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Emergencies

KEY FACTS

- More than 200 million people are affected by natural disasters every year. In 2010, this included floods in Pakistan, an earthquake in Haiti and drought in the Niger and the Horn of Africa.
- Almost 100 countries have been significantly affected by high food prices in recent years. In 2010, the food crisis worsened, and in January 2011, the FAO food price index had again risen by 3.4 percent.
- There are 70 situations of current or potential conflict in the world and around 20 countries in protracted crisis.
- Among the 80 new infectious diseases identified since 1970, 70 percent are of animal origin and pose a threat to food supplies across the globe.
- Since 2004, over 60 countries have been affected by avian influenza; the virus remains endemic in five countries.
- Approximately 1 billion people are malnourished in the world today.
- In 2011, FAO is operating nearly 500 emergency projects – valued at around US\$1 billion – in over 100 countries.

Protect, restore, enhance: FAO's role in emergencies

Emergencies can arise from any number of natural causes – hurricanes, floods, drought, animal and plant diseases or pests – or be created or exacerbated by human factors such as market failures or conflict. Rural populations in the developing world tend to be the most vulnerable to emergencies. Over 75 percent of them depend almost exclusively on agriculture for their food security and livelihoods. FAO's expertise in farming, livestock, fisheries and forestry is crucial in emergency response and rehabilitation efforts.

How an emergency operation unfolds

In responding to an emergency that requires exceptional external assistance, FAO collaborates with many partners, including governments, other UN organizations and humanitarian groups. FAO acts on the request of and in consultation with affected member states.

Among FAO's first steps are the establishment of an Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordination Unit and the activation of the Food Security Cluster, a food security platform co-led by FAO and the World Food Programme for the coordination of food security responses in humanitarian crises.

Depending on the extent and nature of the crisis, FAO may launch a specific needs assessment or participate in a joint or interagency assessment.

Together with its partners, FAO designs a rehabilitation programme and mobilizes funds to implement it. This is often achieved in the context of an appeal launched by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and in consultation with the authorities of the affected countries.

FAO manages agricultural livelihoods protection and recovery programmes. FAO's emergency activities include procuring



Haitian farmers water crops with a treadle pump one year after the earthquake.

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material assets, such as seeds, livestock and tools, as well as repairs to vital agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation systems.

Given the Organization's development mandate and institutional ability to pass seamlessly from post-emergency rehabilitation to long-term development assistance, FAO designs its emergency interventions to help communities upgrade their skills and sustainably improve their farms. When the crisis ends, FAO seeks to phase out its emergency presence by strengthening the capacity of local NGOs and other relevant organizations.

Emergency funding approved 2006-2010 (US\$)

	2006	2007	2008	2009 *	2010 *
Total approvals	264 287 000	327 029 000	384 269 000	582 605 588	416 102 655

* includes EU Food Facility

Source: FAO

FAO: before, during and after emergencies

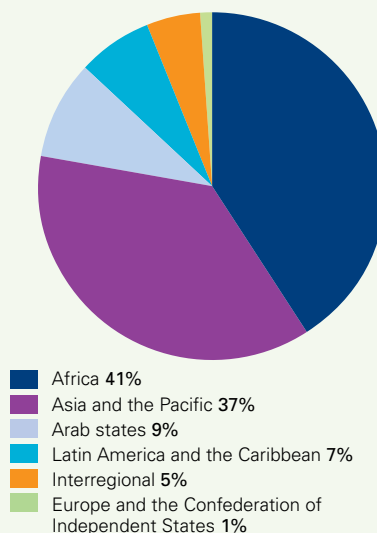
With decades of experience in responding to food and agricultural emergencies and broad technical expertise, FAO provides leadership and timely assistance in:

- **Preparedness and prevention:** FAO's early warning systems highlight potential emergencies, while disaster preparedness and contingency planning programmes help countries and partners minimize the impact of disasters on the food and livelihood security of affected populations.
- **Response:** FAO assesses urgent needs, monitors food security, formulates rehabilitation strategies and implements recovery programmes.
- **Transition:** FAO provides extensive technical expertise and development

experience to help countries and people affected by emergencies successfully make the transition from short-term relief to longer-term rehabilitation. Post-emergency situations provide an opportunity to focus on increasing the resilience of communities to future hazards; FAO focuses on building back better and smarter.

- **Coordination and technical assistance:** As the lead UN agency in agriculture, FAO provides technical advice and coordination for agricultural interventions undertaken by all development partners, including NGOs, civil society and other UN agencies, thereby optimizing their impact.

Operationally active projects by region



Source: FAO

Specialized approach to protracted crises

In the case of protracted crises, FAO believes that responses must go beyond mobilizing emergency support and build upon the natural resilience of communities. This approach leads to more effective and longer-term recovery.

Strengthening diversity: communities that both cultivate a variety of crops and raise livestock are often flexible enough to survive disaster. For example, in the drought-prone western Sudan, communities traditionally tend some livestock in addition to raising crops, which provides them with a safety net if a harvest fails. FAO builds upon this diversity

by encouraging a shift from cropping to grazing and providing support by rehabilitating rangelands and improving access to credit and better veterinary services.

Supporting local institutions: in a protracted crisis, government and market institutions often collapse, leaving communities to fend for themselves. Traditional support networks and communities are often people's best hope for survival. FAO works on the ground to ensure that these local institutions stay strong and adaptable. For example, FAO promotes local seed markets where possible because

they give local farmers a sales outlet for their produce and access to a much wider selection of seeds for crops suited to local conditions.

Building on local knowledge: during a crisis, farmers often fall back on crops that require fewer inputs and do not depend on distant markets. In Sierra Leone, for example, production of cassava and other tubers has increasingly replaced maize. FAO encourages trends like this as a key to progress and future resilience to shocks.

Profiles of disaster response

Pakistan floods

Following the 2010 floods, FAO has had a strong presence on the ground in Pakistan, supporting nearly 580 000 farming households with wheat and vegetable packages, as well as cash crops such as canola and sunflower. The seeds and tools distributed by FAO have helped flood-affected families plant the staple wheat crop in time for winter planting – rather than waiting 1.5 years for the next harvest – producing 500 000 tonnes of wheat, enough to feed more than 4 million people for at least six months.

Food security and peace building in North and South Sudan

In both North and South Sudan, FAO is working with the governments to support

peace by helping those most affected by conflict – refugees, returnees and internally displaced people – reintegrate back into their communities. The support FAO provides ranges from the distribution of basic agricultural inputs to building communities' capacity to respond to animal disease outbreaks and participate in land reform.

Turning the rising tide of hunger

When food prices hit record highs in 2007-2008, the European Union (EU) responded quickly with the €1 billion Food Facility. Thirty FAO projects under this facility aim to boost agricultural productivity in 28 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, touching the lives of more than 9 million people in rural

areas. FAO helps developing countries move towards long-term food security by promoting conservation agriculture, increasing livestock production, establishing community-managed irrigation schemes, facilitating linkages to markets, improving storage infrastructure, strengthening farmer-based organizations, ensuring access to quality agricultural inputs and expanding certified seed production.



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy

Telephone: (+39) 06 57051
Fax: (+39) 06 57053152
E-mail: FAO-HQ@fao.org

Media enquiries:
Telephone: (+39) 06 57053625
Fax: (+39) 06 57053729