



Central African Republic



24 April 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

- **2.5 million people need immediate humanitarian assistance**; and one in five Central Africans has been internally displaced. These figures are likely to rise as the conflict places millions at risk of a full-scale food and nutrition security crisis due to low production in 2013 coupled with prevailing chronic countrywide malnutrition, extreme poverty and inappropriate sanitation.
- The results of the **Multisectoral Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)** undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and its partners indicate that, in spite of insecurity, **78 percent of farmers will be cultivating** in the coming weeks. However, **94 percent of communities** report that they do **not** have **enough seeds** to plant for the next agricultural season.
- In light of the MIRA findings, the [Revised Strategic Response Plan](#) was launched on 19 January, outlining the humanitarian strategy for the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014. A substantial scaling up of operations is necessary in the short term to ensure the provision of protection and life-saving assistance to 1.9 million people. The Food Security Cluster is seeking USD 180 million to assist 1.25 million people.
- **FAO aims to support 150 000 crisis-hit families** in CAR to enable them to produce their own food, protect their scarce resources and earn some income. The success of the 2014 maize, rice, sorghum and millet planting seasons, starting in April and May respectively, will be a turning point for food security.
- The results of the **Markets and Food Security Assessment carried out by FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP)** warns that **the country needs a long and expensive humanitarian operation** over at least the next 18 months to stem the growing toll, and pave the way to rebuild livelihoods.

BACKGROUND

- **Widespread civil insecurity caused a sharp reduction in 2013 crop production**, and is likely to severely impact the 2014 cropping season.
- Due to persistent insecurity, households have relied on stress or crisis coping mechanisms, putting their livelihoods at risk.
- **Food prices have almost doubled in Bangui due to severe market disruptions.**
- The **MIRA** confirmed that food reserves are almost non-existent. People interviewed indicated that they were now eating just one meal a day. All communities reported that livelihood assets have been lost – abandoned or looted. In spite of insecurity, 78 percent of farmers plan to cultivate in the coming weeks, confirming the importance of cropping and livestock rearing in ensuring their income and access to food. However, 94 percent of communities reported they will not have enough seeds to plant for the next agricultural season. People outside Bangui must urgently resume production activities, without which they cannot eat, generate income or even relocate.
- The results of the **FAO/WFP Markets and Food Security Assessment mission** indicate that the agricultural sector was the most affected by the crisis, which contracted by 37 percent and agricultural production declined by 38 percent. Representing 57 percent of the GDP, agriculture is the backbone of the economy and it is crucial to restore production. However, the joint FAO/WFP assessment mission warns that the humanitarian operation in CAR over the next 18 months will be long and expensive, especially if the current planting season is missed.

Clusters activated:

- Coordination: OCHA
- Early recovery: UNDP
- Education: UNICEF/COOPI
- Emergency Telecoms: WFP
- Food Security: FAO/WFP
- Health: WHO
- Logistics: WFP
- Refugees: UNHCR
- Nutrition: UNICEF
- Protection: UNHCR
- WASH: UNICEF

CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURE

- ❖ Disruption of market linkages due to insecurity, and production hampered.
- ❖ Insecurity and limited size of the market have increased procurement and logistics costs by 40 percent compared to previous interventions.
- ❖ Standing crops, stored seed/grain and productive assets have been lost, leaving the population food insecure and unable to resume crop production.
- ❖ Rural populations have been affected by the numerous Séléka – anti-Balaka clashes, yet their protection is key in order for FAO and its partners to access the areas where they are located to implement humanitarian and resilience programmes.
- ❖ Lack of immediate assistance will trigger further losses and longer-term suffering.
- ❖ Delayed action will lead to the worsening of the food security situation.

PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS

FAO can prevent further deteriorating of livelihoods and missed planting opportunities with timely donor support, saving families from a domino effect of continued losses, as well as preventing farmers from adopting negative coping strategies with long-term effects (joining militias and bandits, economic migration, etc.). Restoring productive assets is crucial to enable crisis-hit farmers to produce their own food and take advantage of local opportunities.

FAO's scaled-up response

In response to the aggravation of the situation in CAR, FAO immediately set up a multidisciplinary team in Bangui with support from its regional and subregional offices as well as its headquarters in Rome. Three suboffices have been opened in Bossangoa, Bambari and Bouar to serve the most affected areas of the country.

FAO regularly coordinates joint field visits with partners to assess the food security situation and needs of conflict-affected populations.

Given the most urgent needs, FAO is preparing distributions of agricultural inputs to women and men farmers in the most affected regions to “plant peace” and protect and restore resilient livelihoods. In recent weeks, in the presence of H.E. the Minister of Rural Development, FAO has been providing vegetable production kits to women’s groups, vegetable farmers’ groups and displaced farming families in Bangui from both religious groups (Muslim and Christian).

As co-lead of the Food Security Cluster, FAO works closely with partners to improve the food security and livelihoods response. Strategic partnership between FAO and WFP is particularly important to prevent duplications in the crisis response, ensure a greater impact of implemented projects and increase cost-efficiency of both agencies operating in the country. In fact, around 54 000 farming families will receive agricultural kits (25 kg of crop seeds and 2 hoes) from FAO to help resume agricultural activities and they will also receive food rations from WFP. The goal is to prevent people from eating seeds because of lack of food and ensure that seeds are planted when the rainy season starts (April), which will guarantee that the country has sufficient crops in the near future.

FAO priority agricultural assistance

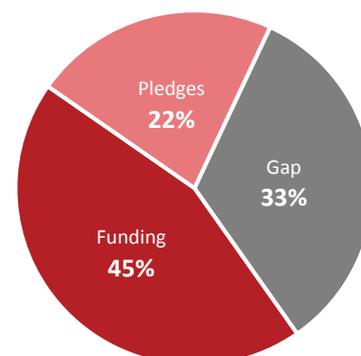
- **Immediate support to vegetable production** so that assisted farmers can harvest vegetables in only six to eight weeks. This support will be provided in the most affected regions of the country and in urban and peri-urban areas of Bangui where displaced people are still willing to cultivate their fields during the day and have expressed a need for agricultural inputs to quickly resume food production and sell surplus in local markets to generate some income.
- **Support to the 2014 planting season – a turning point for food security.** Missed planting opportunities can be prevented through timely provision of seeds and complementary inputs such as tools, processing machines and agricultural tools for the 2014 cropping season starting in April.
- **Restore vital rural infrastructure:** linking immediate hunger relief interventions with a long-term strategy for sustainable growth. Cash-for-work provides: (i) much needed income to meet affected families' food needs and protect their scarce resources; while (ii) rebuilding community assets.
- **Peace-building dialogue:** FAO's joint social and economic activities focus on three pillars: farmer field schools, good governance of farmers' groups and access to savings and loan schemes, particularly for women's groups.
- **Post-harvest handling and market linkages:** to stimulate demand and supply in order to revitalize the local economy of vulnerable rural communities.

Total funding

FAO total funding needs: USD 45 million

Total funds received: USD 20 million

Total pledges: USD 10 million



**PLANNED
BENEFICIARIES
150 000 FAMILIES**

Of the total funds requested by FAO under the Strategic Response Plan (USD 45 million to support 150 000 farming families), FAO has received over USD 23 million¹ and pledges for over USD 7 million. With funding received FAO has been able to procure around 2 000 tonnes of seeds and small tools to assist 80 000 farming families for the upcoming agricultural season in 14 of the 16 prefectures. However, **an additional USD 15 million is still required** to provide livelihood support to the population immediately after the planting season. The objective is to build resilience through activities that will generate regular income before the first harvest, and enable families to purchase food from the market. These activities are not affected by the rainy season and provide opportunities to diversify and accumulate assets on a regular basis year round.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- All up-to-date information is available on our Website: www.fao.org/emergencies
- Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (Dominique.Burgeon@fao.org)
- Alexis Bonte, Designated Responsible Official, FAO Central African Republic (Alexis.Bonte@fao.org)

¹ USD 3 million are committed for activities that are not covered by the SRP: aquaculture, cluster coordination, training, rice irrigation, etc.