



This report is produced by OCHA [Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean] in collaboration with the humanitarian partners from Redlac and the Humanitarian Country Teams from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Highlights

- The drought caused by El Niño is one of the most severe in the history of Central America, surpassing in size and impact the situation faced in 2014.
- Despite mitigation measures, thousands of families in the dry corridor have been affected, reaching levels of humanitarian crisis.
- 3.5 million people have been affected in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, of which more than 2 million need immediate food assistance, health care, nutritional support, and recovery of livelihoods, among others.
- This crisis highlights the extreme vulnerability of subsistence farmers, labourers and low-income families living along the dry corridor to erratic rainfall, crop failure, and deterioration in food security and nutrition, health and livelihoods.
- According to a study by IOM and WFP, the impact of drought has become an additional trigger for the migration of people from rural areas to urban centres and to other countries.
- National governments are preparing to respond to this situation. The UN System is mobilizing resources and supporting the affected countries by coordinating emergency response plans.

3.5 million

People affected by food insecurity (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras)

75% - 100%

Approximate losses of maize and bean crops in the affected areas

US\$28 million

Estimated losses in El Salvador

US\$23.1 million

Required in the Response Plan in Honduras

145,000 families

Require food assistance in Guatemala

Situation Overview

Insufficient and erratic rainfall in recent months has resulted in the loss of staple grain crops and the death of thousands of cattle in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and to a lesser extent in areas of Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Puerto Rico, among others.

This is the second consecutive year that the population in these areas is facing drought, destroying livelihoods and eroding their resilience. The most vulnerable population are subsistence farmers, labourers and landless farmers. These low income households are dependent on rainfall as they work in farming without irrigation, have limited access to basic health services and education, and face difficulties accessing the basic food basket.

Despite mitigation measures implemented in the affected countries, food insecurity has deteriorated for thousands of families resulting in a serious humanitarian situation. Data from governments and assessments indicate that 3.5 million people are affected, of which 2 million need immediate food assistance, health care, livelihood recovery and activities that increase resilience.

In August, the Central American Agricultural Council, headed by the Ministers of Agriculture of the region, declared a regional state of alert due to the losses suffered by hundreds of thousands of farmers during the main season of maize (May - September). The declaration came within the meeting of the council members that included the agricultural ministries of Central America, Belize and the Dominican Republic.

According to the study “*El Hambre sin Fronteras*” (Hunger without Borders) issued by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP), the food insecurity caused by the drought is a trigger for the migration of people living in the Northern Triangle of Central America. This study (made in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) highlights the need to invest in food security as a survival mechanism to prevent migration.

El Salvador: The country is experiencing the driest trimester (May-June-July) historically registered, according to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN in Spanish). 57% of the country's departments are affected.



825,000
People approx. affected by the drought

192,000 people
Require immediate food assistance in El Salvador

The new national health survey (2014) shows that since the last survey (2007), the percentage of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition has doubled, now standing at 2%. El Salvador has not reported a problem of acute malnutrition with similar figures since 1988.

The Ministry of Health is concerned that there could be an increase in dengue cases due to the need to collect water in homes without the recommended measures to prevent mosquito breeding.

Guatemala: According to the National Institute for Seismology, Vulcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology (INSIVUMEH), some areas in the central zone of the country had no rain for 45 days during the months of July and August (mainly in: Baja Verapaz, El Progreso, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Jalapa and Jutiapa, Quiche, Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, San Marcos, Retalhuleu, Santa Rosa and Escuintla).



1.3 million
People approx. affected by the drought

720,000 people
Require immediate food assistance in Guatemala

According to the Ministry of Food Security and Nutrition of the Ministry of Agriculture and the World Food Programme (WFP) 1.3 million people are affected and 720,000 people require immediate food assistance.

Preliminary assessments estimate that severe acute malnutrition oscillates from 3.3% in Polochic (evaluation of Plan International) to 5.7% in the east of the country (according to Action against Hunger). The on-going nutritional screening carried out by UNICEF and WFP, in collaboration with CENACIDE, Doctors Without Borders, Plan International and Action Against Hunger, detected 726 cases of acute malnutrition in the departments most affected by the drought, with extreme rates, for example, in Chiquimula (3.4%).

Honduras: In July, the Government of Honduras declared a State of Emergency for 146 municipalities with 161,400 families affected, including 83,229 severely affected in 81 municipalities and 78,174 moderately affected in 65 municipalities.



1.4 million
People approx. in food insecurity by the drought¹

253,000 people
Require immediate food assistance in Honduras

In August, the Government with WFP and the Humanitarian Country Team conducted an Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) that found the emergency had already affected 1.4 people in 146 municipalities.

Other countries: Drought has also affected crops and livestock in Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Puerto Rico, among others.

Cuba faces a serious water shortage, the worst since 2004. Currently, 144 of 168 municipalities are affected, 63 of them severely affected. Approximately 100,000 people receive water from trucks.

In Colombia, 20 departments are affected by drought and several forest fires have been reported. The more complex scenario are in the departments of Caldas, Tolima, Quindio, Huila, Boyacá, Valle, Santander, Nariño, Caquetá,

¹ Preliminary figures, subject to changes, according to the Emergency Response Plan in Honduras.

Risaralda, on top of the humanitarian situations reported in La Guajira, Atlántico, Magdalena, Bolívar, Arauca and Casanare.

Panama and Dominican Republic have declared emergency levels in specific areas where agricultural production is facing serious problems and where the availability of drinking water and for other purposes (such as management of the Panama Canal) and industrial and energy activities are proving insufficient to meet the needs.

Humanitarian Response

Governments of the affected countries have carried out needs assessments and have created action plans to cover the short, medium and long term response. In addition to immediate food assistance and the recovery of productive capacities, it is crucial to implement actions aimed to reduce agro-climatic risk in the future and adapt to climate change in the longer term.

WFP has provided food assistance to more than half million people in the dry corridor in 2015 and plans to assist the population in severe food insecurity until August 2016. WFP estimates that about US\$ 80 million will be needed to assist this population.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in coordination with the ministries of agriculture of the affected countries, has developed a program to strengthen resilience in the dry corridor to mitigate the effects of drought and reduce the risk of possible future crises. In order to implement the program, FAO is seeking from international donors \$6.7 million.

El Salvador: The Government has not issued an emergency declaration as authorities await the result of the final season (*postrera* in Spanish).

The government and UN agencies have conducted a food security assessment of affected households and are responding to the crisis. OCHA ROLAC is supporting needs assessment of the affected population and coordination of response plan.

During the 2014 drought, assistance was focused in the delivery of agricultural packages (seeds and fertilizer). In 2015, response includes the rehabilitation of irrigation systems, health campaigns and the delivery of animal feed, opening of credit lines and monitoring market prices, among other actions.

On-going response actions in El Salvador:

INSTITUTION	AMOUNT (USD)	SECTOR/INPUT
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	\$6 million	Packages for the final season (<i>postrera</i>)
Government of Japan	\$6 million	Installation of irrigation systems for 2016
WFP		Food assistance to 75,985 people (between 2012 to 2015) and awareness-raising and advocacy activities with government authorities
FAO	\$500,000	3,175 families assisted to restore and diversify their livelihoods (2014 drought projects) in the departments of San Vicente and Cabañas

Guatemala: The Government of Guatemala through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) and the Secretariat of Food and Nutritional Security (SESAN), with the support of the United Nations system with FAO, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), WFP and UNICEF, signed a letter of understanding to promote a model of "Integral Attention to Drought in the dry corridor of Guatemala". This was made to develop capacity building actions and resilience of the population and integrate complementary elements to the Family Farming Program for Strengthening the Rural Economy (PAFFEC).

This new comprehensive model has four major areas: production of basic grains, food aid, technical assistance and environmental conservation. The partnership between the government of Guatemala and the UN aims to reduce the vulnerability of households, contributing to their adaptation to climate change in the short, medium and long term.

The challenge involves the mobilization of technical and financial resources to achieve broad coverage, to help meet food and nutritional security of the affected population.

This letter of understanding strengthens the actions of the government and international organizations for food and nutritional security in the country. The comprehensive approach based on building strategic alliances represents a regional example to serve the population of Central American Dry Corridor.

WFP has requested a contribution of \$US 3.57 million from the Guatemalan government to complement the food basket of the Brazilian contribution of rice and beans with cash/voucher assistance.

On-going response actions in Guatemala:

INSTITUTION	AMOUNT (USD)	SECTOR/INPUT
Government of Brazil		4,000 tons of rice and beans for more than a half million people through WFP
FAO	\$3 million	About 5,000 rural families in the departments of Jalapa and Chiquimula are assisted to restore and diversify their livelihoods (2014 drought projects)
Save the Children Guatemala		Assistance in 4 communities in Camotán and Jocotán. 390 families including 1,176 children benefited with Cash for Work programs, activities to fight against hunger and School Feeding programs in seven schools

Honduras: The Humanitarian Country Team, based on the international appeal made last July by the government of Honduras, developed a preliminary response plan for the drought. The President has approved through an Executive Decree the reprogramming of \$4.55 million aimed at the reactivation of agricultural-food sector, as well as donations and external loans to complete the financing of the Action Plan for Food Security caused by the drought 2015.

The plan elaborated by the Humanitarian Country Team (*Red Humanitaria de Pais*) requires \$23.1 million to implement its activities and complement government's efforts. This plan lays out priorities for the sectors of food security, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, protection and recovery of livelihoods.

A concept note for CERF funds is being prepared as support from the UN to immediate response actions.

On-going response actions in Honduras:

INSTITUTION	AMOUNT (USD)	SECTOR/INPUT
Central Government	\$13.6 million	Transfer to the 146 affected municipalities
Central Government	\$4.55 million (Trust Fund)	Food assistance to more than 50,000 families for 30 days
WFP	\$7.4 million	During 2015 (as of August) 34,270 people were assisted with the "cash and voucher" program
FAO	\$1.5 million	22,532 families benefited from long-term projects in 7 affected municipalities by the drought in 2014
COSUDE/HEKS	\$167,000	3,943 families were assisted in Choluteca, Valle and South of Francisco Morazán with the delivery of basic grain seeds, supporting grain storage and micro irrigation
ADRA		1,035 food rations to equal number of families in Choluteca and southern Francisco Morazán
Red Cross		3,500 families assisted with food in Intibuca and Paradise, and 250 families benefited with agricultural packages
CARE		264 families benefited with equipment in Choluteca and El Paraíso
Christian Aid/ACT	\$114,000	Food kits delivery for 45 days to 1,239 families in 47 communities in the municipalities of Apacilagüa, San José and El Corpus in Choluteca

OXFAM	\$175,000	Assistance for 45 days to 1,100 families through food and basic necessities coupons in the municipalities of Lepaera, San Manuel Colohete and Candelaria in the Department of Lempira
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Humanitarian Trends

According to forecasts from the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), the phenomenon of El Niño is fully established with a 100 percent chance of lasting at least until end of *postrera* season in November 2015. It also anticipates a continuation of this phenomenon in 2016, with 91 percent probability during the trimester from March to May 2016 (new agricultural season or *primera* season).

The lack of humanitarian assistance may result in higher levels of morbidity and mortality in a population without resources to deal with this crisis.

- In the short term, it is fundamental to target people requiring food assistance. In the case of Guatemala, high levels of chronic malnutrition lead to the rapid increase of severe acute malnutrition, so the identification and treatment of cases of children under 5 years old is a priority in the most affected areas by the drought.
- In the medium term, a key element of the response is to work on recovering livelihoods to prevent a severe humanitarian crisis.
- A long-term response requires sustainable and agreed decisions and public policies that prioritize this geographic area in development plans and gives preferential treatment to public and private investment such as irrigation activities, water infrastructure, crop substitution and access routes, as well as strengthening the resilience of rural livelihoods and the development of education and health programmes.

General Coordination

United Nations agencies and authorities of the affected countries are working closely together in the response to drought.

Regional UN offices are supporting the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) in their monitoring, evaluation and development/implementation of response plans. From Panama, the interagency Risk Emergency Disaster Working Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (RedLac) group coordinates regional actions.

International organizations and local NGOs implementing community programs in the affected areas are also working in coordination with other humanitarian actors.

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