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EL NIÑO, DROUGHT BLAMED AS SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY DOUBLES IN 6 MONTHS IN HAITI

WFP News Video: El Nino

Locations: Haiti, Italy

Shot: 27 Jan / 2 February 2016

TRT 1:59

Shotlist

:00 - :25

Haiti, Pont Janvier & Mahotiere, Commune of Thimazeau

Shot 27Jan2016

Dried field cracked earth. Failed crops Dried leaves. Farmers working in field.

Severe drought in Haiti has caused many farmers to lose a significant part of the harvest they depend on to feed their families. According to FEWS Net projections, the number of Haitians facing a crisis level of food insecurity could rise to 1.5 million by March 2016.

:25 - 01:03

Italy, Rome,

Shot 2 Feb2016

SOT(English): Rogerio Bonifacio, WFP Climate Analyst

“The current El Niño event that started in March 2015 has peaked in December, being one of probably the strongest on record and will wind down toward the middle of 2016. It’s effects however will be felt all the way to early 2017 and its effects have been widespread geographically. El Niño has caused impacts on the growing seasons of central america - Haiti. Ethiopia where it registered one of the driest seasons in the last 50 years all the way to Indonesia and Papua New Guinea which again has suffered one of the major droughts on record.”

1:03 - 01:13

Haiti, Mahotiere, Commune of Thimazeau

Shot 27 Jan2016

Farmer walking through failed crops. Farmers walking home.

1:13 - 01:38

Haiti, Mahotiere, Commune of Thimazeau

Shot 27 Jan2016

SOT(French): Casilien Señor, Farmer

“We have to walk 6 hours to find water. Children get hungry on the way and they arrive late to school because of the drought, because they have to get water. But the head master cannot punish them because he understands the situation.”

01:38 - 01:59

Haiti, Pont Janvier, Commune of Thimazeau

Shot 27 Jan2016

Man walking in dried riverbed, father greeting son as he returns to village.

ENDS

9 February 2016

EL NIÑO, DROUGHT BLAMED AS SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY DOUBLES IN 6 MONTHS IN HAITI

PORT-AU-PRINCE – Haiti’s third consecutive year of drought, exacerbated by the global El Niño weather phenomenon, has driven people deeper into poverty and hunger, and doubled the severely food-insecure population, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said today.

Some 3.6 million Haitians are facing food insecurity, among them more than 1.5 million people who are severely food insecure. This was a key finding from an Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) conducted by WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization and National Food Security Coordination.

The main 2015 harvest fell below average with losses of up to 70 percent in some areas. This is a severe blow to food security in Haiti, where agriculture employs half of the working population and 75 percent of people live on less than US\$2 per day.

“Without rain for the 2016 spring season, farmers will lose their fourth consecutive harvest on which they normally depend to feed their families,” said Wendy Bigham, WFP Deputy Country Director in Haiti. “We need to help them meet their immediate needs and help build up their resilience.”

The current El Niño, which began in early 2015, is one of the strongest on record and is affecting the food security of vulnerable people around the globe.

In some areas of Haiti, up to 70 percent of the population is facing hunger and a recent study conducted by UNICEF and the Government revealed that in several communes, malnutrition rates are above emergency levels.

Based on the results of these new studies, WFP intends to scale up its food assistance programmes to address the most critical and immediate needs of 1 million drought-affected people by distributing cash and food rations.

WFP will complement the immediate distributions with Cash-for-Assets programmes. In these, 200,000 Haitians are paid in cash in exchange for work on watershed management and soil conservation projects to improve local infrastructure for long-term development. WFP has already implemented Cash-for-Assets projects for 30,000 Haitians in areas worst hit by the drought.

In coordination with the Government, WFP has been distributing food to about 120,000 Haitians since November in areas worst affected by the drought. A two-month food ration feeds a family of five and includes such basic food items as rice, pulses, oil, sugar and salt.

In addition, WFP-supported School Meals programmes in Haiti – many in drought-hit areas – provide crucial support to almost 500,000 children by ensuring that they receive at least one meal daily, while at the same time encouraging them to attend school.

WFP’s assistance to families is essential until at least the next harvest, expected in July 2016. To meet basic needs of 1 million Haitians, WFP, which is funded entirely by voluntary contributions, requires US\$84 million.

BACKGROUND: What is El Niño?

El Niño refers to a pattern of unusually warm water stretching across the surface of the Pacific Ocean. It occurs every 3-7 years. During an El Niño event, the relationship between winds and ocean currents in the Pacific Ocean changes, modifying weather conditions around the world. The resulting changes in rainfall and temperature affect crop and pasture development.

The current El Niño was officially declared in March 2015 and reached its peak intensity at the end of 2015. It is expected to subside back to neutral conditions, likely by the second quarter of 2016.

Although the weather event has been felt mainly as drought, some parts of the world have seen greater amounts of rain than normal, raising the risk of large-scale floods.

Although El Niño has started to decline in strength, this does not mean that the danger has passed. The lingering impacts of El Niño and the possibility of subsequent La Niña may continue to affect different parts of the world, and increase food insecurity, for as long as two years.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. Each year, WFP assists some 80 million people in around 80 countries.

Video footage is available on request -- please contact Jonathan Dumont: jonathan.dumont@wfp.org

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