aims to support a record 152 million food insecure people in 2022, a significant increase from the already record-high 128 million people reached in 2021. In the first quarter of 2022, WFP reached 83 million people, or 55 percent of its annual target.

In addition, WFP is implementing measures to reduce suffering, diversifying its supplier base, promoting local food procurement, and advocating for and negotiating humanitarian access and export waivers. WFP is also reshaping operations to optimize resources, shifting the focus of operations to sustain assistance, reducing food rations to prioritize those who are in most need, and stretching out support where feasible.

Step change to avoid disaster

WFP has a plan for 2022 – its most ambitious in history – but needs a step-change to help deliver millions from disaster. WFP faces a triple jeopardy: operational costs are going up as the numbers of the acutely hungry are rising to unprecedented levels, and at the same time donors are being squeezed by multiple demands.

This global crisis will only be solved by concerted work at scale, in partnership with governments and food systems experts. WFP calls for coordinated action to address emergency, humanitarian needs, build an all-inclusive multi-stakeholder approach, ensure trade is open, invest in strategic development solutions and commit to political solutions.

School feeding must be sustained to keep children in school and protect them from the risk of child labour and exploitation. Malnutrition prevention and treatment must continue to end inter-generational hunger and prevent malnutrition rates from deteriorating even more. Political commitment is essential to address climate change and conflict and instability, which are the major root causes of food crises worldwide.

Global food security is struggling in a storm of staggering proportions. Increasing climate



variability and shocks – including back-to-back droughts and floods – have piled on to the devastating economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is causing massive income losses, record inflation, tumbling currencies and a growing global debt burden. Meanwhile, conflicts in Ukraine and elsewhere have made already demanding situations even more severe with dramatic ripple effects on food security and in energy markets.

Food prices have been rising since mid-2020. The Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Price Index reached a new all-time high in February 2022 and then took another leap in March 2022 (about 30 percent above its value in the same month last year) and has only slightly fallen since. Domestic food prices rose by 15 percent or more in 40 countries over the past year, making essential purchases unaffordable for many.

Rising crude prices

Similarly, crude oil prices have steadily increased since spring 2020 after recovering from a pandemic-triggered plunge. At the same time, incomes are depressed as labour markets struggle to recover from pandemic-induced shocks. And governments around the world meanwhile are tightening their belts after draining their reserves and racking up debt during the pandemic.

About 60 percent of low-income countries are at high risk of or already in debt distress, compared with 30 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, high inflation is causing central banks in advanced economies to tighten their monetary policies, resulting in less cheap credit and access to financial flows. Growing credit costs are adding pressure, likely to be compensated by austerity policies affecting the vulnerable first and most.

Conflict and insecurity are the main driver of food insecurity globally. Conflict displaces people, disrupts agricultural value chains and drives income losses and food price hikes. In 2021, 139 million people were in Crisis or worse food insecurity in 24 countries/territories where the lead driver was conflict and insecurity.

Major violent hotspots included Central Sahel, northern Nigeria, Central African Republic, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and most recently, Ukraine. In many of these places, conflict and insecurity still present severe challenges to humanitarian access, resulting in breaks in operations and delays.

The links between conflict and hunger are clear. Conflict and instability put countries into reverse. In this year of unprecedented needs, the world cannot afford another conflict. We must end the wars. Without peace and stability, we cannot help to end hunger. Likewise, addressing hunger is the foundation for stability and peace.

Climate events are new normal

Climatic shocks impairing agricultural production globally have curbed domestic supplies of food in

many countries and contributed to rising prices. Extreme climate events are becoming the new normal in many of the most vulnerable areas of the globe, with recurring extreme climate events affecting the same places.

La Niña weather events since late 2020 have affected agriculture, causing crop and livestock losses in many parts of the world. Forecasts indicate a 58 percent likelihood for La Niña conditions to continue through August–October before slightly increasing later this year through early 2023, putting some countries in the Greater Horn of Africa, Asia, the Sahel and Caribbean at high risk of deteriorating food insecurity.

Rains in the Horn of Africa have failed to materialize as the peninsula faces one of its most severe droughts in recent history. In Southern Africa, Angola has had a fifth straight year of drought conditions in southern provinces, with the 2020–21 season the worst in the last 40 years in some areas. Forecasts indicate a high risk of isolated flooding across the Sahel. In South Sudan, above-average rainfall is largely expected to continue until the end of the season, increasing flooding risks in the southeast from July to September.

The conflict in Ukraine – one of the world’s major breadbaskets – is compounding what was already a year of catastrophic hunger. Ukraine and Russia together supply 30 percent of globally traded wheat, 20 percent of maize and 70 percent of sunflower supplies. A shortfall in export supplies is driving prices up, leaving import-dependent countries with higher food import bills – or less food to eat.

Reduced food via Black Sea ports

Since the start of the crisis in Ukraine, food shipments from the Black Sea have reduced and costs have grown significantly, with immediate impact on import-dependent economies. Military operations have further disrupted Ukraine’s agricultural production for the 2022-23 season. While the harvested amounts will exceed Ukraine’s needs, global grain supply will stay low unless shipping from the Black Sea resumes.

In addition, Russia is one of the most important suppliers of the three major groups of fertilizers. Fertilizer prices are increasing to record levels, which will significantly affect countries' ability to grow food, increasing food insecurity far beyond 2022 levels.

Russia is a critical player in global energy markets. The conflict has significantly affected energy costs, which are also likely to put additional pressure on food prices, as fuel represents a key agricultural



input and natural gas is an important feedstock to produce nitrogen-based fertilizers. At the same time, rising energy costs are likely to reduce households' purchasing power and slow down post-pandemic economic recovery.

Decreasing international supplies of fertilizer are causing some producing countries to limit or ban exports with the aim to stabilize domestic prices. Current export restrictions affect 17 percent of globally traded calories. A rapid drop of supplies induced by a succession of export bans will accelerate price rises and prevent import-dependent economies securing food. These bans have major implications on global economic dynamics. In the 2007–2008 financial crisis, export restrictions caused 40 percent of price surges.

Risk of civil unrest

Conflict drives hunger, and hunger can likewise be a cause of conflict. Food insecurity, especially when caused by higher food prices, heightens the risks

of democratic breakdown, civil unrest, protests and riots, communal conflict and even interstate war. This was seen in 2007–2008 and 2009–2010 when large-scale political unrest and instability, or so-called “food and hunger riots,” coincided with big spikes in food prices.

These riots left hundreds of people dead, triggered government reshuffles and forced major towns to shut down. In Syria, Libya and Yemen, food price inflation even contributed to protracted armed conflicts.

The global food crisis is significantly worse than 2008 or 2010. In those years, there were no pandemic-related shocks, no massive income losses, no record inflation, no supply chain disruptions and no major record debt burden. There was no war in Syria, Yemen, Nigeria or Ethiopia. There were less frequent and less intense climate-related shocks.

Since March 2022, protests over rising food prices have erupted in several countries, highlighting the pace and severity of repercussions months into the conflict in Ukraine. The overlap of price increases with political instability, violence and extreme weather could fuel conflict by increasing food insecurity in terms of both availability of and access to food.

As the frontline fighter of global hunger, WFP is heavily affected by increasing food prices and decreasing international attention for food security crises. The cost of WFP commodities such as wheat and wheat flour, vegetable oil (sunflower and palm oil), peas and specialized nutritious foods have increased by US\$27.1 million per month. Fuel prices have increased WFP's operational costs by US\$5.5 million per month.

Funding forces cuts

This is on top of pandemic-related price increases of US\$42 million compared to the 2019 average monthly cost. Global supply chain disruptions also impact WFP's shipping operations through longer lead times and higher ocean-freight costs. Overall, the crisis in Ukraine increased WFP's monthly costs by US\$73.6 million above their 2019 average (an average increase of 44 percent).

Increasing costs and the low percentage of overall funding is of particular concern for refugee operations and other protracted crises. Across all regions, insufficient resources are forcing WFP to take drastic measures by reducing the number of people we each or the size of rations – or both.

- In Asia and the Pacific, WFP faces a US\$1.2 billion shortfall in Afghanistan through the end of the year and will be forced to choose whether to feed people in acute food insecurity now, or preposition food for the winter when they will be cut off from aid. Meanwhile, in Myanmar, funding for urban operations is expected to run out in July, while cash-based operations in crisis-affected areas will face interruptions in August, leaving internally displaced and other vulnerable people without food assistance.
- In Eastern Africa, the Horn of Africa is struggling with its worst drought in 40 years; however, WFP must prioritize who receives assistance and who goes hungry. In South Sudan, resourcing shortfalls have forced WFP to suspend assistance to 1.7 million people. Even people living in areas where some households face Catastrophe (Phase 5) are only receiving 70 percent of a full ration.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, weather forecasts confirm an earlier, more active and intense hurricane season for 2022. Areas in the northern Caribbean and eastern Central America are at particular risk and critical funding is required for WFP to support emergency preparedness and response efforts at regional and country levels. WFP's net funding requirements for the region, however, stand at 65 percent for the next six months.
- In the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe, WFP is facing significant resourcing shortfalls in Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Syria and Yemen; in Yemen, WFP's assistance to 6 million people will be reduced to 55 percent of caloric needs between July and December if no additional funding is received. Meanwhile in Jordan, WFP has been forced to prioritize assistance to only target refugees in camps and extremely vulnerable refugees in communities as of June.

- In Southern Africa, resourcing remains insufficient to meet even the very basic needs of vulnerable households, forcing WFP to implement reductions in food rations for refugee operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, as well as reductions in programme implementation in some countries including Zimbabwe.
- In Western Africa, as the Sahel enters the annual lean season, WFP is being forced to reduce the number of people who will receive assistance, cut rations and prioritize activities. Even before the conflict in Ukraine, WFP was forced to cut rations up to 50 percent in Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Chad, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania and Niger due to funding shortfalls. Now, WFP will be forced to take from the hungry to feed the starving.



WFP's nutrition programmes in emergencies are also underfunded. Significant shortfalls in SuperCereal+, used for prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition, will affect Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Chad and Kenya in coming months. Ethiopia, Kenya and Burkina Faso will face shortfalls in Lipid-based Nutrient Supplement, affecting treatment for children under 5. Such disruptions combined with inadequate and incomplete food assistance will likely further worsen the already dire nutrition situation.



Millions of families are falling deeper into hunger as food rations dwindle due to humanitarian resources being stretched beyond their limits. In many of its operations, WFP is implementing needs-based prioritization schemes and reshaping responses to ensure that help is reaching the most vulnerable families first, and mostly focusing on people in acute food insecurity Phases 4 and 5. For example, in Afghanistan's remote Ghor province, where 20,300 people were in catastrophic food insecurity (Phase 5) in the March-May lean season, WFP stepped up and provided emergency food assistance to 800,000 people.

Meanwhile, in Ukraine, where one-third of the population is estimated to be food insecure, WFP is scaling up to assist 5 million people each month through multipurpose cash and immediate food relief. And in the Central Sahel, where more than 9.6 million people are facing food insecurity across Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, WFP is scaling up operations to support 5 million people during the lean season.

Investing in resilience

In this year of catastrophic hunger, WFP's efforts in both saving and changing lives need to expand in scale.

By investing in resilience, WFP can build self-reliance, stabilize communities and reduce long-term costs.

For example, in just three years, WFP and local communities turned 110,000 hectares of barren fields in the Sahel region into productive farmland, changing the lives of over 2.5 million people and showing how investing in resilience can pay dividends in peace and stability.

Meanwhile, in Central America, WFP supported 32,000 people affected by El Niño in the Dry Corridor of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to adapt to the impacts of drought and improve livelihoods through asset creation and income generation. A total of 1,321 hectares of degraded and marginal land have been reforested, 177 tree nurseries and vegetable gardens established, 2,790 water harvesting systems constructed and 2,713 irrigation systems installed.

In Iraq, WFP is working with the Government and UN partners to introduce smart, innovative solutions that help smallholder farmers become self-sufficient in confronting and mitigating the effects of climate change. The latest cycle of WFP's livelihoods programmes directly supported nearly 104,500 people, plus 288,100 people indirectly, in the communities between April 2021-April 2022.

Stabilizing communities

In Afghanistan, WFP's resilience activities have become increasingly important as the country faces its worst drought in years and unprecedented levels of food insecurity. In 2022, WFP is focusing particular attention on fostering women's participation by adapting training and partnering with women's associations, along with improving linkages to markets and continuing food systems work on soy value chain development.

These medium- and longer-term resilience building projects stabilize communities in particularly

precarious places and help them to better survive sudden shocks without losing all their assets. The price of not helping people to build resilience and livelihoods in their home countries is as predictable as evident: it increases the risk of poverty, leading to increased population movement and social unrest.

However, funding for resilience and development is often the first thing to be cut when resources are tight. But faced with the compounding effects of conflict, climate shocks and economic crises, investing in resilience-building is an insurance policy against future vulnerability.

The time to act is now: WFP's five calls to action

1

Address the current humanitarian needs

to meet WFP's funding requirement of US\$22.2 billion in 2022 through cash or in-kind donations that will allow the organization to feed the targeted 152 million people in need.

2

Support and join global and regional initiatives

set up to coordinate the international response to the unprecedented crisis including, but not limited to, the Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS), the complementary Food & Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM), the School Meals Coalition and the IFI Action Plan to Address Food Insecurity.

3

Ensure trade is open

for food, fuel, pesticides and fertilizers to avoid export restrictions and import subsidies, and exempt humanitarian assistance from restrictive trade policies.

4

Invest in strategic development solutions

that help build resilient communities and foster climate actions, social protection and sustainable food systems, allowing humanitarian and development organizations to change lives over the long term and plan for scale as needs increase.

5

Commit to political solutions

to secure stability and peace, prevent hunger as a weapon of war and ensure humanitarian access to affected populations including the immediate reopening of Black Sea ports.

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Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131

wfp.org

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