

Starvation looms as food runs out in drought-hit Ethiopia

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Drought has forced 7.8 million people across the whole of Ethiopia to rely on emergency food handouts to stay alive.

The Somali people of Ethiopia's southeast have a name for the drought that has killed livestock, dried up wells and forced hundreds of thousands into camps: sima, which means "equalised".

It's an appropriate name, they say, because this drought has left no

person untouched, spared no corner of their arid region. And it has forced 7.8 million people across the whole of Ethiopia to rely on emergency food handouts to stay alive.

But by next month, that food will have run out, aid agencies say.

Droughts are common in Ethiopia, and in past years the government and international community have mounted impressive efforts to curb starvation.

This year though, Africa's second most-populous country is struggling to find the money for [food aid](#), say aid agencies.

"We're looking at the food pipeline actually breaking, so the food is running out in about a month's time," said John Graham, country director for Save the Children. "After that, we don't know what's going to happen."

Distracted donors

Once a global byword for starvation and poverty after a famine in 1984-85 killed hundreds of thousands, Ethiopia has seen its economy grow rapidly in the last decade. Health indicators such as infant mortality and malaria deaths have also improved.

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