

WFP plans food relief for 700,000 Zimbabweans

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) plans to provide food relief for 700,000 people in Zimbabwe from October as the effects of a poor harvest and the Ukraine war continue to impact the country, an official has said.



Villagers collect food aid distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) following a prolonged drought in rural Mudzi district, Zimbabwe. 2020.
Source: Reuters/Philimon Bulawayo

Zimbabwe's government is working with agencies to provide food aid for 3.8 million people, the WFP said.

The southern African country's government has said it expects its staple maize harvest to fall by almost half this year, to 1.56 million tonnes from last season's multi-year record of 2.72 million tonnes, due to poor rainfall in the 2021-22 growing season.

The country requires 2.2 million tonnes of maize annually for human and livestock consumption.

WFP said it had budgeted \$40m for the food aid programme to cushion millions over the peak of the hunger season from October, when poor households run out of food stocks, to March, when harvesting starts.



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Food deficit mitigation programme

"I do not think this is a famine as yet but that does not mean that it is good. We are preparing for a response that will take off in October up to March. We are working with government on a joint plan for the food deficit mitigation programme and that is for 3.8 million people," WFP country representative Franscesca Erldelmann told Reuters.

She said the number of food insecure people had shot up from 2.9 million to 3.8 million, warning that more households could go hungry as grain stocks dwindle.

Rising food prices, coupled with higher fuel costs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have driven Zimbabwe's inflation from 61% in January to 285% in August, undermining President Emmerson Mnangagwa's efforts to revive the country's economy.

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