



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC AND FAO

## BUILDING RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

The Syrian Arab Republic joined FAO in 1945 and cooperation was strengthened with the opening of an FAO representation in 1978. Over the years, collaboration has spanned all areas of the agricultural sector, with an emphasis on enhancing agricultural production and rural development as well as normative support. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, resilience building has been a major component of FAO activities, with interventions targeting households affected by the conflict and host communities across the country.



**Established in 1978, the FAO Representation in Syria is pleased to be celebrating its 40th anniversary.**

Over 40 years of significant cooperation have produced notable results in the Syrian agriculture sector. Since the beginning of the crisis, however, given the staggering number of food-insecure people in the country, FAO has shifted the focus of its support from technical assistance to resilience building for food and nutrition security.

A major challenge ahead is to ensure that the millions of Syrian migrants are able to return to their lands to resume production activities and guarantee a better future for themselves and their children.



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### CONTACT

**Mr Michael Robson**  
**FAO Representative in Syria**

FAO Representation  
Mazeh - East Villas - Al Farabi Street - Al Duha Avenue  
10709 Damascus, Syria  
Tel.: +963 11 6118358  
E-mail: [FAO-SY@fao.org](mailto:FAO-SY@fao.org)

### Matching FAO's expertise to Syria's development priorities

In light of the current humanitarian crisis affecting Syria, an **FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF)** has not yet been developed. Instead, the Organization developed a Plan of Action to shape FAO's assistance in the country.

For **2016-2017**, this centred on four priority areas:

- ➔ Improving households food security and nutrition through support to local smallholder crop and livestock production
- ➔ Promoting sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities for households and communities
- ➔ Enhancing sustainable use of natural resources
- ➔ Strengthening the capacity of targeted institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders

The Plan of Action reflects Government priorities, while also contributing to the 2016-2017 UN Strategic Framework for Syria, which has been extended through 2018.

FAO has taken steps to conduct a comprehensive review of the agriculture sector with a view to proposing a series of policy options for decision makers. The process will include extensive stakeholder consultations, including Government counterparts, donor organizations, UN and international organizations, NGOs and the private sector. These are expected to lead to the formulation of comprehensive development programmes and projects beyond humanitarian interventions. The process will also inform Government strategies and programmes for the agriculture sector, set priorities for the country's achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (2030) and eventually shape a fully-fledged FAO Country Programming Framework.

## Facing the crisis

Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives in the seven-year Syrian crisis while countless civilians have been injured and others have been forced to flee their homes. In all, some 6.3 million people have been displaced within the country. Since the beginning of the crisis, FAO has dedicated major efforts to help families overcome the challenges caused by the crisis, with a key immediate aim being to enable the resumption of production activities to sustain and improve people's livelihoods.

“Rural development and food security are central to the global response to the refugee crisis.”

FAO Director-General

### Improving natural resource management for food production

In 2017, through an FAO project, over 40 000 households have resumed their production activities by improved access to water. As part of these efforts, FAO has rehabilitated a 26 km irrigation canal located in Homs and Hama governorates, which is considered the largest agricultural area in Syria.

In addition, 60 households have benefited from the conversion of livestock manure into a domestic renewable fuel source (biogas) and biofertilizer, employed for cooking and household vegetable production, respectively. The positive impacts of the project have been twofold: it has allowed beneficiaries to save on the cost of fuel purchases, and it has contributed to protection of the local environment by limiting tree cutting for firewood and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from livestock manure.

### Sustainable rural employment opportunities for women

Owing to the displacement of people and disruption of households, in many cases changes in roles have led to women becoming the sole breadwinner of the family.

In 2017, FAO supported 2 500 female-headed households by providing them productive assets and training to start their own small businesses and earn an income. Project participants have improved their skills in production and marketing of different agricultural products: including honey, thanks to training in beekeeping activities; food production and processing, including milk, poultry, mushrooms and soap products.

### Building capacities of local institutions and stakeholders for resilient agricultural systems

According to an FAO damage and losses assessment carried out in 2016, Syria's agriculture sector has suffered damage amounting to US\$16 billion. This is coupled with the severe loss of human capital in the sector: countless experts and qualified technical staff

have been forced to leave Syria for safety and security reasons and to seek better living opportunities in other countries.

FAO is working hand-in-hand with the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform as well as other line ministries and stakeholders to restore the country's physical infrastructure and rebuild human capital through tailored training programmes. The aim is to achieve recovery of the overall agriculture sector, including the country's former state-of-the-art research centres.

At the household level, FAO training farmers in good agricultural practices, adaptation to climate change, irrigation management and other key areas to build resilience against food and nutrition in-security.

### Protecting livestock

FAO has treated over 11 million head of livestock to support the food and nutrition security of 1.4 million livestock-dependent people since the beginning of the crisis. In 2017, 39 000 households treated 1.3 million heads of animals against the main parasites, thereby protecting their primary source of income.

### Wheat product for farming households' food security

Wheat production in Syria has been reduced to less than half of its pre-crisis volume, thereby falling short of the population's staple food needs. To tackle this shortfall, FAO has supported household-level production of more than 200 000 tonnes of wheat grain to cover the cereal needs of more than 1.1 million people. During the 2016/17 season, FAO reached 30 600 households in key wheat production areas of all governorates by distributing wheat and grain seeds. This resulted in an overall of production of 61 200 tonnes of grain – sufficient to feed about 75 000 households.



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