

U.N. to feed one in four people in Haiti

High prices sap hemisphere's poorest nation

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The [U.N. World Food Program](#) is scaling up efforts to feed millions of people in [Haiti](#), where riots over rising food prices have toppled one government in a nation known for chronic malnutrition of its children even in the best of times.

The WFP says it is preparing to feed 2.3 million people, more than one in four Haitians, up from the 800,000 who presently receive aid from the United Nations agency.

"Our food is critical to helping people cope with high prices - a daily burden on people who were already very poor," WFP Regional Director Pedro Medrano told reporters Wednesday.

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, with three-fourths of its 9 million people getting by on less than \$2 a day.

This summer, WFP also plans to provide 200,000 school-age children with hot meals and take-home rations, which officials hope will prevent them from joining street gangs or searching for work.

Besides WFP operations, the [Pan American Development Foundation](#) (PADF) announced on Wednesday the arrival in Haiti of an emergency shipment of food, which will feed more than 36,000 people for a month.

About \$300,000 worth of fortified rice and soy protein meal packages were donated by the Minnesota-based agency Feed My Starving Children, which responded to PADF's appeal for relief.

Additional distribution will be coordinated by WFP and Haiti's Ministry of Social Affairs.

"PADF is working with local partners, governmental agencies and international organizations to maximize support for Haitians during this devastating crisis," said Michelet Fontaine, PADF's Caribbean programs director.

Haiti has been suffering a food crisis due to skyrocketing prices, threatening stability in the country. Food riots led to several deaths and the forced resignation of Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis.

President Rene Preval named a new candidate, Michele Pierre-Louis, this week. The nomination is still to be approved by legislators, who have rejected Mr. Preval's two previous nominees.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis is an economist and educator, known internationally for her work on behalf of the poor and young in Haiti.

At a summit on the global food crisis last month in Rome, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for renewed efforts to help Haiti deal with the impact of the rise in food prices.

He warned that failure to do so could undermine the country's efforts to improve stability, recovery and development.

Global increases in food prices prompted the WFP to issue an emergency appeal for \$755 million to cover a budget shortfall.

A \$500 million donation from Saudi Arabia, announced in May, helped cover its deficit. The U.S. has contributed \$567 million so far this year, according to the United Nations-backed IRIN news service.