



IN NUMBERS



6.5 million
people severely food insecure



85 000 ha
of crops burnt



5.9 million
people internally displaced



USD 114.4 million
needed for 2019 under the 2019
Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)

KEY POINTS

- Localized insecurity, new and protracted displacement, spontaneous returns and the sustained erosion of communities' resilience make the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic a highly complex crisis.
- Some 6.5 million Syrians are severely food insecure. They have limited livelihood opportunities and have depleted their productive assets. An additional 2.5 million people are at risk of food insecurity.
- A joint FAO/World Food Programme (WFP) Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) visited the Syrian Arab Republic between 8 June and 4 July 2019 to estimate crop production and to assess the country's overall food security situation.
- Harvests increased in 2019 compared to last year due to favourable rains and improved overall security. However, Syrians are unable to bear the burden of rising prices and lack of income.
- FAO urgently requires USD 114.4 million to support families, including growing numbers of households headed by women, to ensure affordable and modernized irrigation systems, access to certified good quality seeds, micro-enterprise, livestock and crop sector support.

BACKGROUND

The Syrian Arab Republic has witnessed almost nine years of crisis, during which millions of Syrians faced displacement – in many cases, multiple times – losing livelihoods and productive assets along the way, while facing rising prices with the collapse of the currency. The impact of past and ongoing insecurity drives humanitarian needs, gravely affecting the population's food security and livelihoods. Across the country, 6.5 million Syrians are severely food insecure and in need of food and livelihoods support to strengthen their resilience. An additional 2.5 million people are at risk of food insecurity.

Despite a reduction of violence in many parts of the country last year, the underlying vulnerability of the population is worrisome. Insufficient infrastructure, limited economic opportunities and increased fuel and commodity prices are further intensifying the situation and restricting Syrians' purchasing power, pushing them to resort to harmful coping strategies. According to a joint FAO/WFP CFSAM, these negative coping strategies include selling productive assets, often at reduced prices, reducing dietary diversity, and cutting the number of daily meals.

Conflict-induced migration continues to be a main driver of food insecurity. The number of people internally displaced is currently estimated at 5.9 million people (Inter-Agency Population Task Force, May 2019). New displacements have been reported in northwest Syrian Arab Republic (Aleppo, Idlib and Hama governorates) and is estimated that around 518 000 people have fled the ongoing conflict since May 2019. Those returning to their homes after escaping conflict face major challenges to restart their lives. In rural areas, access to land irrigation and agricultural inputs are problematic and the numbers affected are increasing. In 2018, around 800 000 internally displaced people, mostly farmers, returned to their places of origin according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. In the first half of 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that an additional 130 000 people have returned.

CHALLENGES FACING FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

Good rains in the 2018/2019 agricultural season and improved overall security led to increased harvests compared to last year, according to the latest joint CFSAM. Wheat production has almost doubled from last year's 29-year low of 1.2 million tonnes to 2.2 million tonnes, but it is still 40 percent below the pre-crisis average of 4.1 million tonnes (2002–2011). On the other hand, barley production estimate, at 1.3 million tonnes, is higher than the average pre-crisis production levels. Unlike wheat, which is used almost equally for animal feed and human consumption, barley is predominantly used for animal feed.

High production and transportation costs and lack of quality of inputs are causing concerns for farmers. The insufficient availability of farm machinery proves a main agricultural constraint for crop production. Also a cause of concern are the rising food prices, which have been gradually increasing over the past 12 to 14 months because of higher fuel prices and a continuous depreciation of the Syrian Pound on the informal exchange market.

Field fires, not unusual during harvesting, were more frequent and severe in 2019 due to the high temperatures and strong winds in May and early June. The Government estimates that about 85 000 ha of crops were burnt. While accidental fires are common, there is evidence to suggest that some fires were started maliciously, particularly in areas with active conflict, the joint report has found. Individual farmers whose crops were burnt lost most if not all their livelihoods and are likely to require assistance with seeds to restart production for the next season.

Herd sizes have stabilized overall compared to last year and pasture conditions have improved, however feed prices continue to be high and the increased incidence of lumpy-skin disease pose a threat. Beekeeping, which used to be a prolific traditional industry in the country, has suffered during the crisis and concerns prevail about bee mortality resulting from the misuse of pesticides, and a lack of marketing channels for honey and bee products to guarantee livelihoods.

FAO RESPONSE, TARGETS AND

2019 PRIORITIES



278 100 people targeted

73 380 people will benefit from improved natural resource management through repaired irrigation equipment and clear irrigation channels, modern water use practices, revived local water management groups and enhanced capacity of local technical institutions to manage and monitor the use of water resources



63 000 people will benefit from increased access to improved certified seeds through resuming seed multiplication and reconstituting a system of out-growers producing quality seed



41 220 people will benefit from food production and value chain support by assisting women smallholders in rural areas to develop and run their micro-enterprises



100 500 people will benefit from protected livestock assets through restocking, restoring support services (i.e. animal health and feed) and sector development promotion

RESPONSE TO DATE



75 400 people assisted directly



Provided **2 940 tonnes of improved wheat seeds** to 14 700 drought-affected farmers, allowing them to cultivate 14 700 ha of land, which is estimated to produce 29 400 tonnes of grain enough to provide food for 147 000 people.



Provided **vegetable production kits** (seeds of various varieties and modern irrigation kits) and **poultry production kits** (15 egg-laying hens and feed for three months) to 24 000 farmers.



Provided **beehives, tools and training on beekeeping** to 500 producers.



Rehabilitated **irrigation canals**, installed **water-harvesting techniques** and implemented **modern irrigation techniques** to improve 3 600 farmers' water use efficiency.

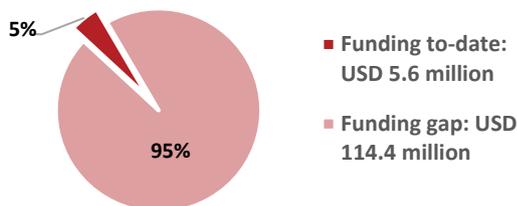


Treated **1.5 million heads of livestock** belonging to 35 000 herders.



Trained 1 200 technicians and farmers to improve their **technical skills in production**.

FUNDING



FAO still requires USD 114.4 million to assist 3.5 million Syrians under the 2019 HRP. The current budget for emergency and resilience programmes stands at USD 16.3 million.

Resource partners: The governments of Belgium, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Russia, Sweden, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the European Union.

FAO requires: USD 120 million **To assist:** 3.5 million people

COORDINATION

FAO and WFP conducted a joint CFSAM between June and July 2019 to estimate crop production for 2019 and to assess the overall food security situation. The mission team visited ten of the country's 14 governorates, but was not able to reach Idleb and Raqqa governorates due to insecurity. The report was released on 5 September 2019.

FAO supports the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform to coordinate the agriculture sector by bringing together all actors for better planning, programming and implementation of activities.

CONTACT

Mike Robson | FAO Representative | Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic | Mike.Robson@fao.org

Dominique Burgeon | Director, Emergency and Resilience Division and Strategic Programme Leader, Resilience | Rome, Italy | Dominique.Burgeon@fao.org