

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Guatemala: Food Crisis

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This bulletin is being issued for information only. The President of the Republic of Guatemala has declared a state of public calamity due to the high level of malnutrition caused by the loss of crops caused by irregular rain, dry and hot conditions as well as high food and fuel prices. According to the authorities, approximately 54,000 families have been suffering from food shortages due to dry weather conditions causing the loss of their corn and bean crops.

The Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) has actively integrated into the Humanitarian Network composed by UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to share information and coordinate possible actions.

The GRC is planning a rapid assessment in order to determine the real needs and draw up a plan of action.. The GRC is considering requesting international assistance with the support of the International Federation, therefore seeking funding and donor assistance.



The lost crops affect thousands of families in Guatemala. Source: ABC.es

[<Click here to view the map of the affected area, or here for detailed contact information>](#)

## The Situation

Since March 2009, the **Guatemalan** government has been implementing an emergency food aid contingency plan. The number of malnourished children has increased to 91 since 1 August 2009. This number is three times higher than in the years 2007 and 2008. The World Food Programme (WFP) in coordination with local authorities have distributed food parcels to 428,427 people in 21 departments. National authorities indicate that 60 to 80 percent of the crops have been lost, placing 93,000 families at risk. Crop losses as a result of Tropical Depression No.16 in October 2008 increased prices of staple foods in the market and prices remain the same this year. According to the WFP the situation is likely to deteriorate since the effects of El Niño have extended

the dry season for more than 27 days. The global economic crisis is also affecting the country, placing an additional burden on those who are already vulnerable. Furthermore, there is currently concern that numbers of cases of dengue are on the rise in Guatemala.

The Guatemalan President declared a State of National Calamity due to the acute cases of malnutrition recorded in the dry corridor located in the eastern region of the country. The most affected departments are Baja Verapaz, El Progreso, Zacapa, Jalapa, Chiquimula, Santa Rosa and Jutiapa. Approximately 54,000 families have been suffering from food shortage due to dry weather conditions causing the loss of their corn and bean crops. Moreover, authorities report that 25 children have died due to malnutrition. Authorities indicated the crisis has been caused by a combination of unfavourable weather conditions, poor soil and the economic crisis experienced in the Central American region.

The Minister of Agriculture stated that the declaration of State of National Calamity issued by the President will allow rapid action to assist the population with food items. The President declared that he will make all resources available, as well as collaborate with international organizations in order to take action in to respond to the emergency. The government is prioritizing its assistance to strengthen the health service sector in the most affected areas of the country in order to help the affected people.

According to the World Food Programme in Central America, 7.5 million people were reported to be malnourished between the years 2002 and 2004. In **Guatemala**, 50 percent of children under the age of five suffer from malnourishment. In addition, one of every three children in **Honduras** under the age of five suffers from chronic malnutrition. In some rural communities in the west of Honduras, the levels of malnutrition can reach up to 88 percent. In **Nicaragua**, approximately one in three children suffers from chronic malnutrition. In the regions where coffee plantations were affected, 40 percent of children under the age of five are malnourished.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Guatemalan Red Cross has been actively integrated in the Humanitarian Network composed by UN agencies and several international NGOs. Information is being shared among the organizations in order to coordinate possible response activities to the food crisis. Methodologies and tools have been designed to carry out assessments. Currently, the GRC is coordinating the design of a Plan of Action with the National Health Secretary, the Disaster and Development Secretary and with the Partner National Societies (PNS) in-country. The plan of action will respond to the immediate identified needs of the affected population. The priority at the moment is to complete the rapid assessments in the affected areas and identify the immediate needs.

The Guatemalan Red Cross will make use of the resources trained in food security during previous emergency operations, such as the Hurricane Felix operation. In addition, the International Federation will deploy a public health in emergencies and a disaster management delegate to support the Guatemalan Red Cross.

The the Netherlands Red Cross, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross have been coordinating with the Guatemalan Red Cross with respect to the structure of the intervention. Additionally, these PNS and the GRC have been participating in the Humanitarian Network meetings to coordinate immediate actions.

The International Federation, through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit and the Regional Representative for Central America and Mexico, has been in constant communication with the GRC to coordinate any activities that might be required due to the food crisis.

### How we work

*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

#### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

## Contact information

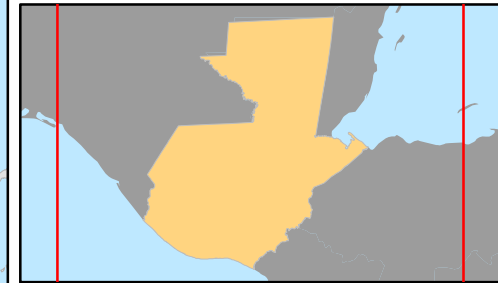
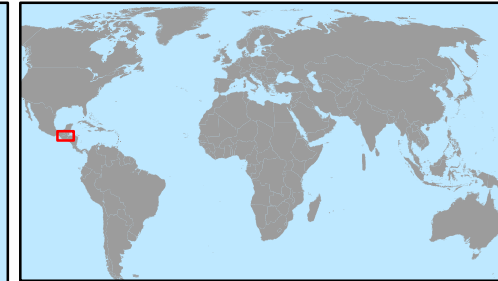
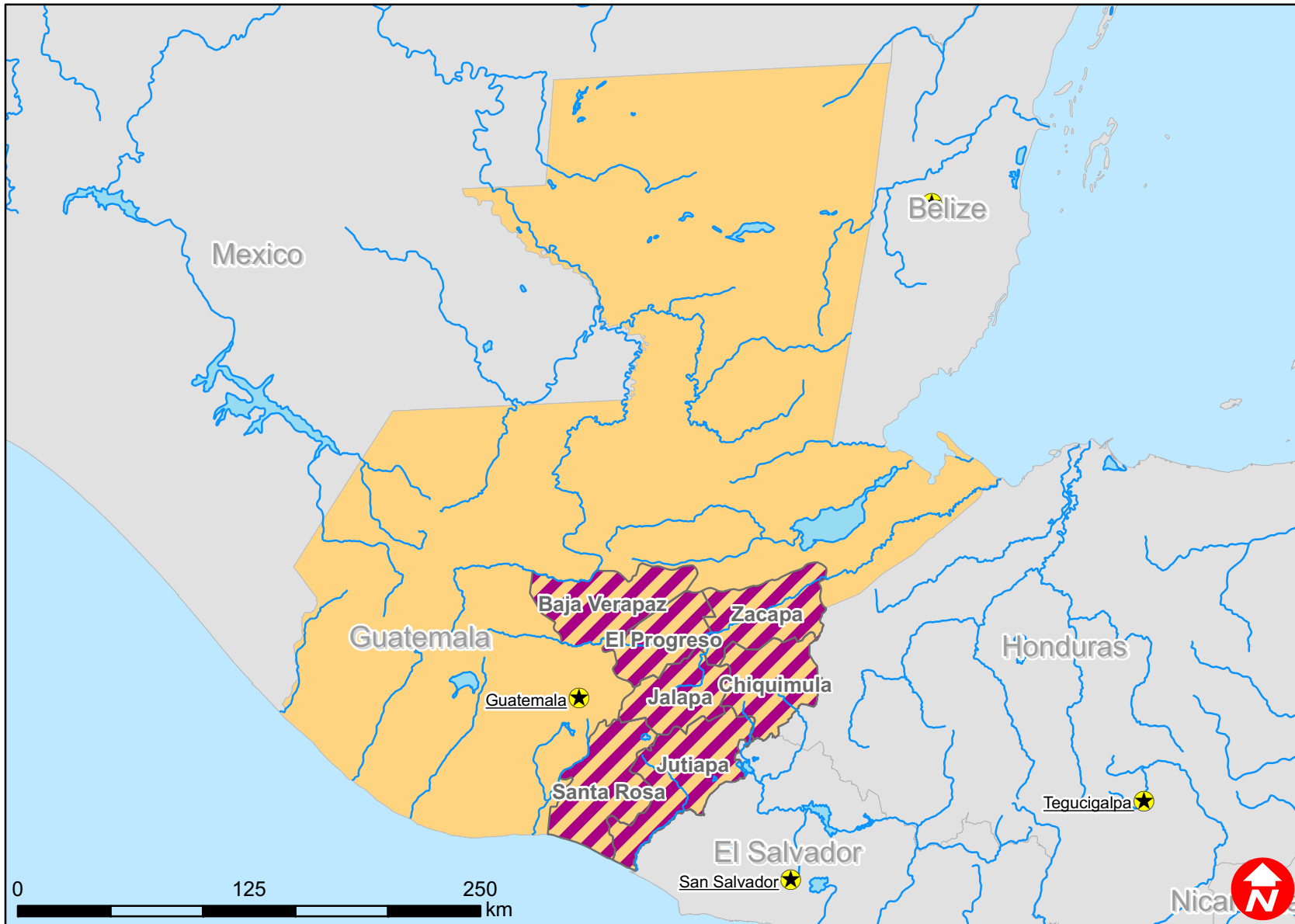
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[<Map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



# Guatemala: Food insecurity



-  Capitals
-  Rivers
-  Affected states

The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

Map data sources: ESRI, DEVINFO, International Federation, ISCGM