



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Nicaragua Country Brief February 2025



WFP supports local smallholder farmers in adapting regenerative agricultural practices @WFP/Nicaragua

Operational Context

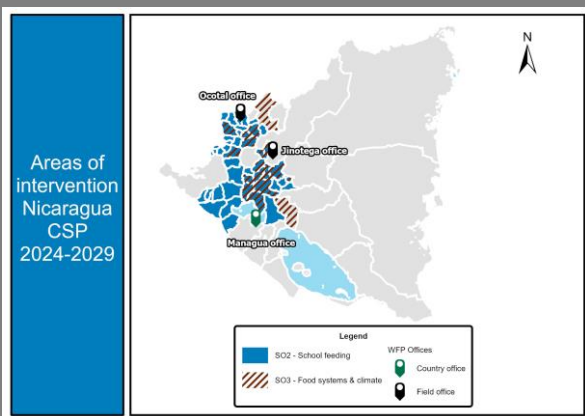
Nicaragua, the largest country in Central America, remains one of the poorest in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its economy relies on light manufacturing, services, and agriculture. Despite recent growth, multiple crises and global challenges highlight the vulnerability of its food systems.

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.



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

In Numbers*



1,106.4 mt of food distributed for school feeding between January and April



527.65 mt of food has been procured from smallholder farmers for school feeding



USD 6.4 million 6-months (March - August 2025) net funding requirements



183,353 people assisted in February 2025



*Preliminary figures

Operational Updates

Emergency Preparedness and Response

- By facilitating access to national agroclimatic bulletins, WFP supported smallholder farmers' preparedness capacities. This timely climate information enables farmers to anticipate and respond to climate variability. Smallholder farmers' organizations supported by WFP shared updates for wider community readiness.

School Feeding

- In support of the national school feeding programme, WFP is organizing the second distribution of food (out of a total of three per year), scheduled to take place in April. In coordination with the Ministry of Education (MINED), this distribution will enable the provision of daily hot meals to 180,000 schoolchildren in the Dry Corridor.

Local Food Systems

- As part of its support to the school feeding programme, WFP sourced over 337.65 MT of beans and 190 MT of rice locally from smallholder farmer organizations for its 2nd quarter 2025 operations, injecting over USD 779,457 into the local economy, strengthening agricultural livelihoods. By linking smallholder farmers to the national school feeding programme, the strategy enhances their access to institutional markets. So far in 2025, 100 percent of the food procured for school feeding activities has come from smallholder farmers.
- WFP supported nearly 1,455 smallholder farmers by equipping them with enhanced capacities, essential production assets and sustainable water solutions, enhancing their economic stability and resilience to climate change. This support included irrigation equipment, food storage silos, water collection tanks, and trainings in regenerative agricultural practices and nutritional education, contributing to long-term agricultural sustainability and safeguarding crop yields, particularly those linked to school feeding activities. To further diversify livelihoods, farmers also received enhanced ovens and bakery tools, expanding their income opportunities and fostering community resilience.

WFP Country Strategic Plan

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2024)		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	6 Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
80.9 M	31.1 M	6.4 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.)

- As part of efforts to strengthen the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and enhance local food systems linked to school feeding initiatives, WFP is supporting the diversification of income streams for women's farmer groups through the promotion of savings strategies based on the Village Savings and Loans (VSL) methodology. These initiatives have supported small-scale food enterprises, including yogurt production and a bread-making business - the last one with a 37 percent profit margin becoming a key economic driver. These initiatives are expanding into new communities and boosting local resilience and contributing to improved food and nutrition security for key actors within local food systems.
- Following the introduction of Farm2Go, an innovative digital business solution that connects smallholder farmers with local buyers, training expanded to more farmer organizations. Eight from Jinotega and four from Ocotal joined the trainings to enhance its adoption and unlock local market opportunities. With the upcoming *primera* harvest season, the WFP anticipates a rise in app usage.

Nutrition and Gender

- WFP has launched its 2025 Action Plan to strengthen protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), in line with its firm zero-tolerance policy on SEA. This plan will guide the Country Office (CO) in enhancing prevention and response mechanisms, further ensuring a safe and accountable environment for staff, contractors, service providers, and other external associates.

Monitoring

- WFP finalized its internal reviewing process for the preparation of two Annual Country Reports for 2024, 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.

Impact of Limited Funding

- WFP urgently requires **USD 6.4 million** to be able to respond to the needs of the **upcoming 6-months (March – August 2025). Securing funds for the school feeding programme remains critical.** Failure to secure more resources would mean that WFP will be unable to provide school meals to over 180,000 children during the third school meal distribution in August. It would also prevent efforts to strengthen local food systems which at the same time are essential to safeguarding school feeding activities, further impacting those most vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity.

Donors

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

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