

Beat: News

Food insecurity and malnutrition are worsening across Somalia

FAO News Release

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ARAC International Global Media Partners - "Below-average rains forecast for Somalia could lead to devastating cattle losses and intensify malnutrition in the Horn of Africa nation, the United Nations food security agency has warned."

As rains fail again catastrophic hunger looms over Somalia Food insecurity and malnutrition worsen across Somalia as risk of famine increases amid historic fourth failed rainy season

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A historic fourth consecutive failed rainy season, skyrocketing prices and an underfunded humanitarian response have resulted in a 160 percent increase in people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity, starvation and disease in Somalia. With no end in sight for the devastating drought affecting the country, the risk of famine looms larger than ever. An urgent increase in support from the international community is essential to avert famine.

A new report from the Famine Early Warning Network and the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, based on a rapid assessment by multiple United Nations agencies, shows that 7.1 million Somalis (close to 50 percent of the population) now face crisis-level food insecurity or worse through at least September 2022. Of those, 213,000 people face catastrophic hunger and starvation, a drastic increase from the 81,000 forecast in April. More areas are at risk of famine, particularly in the south of the country in regions where insecurity and conflict makes humanitarian access more challenging.

These figures reflect a food security situation that is expected to deteriorate rapidly over the coming months. United Nations agencies and partners are now focusing their limited resources on famine prevention to protect the country's most vulnerable, as meteorological organizations warn that another below-average rainy season could follow later in the year.

"We are staring at a potential calamity; failure to act now will be tragic for scores of families in Somalia," said Adam Abdelmoula, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. "Somalia is in danger of entering an unprecedented fifth consecutive failed rainy season, meaning hundreds of thousands of people face the risk of famine. Famine cost the lives of 260,000 Somalis in 2010-2011. This cannot be allowed to happen again in 2022. It is urgent that more is done to avert this risk and done now," he said.

Collectively, humanitarian agencies have reached 2.8 million people between January and April 2022 with lifesaving and livelihood assistance through drought assistance and famine prevention programmes, but the new assessment clearly indicates that the scale of assistance currently being delivered and funding from the international community is not yet sufficient to protect those most at risk.

Food prices affecting the most vulnerable

Somali families are increasingly unable to cope with soaring food prices as local food has become scarce due to consecutive seasons of poor or failed domestic production, livestock deaths, and imported food prices reaching record levels – in part because of supply chain impacts due to conflict in Ukraine. In parts of the country, food prices have risen 140 to 160 percent, leaving poor families hungry and destitute.

"We must act immediately to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. The lives of the most vulnerable are already at risk from malnutrition and hunger, and we cannot wait for a declaration of famine to act," said El-Khidir Daloum, WFP's Country Director in Somalia. "It's a race against time to prevent famine and WFP is scaling up as much as possible, prioritizing our limited resources to save those most at risk. But as these new figures show, there is an urgent need for more resources to meet this escalating hunger crisis," he said.

Around 3 million livestock have died due to the drought since mid-2021, and the decline in meat and milk production has also led to worsening malnutrition, particularly among young children in pastoral areas who are dependent on local supply. As of May 2022, an

estimated 1.5 million children under the age of five years face acute malnutrition through the end of the year, including 386,400 who are likely to be severely malnourished – an increase of 55,000 compared to previous estimates.

The malnutrition crisis is likely to worsen as the nutrition situation deteriorates further in the affected areas, with children and vulnerable people the hardest hit. "This is a child crisis. It's not only about water or nutrition, but also about children losing education, falling vulnerable to child protection issues and having poor health; all impacting their future," said Angela Kearney, UNICEF Somalia Representative. UNICEF has supported the treatment of more than 114,000 children with severe acute malnutrition between January and April 2022. "We are treating children but now we need further funding to prevent a famine and protect the future of every Somali child," she said.

Grim situation as humanitarian funding falls far short

The grim food security situation is unfolding as humanitarian funding from the international community has so far fallen short of coming close to what actors need to avert a famine in the country. The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan is currently only 18% funded. "The support required has not yet fully materialized, and hundreds of thousands of Somalis are at a very real risk of starvation and death," said Etienne Peterschmitt, FAO's Representative in Somalia. "It's a tragedy to see the level of distress that rural communities in particular are experiencing, and we are being limited in what we can do to prevent this extraordinary suffering. We're calling on the international community to act fast while we still have some hope of preventing collapse of livelihoods, further and potentially massive population displacement from rural areas to IDP camps and widespread famine in Somalia," he said.

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO in Emergencies)

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<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-20978/food-insecurity-and-malnutrition-are-worsening-across-somalia.html>

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