



“Declining incomes and pervasive unemployment are depleting coping mechanisms”

West Bank and Gaza Strip

Background

The humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip worsened in 2009, largely as a result of Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip, which caused civilian casualties and widespread damages to property and infrastructure, deepening the already acute humanitarian crisis. Palestinian populations in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip continue to suffer from border closures, the construction of the barrier, limited access to natural resources, land confiscations and heavy restrictions on the movements of people and goods.

Declining incomes and pervasive unemployment are depleting the coping mechanisms of ordinary Palestinians, leading to loss of livelihoods. Unemployment levels remain highest in Gaza, where 42 percent of the inhabitants are out of work, compared to 23 percent in the West Bank. Women have become increasingly vulnerable to poverty because of their limited access to the labour market.

Challenges facing food security

Soaring global food prices have a significant impact on household-level food security across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, forcing families to reduce the quality and quantity of food consumed. The main source of food for the majority of Palestinian households is imported, thus making food insecure populations more vulnerable to price shocks, given the environment of low wages and reduced purchasing power. As a consequence, food insecure households are on the rise with 61 percent prevalence in the Gaza Strip and 29 percent in the West Bank. A joint FAO/WFP/Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Socio Economic and Food Security survey indicated that the severe economic downturn and protracted livelihood crisis have forced local populations to rely heavily on aid to sustain a minimal level of food consumption.

In the Gaza Strip, the agriculture sector has been devastated by the imposed blockade and, most recently during the military offensive, which resulted in an estimated USD 180 million in damages to agriculture-related infrastructure and the destruction of an estimated 17 percent of cultivated areas, including orchards and open fields. Although an important livelihood asset, fishing has become increasingly rare among Gazans, on account of the growing number of security measures in place.



Proposed activities include support to livestock herders through the delivery of animal feed, medicines and veterinary kits.

The existing import and export restrictions have driven up agriculture production costs, reduced productivity and impeded the rehabilitation of cultivated fields, greenhouses, poultry farms, irrigation and water wells.

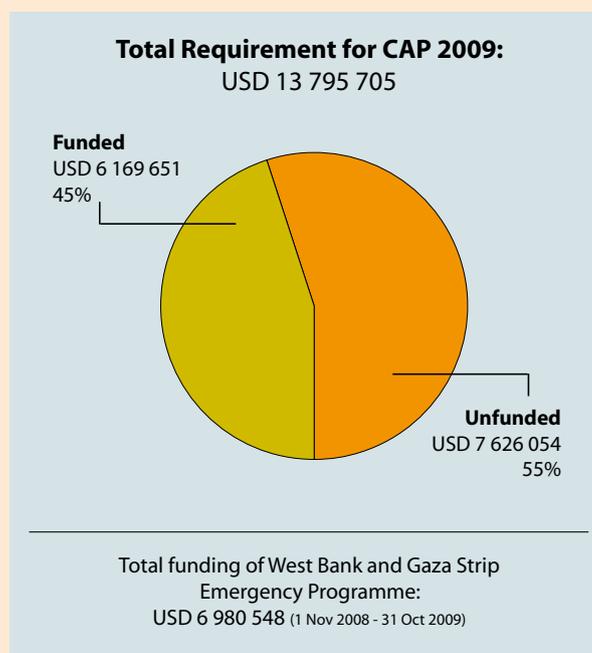
Farmers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continue to endure a water scarcity crisis owing to drought, desertification, the fragmentation of agricultural landholdings and the inequitable distribution of water resources. Consequently, the productivity of most vegetables and fruit trees has plummeted.

FAO Response

The main objective of FAO's activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2010 will be to focus on providing a safety net for food insecure households that can no longer rely on agriculture and fisheries-based practices to restore their livelihoods. To this effect, project proposals include support to women-headed households in diversifying their income sources through the establishment of home gardens, small-scale aquaculture farming, cottage industries and the distribution of small livestock. Proposed activities also include the distribution of key agricultural inputs, including crop seeds, fertilizers, animal feed and veterinary kits. In order to optimize the use of existing water resources and mitigate the effects of escalating food prices, FAO seeks to construct collective high-capacity water tanks, cisterns and ponds, deliver drought-tolerant seed varieties and rehabilitate irrigation networks, orchards and greenhouses.

In collaboration with partners, FAO intends to conduct biannual food security assessments to gauge the changing needs of beneficiaries and collect information on acquisition and consumption levels.

Sectoral and cluster coordination will be strengthened through stakeholder consultations, improved information sharing and the institutionalization of agricultural and food security monitoring systems. These activities are expected to improve evidence-based policy planning and ultimately minimize gaps and overlaps in emergency and rehabilitation efforts.



PROPOSALS: FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Total funding requested: USD 10 621 576

Protecting the livelihoods of small ruminant herders through better herd management in the West Bank and Gaza Strip	
Objectives:	To preserve the livestock assets and productive capacities of sheepherding families.
Activities:	Distribute animal feed, medicines and veterinary kits to improve the productivity of livestock herds; provide drought-tolerant seed varieties and fertilizers; provide training on improved herd management practices; and promote local feed production.
Beneficiaries:	1 200 small ruminant herders, including 200 women.
Implementing Partners:	Local and international NGOs and local councils.
Project Duration:	January – December 2010.
Funds Requested:	USD 1 500 000.

Protecting the livelihoods and production capacity of vulnerable farming families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in response to water scarcity and soaring food and input prices	
Objectives:	To increase income through the rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure and the optimization of existing water resources.
Activities:	Support selected beneficiaries through the rehabilitation of cisterns, groundwater wells, irrigation systems, greenhouses and orchard lands; distribute seeds, seedlings, fertilizers and rootstocks; provide tools and equipment to four farmers' associations; and train ten farmers' groups on enhanced pest control measures.
Beneficiaries:	2 000 vulnerable farmers, including 500 women and 40 extension agents.
Implementing partners:	Ministry of Agriculture.
Duration:	January 2010 – December 2011.
Funds requested:	USD 3 355 000.

Reducing the vulnerability of farming communities affected by severe water scarcity and drought conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Objectives:	To support vulnerable farmers and herders impacted by drought to optimize available water resources and increase water storage capacity at farm and household levels.
Activities:	Distribute plastic tanks, mobile metal tanks and irrigation systems; rehabilitate and enlarge existing wells and related catchment areas; construct collective high capacity water tanks; provide vegetable and fodder seeds for dryland farming; and assist farmers through the provision of technical expertise on improved water conservation practices.
Beneficiaries:	4 800 individuals (1 800 children, 1 500 women and 1 500 male farmers and herders).
Implementing partners:	Ministry of Agriculture.
Duration:	January – December 2010.
Funds requested:	USD 1 969 000.

Emergency support to needy fishers in the Gaza Strip to alleviate the impacts of fishing restrictions through the introduction of aquaculture activities

Objectives:	To improve the food security status of 200 Gazan fisher households through the establishment of 100 aquaculture farms.
Activities:	Construct 100 water storage ponds; provide plastic lining water pumps, engines, pipelines and fencing equipment; distribute fingerlings, fish food, 100 fish harvest nets; and 4 oxygen, 4 ammonia and 8 pH measurement tools; and conduct training exercises on improved aquaculture techniques and fish pond management for 200 beneficiaries.
Beneficiaries:	1 400 fishers (600 children, 400 women and 400 men) including 4 fisher/farmer associations.
Implementing Partners:	Agricultural cooperatives.
Project Duration:	January – December 2010.
Funds Requested:	USD 660 000.

Mitigating household food insecurity through backyard farming and women's socio-economic empowerment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Objectives:	To enable vulnerable women-headed households to improve their food security status, nutrition and income through the provision of productive inputs and technical support.
Activities:	Assist vulnerable women-headed households by encouraging backyard food production through the provision of fertilizers, pest control measures, water collection cisterns and grey water treatment systems; distribute sheep, rabbits and animal feed; support small-scale aquaculture farming by providing species adapted to saline water, plastic lining, water pumps, pipelines and fencing; provide tools and equipment for the cottage processing of dairy products; introduce the concept of organic farming; conduct training exercises on rabbit rearing, food preservation and packaging, labelling, and fostering linkages with suppliers; and assist vulnerable rural children through Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools.
Beneficiaries:	1 400 vulnerable women-headed households (500 children, 900 women and disabled persons).
Implementing Partners:	Ministry of Agriculture and women's groups.
Project Duration:	January – December 2010.
Funds Requested:	USD 1 200 000.

Socio-economic and food security assessment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Objectives:	To improve evidence-based food security programming and policy-making.
Activities:	Conduct biannual food security assessments to gauge the needs of beneficiaries and collect information on food acquisition and consumption levels; analyse socio-economic and food security indicators, determinants and trends; ensure stakeholder consultations at central and decentralized levels; disseminate assessment findings through publications, workshops, briefings and meetings; extend basic knowledge on food security among national and international actors through decentralized courses; and provide timely recommendations to policy-makers and programmers of humanitarian agencies.
Beneficiaries:	Food insecure Palestinian populations, social safety net agencies, UN agencies, NGOs, the Palestinian Authority and donors.
Implementing Partners:	PCBS, Al Sahel Research Institute and Palestinian Economic Research Institute.
Project Duration:	January – December 2010.
Funds Requested:	USD 750 200.

Promoting a cluster coordination approach for improved food security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Objectives:	To improve agriculture and food security sector coordination in order to optimize the effectiveness of interventions.
Activities:	Strengthen the capacities of Palestinian counterparts to respond to drought and food insecurity and conduct evidence-based policy planning and programming; expand cluster and sectoral coordination in partnership with UN agencies, NGOs and Palestinian stakeholders through decentralized stakeholder consultations; carry out livelihood recovery studies and monitoring; and ensure the institutionalization of agriculture and food security monitoring systems.
Beneficiaries:	Agriculture and food security sector stakeholders.
Implementing Partners:	N/A.
Project Duration:	January – December 2010.
Funds Requested:	USD 1 187 376.