



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Nicaragua Country Brief December 2024



Local smallholder farmers harvesting maize for processing for school feeding activities
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In Numbers*



1,364.50 mt of food has been procured from smallholder farmers for school feeding



USD 11.1 million 12-months (January 2025 - December 2025) net funding requirements



190,347 people assisted in December 2024



*Preliminary figures

Operational Context

Nicaragua, the largest country in Central America, remains one of the poorest in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its economy relies on light manufacturing, services, and agriculture. Despite recent growth, multiple crises and global challenges highlight the vulnerability of its food systems.

Nicaragua's economy and social outcomes are highly susceptible to external shocks and natural hazards due to its dependence on climate-sensitive sectors. Ranked 20th in the 2024 World Risk Index, recurrent extreme climate events significantly contribute to food insecurity.

According to the latest national census, 40% of the population lives in rural areas, with about half in poverty and 16.3% in extreme poverty. Agriculture is the main livelihood for 73% of the rural population. Smallholder farmers, who produce 79% of basic food staples, face high levels of food insecurity. Gender inequality further hinders women farmers' access to markets.

High informal employment leaves poor households with unstable incomes, struggling to access food. In the Dry Corridor, climate variability severely affects family farming, leading to agricultural losses and undermining food security. Additionally, high food prices and global economic pressures increase agricultural input costs, threatening local food systems. Many vulnerable households resort to negative food-related coping strategies and remove their children from schools.

WFP supports the Government in achieving Zero Hunger in vulnerable Dry Corridor communities of Nicaragua by enhancing nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes. WFP has been present in the country since 1971.

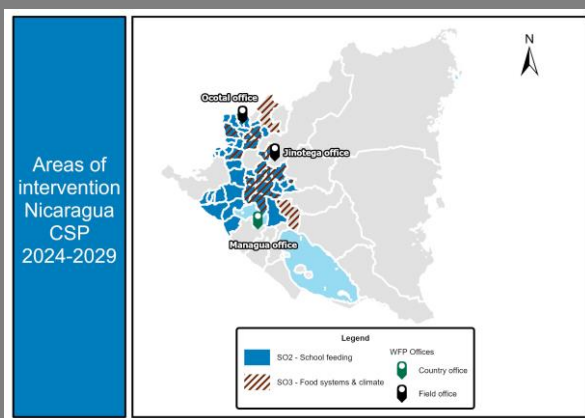
Operational Updates

Emergency Preparedness and Response

- In partnership with smallholder farmers organizations, WFP initiated a project to support households exposed to protracted food crisis in the Dry Corridor by establishing family vegetable gardens to counter the effects of El Niño phenomenon on food and nutritional security. With annual operational plans in place, resources were allocated to 2,065 families, providing tools, irrigation systems, and trainings in climate-smart agriculture and nutrition. Families will be able to plant diverse crops—bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, carrots, and beets— during the upcoming *primera* harvest cycle, enhancing their food security and dietary diversity while supporting their recovery.

School Feeding

- In partnership with the Ministry of Education (MINED), WFP prepared for the first food distribution of 2025 to support the national school feeding programme. Scheduled for delivery before the school year begins, the distribution aims to ensure timely warm nutritious meals to 180,000 schoolchildren in the Dry Corridor. Rations include beans, maize and rice; preparations included procurement from smallholder farmers, food storage, and coordination with the Ministry for the distribution.
- Preparing for 2025, WFP also held several meetings with the Ministry of Education to refine the scope of the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and to ensure alignment to national priorities for the 2025 Annual Operational Plan.
- As WFP advances the planning of the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGFS) pilot to introduce fresh, locally sourced produce into school meals, it has assessed 5 smallholder farmer organizations, selecting 3 as potential suppliers for fresh produce. With support from a WFP regional Food Safety and Quality specialist, these organizations were evaluated for their ability to meet strict food safety standards for supplying vegetables and eggs.



Population: **6.9 million**

2023/4 Human Development Index: **130 out of 193**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition (Stunting): **7.8% of children less than 5 years old***

*Nicaragua Nutritional Census 2023

Local Food Systems

- With support from WFP, a smallholder farmer organization in Nueva Segovia certified 3,341 hectares under Rainforest Alliance, organic, and fair-trade standards, benefiting 495 smallholder farmers. WFP strengthened their capacity to boost productivity, market access, and food system resilience.

WFP Country Strategic Plan

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2024)		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	12 Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
80.9 M	31.1 M	11.1 M

Strategic Result 1: People are better able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs

Strategic Outcome 1: Populations affected by or exposed to crises in Nicaragua meet their food, nutrition and other urgent essential needs in an inclusive way during shocks, stressors and protracted crises, and benefit from the strengthening of capacities and systems for integrated disaster risk management by 2029.

Focus area: Crisis response

Activities:

- Provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by or exposed to crises and provide technical support to strengthen the capacities of disaster risk management actors and response systems, using an approach that takes account of nutrition, protection, gender and interculturality issues.

Strategic Result 2: People have better nutrition, health and education outcomes

Strategic Outcome 2: Girls, boys and adolescents in schools and their families in priority areas of Nicaragua benefit from a strengthened social protection system, including a comprehensive school feeding programme with fresh, nutritious and locally produced food that will positively contribute to their nutrition, health and education outcomes by 2029.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide nutritious meals to girls, boys and adolescents through the national school feeding programme, contributing to the strengthening of national social protection programmes using approaches that take account of gender, protection, nutrition, interculturality and climate resilience.

Strategic Result 3: People have improved and sustainable livelihoods

Strategic Outcome 3: Smallholders and key food systems actors in prioritized areas of Nicaragua, especially women, are resilient with sustainable and climate adaptive capacities that improve their access to healthy diets and markets, particularly institutional market of home-grown school feeding by 2029.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Strengthen adaptive capacities and develop solutions and models for smallholders, other key food system actors and institutions to enhance climate resilience, food security and nutrition; and improve their access to markets in an equitable and equal manner.
- Provide technical assistance to smallholder farmers to increase their resilience, improve their livelihoods and reduce their vulnerability to adverse climate events.

Strategic Result 5: Humanitarian and development actors are more efficient and effective

Strategic Outcome 4: National institutions and United Nations entities receive operational support services from WFP in an effective, efficient and reliable manner in Nicaragua, enabling them to assist people affected by or exposed to crises until 2029.

Focus area: Crisis response

Activities:

- Provide services required by national institutions and United Nations entities to facilitate timely assistance for people affected by or exposed to crises.

Local Food Systems (Cont.)

- Thanks to WFP's capacity-strengthening effort, a smallholder farmers' organization also secured a contract to supply 100 metric tons of beans to the school meal programme, gaining access to institutionalized markets.

Service Provision

- WFP has officially closed its Bilwi Humanitarian Hub after two years of operation. During this time, the center hosted 4 UN Agencies to support emergency response efforts in the area. The closure follows a decline in service demand as partner entities and WFP redirected their interventions to other geographical areas.

Nutrition and Gender

- Through awareness trainings, WFP strengthened smallholder farmers' knowledge of Food and Nutrition Security (FSN) in Nueva Segovia and Madriz. Nine farmers organizations received training on healthy eating, malnutrition, food safety, and the importance of community gardens for nutrition. As part of a broader resilience-building intervention in the Dry Corridor, trained members will pass on their knowledge to beneficiary groups.

Monitoring

- WFP has focused its efforts on data assurance for the preparation of two Annual Country Reports for 2024. It has provided coordination and technical support to its programme units, ensuring accurate processing of outcome and output results, beneficiary counts, and goal planning for the upcoming period.
- WFP is advancing in the systematization of its the Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) by contracting a company for configuring a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform to manage cases within the CFM. This platform will complement WFP's feedback mechanism systems as part of its launch.

Challenges

- **Funding Gaps:** Urgently securing funding for the **second and third distribution** of the **school feeding programme** scheduled for **April and August remains critical for WFP**. Without this funding, WFP will risk reducing the number of targeted schoolchildren.

Resource Outlook

- WFP urgently requires **USD 11.1 million** to be able to respond to the needs of the **upcoming 12-months (January – December 2025)**. Failure to secure more resources would mean that WFP will be unable to provide school meals to over 180,000 children during April and August's school meal distribution. It would also prevent efforts to strengthen local food systems, further impacting those most vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity.

Donors

Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, USAID, European Commission, Canada, Switzerland, Nicaragua, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and private donors.

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