

ECMWF – Experiences with UN WFP

The World Food Program was founded in 1961 and it is the largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. It aims to reach more than 90 million people with food assistance in more than 73 countries. It employs 11000 staff, most of whom work in remote areas.

The five objectives of WFP are:

- Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies
- Prepare for emergencies
- Restore and rebuild lives after emergencies
- Reduce chronic hunger and under-nutrition anywhere
- Strengthen capacity of countries to reduce hunger by investing in disaster preparedness and mitigation measures.

In 2011 a staff from the Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch visited ECMWF giving a talk on the needs of humanitarian agency regarding weather information. The branch provides strategic support to ensure that WFP is ready to respond internally and with partners, makes sure that the response is coherent and that decision-makers have the best information available. The following elements are the basis for this response:

- Knowledge of what is happening
- Knowledge of what might happen
- Knowledge of why it is happening
- Provision of readiness actions that are appropriate to enable rapid response.

In 2012 the Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch set up a pilot project to provide tailored weather predictions for the Yida area of South Sudan where WFP and its partners were feeding a large influx of refugees from neighbouring Sudan. ECMWF provided WFP with access to a wide number of products on its website, as well as support for WFP staff and training on the use of ECMWF products.

As a follow up from this trial period, WFP hired a meteorologist, and ECMWF council agreed to a more formal agreement with WFP for the provision of real-time medium-range and seasonal forecast data for planning purposes to be used at WFP HQ with no re-distribution of the data themselves. The data is provided under a research license, ie no commercial use of the data is allowed, for the period November 2012 to end of 2017.

WFP-ECMWF: the timeline

End 2011 – beginning 2012: After an initial period of consultation between WFP and ECMWF staff to establish on the one hand the needs of the humanitarian agency and on the other hand what ECMWF could deliver in terms of data and support,

Middle 2012- it was decided to give access to ECMWF web plots. This would guarantee a variety of products for the medium and seasonal range, without the increased burden of having to decode the data into a format suitable to WFP's information system.

End 2012: After the trial period, a more formal agreement was established and now WFP has access to ECMWF archive with a 'research license' which allows for the use of the data (not only plots on the website) for their own planning purposes, but re-distribution of ECMWF data is not allowed. Access to the archive means that WFP have now the resources (one meteorologist at their HQ) to decode the data and re-format them for their geographic information system.