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Tackling drought essential for food crisis solution

Drought and unsustainable water management have been key contributing factors to the global food crisis. In turn, managing drought risk to prepare for the increasing drought impact of climate change, is a crucial part of addressing the food crisis long term.

The effects of drought that we are now seeing on major food exporters like Australia and Ukraine is just a taste of how climate-change could contribute to a future of ongoing global food crises. Water scarcity will contribute to food scarcity. Drought has already disrupted food production and exports, most markedly Australian rice, contributing to higher global prices of staples for those who can least afford it, and reducing the supply of food relief to the world's poorest people. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has already observed that the currently raised levels of drought will increase, placing billions of people at risk of water stress by the end of the century, unless there are deep cuts in carbon emissions and urgent action is taken on adaptation

More attention must be focused on disaster risk management, which has already developed practical ways for adapting to increased drought predicted to come with climate change. Because drought is a slow-building phenomenon, communities and nations can build their defences against rising temperatures and dryer seasons with good planning – such as better water management and scaled-up use of available risk-reduction tools and programmes to combat drought and desertification.

“Drought creeps,” says UN/ISDR secretariat Director Sàlvano Briceño, “so we can outrun it. But this will take a genuine mindset and policy shift towards the ethos that prevention is better than cure, and serious political and economic commitment to saving harvests and lives on a global economic level.”