



# WORLD FOOD ASSISTANCE 2017

## *Taking Stock and Looking Ahead*

### *Key Findings*

#### **Food assistance is vital to international humanitarian assistance**

- About 40 percent of total humanitarian spending is on food assistance.
- Humanitarian crises have increased in number and severity due to conflict, extreme weather events, and other disruptions. In turn, international food assistance expenditures have grown in scale and coverage.
- For example, food assistance expenditures by WFP from 2009 to 2016 went from US\$2.2 billion to US\$5.3 billion - more than double.

#### **Food assistance from national governments is much larger than food assistance from international actors**

- There is limited reliable information about national food assistance, but the data available suggests huge investments are being made.
- For instance, in 2016, WFP's school meals programmes reached 16.4 million children in 60 countries.
- In 51 of these 60 countries, WFP also provided technical assistance and worked with governments

to strengthen the school meals programmes that they fund and implement. This reached a further 45 million children.

- Globally, 368 million children benefit from daily school meals.
- These numbers reveal the wide coverage and magnitude of food assistance. They also showcase its huge potential to achieve SDG2 to End Hunger with the power of global and national investments.

#### **Funding for international food assistance is at record levels, but it's not enough to meet needs**

- Between 2013 and 2016, donor contributions to WFP averaged US\$5.11 billion each year, rising to a record level of US\$5.89 billion in 2016.
- But estimated needs over that period averaged US\$7.03 billion/year, with the gap equalling US\$937 million in 2013, US\$3.16 billion in 2015, and US\$2.68 billion in 2016.
- The growing funding gap must be bridged. This can be through traditional donors, and also new sources, like middle-income countries and the private sector.
- To help use resources where they are needed most, earmarking of funding must be significantly reduced, as should fragmented, duplicative, and excessive reporting requirements.



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### **Spending on international food assistance differs by region and income level**

- The regions of East and Central Africa and the Middle East and North Africa are facing huge and complex food emergencies. These two regions account for 70 percent of food assistance spending.
- More money is spent on food assistance in middle-income countries than low-income countries, which are greater in number. Spending is increasing most quickly in upper middle-income countries, which are affected by some of the world's most complex food emergencies.

### **International food assistance has changed significantly in recent years**

- Spending on all categories of assistance increased, but to different degrees.
- The proportion of spending devoted to in-kind food transfers fell. Despite this, in-kind food is still the main way food assistance is delivered in most of the world.
- The proportion of spending devoted to cash-based transfers surged.
- The proportion of spending devoted to technical assistance also rose significantly.
- The proportion of spending devoted to logistics fell. This reflects the reduction in the share of in-kind food transfers. However, logistics capacity remains vital everywhere, because it supports food assistance and the entire humanitarian system.
- The range of food products used in food assistance grew significantly. Specialized nutritious products are becoming more important. This boosts effectiveness but also creates new challenges for food safety and quality.
- Digital technology now drives most innovations. It strengthens work to save lives, enhance logistics, reduce exclusion and deliver more efficient and personalized interventions.

### **Food assistance is constrained by lack of humanitarian access, instability, and poorly performing food systems**

Considering WFP operations in 2015, it is estimated that:

- Poor access raised food assistance costs by US\$997 million in the 20 countries facing the most severe food crises.
- High levels of instability in most of the 80 countries in which WFP operates raised costs by US\$2.24 billion.
- Low levels of performance of food systems in many of these countries raised costs by US\$439 million.
- Together, these challenges raised costs by US\$3.45 billion. This amount would have more than filled the US\$3.16 billion funding gap between WFP's assessed needs and funding actually received in 2015.

## *Recommendations*

### **To capture the full benefits of food assistance, leaders and policy makers must support efforts to:**

- Confront the political drivers of vulnerability and hunger in order to increase humanitarian access, promote stability, and reduce the cost and enhance the effectiveness of food assistance;
- Improve the quality of food assistance programmes, aiming to boost emergency preparedness and response, resilience, gender equality, nutrition, and food system performance;
- Strengthen national capacity and South-South cooperation, including strong engagement of the private sector;
- Fill vast data gaps about food assistance, focusing on national systems; and
- Frame and implement a practical research agenda that addresses both programme-level and system-level challenges and opportunities facing food assistance initiatives.