

World Food Assistance 2018: Preventing Food Crises

Chronic hunger is increasing, and food crises are spreading and intensifying. A new report by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), *World Food Assistance 2018: Preventing Food Crises (WoFA 2018)*, focuses on these crises, and asks what causes them to break out, what determines their scale and how they might be prevented.

Existing knowledge suggests that food crises are driven by combinations of short-term events such as conflicts and natural disasters and long-term influencers of poverty and food insecurity. Hence the prevention of food crises entails short-term action and long-term investment. But precisely which actions and investments should be prioritized in different contexts, and why, are still not clear.

WoFA 2018 seeks to reduce this knowledge gap through ground-breaking analysis of linkages between food assistance expenditures by WFP and a range of other factors. Food assistance is uniquely positioned at the intersection of short-term humanitarian action and long-term hunger reduction. Food assistance expenditures thus constitute a powerful lens through which the drivers and deterrents of outbreak and intensity of food crises can be examined. The vision of this report is that increased understanding of the drivers of food assistance will lead to greater comprehension of the causes of food crises. This should in turn expand scope to prevent them.

The analysis confirms that food crises have short-term and long-term causes and drivers linked to myriad performance gaps in national food sectors, economies and political and social systems.

The results suggest that improved management of natural and man-made shocks in the short-term, and greater investments in social and economic underpinnings of economies in the longer term, would reduce WFP's global food assistance expenditures by huge sums. The report gives precise examples of the amounts that would be saved if certain actions were taken in specific countries. The findings are illustrated by comprehensive graphics and charts.