

WFP: 349 million acutely Food Insecure in Nigeria, rest of the World

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has said 349 million people across 79 countries are acutely food insecure. It also lamented that the prevalence of undernourishment is on the rise, following three years of deterioration, with the situation expected to worsen, with global food supplies projected to drop to a three-year low in 2022/2023. A joint statement by the Heads of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, International Monetary Fund, World Bank Group, World Food Programme and World Trade Organisation on the Global Food and Nutrition Security Crisis Food and Agriculture Organisation, Qu Dongyu, Kristalina Georgieva, David Malpass, David Beasley and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, respectively, called for continued urgent action to address the global crisis on food and nutrition security.

They said: "We offer our deepest sympathies to the people of Turkey and the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic who have suffered the recent earthquakes. Our organisations are closely monitoring the situation, assessing the magnitude of the disaster, and working to mobilize necessary support in accordance with each organisation's mandates and procedures." They lamented that: "Globally, poverty and food insecurity are both on the rise after decades of development gains. Supply chain disruptions, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, financial tightening through rising interest rates and Russia's war in Ukraine have caused an unprecedented shock to the global food system, with the most vulnerable hit the hardest. "Food inflation remains high in the world, with dozens of countries experiencing double-digit inflation. According to WFP, 349 million people across 79 countries are acutely food insecure."

They added that: "The prevalence of undernourishment is also on the rise, following three years of deterioration. This situation is expected to worsen, with global food supplies projected to drop to a three-year low in 2022/2023. The need is especially dire in 24 countries that FAO and WFP have identified as hunger hotspots, of which 16 are in Africa. "Fertilizer affordability as defined by the ratio between food prices and fertilizer prices is also the lowest since the 2007/2008 food crisis, which is leading to lower food production and impacting smallholder farmers the hardest, worsening the already high local food prices. For example, the reduction in 2022 of the production of rice, for which Africa is the largest importer in the world, coupled with prospects of lower stocks, is of grave concern." They noted that: "In response to the inflation of food, fuel and fertilizer prices, countries have spent over US\$710 billion for social protection measures covering 1 billion people, including approximately US\$380 billion for subsidies. However, only US\$4.3 billion has been spent in low-income countries for



A scene of recent earthquake in Turkey

social protection measures, compared to US\$507.6 billion in high-income countries."

To prevent a worsening of the food and nutrition security crisis, they said further urgent actions are required to rescue hunger hotspots, facilitate trade, improve the functioning of markets, enhance the role of the private sector, and reform and repurpose harmful subsidies with careful targeting and efficiency, insisting that countries should balance short-term urgent interventions with longer-term resilience efforts as they respond to the crisis. They called on governments and donors to support country-level efforts to address the needs in hotspots, share information and strengthen crisis preparedness, stressing that the WFP and FAO need funds urgently to serve the most vulnerable immediately.

They noted that in 2022, WFP and partners reached a record number of people – more than 140 million – with food and nutrition assistance, based on a record-breaking US\$14 billion in contributions, of which US\$7.3 billion came from the United States Government alone. It was revealed that WFP sent over US\$3 billion in cash-based transfers to people in 72 countries and provided support to school feeding programmes in 80 countries, including 15 million children through direct support and more than 90 million children through bolstering government national school feeding programmes. The statement disclosed that FAO has invested US\$1 billion to support more than 40 million people in rural areas with time-sensitive agricultural interventions. These activities were primarily focused on the 53 countries listed in the Global Report on Food Crises, with the World Bank providing a US\$30 billion food and nutrition security package covering the 15 months from April 2022 to June 2023, including US\$12 billion of new projects, which have all been committed ahead of schedule, among other investments.