



SOMALI AGRICULTURE

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KEY FACTS

Cultivated Land

Only 1.6 percent of Somalia's total land area is cultivated, and 69 percent is permanent pasture.

Cash Crops

Before the civil war bananas, sugarcane and frankincense, constituted the nation's major commercial crops with hundreds of thousands of tons in exports in the 1990s.

Staple Crops

Maize, sorghum, rice, and cowpea are the most important staple foods for Somalis.

Building Drought Resilience

During the Somalia famine of 2011, the country's agriculture sector took a devastating hit from prolonged drought that led to acute shortages of water for irrigation. Somalia's rivers run dry starving fields of much needed water leading to food shortages and food price hikes.

The cumulative impact of two decades of conflict also worsened a situation of protracted and complex emergency, which has eroded livelihoods and led to increased vulnerability to food insecurity. In the midst of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, hunger and malnutrition are some of the major causes of suffering for significant sections of the population.

Due to intermittent conflict, floods, drought, disease outbreaks, high unemployment and very limited access to basic services and humanitarian space, a section of Somali families increasingly face challenges to maintain a food secure and well-nourished household. This also curtails agricultural production leading to poor harvests and

significant cereal shortfalls. Limited access to quality health care, education services and poor childcare practices are direct results of the conflict. As a result, Somalia has some of the world's highest levels of malnutrition according to World Health Organization standards.

Emergency interventions

FAO's emergency interventions in Somalia include immediate life-saving measures and restoring productive capacities and assets in the shortest possible timeframe. These interventions simultaneously bridge the gap between short-term responses and longer-term needs. FAO designs its interventions based on specific livelihood requirements through cash injections at household level in exchange of labor while restoring the productive assets. The cash injections to the households, who are in crisis, are tailored to cover the cost of the minimum food basket and in the meantime the work carried out by the same household is aimed at improving productive assets.

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Agriculture inputs distribution is one of the FAO's key emergency interventions. Agriculture inputs packages are designed/tailored to suit different agro-ecological/conditions of Somalia farmers and primarily consist of riverine and agro-pastoral packages. The comprehensive riverine package to cover 1 hectare of cultivable land includes high quality and improved 20 kg of Maize and 10kg of Cowpea seeds, 110 grams of assorted vegetable seeds (Tomato, Onion, Watermelon, Carrot and Capsicum Seeds), 3 sets of critical irrigation support and land preparation support through provision of tractor hours. Agro-pastoral package to cover 1 to 2 hectares of cultivable land includes high quality 15 to 30 kg of Sorghum and 10 to 20kg Cowpea seeds. In Sesame growing areas, Sesame package includes high quality and improved 8kg of Sesame seeds together with land preparation support through provision of tractor hours to cover 1 hectare of cultivable land.

Key achievements

In the aftermath of the 2011 famine, FAO's response reached over 344, 000 households in Somalia's most drought affected regions of Shabelle, Bay and Bakool. Crop yield/production estimates revealed that agriculture inputs distribution interventions improved Maize crop yields in the range of 50 to 100 percent increment and incase of Sesame, at least 30 percent incremental yield recorded. The targeted households has shown keen interest in Irrigation and land preparation activities and urged FAO to continue to implement these type of activities in future as they believe that these activities can impact significantly on their crop production directly and income and livelihoods indirectly.

The introduction of land preparation services such as vouchers for tractor-aided cultivation in some areas last season (October-December 2012) has already led to mass mobilization of the private sector in availing available more tractors on rental basis.



Mechanization

Why Agriculture?

Agriculture is an important economic activity in Somalia not only in terms of meeting the food needs of the population but also in terms of generating income through crop sales and agricultural labor opportunities. With roughly 50 percent of population's cereal requirements met through domestic production, Agriculture is a major component particularly for two of the main rural livelihood systems in the Horn of Africa country: Agro-pastoralist, mix of agriculture and livestock production based livelihood and Agriculturalist, agriculture based livelihood.

Crop production performance and its potential is determined by the bi-modal rainfall. The two main agricultural seasons are: *Gu* crop production, from April to June and *Deyr* crop production, from October to December.

Two areas are considered high potential for crop production with rainfall ranging from 400mm to 600mm: a small area in the Northwest (west of Hargeisa) and a much larger inter-riverine area between the Shabelle and Juba river valleys.

There are four primary agricultural zones in Somalia:

- ◇ Northwest in parts of Awdal and W. Galbeed - rainfed maize and sorghum with some livestock herdings
- ◇ Coastal Cowpea Belt Zone in Central and Southern Somalia
- ◇ Shabelle and Juba Riverine Valleys - rainfed and irrigated maize, with sesame cash crops
- ◇ Sorghum Belt in Bay and Bakool Region - rainfed sorghum with livestock production.



Farmer Field Schools

Farmer Field School (FFS) was identified as one of the means of providing increase in agricultural production through a participatory, learning discovery extension approach where farmers are empowered to make sound and informed production decisions on their farms in Somalia. The final goal of FFS is to make farmers their own extension agents.

As part of building rural advisory services at the grassroots level in all the regions of Somalia, FAO has embarked on FFS since 2006. During the past year, 2011, over 100 facilitators were trained and have further contributed to training 2500 farmers in different regions of Somalia.

Building on past experiences, FAO has shifted this year, 2012 to full adoption of season long FFS. Two comprehensive season long FFSs with an average 75 days each, were conducted in Somaliland. The first for irrigated agriculture at Amoud University and the second for rain fed agriculture at Aburin Reseach

Centre. Apart from the international consultants: Master Trainers, IPPM, Fruits and plant breeding scientists participated to training the facilitators.

The FFSs were also combined with FAO Somalia intervention for cleaning and selection of local varieties together with testing recommended new varieties where the FFSs trainees had the chance to contribute to the observations through out the season and selection of the best performing varieties for onward multiplication and dissemination.

The two trainings incorporated for the first time the Field Business School (FBS) for further complementariness of FFS with the implementation of FAO Somalia Rural Commercialization Model which main focus is capacity development and empowerment of producers organizations.



Reviving Somalia's Quality Seed Production

A must move towards modern Agriculture

Just like anywhere else in the world, agricultural success in Somalia is partly linked to availability and access to improved quality of genetic material and fertilizers. Despite a potential for booming agricultural production, yields are low mainly due to the lack, among others, of improved varieties of seeds. Consequently, agriculture tends to stagnate at subsistence levels with households struggling to meet their day-to-day food needs. To fill this gap, FAO is implementing a number of activities aimed at improving maize, sesame and banana growing, funded by the European Union and the Italian Cooperation.

Maize Seed Production



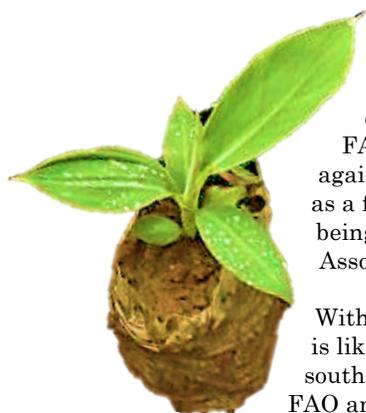
Maize remains one of Somalia's most imported staple foods, making about two thirds of domestic consumption. Somalia has the potential to meet its domestic food demand if the country realizes full agricultural production capacities. Bay, Lower and Middle Shabelle regions of southern Somalia form the country's breadbasket producing over 80 percent of domestic cereal output. Re-sowing—planting grain instead of seeds—yields approximately 0.8-1.2 T/ha. To increase agricultural output, development of systems to produce improved seeds, will go a long way in boosting production by smallholder farmers. Against this background, FAO has and continues to support farmers' associations and cooperatives to become the leading commercial seed enterprises in Merca, southern Somalia. Improved seed varieties have already demonstrated an estimated 50 percent increment in yield. FAO also trained seed production technicians and conducted performance and market tests for about 16 varieties of maize seeds. Seed production during the last five cropping seasons has led to production of an average of 750 MT per season.

Sesame Seed Production



With limited global output of sesame, international demand is on the rise, as is the product's price. Somalia is one of the few countries in the world, where sesame is grown as a traditional crop. The traditional sesame crop rotation with maize benefits both crops. Unfortunately local sesame landraces are contaminated and genetically exhausted. Due to the poor genetic value, yields are low (350-420 kg/ha) and the seed quality is poor. Consequently, Somalis are not benefiting from sesame, as they should due to these bottlenecks. FAO has developed a genetic improvement programme, which has substantially improved the seed quality and crop yield. Under this activity, FAO has supported and equipped a Sesame Growers Association, trained two field technicians, and conducted market and performance tests on six sesame varieties. As a result of these initiatives, up to about 512 MT of improved seeds has been produced, sufficient to plant up to 85,000 ha. FAO has also distributed sesame seeds as part of its emergency programme during the last three cropping season.

Reviving Somalia's Banana cropping



Prior to 1991, Somalia was renowned for its thriving banana industry. However, insecurity, lack of inputs, and poor infrastructure, has over the last two decades led to a devastating decline and eventual collapse of banana exports. To revive what was once Somalia's leading source of foreign earnings, FAO has developed 5 banana varieties found to be virus free after testing them against local ones. Out of the five varieties, *Somali banana growers chose Williams*, as a favorite variety tolerant to virus attacks and drought. Over 60,000 seedlings are being produced and made available to members of the Somalia Banana Growers Association.

With expression of interest by potential banana buyers in Iran and Turkey, Somalia is likely to revive its past glory in the long run. With peace slowly returning to southern Somalia, this makes investment in the banana industry a key priority for FAO and its national and international partners.

BETTER SEEDS, HIGHER YIELDS



FAO's Livestock Activities are funded by

