



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Early Warning Early Action- What's new?

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SUMMARY POINTS, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



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Background

This webinar was the first event of a mini-series on Forecast-based Financing (FbF). It presented the latest developments and what is installed in the future for FAO's Early Warning Early Action work. Topics included:

1. The [Global Early Warning - Early Action quarterly update](#) covering the period October to December 2017 to highlight major disaster risks to food security and agriculture;
2. The latest **EWEA country level work** including the brand new EWEA Country Toolkit initiative, the Sudan and Pacific pilots and the case of the Mongolia dzud;
3. The **Return-on-Investment of Early Action**: key findings from a Kenya case study; and
4. **Partnerships and advocacy**: what is happening at Inter Agency level and in the more broad international community with regards to FbF?

Introduction

Evidence shows that the frequency and intensity of [climate-driven natural disasters and conflicts](#) is increasing. **Natural disasters** are occurring nearly five times as often compared to 40 years ago, with great costs to local economies, livelihoods and lives. Expanding needs, competing priorities and scarce resources globally mean that new tools are needed to ensure smart, effective investments to help attenuate the impact of disasters before they occur.

The international community has formally committed to moving progressively towards a more 'anticipatory' approach in **humanitarian assistance**, with its most recent endorsement at the **World Humanitarian Summit**(WHS). In the lead up to the WHS, both the UN Secretary General and the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing stressed the critical importance to shift the focus from response to prevention and mitigation and to adapt financing modalities accordingly.

Acting early before a disaster is critical: it can save lives and protect livelihoods from the immediate shocks as well as protecting longer term development gains by increasing the resilience of local communities over time. A growing body of evidence also supports the cost effectiveness of this approach.

FAO's [Early Warning Early Action \(EWEA\)](#) links forecasts to anticipatory actions to lessen the impact of disasters. It focuses on consolidating available forecasting information and putting plans in place to make sure FAO acts when a warning is at hand.

Summary points

1. Global Level

At global level, FAO EWEA provides a quarterly forward looking report (Global Early Warning Early Action Report) which flags the main risks to agriculture and food security while providing recommendations on early actions. This analysis is based on information provided by existing FAO corporate and joint multi-agency information and early warning systems, mainly:

- the [Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture \(GIEWS\)](#)
- the [Food Chain Crisis and Emergency Prevention System \(FCC-EMPRES\)](#)
- the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#)

2. Country Level

At country level, EWEA systems are being piloted in a number of countries (Paraguay, Madagascar, Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Pacific, Sudan, Mongolia) with the best practices and technical knowledge being collected in an EWEA Country toolkit. The country level activities can be funded through the Early Action Fund. The FAO Early Action Fund set up with the specific purpose of allowing country offices to rapidly access financial resources to be able to act while it is still possible to mitigate or prevent disasters.

3. Return-on-Investment

In the case of Kenya, a Return-on-Investment study was conducted in July 2017. In light of early warnings about an impending drought, the EWEA team worked closely with the country office to implement early actions, including livestock feed/supplements and animal health treatments, to protect core breeding stock. Chief benefits of these interventions included the reduction in mortality, increased milk production and better animal conditions. Overall, for every USD 1 dollar spent on livestock interventions, the household has a return of almost USD 3.5 dollars. If the benefits of the potential avoided costs of humanitarian assistance (food and nutritional assistance, livestock restocking), this value considerably increases from almost USD 3.5 to USD 8.91. Furthermore, the value of extra milk production, thanks to the feed interventions, in itself covers nearly half of the overall project costs.

4. El Niño Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

The SOPs are intended to help catalyse and guide earlier humanitarian and development action to future ENSO-related extreme weather events (including drought, flooding, cyclones and extreme heat/cold and related events such as disease outbreaks). They outline what actions need to be taken, by whom and by when, once there are warning signs of a possible or impending ENSO event, to mitigate or prevent its impacts. The SOPs were an inter-agency effort, led by FAO and OCHA. They were first tested in June 2017, through the work of the Global Inter-agency cell. Through this experience the SOPs were further refined and confirmed methodologies on how to coordinate these events in the future. The SOPs are expected to be finalized and operational by early 2018.

Questions and answers

1. What exactly was the assistance intervention provided to the Kenya case-study?

In Kenya, FAO released USD 400 000 in funds from its newly set-up [Early Action Fund](#) under the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities. Livestock emergency feed rations (supplementary feed along with multi-nutrient blocks), animal health treatments and rehabilitation of water boreholes/provision of water were distributed to the worst hit counties for 12 800 households.

2. According to the results and impact of this approach, did you develop an advocacy strategy for government mainstreaming in their policies?

We are currently working on an approach for advocating and advising relevant national counterparts in adopting EWEA as an approach to disaster risk management. Moreover, we are conducting Return-on-Investment studies to capture the benefits of early action interventions to support decision makers, including governments, to move towards mitigation approaches.

3. EWEA is mostly in the context of drought, what about other disasters such as floods? How far can planning be later adapted to any other risks which have not been identified during the first step of disaster risk prioritization?

EWEA is a flexible methodology which can be applied to a range of risks. A prerequisite however, is that an early warning can be issued and early actions be feasibly implemented. With this criteria the following risks can be considered under the system: drought, severe winter seasons, cyclones/typhoons, flooding and volcanos. Disasters such as earthquakes are not considered under this model due to the lack of, or more so inability to establish, early warning systems leaving no window for early action implementation. Furthermore, once an early warning systems are established they require regular monitoring and testing to ensure the model is working correctly.

4. How did you incorporate traditional and/or ancestral knowledge to risk management?

This is taken into consideration for both the early warning and early action activities. In regard to early warning, traditional knowledge can provide another layer of information. For example, the first signs of drought in the Solomon Islands can be identified by the yellowing of banana tree leaves - this signifies to the community the need to plant drought-resilient crops (such as taro, cassava or kumara). For early actions, mitigation efforts that communities commonly practice can also be scaled up. For instance, with the first sign of drought, some communities of Vanuatu begin food processing, primarily the drying or salting of meat, fruits and vegetables. Early actions can therefore strengthen this process by supplying equipment and hygiene kits to support the drying and storage of food.

5. Since the phenomena you predict have real consequences on communities, is a framework of accountability to the beneficiaries established?

Yes, FAO has an [Accountability to Beneficiaries framework](#) which we also adhere to.

6. How does EWEA link with the *Global Report on Food Crises*?

The Quarterly EWEA Report is an update to the major food crises flagged once a year by the *Global Report on Food Crises* (GRFC). It also contributes to the GRFC at the end of each year when the new edition is drafted.

7. In the countries you operate in, who funds the actions and is it a sustainable mechanism or it is just a project?

To enable early actions to quickly and efficiently mitigate disaster impacts at country level, FAO has established a dedicated Early Action Fund within the existing [Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation \(SFERA\) mechanism](#). The Early Action Fund allows FAO country offices to rapidly access funds once the early warning triggers have been reached, indicating an impending disaster. 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 Early Actions proposed among others.

8. Are FAO country offices actively using EWEA in their work on disaster risk reduction/management (DRRM) policies?

The EWEA pilot countries actively use EWEA, however this is still a limited number and plans are in place to scale up.

9. What roles do you see for social protection in EWEA?

Social protection can be an effective early action measure, which can help households protect themselves from the impact of shocks. Standard operating procedures and adequate funding in place would enable benefits to reach social protection beneficiaries (and non-beneficiaries) more predictably and reliably once triggered by a forecast.

A case-and-point is using social protection in the case of an impending cyclone. When a cyclone warning is issued a small window of time is available for early action measures (commonly five days or less). Social protection through cash transfers can support households by quickly disbursing funds to support their preparation measures; i.e. buying feed for their livestock or shelter materials. During this window of opportunity markets will also be functioning and transports routes open.

For more information

- [FAO Early Warning - Early Action \(EWEA\)](#)
- [Global EWEA report - October-December 2017](#)
- [Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture \(GIEWS\)](#)
- [Food Chain Crisis and Emergency Prevention System \(FCC-EMPRES\)](#)
- [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#)
- [Easing the impact of drought in Kenya](#)
- [Webinar series on Forecast-based Financing \(FbF\)](#)
- [KORE FbF Webinar II: Reducing disaster risk vulnerability in Bangladesh – Partner perspectives](#)



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