

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY SECTOR UPDATE



Community members in Malawi receive PICS bags to improve food security and protect agricultural livelihoods. *Photo by Hira Channa/USAID*

Strengthening Crop Production in Southern Africa

Stable crop production is crucial for improving food security and reducing poverty in Southern Africa. Despite average rainfall and harvests in the 2016/2017 agricultural season, smallholder-farming communities that cultivate maize in Southern Africa faced two key post-harvest challenges: pests, such as grain borers and weevils, and reduced profits. Pest infestations can result in a post-harvest storage loss of up to 30 percent in six months. Additionally, immediately selling harvest yields reduces profits for smallholder farmers, as food prices typically decrease following the harvest due to increased food availability.

With \$275,000 in FY 2017 funding, USAID/OFDA supported Purdue University to strengthen food security in central and southern Malawi by distributing Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags, which prevent pest infestations and mold growth. With USAID/OFDA funding, Purdue University also provided loans to smallholder farmers—offsetting immediate cash needs following the harvest and enabling farmers to store harvests for sale when food prices increase—as part of a pilot program to observe the effect of loans on sale and storage behaviors.

Improving Livestock Vaccination Strategies in East Africa

Recurrent livestock disease outbreaks, such as Rift Valley fever, can have detrimental effects on livelihoods for pastoralist communities in East Africa. Rift Valley fever—a mosquito-borne viral disease—can spread rapidly in rural areas following period of above-average rainfall. Although livestock vaccinations are the most effective preventive measure, delayed responses to outbreaks have limited the effectiveness of ongoing vaccination campaigns.

Sector Overview

Natural disasters—such as drought, floods, and insect infestations—and conflict can have critical impacts on the food security and livelihoods of affected populations. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports agriculture and food security interventions that increase livelihood opportunities and address the immediate needs of disaster-affected populations unable to meet their basic food requirements. USAID/OFDA also works to strengthen local disaster response capacity and increase community resilience to shocks that could negatively affect agricultural activities and food security.

In the aftermath of disasters, USAID/OFDA supports agricultural infrastructure rehabilitation and economic recovery by providing agriculture-based livelihood assistance. USAID/OFDA-funded programs also target livestock and fisheries, support pest control initiatives, assist animal health endeavors, and supply agricultural inputs to vulnerable households. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$124.5 million to UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to support agriculture and food security activities in 30 countries.



In FY 2017, USAID/OFDA supported the distribution of PICS bags to improve harvest storage in Malawi. *Photo courtesy of Hira Channa/USAID.*

In FY 2017, USAID/OFDA partner the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) began a two-year project to develop improved Rift Valley fever vaccination strategies that incorporate preventive vaccination measures in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. By conducting research, performing field and laboratory response studies, and identifying contributing factors to outbreaks, ILRI is developing new, effective livestock vaccination strategies in East Africa.

Empowering Local Farmers Through Fall Armyworm Monitoring

Fall armyworm (FAW) feed on a variety of staple crops—including barley, maize, millet, rice, sorghum, sugarcane, teff, and wheat—in disaster-prone areas, threatening the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable populations if infestations are uncontrolled. In FY 2017, USAID/OFDA supported a disaster risk reduction program through the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to conduct FAW monitoring activities in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. The project aimed to strengthen national and regional capacities and empower farmers and local communities to forecast, prevent, monitor, and control FAW outbreaks. In addition, USAID/OFDA supported field assessments on the impacts of FAW on maize crops in Southern Africa, as well as FAW monitoring in the region.

Through USAID's Bureau for Food Security, USAID/OFDA also supported the development of a practical field manual to scout, monitor, prevent, and manage the effects of FAW. Following a two-day workshop in Uganda that brought together more than 55 agricultural experts and researchers, the International Center for Maize and Wheat Improvement is developing a field guide to complement the USAID/OFDA-funded FAO project and contribute to effective FAW control and prevention. In addition, USAID/OFDA held a two-day FAW awareness and management workshop in Ethiopia with relevant stakeholders in FY 2017.

Strengthening Regional Locust Prevention in the Caucasus and Central Asia

Locusts are a persistent threat to crops—including cotton, fruit, legumes, tobacco, vegetables, and wheat—and pasture in the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. A locust outbreak in these areas could potentially infest more than 25 million hectares of cultivated and grazing land, negatively affecting the food security and livelihoods of up to 20 million people in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, according to FAO.

From FY 2011–2017, USAID/OFDA supported FAO to conduct a multi-year prevention program in the Caucasus and Central Asia that provides training, material support, and technical assistance to strengthen national and regional locust surveillance, monitoring, reporting, and early warning systems. By bolstering regional and national locust management, FAO improved mitigation and response efforts, limiting the risks posed by locusts to human health, crops, and graze lands for livestock. With USAID/OFDA support, FAO also helped institutionalize effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Improving Food Security Analysis in Mozambique

Mozambique, particularly in central and southern provinces, experienced intense drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon in 2016, resulting in decreased agricultural production and livestock holdings, reduced food availability, and rising food prices. These factors—combined with limited market access, reduced livelihood opportunities, and limited resiliency to climate shocks such as cyclones, droughts, and floods—led to a deterioration of food security conditions in Mozambique. Although above-average national crop production in the 2016/2017 agricultural season resulted in improved food security in the country, slow recovery contributes to continued food insecurity. With \$295,500 in FY 2017 funding, USAID/OFDA supported FAO to strengthen local capacity to monitor food and nutrition security, bolster early warning systems, and conduct outreach activities.

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