

# Over 60 Countries Hit Hardest by Food Crisis to Receive Increased UN Aid

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The United Nations World Food Programme said today it will provide \$1.2 billion in additional food aid in the 62 countries hit hardest by the current crisis resulting from the surge in food and fuel prices.

"With soaring food and fuel prices, hunger is on the march and we must act now," WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran said in written remarks delivered today to the food summit taking place in Rome.

"If we do not act quickly, the bottom billion will become the bottom two billion virtually overnight as their purchasing power is cut in half due to a doubling in food and fuel prices," said Ms. Sheeran, whose agency will provide some \$5 billion to assist nearly 90 million people in 78 countries this year.

To address the current crisis, WFP is tripling the number of people who receive food in Haiti, doubling those who will receive food in Afghanistan, and delivering more critical food aid to people in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

The three-day High-level Conference on World Food Security, hosted by the Rome-based UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has brought together leaders from around the globe, international organizations and financial institutions to tackle the current crisis arising from the recent dramatic escalation of food prices worldwide.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the meeting yesterday by calling on world leaders to take "bold and urgent" steps to address the crisis, including boosting food production and revitalizing agriculture to ensure long-term food security.

Also [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/media.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/media.aspx) addressing the summit yesterday was High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, who told those gathered that human rights violations by Governments often lie at the roots of food crises and hinder efforts to assist affected populations.

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"Food insecurity is often compounded by warfare, bad governance, and natural disasters," Ms. Arbour said. "In such cases, it becomes painfully evident that we cannot always rely on the willingness and ability of national authorities to discharge their obligations towards people in need. Not surprisingly, Governments that commit or turn a blind eye to gross violations of human rights are also the most likely to disregard their duties and responsibilities."

The High Commissioner emphasized that problems of access to hungry populations did not simply emerge at the start of a crisis, but were part of a much longer-term pattern of human rights violations. "Long-standing international tolerance for human rights abuses allows both the obstruction of international assistance when a need arises, as well as the hindrance of corrective international efforts in the long term," she said.

For more details go to UN News Centre at [www.un.org/news](http://www.un.org/news)