



Sahel: Food and Nutrition Crisis

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

- **37 million people severely or moderately food insecure** including **6.3 million in need of emergency food assistance**
- **5.9 million children** expected to suffer from **acute malnutrition** including 1.9 million from its most severe form from June 2016 onwards
- **Under nutrition kills more than 550 000 children each year** in the Sahel
- **4.5 million forcibly displaced:**
1 million refugees,
2.5 million internally displaced people
and 1 million returnees

The EU supports **AGIR**, an alliance for resilience building in West Africa/Sahel. 17 countries participate in this initiative to reduce chronic under-nutrition and achieve 'Zero Hunger' by 2032.

Humanitarian funding for the Sahel food & nutrition crisis:

- **2016: €203.7 million**

Sources:
CILSS/WFP/COHA/FAO/
UNICEF

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



* All the latest ECHO Factsheets:
bit.ly/echo-fs



Nutrition care for children in Abeche regional hospital, in eastern Chad. ©WFP/Rein Skullerud

Key messages

- The European Union is one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel. As such, its assistance to this region has been reaffirmed and has reached over **EUR 203 million so far in 2016**. The funding will support the **1.2 million Sahelian people affected by food insecurity** as well as the treatment of **550 000 children affected by severe acute malnutrition**. This represents **a quarter of all food security needs** and **43% of child malnutrition care needs** in the Sahel.
- The ongoing **food and nutrition*** crisis in the Sahel is compounded by the **erosion of people's resilience**, due to the quick succession of the crises, the absence of basic services and the ramifications of **conflicts** in the region.
- The latest surveys conducted indicate a **deterioration** of the nutritional status in many Sahel countries. The situation in northern Nigeria and Chad is quite critical, even more as the lean season has started.
- Emergency needs in the Sahel will persist unless the **root causes of food insecurity and under nutrition are addressed**, and the resilience of the poorest people is strengthened. The European Commission has championed the creation of **AGIR***, a global alliance to strengthen resilience in West Africa which has set itself a 'Zero Hunger' goal by 2032.
- The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) is contributing to the resilience objective of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. Through this contribution, the aim is to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable communities and more concretely link relief, rehabilitation and development efforts

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

The Sahel region is still reeling from the aftershocks of **four consecutive food and nutrition crises** (2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012) with many vulnerable households struggling to recover. The food security situation is **exacerbated by the spill over from conflicts** in Mali, northern Nigeria, Libya and the Central African Republic.

Approximately 20% of the population - at least 25 million people - are considered extremely poor, requiring some form of social protection. Although the majority of people in the Sahel live from agriculture, many poor households barely cover 20% of their food needs through farming. The successive food crises and numerous conflicts have **severely eroded the resilience of the poorest** and most affected populations, including of those communities that are hosting refugees. Their struggle to meet their daily food requirements has become nearly permanent. Dragged into a spiral of poverty, many families have just one meal a day during the lean season. The more desperate ones are driven to migration, debt or exploitative labour.

To break the endless cycle of emergencies in the Sahel, the **underlying causes of the chronic food insecurity and high malnutrition rates need to be addressed**. These causes include extreme poverty and inequality, limited access to basic services, environmental degradation, climate change and population growth, which at 3% rate per year is one of the highest in the world. It outstrips economic growth and agricultural progress. At current rates the population of Niger, where 1.3 million children suffer from acute malnutrition each year, doubles every 20 years. This contributes to the ever growing caseload of severely undernourished children.

Most of these structural causes require determined joint efforts by national governments, development and humanitarian donors to actually tackle these issues and reduce the impact of what could be called a **"resilience deficit crisis"**.

Major needs and related problems

The humanitarian situation in the Sahel remains **very fragile**. Nearly **one quarter of the population is currently facing moderate or severe food insecurity** in nine Sahelian countries: Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria.

According to the figures of the Harmonised Framework (Cadre Harmonisé in French) survey carried out at the beginning of 2016, **37 million people are food insecure** in the Sahel, with **6.3 million (21%) of them facing severe food insecurity and requiring emergency assistance**, a figure that could increase to 8.3 million from June to August, the so-called lean season or period between harvests when food stocks are depleted and the situation of hundreds of thousands of families tends to quickly deteriorate.

The **nutrition situation is very critical** overall in the region. An estimated 5.9 million children under age five are expected to suffer from moderate acute malnutrition in the course of 2016, of which **1.9 million are at risk of Severe Acute Malnutrition**. This represents an **increase of 27%** compared to last year. Thus, nutrition care and supplementary feeding remain a priority.

The Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has resulted in indiscriminate violence against civilians on a massive scale, forcing 2.2 million people out of their homes and disrupting trade and agriculture. Health centres have been closed and people are on the run, hampering efforts to detect and help the undernourished. **Currently, Northern Nigeria alone accounts for more than 50% of the severely food insecure**, with 3.4 million people in need of immediate assistance.

In other parts of the Sahel, **refugees and "returnees"** from Mali, the Central African Republic and Sudan continue to rely on humanitarian assistance to cover their basic needs.



The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

The severe food and nutrition crisis in 2012-2013 prompted an unprecedented scale-up of humanitarian aid. With a significant contribution of **€203.7 million in EU humanitarian aid in 2016**, the European Commission will continue to support life-saving aid, covering over a quarter of all food security needs and 43% of child malnutrition treatment needs. The Commission's funding will allow its partners to provide a food or cash assistance to 1.2 million people affected by food insecurity and to treat 550 000 severely under-nourished children within national health systems.

Activities funded will include [food assistance](#)* in the form of cash transfers, vouchers and in-kind food rations, usually provided during the lean season; also the provision of Ready-To-Use Food and essential drugs to severely under-nourished children, equipment of health centres with water and hygiene systems, training and supervision of staff and screening of children at risk. The Commission will also pursue its assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced people from Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and the Central African Republic. In the region, the EU has successfully piloted cash transfer and free health care programmes as social protection measures.

Since 2015, the European Commission and the United Kingdom have been implementing a joint programme - "Providing Humanitarian Assistance to Sahel Emergencies" (PHASE) - with an initial period of three years. This partnership aims at responding to three major humanitarian challenges in the Sahel: under nutrition and food insecurity, conflict-related needs such as displacement and protection, and the rise of epidemics and other natural hazards. By joining forces and pooling resources, the European Commission and the UK seek to have a better impact on addressing life-threatening crises, but also in encouraging resilience building approaches and policies to take hold in the region.

In 2016, the European Commission's humanitarian action in the Sahel will continue to be guided by the 2014-2016 UN Sahel Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Adapting to the particular context of the Sahel, the response strategy aims to strike a balance between **responding to immediate needs** triggered by conflicts and disasters and **addressing chronic vulnerability** so as to reverse the pattern of growing humanitarian needs, **building the resilience** of the most vulnerable.

AGIR and the EU Trust Fund

The European Commission has championed the creation of **AGIR, the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative** in the Sahel and West Africa. Launched in December 2012, the initiative brings together West African governments, regional organizations, donors and the aid community around a "Zero Hunger" goal by 2032.

Through AGIR, the West African/Sahel governments and their development partners are encouraged to reduce chronic malnutrition, improve agricultural production and livelihoods, develop and strengthen social safety nets so as to prevent the most vulnerable from repeatedly falling into crisis. So far, six out of the 17 participating countries have approved their National Resilience Priorities at political level. However, efforts have to be stepped up to translate these priorities into effective action.

With an overall budget of **€1.8 billion** in EU contributions from the EU budget, the European Development Fund, and Member States, the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa has been created to address the crises in the regions of Sahel, Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa. The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) is contributing **€10 million** in 2016 to the resilience objective of this Trust Fund. This includes actions linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD). They entail supporting local communities in terms of food security and basic services for local populations - in particular the most vulnerable, as well as the refugees and displaced people.



Examples of humanitarian projects

Food assistance



In **Niger***, the UN World Food Programme provided vulnerable households with food assistance, in return for their efforts to regenerate the land. Besides food, the beneficiaries involved in this project receive part of the land they have been working as a lease, enabling them to grow crops for their families. ©WFP/Tim Dirven supported by the EU

In **Burkina Faso***, in the remote region of Tapoa, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) implements cash-for-work programmes. In exchange for money to buy food, 900 households have helped to build embankments around rice fields in order to retain rainwater and enhance future crops. In total, each worker received €90 over two months, the equivalent of about three 100kg bags of sorghum. Overall, the EU has enabled ACF to assist 40 000 people in the region. ©Raphael de Bengy



Prevention and management of under-nutrition



In the region of Guidimakha, **Mauritania**, EU partner Action Against Hunger is ensuring that severely undernourished children are identified and treated in local health centres and mobile clinics. The project funded by the Commission and DFID also includes activities to prevent under-nutrition, such as education and theatre sessions with the communities to pass messages on nutrition and hygiene habits that can help prevent this disease. ©ECHO/DFID/ACF/S.Cherkaoui

Resilience building

In the Kanem region of Chad* the European Commission and DFID support Action Against Hunger and Medecins du Monde's joint efforts to provide an integrated response to the food, health and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable populations, while at the same time building their resilience to external shocks. Through the project, for instance cash is provided to households at risk of acute under nutrition and livelihood activities are promoted such as gardening, rain fed crops, grain banks and livestock food banks. In total, 5.300 families benefit from the project. ©EU/ECHO/Anouk Delafortrie

