

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## ***CENTRAL AMERICA: DROUGHT***

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This Information Bulletin is

- for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

### ***The Situation***

Farmers in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala are suffering from crop failure because of a lack of rain since May. The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that 927,550 people have been affected by the loss of crops, of whom 324,650 are categorised as “most vulnerable”.

In *Honduras*, the government declared a national food emergency on 23 July in southern, central and western parts of the country. Eight departments (118 municipalities) are most affected, in particular Choluteca and Valle. An estimated 29,500 subsistence farmers lost their crops and, as a result, 185,000 people are suffering from acute food shortages. The government is distributing 1,000 rations of food in the south of the country and will provide seed to four municipalities.

In *Nicaragua*, the Ministry of Agriculture states that 22,000 families in seven departments and 32 municipalities in central and northern parts of the country have lost at least half of their maize crop. In addition, lack of rain seriously affected last year’s second harvest too. In those municipalities where almost all the maize crop has been lost, most families are resorting to selling livestock and/or migrating to cities for work. On the Atlantic coast, meanwhile, the local Miskita population suffered relentless rain two weeks ago which ruined crops and washed away food reserves. The WFP plans to provide assistance to 9,000 vulnerable families.

Drought has hit four departments in the east of *El Salvador*: Usulután, San Miguel, Morazán and La Unión. A meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the four countries suffering from drought has been organised for 10 August in San Salvador. The meeting will analyse the food crisis caused by the drought. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the WFP and NGOs are conducting food assessments in *Guatemala*. Preliminary information indicates that a long dry spell within the usual rainy season has particularly affected the departments of El Progreso, Zacapa, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Santa Rosa, Retalhuleu, Suchitepéquez and Baja Verapaz. There has been an estimated 80 per cent reduction in the harvest in these departments and 63,000 people have been affected.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The National Societies in the region are closely monitoring the situation. The recurrent problem is complicated by erratic weather and the sharp fall in the price of coffee, causing the closure of numerous plantations. As a result, unemployment of day labourers has increased, aggravating the food crisis and poverty. Furthermore, the loss of an initial harvest has meant the depletion of seed reserves which would normally be used for the sowing of the next crop to be harvested in August.

In this context, the Honduran Red Cross has carried out a series of assessments in drought-affected areas and began a food distribution on 2 August, providing 1,000 sacks of maize in the municipalities of Nacaome, in the department of Valle, and Pespire, in the department of Choluteca. Criteria for beneficiary selection - as defined by the branches - are that no assistance has been received from other organisations and that there is evidence of crop loss. Priority is granted to single mothers, the elderly living alone and large families. The distribution will take place over a three-day period.

The Nicaraguan Red Cross will hold a meeting with WFP representatives next week to share information and look into the possibility of establishing a partnership to reduce food shortages.

The National Societies and the regional delegation for Central America are concerned that, should drought continue, the numbers of vulnerable people will increase as food becomes more inaccessible. The Societies continue to monitor the situation through assessments and liaison with the government, the WFP and NGOs.

The Federation, through its regional and country delegations, is supporting the National Societies in more detailed assessments and is taking part in coordination meetings with other agencies.

Additional information will be provided as the situation evolves.

For a full description of the National Society profiles, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

*For further details please contact :*

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*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

*For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

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