

# *Venezuelan Government Guarantees Food Security*

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The Venezuelan government headed by President Nicolas Maduro has continued to guarantee the people the food security developed by late Bolivarian leader Hugo Chavez.

This has not been an easy task to undertake, since in 2013, the country was the target of actions by rightwing circles aimed at destabilizing the steady food supply. Venezuelans say that such event is linked to speculation and stockpiling more than to scarcity of food, as some rightist media outlets want the population to believe by putting the blame on the Venezuelan administration.

The anti-government attempt has been met with government measures, such as the outdoor food distribution points called Mercal and a food mission that takes staples to home doors and fairs, such as those held near the year's end in an effort to keep a steady availability of food for the people.

The Mercal initiative distributed over 352 thousand 2 hundred tons of food in 2013 in many markets set up in open city areas, where the staples sale at affordable and fair prices. Mercal was created in 2004 by Hugo Chavez in an effort to guarantee subsidized foodstuffs for the people, particularly for those Venezuelans earning minimum salaries.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has acknowledged the efforts made by the Bolivarian Revolution, which managed to lower by half hunger levels over the past ten years.

Some four million Venezuelans would go hungry in the 1990s, standing for 15.5 percent, while at present that figure has been reported at only 2.5 percent according to official statistics.

Venezuelan authorities expect to further boost the Mercal initiative in 2014 after having distributed over 21 million tons of food at fair prices through that program. For Venezuelans, this achievement of the Bolivarian Revolution has been possible thanks to the initiative of Bolivarian leader Hugo Chavez and to the strengthening of that strategy through the local policies implemented by President Nicolas Maduro.

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