



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



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Early Warning Early Action

It's time to change the way disasters are managed. Thanks to innovative early warning systems, anticipating risks and timely action is now easier. FAO is helping transform the approach to humanitarian assistance – mitigating and preventing instead of reacting. Acting early strengthens resilience and eases pressure on limited humanitarian resources.

There is evidence that the intensity and frequency of climate-driven natural disasters and conflicts are increasing. Natural disasters now occur nearly five times more often compared to 40 years ago. The impact on local economies, lives and livelihoods has similarly grown. In some of the worst-hit places, it can seem unrelenting. One crisis can follow another, every time stripping away at the limited assets of already vulnerable people.

Expanding needs, competing priorities and limited resources mean that new tools are essential. Interventions must be wise and effective to ensure that the impacts of crises are limited before they can grow into even more costly humanitarian disasters.

The **Early Warning Early Action (EWEA)** approach consists of three components:

Early Warning

Working with national government and humanitarian, development and scientific partners, FAO monitors risk

information systems to inform appropriate early actions. Many countries have existing monitoring mechanisms tracking trends and predicting shocks, however, they are often not linked in a synchronized way to provide a strong signal about an impending risk.

FAO has established a model that brings together all these elements to harness information systems at global, regional and local levels to forecast potential disasters and safeguard critical agriculture and food security assets of the most vulnerable. These early warning systems target a wide variety of risks including droughts, floods, cyclones, harsh winters, conflicts, and animal/plant pests and diseases.

Early Action

Drawing on early warning information and resources, FAO activates the implementation of technically sound and timely early action activities to prevent or mitigate the impact of impending disasters.

Timely action gives the opportunity to protect people and livelihoods, so they can be more resilient to future shocks. Investing in early action means FAO can help shelter longer-term development gains while also mitigating the impact of potential humanitarian disasters.

Early actions are varied and flexible, ranging from cash transfers for fishing communities to safely store their nets ahead of an impending cyclone, to livestock treatments for herders to protect their animals before a drought intensifies, to flood defenses before a severe rainy season to protect crops.



Financing mechanism

To act early, flexible financing mechanisms are essential. The Early Action Fund allows FAO to rapidly access resources once the early warning triggers have been reached. The Fund is activated according to a set of precise criteria, including the likelihood and severity of the risk, FAO's comparative advantage and capacity, the type and the timing of the proposed early actions among others.

What does FAO offer?

Global risk analysis

FAO's quarterly Early Warning Early Action report on food security and agriculture provides a forward-looking analysis on major threats. The report, an increasingly key global reference, is part of FAO's efforts to systematically link early warning to anticipatory actions. By providing specific early action recommendations for each country, the report aims to prompt FAO and partners to proactively mitigate and/or prevent disasters before they start to adversely impact food security.

Acting early to save lives and livelihoods – country projects and impact analysis

Across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America, FAO has successfully implemented a range of early actions to mitigate the impact of droughts, severe winters, animal diseases and forced migration.

In order to learn from these experiences, FAO invested in generating key evidence on the cost-effectiveness of EWEA. These empirical studies, among the first of their kind, provide a critical snapshot into the value for money of acting before an anticipated crisis has become a humanitarian disaster. The results have been encouraging – for every USD 1 spent on early actions, households had a return ranging from USD 3.5 in Kenya to USD 7.1 in Mongolia in avoided losses and benefits.

Partnerships and capacity building

EWEA – also known as forecast-based financing – is a growing area of work. FAO closely collaborates with a number of partners to share experiences and knowledge, promote joint programming and risk analysis, and to advance the collective understanding of how the wider humanitarian system can move towards a more anticipatory modality. This includes work under the umbrella of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, such as on the Inter Agency El Niño/La Niña Standard Operating Procedures for Early Action, as well as partnering with a number of agencies active in this area such as the Red Cross, the START Network and the World Food Programme.

FAO further supports the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Central Emergency Response Fund in shaping the way early action is integrated into humanitarian planning and financing processes. In 2019, FAO is working to deliver a training programme which will contribute to a wider understanding and stronger capacity to deliver early action.

For more information



eweafao.org



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