

WFP plans food relief for 270,000 Zimbabweans, poor harvest expected

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The World Food Programme is planning to feed 270,000 hungry Zimbabweans over the next three months, an official said on Friday, as the country braces for a poor harvest due to an El Nino-induced drought.



A logo of the World Food Programme is seen at their headquarters after the WFP won the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, in Rome, Italy October 9, 2020. Reuters/Remo Casilli/File Photo

The southern African country has been struggling to feed itself since 2000, when former leader Robert Mugabe led the seizure of white-owned farms to resettle landless Black people.

But Zimbabwe and other regional countries also expect 2024 crop yields to be hit by El Nino, a climate phenomenon in which surface waters of the central and eastern Pacific become unusually warm, causing changes in global weather patterns.

Zimbabwe's government has forecast the staple maize harvest to halve to 1.1 million tons in 2024 due to the drought.

In total, the country is working with aid agencies to provide assistance to 2.7 million people struggling with food insecurity, WFP acting country director Christine Mendes said.

The WFP itself, which has provided assistance in Zimbabwe for decades, will be focusing on 270,000 people mostly in the southern region where the rains are poor and the lower yields will have some of the most significant impact.

"Out of the 2.7 million people, we jointly planned to assist the most vulnerable. WFP will be assisting communities in four districts where populations are more vulnerable with a package that is slightly more advanced," Mendes told Reuters.

Mendes said the WFP had budgeted \$39m for its humanitarian programmes in Zimbabwe, including food assistance in the next six months, but that figure was only 40% funded so far.

"We have to work hard to secure funding resources to meet that shortfall," Mendes said.

Due to funding shortages, Mendes said WFP will prioritise the most vulnerable communities, providing maize grain, beans and cooking oil per household.

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