

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY | High food prices and the impacts of El Niño are driving acute food insecurity.

PEAK 2023 (MARCH–JUNE)



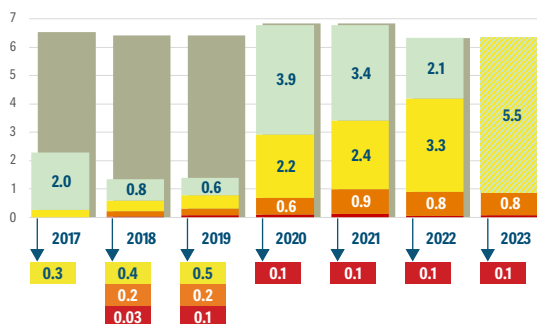
0.9M people or 14% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity. Of them, over 62 000 people were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

This marks a marginal decrease in magnitude from nearly 1 million acutely food-insecure people since the March–May 2022 peak, but a notable decrease in severity as the number of people in IPC Phase 4 nearly halved from 120 000 in 2022.

Despite increased incomes from higher labour demand in the agricultural, trade and tourism sectors, high food prices and localized food shortages persisted in areas affected by poor rains. The most affected departments were Ahuachapán, San Vicente, Usulután, Cabañas, Morazán and La Unión.

Source: HRP, April 2023.

Peak numbers of people (in millions) by phase of acute food insecurity, 2017–2023



Notes: While the size of the bars reflects rounding to two decimal points, the labelling is rounded to one decimal point. In 2023, no disaggregated data for phases 1 and 2 were available.
Source: El Salvador IPC TWG, 2017–2022; HRP 2023.

History of the food crisis An upper-middle-income country, El Salvador has been identified as a food crisis in all editions of the GRFC since the 2018 edition. Initially it was included as part of Central America’s Dry Corridor crisis, but more recently it has been included independently using national-level data. Since 2020, the coverage extended to the entire country and, after an initial increase in the numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, reaching a peak in 2021, the numbers marginally declined in 2022 and 2023.

The increase into 2021 was driven by recurrent droughts and exacerbated by economic shocks and catastrophic cyclones since 2020. The improvements in 2022 and 2023 reflected above-average crop production, which improved household food stocks and enhanced food access.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023–2024



Weather extremes In the Dry Corridor of El Salvador, low precipitation amounts and above-average temperatures, conditions typically associated with the El Niño phenomenon, led to below-average crop yields in 2023.

Seasonal improvements in food availability and access from the Postrera harvest in December were limited and estimated to be less than normal due to diminished yields for rural households caused by erratic El Niño-related rainfall, resulting in a premature termination of household staple food reserves (FEWS NET, November 2023).

Higher rainfall accumulations due to the passage of tropical storm Pilar in late October and seasonal cold fronts led to agricultural damage in specific areas, especially to small farmers’ bean crops due to the development of fungal diseases caused by high humidity. The impact was estimated to be localized and moderate (FAO, November 2023).



Economic shocks Food inflation peaked in February 2023 at 12.7 percent and then declined steadily through the end of the year, standing at 4.7 percent in November (WFP Economic Explorer, 2023).

Despite this easing of inflationary pressure, persisting high prices of food and other basic services limited the purchasing power of poor urban and rural households, leading to negative coping strategies such as adjusting the quality of the diet to meet food needs (FEWS NET, November 2023).

Prices of beans were over 10 percent higher than their year-earlier levels while prices of maize and sorghum were lower by the end of 2023 (FAO FPMA, 2023).

1 - None/Minimal 2 - Stressed 3 - Crisis 4 - Emergency 5 - Catastrophe/Famine 1+2 - None/Minimal and Stressed Total population