



Anticipatory Action Activation

Malawi



Anticipatory Action to mitigate the impact of drought in Malawi

In August 2025, the World Food Programme (WFP), in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, activated its Anticipatory Action Plan (AAP) to mitigate the forecasted impacts of drought in Zomba, Nsanje and Phalombe districts, three of five monitored districts.

The activation was triggered on 19 August 2025 when the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMS) confirmed two consecutive months (July and August) of drought alerts for Zomba, Nsanje and Phalombe districts-in line with the agreed threshold of a 1-in-4 year (or greater) return period. This marks the first operationalization of WFP Malawi's AA programme, designed to act ahead of forecasted dry conditions during the November-January (NDJ) period.

The activation aims to protect the most vulnerable populations by providing timely assistance before the full impacts of the predicted drought are felt. WFP used the readiness phase since July 2025 to prepare interventions in coordination with government authorities and partners, including the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA), the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO. Service providers for seeds, fertilizer, and cash transfers were mobilized and rollout plans finalized.

With the activation confirmed, WFP and the Government of Malawi are moving from planning to implementation, ensuring that assistance reaches households ahead of and throughout the peak lean season. The anticipatory package consists of three key components:

1. Early warning messages. From September 2025, WFP will send SMS-based early warning messages to the potentially affected population across the three districts. These messages will run until March 2026, guiding communities on how to prepare for the drought, adopt adaptive agricultural practices, and protect their families. The goal is to empower households with timely, actionable advice before the crisis reaches its peak.

Key facts

Location: Zomba, Nsanje and Phalombe districts, Southern Region of Malawi	
Number of people expected to be reached with early warning messages	1,360,356
Number of people expected to receive agricultural inputs	21,339
Number of people expected to be supported with anticipatory cash transfers	21,339

2. Agricultural inputs. In September-October 2025, households will receive drought-tolerant, biofortified seeds and fertilizer. This intervention, designed with FAO's technical support, focuses on early-maturing, short-cycle crops (60–90 days) such as sorghum, millet, and maize. These seeds are chosen to ensure that even under dry conditions, families can harvest quickly, with whatever amount of rain does fall, to improve household nutrition, and sell any surplus to support other needs. Fertilizer distribution will complement the seeds to maximize productivity in the challenging agroecological zones.

3. Cash based transfers. WFP will provide cash assistance in January and February 2026 to the same households who received agricultural inputs. This anticipatory cash, provided during the peak lean season, will allow families to buy food, protect their productive assets, and avoid negative coping strategies such as selling livestock or reducing meals.

This intervention is part of WFP's broader efforts to help ensure Malawi has the foundational systems and partnerships required for basic AA readiness. Beyond the immediate household support, the activation builds on DCCMS' use of the PRISM tool to generate drought alerts, the ongoing updates to the Unified Beneficiary Registry to strengthen social protection linkages, and DODMA's role in coordinating national and district-level preparedness. Together, these elements form the basis for scaling up a predictable, government-led AA system that can protect lives and livelihoods before future shocks fully materialism.

This activation was made possible through USD 2 million in funding from Norway and Germany, providing critical support to protect the most vulnerable from the harmful impacts of the predicted drought.