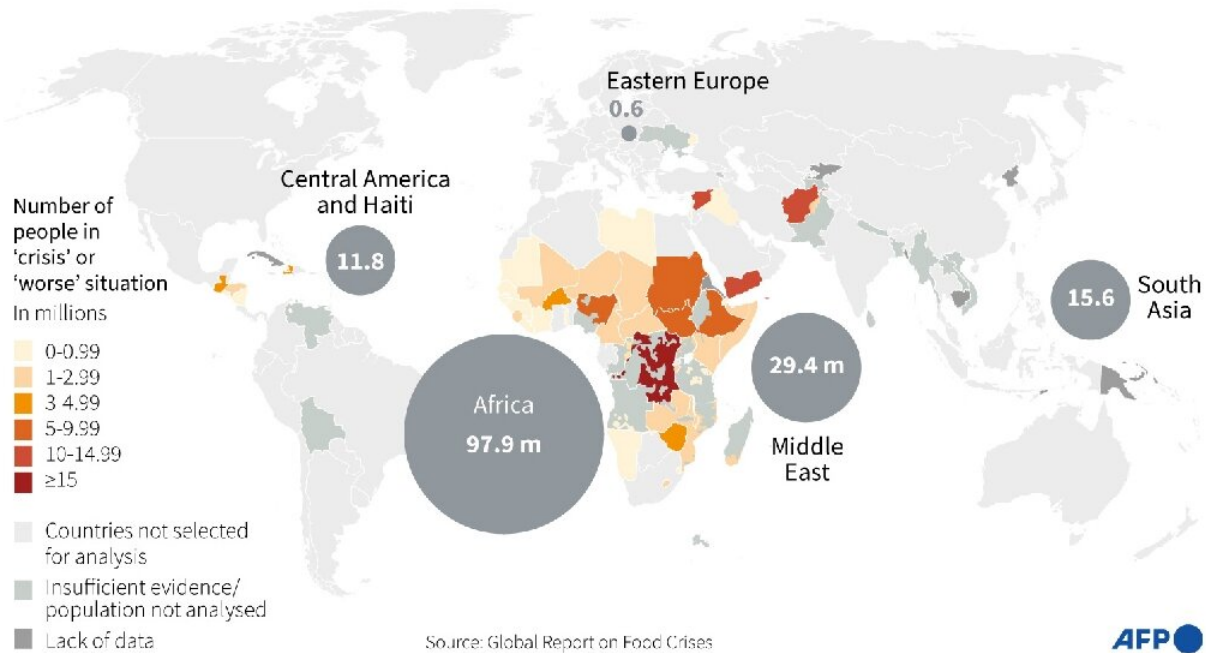


Pandemic, war, climate change fuel food fears

May 6 2021

Food crises in the world

155 million people were in a 'crisis' or 'worse' situation in 2020, about 20 million more than in 2019



Distribution of the number of people in the world in "crisis" (phase 3 on the international food security scale) or "worse" (phases 4 and 5)

The economic cost of the global pandemic as well as conflict and climate change are fueling food security fears that in 2020 reached their highest level in five years, according to a report published Wednesday.

Last year, 155 million people in 55 countries faced acute [food](#) shortages—20 million more than in 2019, according to a report by the EU, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme, which see the problem as getting steadily worse.

"We must act together to prevent an additional deterioration of the situation," FAO director general Qu Dongyu told a video-conference, describing the New Global Report on Food Crises as a call to "urgent humanitarian action".

He added in a tweet: "We must address the root causes and make agri-food systems more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable."

Last year saw the Global Network Against Food Crises, which groups together the three international organisations, identify 28 million people in 28 countries as suffering emergency levels of acute hunger with DR Congo, Yemen and Afghanistan worst affected.

A further 133,000 people were judged to be living in the most severe, "catastrophic" phase of food insecurity in Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Yemen.

Africa remains the continent worst hit by food shortages with 98 million people affected, or 63 percent of global cases—up from 54 percent in 2019.

"For 100 million people confronted by acute food crisis in 2020, the main cause was linked to conflicts and insecurity," compared with 77 million in 2019, Dominique Burgeon, FAO emergencies director, told AFP.

Economic crisis was the prime reason for hunger for 40 million, compared with 24 million in 2019.

Burgeon said that "the pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities," singling out Sudan, Zimbabwe and Haiti—the latter also hit by climate issues affecting the food security of some 15 million people.

With COVID restrictions still in place across much of the world, Burgeon said the coming year would be very difficult, exacerbating food security in already fragile economies.

He estimated at 142 million the number of people who would be affected in 40 of the worst-hit countries.

And with the [global population](#) on its way to hitting 8.5 billion by 2030, the report concluded that COVID-19 had underlined the need to make food distribution more equitable as the number of mouths to feed grows.

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