



Sustain Funding and Maintain Public Reporting for Critical Famine Early Warning Systems

September 2026

Background

Since its creation in 1985, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network ([FEWS NET](#)) has been the U.S. government's premier global food security early warning capability. Uniquely positioned to draw on and integrate satellite observation, agroclimatology, market and livelihood analysis, and nutrition and conflict data, FEWS NET produces the world's only operational food security projections extending eight months into the future. It provides independent, evidence-based analysis that helps the U.S. government and humanitarian organizations act before hunger crises escalate.

Current Risks to the Program

FEWS NET is now at risk of closure. As of now, the program has resources to operate through the end of 2026 but will need to begin terminating staff by September 30 absent a clear commitment from the State Department to continue funding. This would not be the first disruption. The administration terminated FEWS NET without review in February 2025, then rescinded the termination weeks later. A backlog of payments delayed rehiring for six months and delayed the restart of reporting even longer. The current contract, in place since 2024, required FEWS NET to roughly double its field presence, from around 20 to 42 countries—an expansion only recently completed.

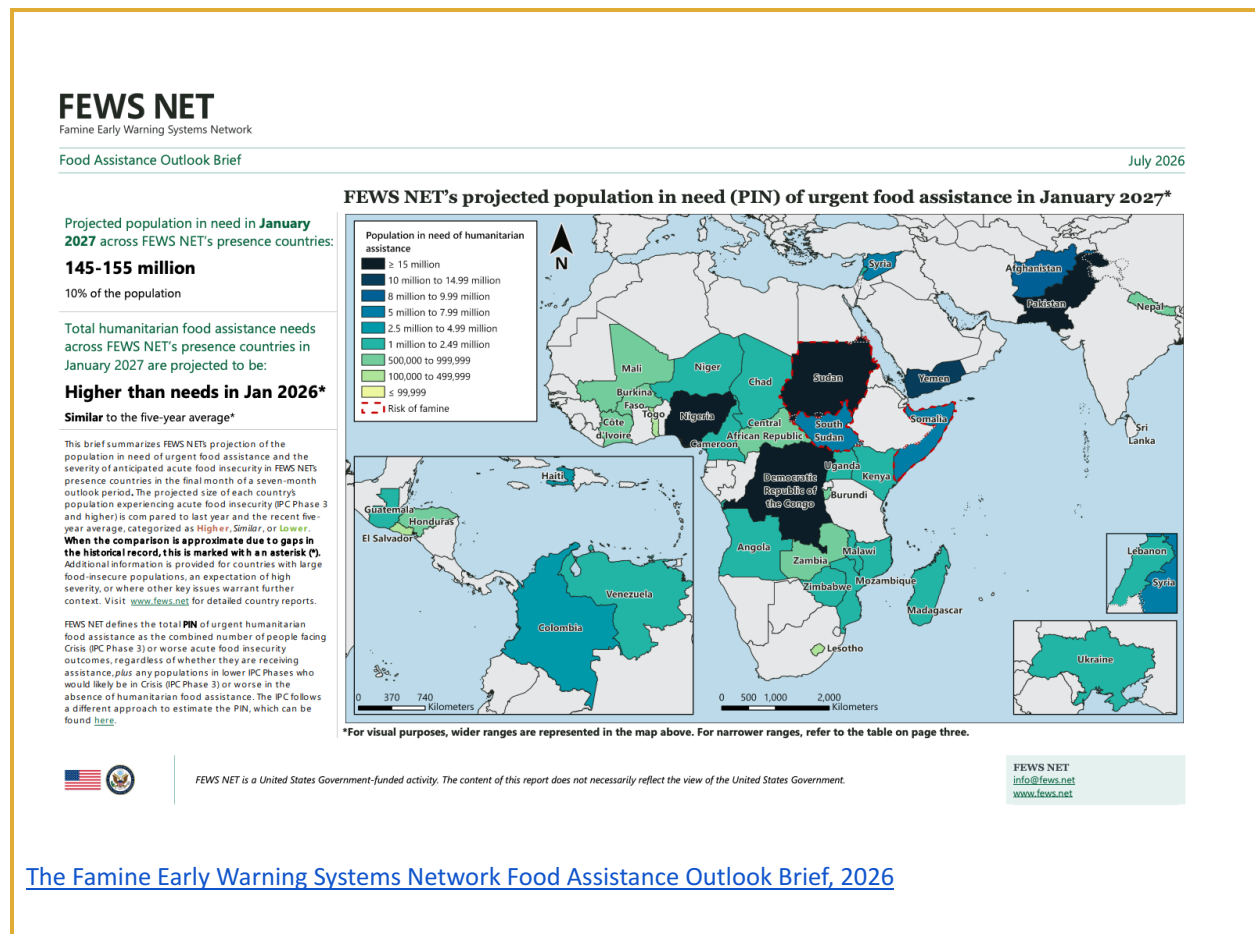
Compounding the funding uncertainty, the State Department recently directed FEWS NET to [stop publishing reports](#) on three of the world's most food-insecure countries: Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen. The State Department did not provide a rationale for this decision, but pointed to non-U.S. government-funded early warning tools as substitutes. This [reporting pause was rescinded](#) at the end of August after outcry from humanitarian organizations and pressure from Congress.

How FEWS NET is Unique

FEWS NET gives the U.S. Government independent projections it can trust, funded by and accountable to the United States.

No other forecasting tool substitutes for FEWS NET. It is widely recognized as the global gold standard for famine forecasting. Unlike United Nations food security assessments and the UN's Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) reports, which can be significantly influenced by the fundraising

needs of UN agencies and other aid implementers, FEWS NET has always been a neutral third-party, without any vested interest in the data it reports or the responses it informs. In addition, IPC reports are produced only once or twice a year and rely almost exclusively on a limited set of backward looking data. FEWS NET fills a key information gap through [standard monthly reports](#), allowing the U.S. government to pivot as needed based on evolving trends.



The reports also provide comparable data across countries, allowing policymakers to weigh relative need and enabling Congress to hold the administration accountable for how scarce humanitarian dollars are allocated. FEWS NET is a unique American capability that could not—and should not—be outsourced to the UN. The UN, which is neither independent nor answerable to the U.S. government, also lacks the infrastructure and independence to sustain FEWS NET's standing as the gold standard of early warning.

Why This Matters

Shuttering the program now would be a waste of the investment already made to restart FEWS NET in 2025 and 2026, and a huge loss for U.S. readiness to anticipate and address the fall out of hunger crises in volatile parts of the world. It would mean loss of expertise, a break in analytical continuity, a

weakening of relationships that underpin data collection and interpretation, and increased costs should the administration decide to rebuild its capabilities later.

The stakes extend beyond food security. Research shows that worsening hunger rarely stays contained—it drives acute child malnutrition, conflict, and migration—and that responding early, before a crisis fully takes hold, saves lives, livelihoods, and money. Independent early warning is what makes that early response possible. FEWS NET was built for exactly this purpose when the 1980s famines in Sudan and Ethiopia caught the world by surprise and no system was in place to provide the lead time needed to act. Losing it now would leave the U.S. government without a trusted, independent source to shape its response and its standing as a global leader, at a time when hunger crises and their knock-on effects are becoming more frequent and severe.

Maintain Consistent Reporting on the Highest-Risk Countries

Suspending reports on Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen is a disservice to the humanitarian and development community, the Members of Congress who rely on FEWS NET to understand emerging needs, and the American taxpayers who fund the response. Most importantly, it is a disservice to the people at risk of acute hunger and famine. Halting reporting obscures the potential knock-on effects of growing food insecurity, including death, malnutrition, migration, and violence in three of the countries where those risks are most acute.

Sustaining funding for FEWS NET and maintaining consistent public reporting on countries most at risk will allow the United States to remain a global leader in providing needs-based humanitarian food aid.

What Can Congress Do

Call for sustained funding of FEWS NET through 2029, when the current project period ends, including by urging the administration to (i) immediately obligate already-appropriated FY2026 funds to bridge the program through the coming year, and (ii) ensure that FEWS NET receives funding in the FY2027 appropriations process.

Direct the State Department to maintain consistent public reporting on countries at risk of crisis, emergency, or famine levels of hunger, including Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen. Press the Department for a clear rationale and timeline whenever it proposes to suspend reporting on a given country in the future.