

Warning against worsening El Nino-related drought

Southern Africa's unprecedented El Nino-related drought has triggered a second shock-year of hunger and hardship for poor and vulnerable people, with serious consequences that will persist until at least to the next harvest in 2017, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned. It is evident that the 2015-16 maize harvest will be insufficient to cover full cereal needs for the region without significant importation, the organisation said in a report e-mailed to Xinhua on Friday.



USAID Africa Bureau via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

El Nino conditions have caused the lowest recorded rainfall between October 2015 and January 2016 across many regions of Southern Africa in at least 35-years. The period also recorded the hottest temperatures in the past 10 years. Poor rainfall, combined with excessive temperatures, has created conditions that are unfavourable for crop growth in many areas, according to the report.

Severe impact on maize yields

In Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe, planting was delayed by up to two months or more, and is expected to severely impact maize yields. Already an estimated 15,9 million people in Southern Africa are highly food insecure, it said.

More than 40 million rural and 9 million poor urban people are at risk due to the impacts of El Nino's related drought and erratic rainfall, according to the report. Small-scale farmers will be particularly hard hit by a second successive poor harvest, it said, adding that food price inflation will also impact low-income households. Maize prices continue to rise well above their five-year average.

In South Africa, spot prices have more than doubled compared to the five-year average, revealed the report. Current macroeconomic conditions, including falling international commodity prices and currency depreciations may inhibit countries' capacity to secure sufficient food supply, it added.

"Regional coordination and government leadership of critical contingency, preparedness and response planning are crucial to guarantee sufficient food supply and access for the most vulnerable people," it said.

Xinhua

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