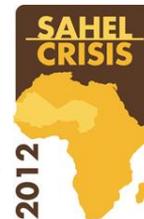




## SITUATION UPDATE

# The Sahel crisis



10 December 2013

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Despite the 2013 harvest in the Sahel being equivalent to the last five years average, preliminary figures indicate that at least 13 million people (excluding Nigeria) are still food insecure, due to limited access to food. The agricultural production of the poorest households is insufficient to restore their livelihoods and is expected to cover only their nutritional needs for the next two to three months. Thereafter they will depend entirely on markets.
- Aggravating factors such as high food prices, population displacements and floods have further affected the livelihoods of vulnerable and food insecure households.
- FAO is assisting more than 1.7 million beneficiaries in the Sahel by supporting food and livestock production, and providing livelihood protection and technical assistance.
- To date, FAO has received USD 25.6 million for its operations in the Sahel. Additional funding is urgently needed to support vulnerable farmers, herders and pastoralists in the Sahel and to restore the agricultural productive means of vulnerable communities affected by conflict in Mali in the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti.

### THE MOST VULNERABLE STILL AT RISK OF ACUTE MALNUTRITION AND FOOD INSECURITY

*The “Cadre Harmonisé” analysis* of food and nutritional security, conducted in October and November 2013, shows that many areas in the Sahel are still facing food stress with localized peaks of severe food and nutrition insecurity despite the recent harvests. Low agricultural productivity, combined with depleted stocks and high food prices, drastically limit the access of poor households to food, and also leads to high acute malnutrition. The lack of adequate or sufficient livelihood support during the main cropping season prevented large numbers of vulnerable households from benefiting from the 2013-2014 normal harvest.

*According to the estimates of the Regional Information System for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC)* on the meeting held in November 2013 in Lomé (Togo), projected cereal production in the Sahel for the main cropping season 2013-2014 is 19.5 million tonnes, allowing a 1 percent increase compared to the last five year average. Gross cereal production per capita has however decreased by about 13 percent compared to the five year average. The pastoral situation is relatively good with satisfactory animal health, water points relatively well filled and pasture available. Fodder deficits are nonetheless locally observed in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal. Hence, livestock body conditions may deteriorate earlier in these areas, before the usual pastoral lean period.

*The nutritional status of children under five remains a concern*, with a continuing high prevalence of acute malnutrition and an upward trend in admissions to nutrition rehabilitation centres close to the 2012 levels, particularly in Chad, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. This reflects the increased vulnerability of the poorest households who continue to struggle to access food and basic services while their livelihoods become more fragile. Over 1.4 million children in the Sahel were at risk of severe acute malnutrition in 2013.

#### ***Food insecurity is aggravated by the impact of food price volatility, population displacements and floods***

Vulnerable households, often with low food reserves and indebted after the lean season, depend on markets and food price fluctuations in order to access food. A small increase in food prices strongly affects the purchasing power, and consequently the food security, of the most vulnerable – since many have just enough to cope.

Insecurity in some parts of the region (in particular Mali and Nigeria) and outside the region (the Sudan and Central Africa Republic) has led to large population displacements that aggravate the food and nutrition insecurity of refugees and their host communities, many of them already affected by recent food and nutrition security crises, and also increases competition over access to basic services. Many refugees brought their livestock with them, adding pressure to scarce natural resources (grazing land and water), and increasing the risk of spreading animal diseases and creating conflict between pastoralist refugees and their host communities.

Good rainfall in the Sahel during the months of August and September compensated for the rainfall deficits observed in June and July, sometimes causing floods that negatively affected livelihoods. In 2013, nearly 539 000 people were affected by floods in West Africa. The most affected countries were the Niger (238 245 affected people), Nigeria (80 000), Senegal (73 500), Guinea Conakry (48 229), Mali (35 000) and Benin (33 000). Over 26 000 ha of crops (groundnuts, maize, millet, sorghum and rice) were destroyed in the region and 2 217 farms were damaged in Nigeria.

Many households affected by the floods are now struggling to replace what was lost or damaged, such as food stocks, seeds, tools, livestock and animal feed. The losses, including damage to infrastructure and equipment, plunge households already affected by food insecurity into an even more difficult situation. In the flooded areas, stagnant water makes it difficult to maintain livestock, which, without proper shelter, veterinary care or adequate feed, easily fall prey to disease.

#### ***Food prices still high compared to the last five-year average***

The market supply level is generally satisfactory. The introduction of new crops helped to initiate a seasonal price decline in September in the region. However, prices are still high compared to the last five-year average, particularly for millet and sorghum in the eastern and western basins. The prices of cash crops vary differently depending on the basin. Compared to the last five-year average, the prices of groundnut are increasing and those of cowpea experienced significant decreases in the west. In the central and eastern basins, the traders' interest for cowpea has contributed to maintaining prices above average. The terms of trade for livestock/cereal are favorable to breeders as livestock prices are generally increasing in the region. Local degradation on the terms of exchange are expected at the end of the first quarter in 2014, due to localized pasture deficits.

#### ***Locust outbreak in Mauritania***

An outbreak continued in northwest Mauritania where ground control operations intensified and some 32 000 ha were treated for hopper groups and bands and an increasing number of adult groups. A second generation breeding will begin in December with egg-laying, hatching and band formation. Consequently, locust numbers will increase further and infestations could expand and extend into adjacent areas of Western Sahara, northern Mauritania and southern Morocco. Locust numbers declined in the summer breeding areas of the northern Sahel in Mali, the Niger and Chad where no significant developments are expected until mid-January.

#### ***Immediate support to agriculture needed for Northern Mali***

Urgent action is needed to rebuild the agricultural productive means of the most vulnerable people in the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti. An Emergency Food Security Assessment conducted jointly in July 2013 by the Government of Mali, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and 15 other partners shows that three out of four households living in northern regions of the country are food insecure and heavily reliant on food assistance. The most vulnerable 1.3 million people have had little chance to recover following the recent conflict and last year's food and nutrition crisis. As internally displaced people and refugees begin to return to their home communities, limited resources will be further strained and the number of people requiring assistance is likely to increase. The combined effects of the food crisis and the security situation have left little room for recovery. Although the local economy is slowly recovering in the north and food security agencies are strengthening their presence, many farmers have been unable to purchase seeds and fertilizers and continue to require food assistance. In addition, while security is slowly improving, its volatility continues to restrict humanitarian access.

## **FAO'S INTEGRATED APPROACH FOCUSING ON RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS**

#### ***FAO Strategic Resilience Framework 'Urgent action to support the resilience of vulnerable populations'***

FAO is committed to respond to the agriculture and nutrition needs of the Sahel under a programmatic resilience framework, anchored in FAO's pillars of Disaster Risk Management (DRM), serving as an overarching umbrella not only for the humanitarian response, but also for the medium-to-long term work of the Organization, including investment. It is entitled "Strategic Response Framework to the Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel" in line with FAO's new Strategic Objective 5 "Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises". **In the short term, FAO's strategy aims to save lives and livelihoods through supporting agriculture and livestock production of vulnerable pastoralists, agropastoralists and farmers, as well as restoring their productive assets.**

FAO, as co-lead of the food security sector, is working with partners to prepare for and respond more effectively to food and agricultural threats and emergencies across the Sahel in the coming years. In the framework of the next Sahel Strategy, FAO leads efforts aiming at defining the needs of crisis-affected farming families. This analysis will be coupled with strategic interventions focused on resilience for the next years (2014-2016).

In 2013, FAO appealed for a total of **USD 113.1 million** to support almost **6 million people**. For the last quarter of 2013, FAO's proposed priority emergency assistance is focusing on the following activities:

1. **Support to off-season agricultural production** to enable vulnerable households to produce their own food, including:
  - a. distribution of agricultural inputs (vegetable seeds, fertilizers, small agricultural tools, irrigation systems, agricultural material to build fences, etc.) targeting the off-season agriculture (October-December) for vegetable production;
  - b. strengthening the food chain and marketing sector (storage, processing and transportation of agricultural goods);
  - c. integrated food nutrition activities (nutritional education, food preparation and use and consumption diversification).
2. **Support to domestic animal protection and production** to meet evolving market demand for healthy livestock, safe and nutritious animal source-foods in the region, including:
  - a. protection of livestock, provision of veterinary multi-vitamin and mineral food complements and vaccination campaigns;
  - b. technical support for livestock management and animal health; and
  - c. restocking of herds through the distribution of vaccinated small ruminants and poultry.

3. **Soil and water conservation and** rehabilitation to enable a better management of natural resources and secure agriculture and livestock activities, focused on the following activities:
  - a. rehabilitation of irrigation systems and water points;
  - b. rehabilitation or construction of pastoral wells; and
  - c. restoration of degraded lands.
4. **Early warning and preparedness support** so that Governments, donors, United Nations agencies and NGOs manage the crisis risk than the crisis itself, focused on:
  - a. strengthening of national Early Warning Systems;
  - b. support to food insecurity and vulnerability analysis, including technical support to the *Cadre Harmonisé*;
  - c. support to national crop assessments and market analysis; and
  - d. contribution to national and regional contingency plans for the Malian refugees crisis.

## RACE TO SUPPORT PASTORAL COMMUNITIES

In December 2013, FAO's support to agriculture and livelihood activities in the Sahel remains underfunded, especially in Mali, and less than half the targeted beneficiaries have been reached. The lack of adequate funding for emergency agricultural livelihood support in the Sahel is refraining vulnerable households and communities from becoming resilient and able protect their livelihoods. In the absence of much needed assistance, the most vulnerable households risk adopting negative coping strategies including eroding their productive assets, reducing their investment in quality inputs, selling their assets and becoming indebted. Increasing support to the agricultural sector could help vulnerable households break the cycle of poverty and hunger, instead of keeping them dependent on food assistance. Early warning and preparedness activities to predict and mitigate future crises, rehabilitation of irrigation systems and water points as well as restoration of degraded lands and support to seed security system assessments are also crucial to reinforce the productive capacities and the resilience of the Sahelian populations.

December sets the end to agricultural support as the main campaign has been harvested and the off-season is ongoing. However, support may still be provided to pastoralists during this time of the year. This month is the right moment to rebuild herds and protect animals from pests and diseases through animal health and vaccination campaigns as they present an adequate body condition. In addition, the irregular rains of 2013 led to some pasture deficit pockets in the pastoral areas where animal feeding distributions may contribute to prolong the milking period while ensuring household food security.

FAO's current assistance to vulnerable communities in the Sahel is provided through the contributions of the following donors: the African Development Bank (AfDB), Austria, Belgium, Brazil, the Commission's European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Chad, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UNDP Administered Donor Joint Trust Fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the United States of America.

### FAO's funds received in 2013

Countries	Beneficiaries foreseen	Total requirements 2013 (USD millions)	Received funds 2013 (USD millions)	Unmet requirements (USD millions)
Burkina Faso	1 080 600	14.4	2.6	11.8
Northern Cameroon	50 800	2.4	0	2.4
Chad	715 800	16.4	3.3	13.1
The Gambia	158 000	6.2	0	6.2
Mali	840 000	14.2	3.8	10.4
Mauritania	786 000	4.7	2.7	2
Northern Nigeria	40 000	3	0	3
The Niger	1 774 200	45.8	9.9	35.9
Senegal	483 500	4	1.7	2.3
Regional	n/a	2	1.6	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 928 900</b>	<b>113.1</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>87.5</b>

## REBUILDING THE LIVELIHOODS OF 1.7 MILLION VULNERABLE PEOPLE THROUGH AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK ASSISTANCE

The assistance provided to farmers, herders and agropastoralists in September and October focused on the preparation of the off-season and floodplain recession campaigns (October-December 2013) with the distribution of agricultural inputs (vegetable and cereal seeds, fertilizers, small agricultural tools, agricultural material to build fences), support to irrigation systems and training of beneficiaries on integrated food nutrition activities.

FAO's distributions of certified food crop seeds and tools for the main agricultural campaign (May–October 2013) in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal allowed assisted farmers to quickly resume production. This enabled smallholder

producers, many of whom have lost part or all of their productive assets (including seeds) during the 2012 crisis, to grow their own food and rebuild their livelihoods as quickly as possible. Support to the off season campaign enabled vulnerable farmers to grow vegetables, improving household food security (the extra production sold on the market is a valuable source of income) and the daily nutritional intake of women and children. Since September, FAO ensured the monitoring of harvests and supported the commercialization of cereals, with activities aiming at strengthening the food chain and marketing sector (storage, establishment of sustainable networks of agricultural input shops and stores, processing and transportation of agricultural goods).

FAO's assistance also includes livestock livelihood protection and rehabilitation through herd restocking, animal health campaigns, fodder distribution, mineral supplementation and the distribution of small ruminants and poultry. Protecting animals from epidemic and climatic disasters is key to ensuring the resilience of pastoralists. FAO also provided trainings on good practices for livestock management through pastoral field schools, which reinforce pastoralists' capacity to manage their herds in times of crisis

In Chad, refugees from the Sudan and Central African Republic, as well as internally displaced persons and host populations are receiving support for agricultural production in the Tissi area. People affected by conflict in Mali and Mauritania are also benefitting from agricultural and livestock production support (internally displaced persons and host families in the regions of Mopti, Segou, and northern Mali and support to livestock in the Hodh Ech Chargui region of Mauritania).

## LINKS

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- FAO website on the Sahel crisis: <http://www.fao.org/crisis/sahel/the-sahel-crisis/en/>
- FAO Component of the Sahel 2013 Humanitarian Appeals: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/emergencies/docs/SahelCAP13.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/SahelCAP13.pdf)
- FAO and emergencies: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/regions/west-africa/en/>
- FAO Locust Watch website: <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/2002/index.html>
- DRM Regional strategy for West Africa and Sahel, 2011-2013 (FAO 2011): [www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/tc/tce/pdf/DRM\\_Strategy\\_Sahel\\_2011-2013\\_web.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/tc/tce/pdf/DRM_Strategy_Sahel_2011-2013_web.pdf)
- FAO DRR corporate framework: "Resilient livelihoods: Disaster Risk reduction for food and nutrition security": <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2540e/i2540e00.pdf>
- Revised Interagency Sahel Strategy 2013: <http://wca.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/system/files/documents/files/2013%20Sahel%20Strategy.pdf>

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