



Anticipatory Action Activation

Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua



Anticipatory Action ahead of El Niño: WFP’s regional response in the Dry Corridor, Central America

The World Food Programme (WFP) has activated the Anticipatory Action programme in four countries in Central America: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. This collaborative effort with national governments and humanitarian partners aims to safeguard over 100,000 people and their livelihoods in anticipation of the projected impacts of El Niño-induced drought.

The Central American Dry Corridor faces recurrent climatic shocks and high climate variability linked to El Niño, which historically causes below-average rainfall, prolonged dry spells and severe agricultural losses. According to NOAA (March 2026), El Niño is likely to emerge between June–August 2026 (62% probability) and persist through the end of 2026. Severe rainfall deficits are expected, mirroring past events (2015–2016, 2023) that triggered widespread crop failure and food insecurity.

On 5 March, the region’s drought triggers were officially activated across Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. This was based on a significant rainfall deficit—defined as thresholds that typically occur only once every four years during the “Primera” season (May–July/August), as forecasted by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF). This window is critical as

farmers rely on early rainfall for staple crops (maize and beans), which sustain livelihoods across the Dry Corridor. Recognizing the looming threat posed by El Niño, agencies began preparing in advance of the expected impacts.

Before the Primera planting season kicks off in May, households will receive early warning messages to help them anticipate and respond to changing weather conditions, cash transfers to protect their livelihoods and cushion economic shocks, and additional school feeding assistance to protect children’s nutrition.

This proactive approach enables households to mitigate losses, safeguard their livelihoods, and preserve essential assets.

This marks one of the largest coordinated anticipatory interventions in the region, jointly implemented by WFP, FAO, UNICEF and PAHO, under the OCHA-facilitated regional CERF Anticipatory Action Framework. WFP implements AA jointly with partners, contributing to a multi-sector drought mitigation package totaling USD 10.5M across agencies. WFP’s component includes cash transfers, early warning dissemination, agricultural inputs, and shock responsive school feeding, tailored per country.

Anticipatory Actions Planned per Country	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua
Number of people reached with Early Warning messages	4,288	33,885	36,206	-
Number of people supported with anticipatory multipurpose cash transfers	4,288	33,885	36,206	-
Number of people supported with distribution of grain silos (only Guatemala)	-	3,400	-	-
Number of school-aged children provided with additional meals	-	-	-	28,741

Guatemala

WFP's USD 1.6M CERF allocation supports a comprehensive anticipatory package in Jalapa, where prolonged dry spells consistently undermine the Primera harvest. The intervention combines multipurpose cash transfers for 33,885 people with strengthened early warning dissemination, enabling households to prepare for rainfall deficits before they intensify. WFP also provides silos, basic grains, and climate monitoring kits, helping farmers protect stored crops, maintain seed reserves, and make informed planting decisions. Close coordination with government agroclimatic tables ensures harmonized messaging and targeting across institutions.

Honduras

With USD 1.6M in CERF funding, WFP assists 36,206 people in the drought-prone departments of El Paraíso and Francisco Morazán. The activation prioritizes cash transfers and early warning messages, helping households secure food and essential supplies ahead of forecasted deficits. Honduras' approach places particular emphasis on community-based preparedness, reinforcing national early warning systems and strengthening local capacity to interpret climate forecasts. Messaging focuses on asset protection, water management, and safeguarding livelihoods ahead of the dry spell.

El Salvador

WFP implements a USD 600,000 anticipatory action package targeting 4,288 people in Santa Ana and Ahuachapán—areas highly exposed to recurrent drought and subsistence farming losses. The intervention centres on cash transfers, enabling households to diversify food access and reduce postharvest losses. Engagement with national and municipal counterparts helps ensure interventions align with existing resilience programmes and local early warning structures.

Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, WFP is supporting the expansion of the national social protection system with USD 800,000 from the internal WFP Anticipatory Action Trust Fund, to cover for the anticipated drought impact. The focus is on shock-responsive school feeding, providing additional meals to 28,741 children in drought-affected areas for 120 days. This anticipatory approach helps stabilize household food consumption, protects children's nutrition during the lean season and is supporting their continued attendance in school. Through strong collaboration with the national school feeding programme, WFP helps families maintain adequate food consumption even in the face of expected rainfall deficits.

The anticipatory actions implemented across the Dry Corridor are designed to create meaningful impact for households and communities facing drought conditions. By focusing on maintaining household food consumption and safeguarding nutrition, these measures ensure that families can access adequate and nutritious meals even during times of hardship. Additionally, the program aims to strengthen community preparedness and resilience, equipping people with the tools and knowledge needed to face environmental challenges proactively.

Protecting productive assets and minimizing livelihood losses stand at the core of these interventions, helping families avoid the sale of critical resources or migration as a last resort. In the educational sphere, the actions seek to reduce school dropout rates that often arise when food insecurity threatens student attendance and performance. Ultimately, these efforts are geared toward preventing the escalation of food insecurity into emergency situations, thereby promoting stability and well-being throughout the region.

This activation was made possible through USD 3.8 million in funding from the CERF and USD 800,000 from the Government of Ireland. Additional support from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Department (DG ECHO) and the Government of Ireland facilitated the development of AA plans and capacity strengthening in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. This support has been crucial to ensuring communities receive humanitarian assistance ahead of the drought, reducing and mitigating its impacts.



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