SITUATION UPDATE
The Sahel crisis

HIGHLIGHTS

- The lean season continues in the Sahel, and the poorest households are still facing difficulties accessing adequate food.
- Floods have caused crop losses and affected livelihoods in the Niger and Nigeria.
- With the USD 20.9 million received so far in 2013, FAO is assisting more than 1.7 million beneficiaries by supporting food and livestock production, and providing livelihood protection and technical assistance.
- Additional funding is urgently needed to support food production, particularly for cereals and vegetables during the upcoming off-season and floodplain recession agricultural campaigns from October 2013 to April 2014. This is an important opportunity to enhance vulnerable farmers’ production and income, mostly in the areas where the main season has not been successful. Funding is also urgently required for protection of animal health and livestock restocking.

PERSISTENT FOOD INSECURITY BEFORE THE END OF THE LEAN SEASON

Despite an expected average to good agropastoral production situation, food insecurity still remains

According to the Regional Consultation of the Regional information system for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC) held in September 2013 in Niamey, the Niger, expected yields will be equal to or higher than the 1971-2000 average in the Sahel region. However, lower yields are expected in some areas of northern Senegal, the regions of Tillaberi, Tahoua and eastern Zinder in the Niger, the Wilaya of Gorgol and Guidimakha in Mauritania and the Lake and Biltine regions in Chad. Locally, rice yields will be affected by the floods in northern Benin, the River area in the Niger and in the Gambia.

The locust situation remains generally calm in the region with potential small-scale breeding in October. Nonetheless the situation should be monitored closely.

According to PREGEC estimations for the Sahel and West Africa, it is expected that cereal production would be 7 percent higher compared with the 2012-2013 campaign if the current rainfall trend is maintained and rains continue to fall until October 2013. In case of an early cessation of rains, particularly in eastern Sahel, cereal production could suffer a 3 percent decrease compared with the previous season.

Recent recurrent climatic crises have disrupted agricultural livelihoods and reduced the agricultural productive capacity of poor and vulnerable households that have lost access to fertile land and quality inputs, hence increasing their dependency on markets. To ensure any revenue, the poorest rural households have resorted to selling their labour instead of working their own land. This situation, combined with a reduced commitment from donors for the agricultural sector during the main cropping season 2013-2014, will prevent those most vulnerable from benefiting from the expected 2013-2014 normal to good harvest.

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 face challenges of food access, limited access to basic services and erosion of their livelihoods. Over 1.4 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition in 2013.

Difficult lean period aggravated by population displacements and floods

After an early start of the lean season, vulnerable households depend on their food stocks when available and are forced to rely on markets during a time of high food prices. This causes a decrease in the purchasing power and additional stress on households’ food access. After several months, the most vulnerable households have sold their assets including livestock, though many are getting into debt, which only further decreases their capacity to cope with the crisis.

At the same time, insecurity in some parts of the region (in particular Mali and Nigeria) have led to large population displacements that cause further stress on host communities already affected by the recent food and nutrition crises and increase competition over access to basic services. Many refugees brought their livestock with them, adding pressure to scarce natural resources (grazing land and water), endangering animals in the region with the possible spread of animal diseases and increasing conflict between pastoralist refugees and host communities.

30 September 2013
In Nigeria people are fleeing from insecurity in the northeastern region of the country and resettling in other parts of the country or in neighbouring countries (i.e. Chad, the Niger and Cameroon).

Good rainfall during the months of August and September have covered the rainfall deficits observed in June and July in the Sahel, while causing floods that have negatively affected livelihoods. Since the beginning of the rainy season, 428 870 people were affected in West Africa. The most affected countries are the Niger (135 943), Nigeria (80 000), Senegal (73 500), Guinea Conakry (48 229), Mali (35 000) and Benin (33 000). More than 25 000 ha of crops (groundnuts, maize, millet, sorghum and rice) were destroyed and 2 217 farms damaged in Nigeria.

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

**Food prices still high in Mali, the Niger and Chad**

In the Niger, Mali and Chad, the main coarse grain prices remain above their five-year average. In the Niger, current food prices exceed the prices prevailing during the peak of the 2012 food crisis. The prices continue to increase throughout the lean season (with a peak in July-August) due to a combination of factors. In particular, since the Niger and western Chad depend on food imports from Nigeria during the lean season, the 2012 floods in Nigeria and insecurity in the northeast have disrupted trade with surrounding countries and affected food availability. Nonetheless with the forthcoming harvest this market disruption is ending slowly. The pastoral households in the Niger and Chad saw their income decrease as a result of the lower price of cattle in the Nigerian market. The situation remains worrisome also in Maradi, the Niger, which is the largest market for millet in the country, supplying almost all of the Niger and a large portion of northern Nigeria.

In the short run, only the security situation in Nigeria and the progression of the rainy season of 2013 could have a strong impact on cereal prices The first harvests will improve food availability and cause early decline in coarse grain prices, which will improve the purchasing power of households that cater to markets for food.

**FAO and WFP appeal for immediate support for Northern Mali**

An Emergency Food Security Assessment conducted jointly 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 people in northern Mali, estimated to 1.3 million, have had little chance to recover following the recent conflict and last year’s food and nutrition crisis as a result of erratic rains. As internally displaced people and refugees begin to return to their home communities, the 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 the security situation is slowly improving, the volatile security situation in the northern part continues to restrict humanitarian access.

In September, FAO and WFP appealed for immediate support to protect and rebuild livelihoods providing agricultural productive means to the most vulnerable people in the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti.

**FAO response strategy**

**FAO Strategic Resilience Framework ‘Urgent action to support the resilience of vulnerable populations’**

FAO is strongly committed to respond to the Sahel crisis under a programmatic resilience framework, anchored in the FAO 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, agro pastoralists and farmers, as well as restoring their productive assets.

In July 2013, humanitarian partners conducted a mid-term review of both the national Consolidated Appeals (CAPs) and the Sahel regional strategy. FAO, as co-leader of the food security sector, has revised the needs of the agriculture sector, that remain high in a context of persistent food insecurity and the deterioration of poverty levels in some regions of the Sahel.

In 2013, FAO is appealing for a total of **USD 113.1 million** to support almost **6 million people**.

For the second half of 2013, FAO’s proposed priority emergency assistance is focusing on the following activities:

1. **Support to rainfed, floodplain recession and off-season agricultural production**, including the following activities:
   a. distribution of agricultural inputs (food crop seeds such as sorghum, fertilizers, small agricultural tools, agricultural material to build fences, etc.), targeting the floodplain recession agriculture (October-December): production of cereals such as rice, maize, sorghum, millet, cowpeas, groundnuts, sweet potatoes and the off-season agriculture (October-December): vegetable production; introduction of drought resistant vegetable varieties;
   b. strengthening the food chain and marketing sector (storage, processing and transportation of agricultural goods); and
c. integrated food nutrition activities (nutritional education, food preparation and use and consumption diversification).

2. **Support to domestic animal protection and production**, 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**, 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**, 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.

**FUNDING URGENTLY NEEDED FOR THE NEXT AGRICULTURAL CAMPAIGNS AND PROTECTION OF LIVESTOCK**

Support to cereal and vegetable production during the off-season and the floodplain recession campaigns is a great opportunity to fight food insecurity. Activities that aim to provide adapted inputs (drought resistant seeds, tools, etc); rehabilitate degraded soils, irrigation systems and water points; as well as strengthen the productive value chains will contribute to improving household food security and resilience. The seeding period is from October to December; therefore funds are immediately needed in order to put in place relevant logistics, especially procurement of the required inputs in order to ensure assistance during preparation of the off-season campaign.

Off-season production is based on vegetable crops that contribute to improve the nutritional status of women and children. Vegetables sold in the market are a valuable source of income for vulnerable farmers. Supporting off-season and floodplain recession campaigns represent an opportunity to reach millions of vulnerable farmers that did not receive support for the main agricultural campaign. At mid-year, only a few projects related to agriculture livelihood activities have been funded through the 2013 CAP process. Including projects funded outside of the CAP process, less than half of targeted beneficiaries have been reached at the regional level.

Funding is also urgently required for activities to support the protection of animal health and livestock restocking. Providing small livestock to pastoralists help them rebuild their herds and ensure they can keep producing milk. In fact, livestock is a crucial source of food (especially for women and children) and income. These activities are essential where animals are weakened by the lack of adequate food due to deficits in fodder productions and also, livestock need to be vaccinated against and treated for disease and pests.

Interventions are complemented by capacity building activities such as training on good practices in livestock management, as well as vegetable processing and marketing.

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 are also crucial to reinforce the productive capacities and the resilience of the Sahelian populations.

The lack of adequate funding to implement emergency agriculture livelihood activities in the Sahel is preventing vulnerable households and communities from strengthening their resilience and capacities to protect their livelihoods. In absence of 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.

The main agricultural campaign, based on the production of food crops, has not been adequately funded. A stronger commitment by resource partners is needed. The remaining needs of the region are enormous. Donors and partners still have an opportunity to support households affected by food insecurity in the coming months by protecting and rebuilding their livelihoods (support to livestock, flood plain recession and off-season agriculture, October 2013 – April 2014).
### FAO’s funds received in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Beneficiaries forseen</th>
<th>Total requirements 2013 (USD millions)</th>
<th>Received funds 2013 (USD millions)</th>
<th>Unmet requirements (USD millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>1 080 600</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cameroon</td>
<td>50 800</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>715 800</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>The Gambia</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>840 000</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>786 000</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Nigeria</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Niger</td>
<td>1 774 200</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Senegal</td>
<td>483 500</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 928 900</strong></td>
<td><strong>113.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>92.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the contributions received so far, approximately USD 20.9 million (18.5 percent of the appeal), FAO has supported 1.7 million vulnerable farmers, herders and agropastoralists in the Sahel.

The assistance to farmers will allow them to quickly resume production with the distribution 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. This will enable 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 lives and livelihoods as quickly as possible.

FAO’s assistance also includes drought-related livestock protection. Herders are provided with small livestock to help rebuild their herds and ensure they can keep producing milk. Livestock, a crucial source of food (especially for women and children) and income, is vaccinated against, and treated, for disease and pests.

Interventions are complemented by capacity-building activities such as training on good practices in livestock management, as well as vegetable processing and marketing.

FAO also provides emergency assistance to families affected by population displacements in the Sahel. In Chad, refugees from Sudan and the Central African Republic, as well as IDPs 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 (IDPs 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

- [FAO and emergencies](http://www.fao.org/emergencies/regions/west-africa/en/)

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