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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

WFP News Release

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BANDITRY AGAINST FOOD TRUCKS FORCES WFP TO CUT RATIONS IN DARFUR

KHARTOUM – The United Nations World Food Programme announced today that it will be forced to cut monthly rations in Darfur starting next month, because banditry against WFP-contracted trucks is preventing sufficient stocks of vital food relief from getting through.

In May, the cereal ration will be cut in half to 225 grams per person per day, pulses will be cut in half to 30 grams and sugar by half to 15 grams. This will reduce the daily kilocalorie value of the ration by 40 per cent (down to 1,242 k/cal per day from the recommended rate of 2,156 k/cal).

"Attacks on the WFP food pipeline are an attack on the most vulnerable people in Darfur. With up to three million people depending on us for their survival in the upcoming rainy season, keeping WFP's supply line open is a matter of life and death. We call on all parties to protect the access to food," said Josette Sheeran, WFP's Executive Director.

At this time of year, WFP-contracted trucks should be delivering 1,800 metric tons of food daily to Darfur to supply warehouses ahead of the rainy season, due to begin next month. But deliveries have dropped to less than 900 tons per day.

"The Government of Sudan provides police escorts for convoys on the main routes, but unfortunately the frequency is not enough to maintain the food pipeline," said Kenro Oshidari, WFP Representative in Sudan, adding that a meeting is planned to increase the convoys.

"We're appealing to the rebel factions and their commanders who operate in other parts of Darfur to ensure security on the roads and to respect the neutrality of all people involved in the humanitarian effort," Oshidari said. "If the security situation on the roads improves, we will be able to restore the ration levels."

Since the start of this year, 60 WFP-contracted trucks have been hijacked in Darfur, with 39 trucks still missing and 26 drivers unaccounted for. One driver was killed in Darfur last month.

In March, more than 2.4 million people received WFP food assistance in Darfur. The target number is expected to go up progressively to about three million during the rainy season from May to September, also known as the pre-harvest 'hunger gap,' when last year's agricultural stocks are depleted and there is less access to food in the market.

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The monthly ration in Darfur includes cereals (mostly sorghum), pulses (lentils, beans or peas), high-nutrient corn soya blend, vegetable oil, sugar and salt.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency: this year, WFP plans to feed more than 70 million people in around 80 countries.

WFP now provides RSS feeds to help journalists keep up with the latest press releases, videos and photos as they are published on WFP.org. For more details see: <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>.

WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.

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