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FAO'S RESPONSE TO THE 2015–2016 EL NIÑO FROM EARLY WARNING TO EARLY ACTION

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been monitoring forecasts for the current El Niño since early 2015. It is using early warning information to design and implement early actions knowing that anticipatory action can mitigate or even prevent disasters from happening.

WHAT IS EL NIÑO?

El Niño is the warming of sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific. While the main threats to food production are reduced rainfall and drought in some regions, El Niño can also cause heavy rains and flooding in others.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

When predictions suggested that this year's El Niño could be even more severe than that of 1997–1998 – the worst on record – FAO took prompt action:

- a multi-departmental El Niño Task Force was established in September 2015. The Task Force holds monthly meetings and liaises directly with countries to develop the best early action and response plans;
- a special Early Warning – Early Action report was created to provide a global analysis of current and anticipated El Niño related impacts. It brings together early warning information with the actions being taken by FAO and national authorities.

Funding needs are also included. See: www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/340660

- FAO staff undertook missions to high-priority countries to support the drafting of El Niño early action and response plans. Plans have already been developed for **Somalia, Papua New Guinea, Mongolia, Philippines, Micronesia and Melanesia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Sudan** and the **Southern Africa region** and implementation has started.

PRIORITY COUNTRIES¹

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN	AFRICA	ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
Haiti	Somalia	Papua New Guinea
Guatemala	Ethiopia	Philippines
Honduras	Mozambique	Pacific Islands
Nicaragua	Malawi	Indonesia
El Salvador	Zimbabwe	Timor-Leste
	Lesotho	Mongolia
	Swaziland	

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

- Gap: USD 240 million
- Funding mobilized: USD 14 million

¹ Countries included in this table are ordered according to their ranking in the INFORM Index for Risk Management 2016. The list does not imply any ranking in terms of severity or prioritization among the countries listed in the table.

FAO IN ACTION



> SOMALIA

BUILDING DEFENCES AGAINST FLOODS AND ANIMAL DISEASE

In Somalia, an El Niño Preparedness and Early Response Plan was put into action to protect the south central main agricultural area from flooding.

The banks of the Shebelle and Juba rivers were reinforced, flood barriers were built and nearly 90 breached riverheads repaired, using both GBP 1 million from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and FAO internal funds. Bags to protect grain stores and seeds were also distributed.

FAO and its partners have also carried out information and awareness-raising sessions on the risk to livestock of Rift Valley Fever. Sessions about the risk to livelihoods posed by locusts are to follow.

> ETHIOPIA

EL NIÑO THREATENS FAMILIES IN A SECOND YEAR OF DROUGHT

An FAO assessment team encountered sandstorms and livestock carcasses on a mission to the Feardhato Kebele camp for displaced people near Dire Dawa in the Somali region. The land should have been lush after the rains. But the 1 400 families gathered here are enduring their second year of drought due to El Niño.

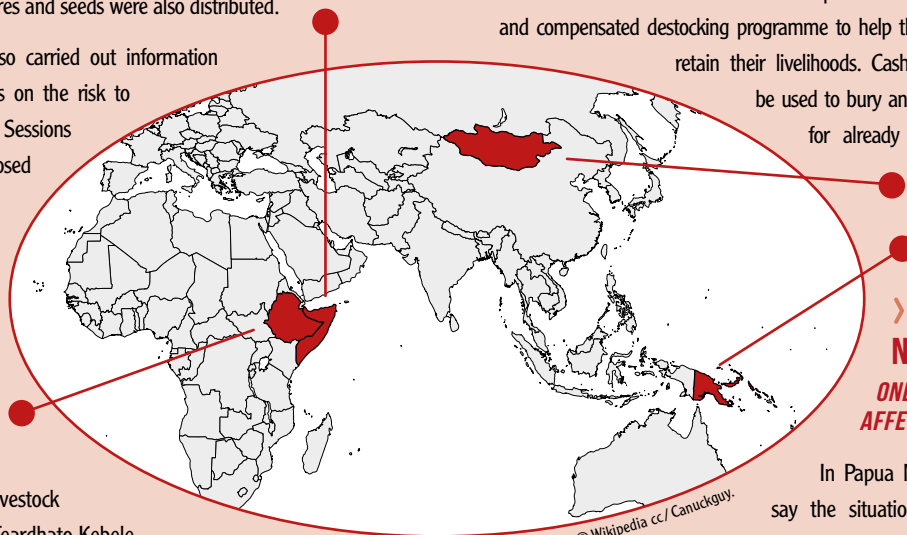
Omar Maie told the team that he had lost almost all his animals and described the drought as the *sima*, or the equalizer, because it had reduced everyone to the same level of need. He says restocking their herds – 30 or 40 animals per family – is people's top priority. Sheep and goats are the most useful as they breed quickly for cash sales and provide milk. Working alongside the Ethiopian government, FAO is planning a rapid intervention under its El Niño preparedness and early response programme.



> MONGOLIA

A STRONG EL NIÑO OFTEN COINCIDES WITH A VERY HARSH WINTER

In Mongolia, a severe dzud – or harsh winter following a summer drought – is being predicted. An FAO mission investigated how this early warning can be turned into effective early action. Previous severe dzuds have coincided with strong El Niño phenomenon and 25–35 percent of Mongolian livestock has been lost. Drought has pushed hay fodder prices up by nearly 230 percent, while the prices of hides and meat are down between 75 and 50 percent. FAO is considering a controlled and compensated destocking programme to help the most vulnerable herders retain their livelihoods. Cash-for-work initiatives would be used to bury animals and generate income for already heavily indebted herders.



> PAPUA NEW GUINEA

ONE IN THREE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DROUGHT

In Papua New Guinea, local officials say the situation is already worse than during the El Niño of 1997–1998. Overall, 2.7 million people are affected, food prices have tripled and availability in local markets has halved. Under the Early Warning Early Action programme, a Food Security Coordinator from FAO is assisting the Department of Agriculture and Livestock on coordinating the response in the sector. An intervention is planned to support 560 000 people in the four most affected provinces. It will help people like subsistence farmer Vivian Jones. Her sugar cane crop has withered due to the drought and she and her family are down to a single meal a day. At a workshop, Vivian was trained in drought adaptation and smart irrigation techniques - such as using a simple drip hose with very small holes.

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