

Brussels, 16 October 2008

European Commission provides €15 million for emergency food aid in the Horn of Africa

As the international community today marks World Food Day 2008, the European Commission has adopted a new emergency funding decision of €15 million for food assistance in the Horn of Africa. The decision aims at saving lives and relieving suffering in one of the world's most vulnerable regions. The food crisis in the Horn of Africa has been caused by a combination of climatic shocks (in particular drought), local food inflation linked to high international prices, increased costs for fuel, transport and fertilisers, as well as other issues like security. The total amount allocated by the Commission to food assistance worldwide in 2008 has now been boosted by €100 million to more than €323 million.

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, said: "The global financial crisis is dominating the news. Many people are worried about their jobs and financial security. World Food Day is a chance to remember that the current food crisis has even more dramatic consequences, putting the very lives of millions at risk. In some parts of the world, a major catastrophe is brewing because growing numbers of people don't have enough food to survive. The Commission has responded to these urgent needs by dramatically increasing its food assistance to the most vulnerable."

There are more than 10 million potential beneficiaries of this latest funding in five countries in the Horn of Africa: 4.6 million in Ethiopia, 3.5 million in Somalia, 1.2 million in Kenya, 700,000 in Uganda and 135,000 in Djibouti. The Commission's support covers the distribution of food aid, nutritional support, therapeutic feeding (especially for malnourished children) and short-term livelihood support including livestock protection and the distribution of seeds, tools and agricultural inputs.

So far in 2008, the Commission has provided humanitarian aid worth €134.5 million for the Horn of Africa (except Sudan): €64 million for food assistance, €40.5 million for other forms of relief assistance and €30 million to improve drought preparedness in the region (see IP/08/453).

Commission food aid budget boost

The overall food aid budget of the Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) has been increased from €220.2 million in 2007 to €323.2 million so far this year. The five largest recipients of Commission food assistance are Sudan (€86m), the Palestinian Territories (€40.36m), Ethiopia (€32.5m), Somalia (€27m) and Zimbabwe (€15m).

All funds are channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid department under the responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel. The projects are implemented by non-governmental relief organisations, specialised UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement. The Commission's humanitarian field staff closely follow developments in the situation on the ground, play an active role in the local coordination of relief efforts and monitor the use of the Commission's relief funds.

For further information: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm