



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

The Sahel crisis

2012

14 February 2012

HIGHLIGHTS

- A **new food and nutrition crisis** is affecting millions of people across the Sahel Region of western Africa this year, due to a combination of drought, high grain prices, environmental degradation coupled with chronic poverty and underdevelopment.
- More than **11 million people** are at risk of food insecurity (including 5.5 million in the Niger) and more than **1 million children under the age of five** are at risk of severe acute malnutrition.
- **Sahelian cereal production is 25 percent lower than last year**, even though comparable to the average of the past five years. Some countries, such as Chad and Mauritania, are experiencing a decrease in cereal production of nearly 50 percent and other countries are suffering **serious localized cereal deficits and severe fodder shortages**.
- A sharp **decrease in remittances** and the **degradation in the security situation** is likely to exacerbate the situation.
- Early Warning has to trigger early response in order to be effective. We are not at famine, but **only early action will prevent further deterioration of the food security situation and avoid a full-scale food and nutrition crisis**.
- In addition to emergency and rehabilitation activities, medium and longer **term interventions are required to address structural vulnerabilities and reverse the cycle of food shortages and crises in the Sahel**.

Background: Food insecurity and malnutrition are recurrent and severe in the Sahel. Acute food crises occurred in 2005 and 2010. In 2012, several countries in the subregion are again at high risk. Agricultural production was sharply reduced due to late and irregular rains, and prolonged dry spells in 2011. Even though comparable to the average of the past five years, cereal production is 25 percent lower than last year. The most seriously affected countries include Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger, Senegal and Gambia, with some countries (Chad and Mauritania) experiencing a decrease in cereal production up to 50 percent as compared to the previous agricultural year, and other countries suffering serious localized cereal deficits. For the households living in affected areas, the lean season is beginning earlier than usual. A severe fodder shortage in localized areas, particularly in Chad, Mauritania and the Niger, is leading to early transhumance and changing transhumance corridors, thus also increasing the risk of tension between communities at border areas and within the countries.

This situation, compounded by sustained high food prices of imported and locally produced products, has placed millions at risk of food insecurity. At least **11 million people will be food insecure in the coming months**. This includes 5.4 million people in the Niger (almost 35 percent of the population), 3 million people in Mali (20 percent of the population), around 1.7 million people in Burkina Faso (10 percent of the population) and 700 000 people in Mauritania (22 percent of the population).

A decrease in remittances, due to the global economic crisis and the return of migrants from Libya, is likely to exacerbate the situation. The return of migrants has also increased pressure on communities' scarce resources and caused tension over access to public services, such as health and education. Growing insecurity, owing to the dissemination of Libyan weapons and spreading terrorism, is jeopardizing development and humanitarian interventions.

Early action is needed to prevent further deterioration of the food security situation and avoid a full-scale food and nutrition crisis.

ONGOING PROGRAMME

Within this context, in December 2011 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported the launch of the Interagency Consolidated Appeals (CAP) 2012 for Chad and the Niger. At the end of 2011/early in 2012, FAO participated in the joint *Comité Inter-Etats pour la Lutte contre la Sécheresse* (CILSS)-FAO-Famine Early Warning System (FEWS NET)-World Food Programme (WFP)-Government assessments carried in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal. Given the lack of a regional CAP, FAO has co-led, together with Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), WFP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and "*Action contre la Faim*", the preparation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Strategy for the Sahel "*Preparation for a food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and neighbouring countries*", launched on 15 December 2011 and updated on 6 February 2012.

Within this broader IASC strategic framework, FAO is currently preparing a Regional Response Programme to the Food and Nutrition Security Crisis in the Sahel to define FAO's interventions in the subregion in response to the crisis, from emergency to recovery, and reinforce efforts to mobilize funds at all levels.

Ongoing programme: FAO's ongoing emergency and rehabilitation projects in the Sahel amount to USD 25.4 million. At least an additional USD 73.8 million are required to support 790 000 vulnerable households. While USD 5.9 million has been mobilized, a **funding gap of USD 67.9 million remains**. The donors that have provided assistance in the region include Austria, Belgium, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the European Union and its Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), Finland, France, Luxemburg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

Priorities: Overall priority interventions include:

- protect the livelihoods of vulnerable households by increasing off-season irrigated crop production and sustaining the upcoming main planting season (starting May 2012);
- strengthen the resilience of herders by providing animal feed and veterinary services and, if necessary, supporting destocking; and
- strengthen food security information management and early warning systems, and reinforce disaster risk reduction and management.

Funding needs: the table below illustrates the requirements in terms of funding to cover the outlined emergency/rehabilitation priorities.

Countries	Activities	Funding requirements	Funding received (USD)	Unmet requirements (USD)
BURKINA FASO	Veterinary and livestock breeding inputs, fodder crops, restocking, market gardening, grain production	14 873 000	300 000	14 573 000
CHAD	Reduction of malnutrition, emergency assistance (drought), information and coordination system	10 357 000	817 000	9 540 000
GAMBIA	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined
MALI	Agriculture and nutrition, livestock farming, forestry	10 050 000	706 600	9 343 400
MAURITANIA	Assistance to vulnerable farmers, nutrition, fodder crops, animal feed	9 000 000	900 000	8 100 000
NIGER	Assistance to vulnerable pastoralist and agricultural households	23 350 000	2 815 296	20 534 704
REGIONAL PROGRAMMES	Support to countries, food security coordination and analysis	1 127 500	154 000	973 500
SENEGAL	Emergency agriculture programme	5 100 000	228 000	4 872 000
TOTAL		73 857 500	5 920 896	67 936 604

In addition to the above emergency and rehabilitation activities, medium and longer term interventions are required to reverse the cycle of food shortages and crises in the Sahel.

In this regard, FAO's on-going activities include the following: (i) Spanish-funded Water Management and Food Security Initiative for five West African countries, including four in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger, Senegal), for a total of USD 20 million; (ii) Italy-funded Food Security through Commercialization programme, focused on value addition in seven West African countries, with a total budget of USD 21 million, including Mali (USD 4.2 million) and Senegal (USD 3.3 million); and (iii) South-South Cooperation support from China to Mali and Senegal, from Vietnam to Chad, and from Morocco to the Niger.

National Programmes for Food Security (NPFS) have been prepared by all concerned countries, with Mauritania as the most recent to be completed. Two NPFS (Chad and Mali) are under implementation. Within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)/Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process, FAO is also supporting the formulation of National Agricultural and Food Security Investment programmes. The NPFS for countries of the Sahel requires an investment of about USD 1.89 billion, of which only 20 percent has been mobilized.

Under the NEPAD/CAADP process, in November 2010 the Niger was awarded USD 33 million of the World Bank Global Agricultural and Food Security Program (GAFSP), to contribute to poverty alleviation by boosting rural crop production and enhancing food security in the vulnerable areas of Maradi, Zinder and Tahoua. GAFSP will build, *inter alia*, water harnessing infrastructure for small scale irrigation, access roads to production areas, short feeder tracks, spillways, buildings, etc.

Moreover, FAO has supported the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the development of the CAADP Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (PRIA). A thematic programme from PRIA focuses on the reduction of vulnerability to food crises and the promotion of stable and sustainable access to food, estimated at USD 176 million. This programme aims to establish a system of regional emergency humanitarian food reserves. It includes the review and adoption of the Charter for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises, covering West African countries (beyond the Sahel) and actors (beyond states, to include regional organizations and non-state actors). The charter stresses the importance at regional level, to avoid and tackle food crises. FAO also supports ECOWAS, through the IASC Emergency Preparedness and Response Working Group (Dakar based), to develop its strategy, mechanism and Plan of Action to intervene in humanitarian crises.

COUNTRIES OVERVIEW

REGIONAL PROGRAMME

At the regional level, the Subregional Emergency and Rehabilitation Office of FAO, based in Dakar, has planned activities that amount to USD 1.1 million to strengthen and support food security analysis, as well as coordination, preparedness and emergency response to food insecurity in the Sahel region and neighbouring countries.

BURKINA FASO

Priorities: within the framework of the IASC Strategy for the Sahel "Preparation for a food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and neighbouring countries", FAO plans to support 118 000 beneficiaries in Burkina Faso, seeking USD 14.9 million in funding to:

- provide livestock breeding and veterinary inputs to vulnerable herder households in response to the food and nutrition crisis of 2012 in Burkina Faso;
- implement restocking of herds for vulnerable households affected by the food and nutrition crisis;
- support fodder production and rehabilitate good quality fodder reserves for vulnerable households;
- support vegetable production to help vulnerable households affected by the food and nutrition crisis recover; and
- support and rehabilitate the cereal production capacity of vulnerable households for the 2012 agricultural campaign in Burkina Faso.

Coordination mechanisms: FAO actively participates in meetings organized by the Resident Coordinator of the UN system, which brings together UN agencies, technical and financial partners as well as NGOs. The Organization also participates in the small group that supported the preparation of the response plan for the Government crisis (FAO, WFP, the European Union, ECHO, representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock), and in monthly humanitarian coordination meetings.

In collaboration with CILSS, FEWS NET, WFP and the Government of Burkina Faso, FAO participated in crop assessment missions in September and October 2011, and food security and market monitoring missions in January 2012.

Ongoing response activities: one project was approved with funding from Belgium (USD 300 000) to support 1 000 vulnerable households with animal feed and veterinary supplies to sustain and improve the health and nutrition status of livestock.

CHAD

Priorities: Chad launched a CAP document for 2012, including a component on agriculture and livelihoods, which will be implemented in part by FAO. In response to the forthcoming food and livelihoods crisis resulting from climatic shocks, FAO presents three project profiles that plan to support 149 100 beneficiaries for a total of USD 10.4 million, and aim to:

- reduce malnutrition in the western region of the Chadian Sahel;
- support the Information System and the Coordination Unit for emergency agricultural activities and assessments; and
- provide emergency assistance to populations affected by the drought in Chad.

Ongoing response projects:

One project was approved with CERF funding (USD 817 000), aimed at providing emergency supply of animal feed to vulnerable pastoralist and agropastoralist households affected by the drought in the Sahelian zone of Chad.

Coordination mechanisms: FAO participates in the Food Security Cluster meetings in Abéché and N'Djamena. In collaboration with CILSS, FEWS NET, WFP and the Government of Chad, FAO took part in crop assessment missions in September and October 2011, and food security and market monitoring missions in January 2012. FAO financially supports and participates in the joint FAO-FEWS NET-MAP-Government vulnerability assessment and targeting evaluations.

GAMBIA

There is currently no emergency programme in Gambia. However, FAO is currently supporting the country in order to complete the agricultural damage and needs assessment and prepare a proposal for submission to the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme.

MALI

Priorities: In response to the crisis, FAO Mali is seeking USD 10 million to:

- strengthen the sustainable livelihoods of vulnerable populations, by supporting the pastoral and agricultural production capacities of affected households;
- strengthen the capacities of vegetable farmers and small ruminant herders to increase their resilience to climatic shocks;
- improve household access to a highly nutritional and diversified diet, and good nutritional practices; and
- increase beneficiaries' income through developing the livestock and farm forestry sectors, promoting sustainable management of the ecosystem and reducing greenhouse emissions.

Ongoing response activities: One project was approved funded by Belgium (USD 300 000) to strengthen the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable households affected by the agropastoral crisis in the region of *Segou*. Also, funds from an earlier approved Belgium regional project are being used to support vulnerable households with the provision of vegetable seed and livestock veterinary supplies.

Coordination mechanisms: FAO participates in the technical and financial partner meetings on food security, head of agency meetings (UNCT) and meetings organized by the Office for Food Security. In collaboration with CILSS, FEWS NET, WFP and the Government of Mali, FAO participated in crop assessment missions in September and October 2011, as well as food security and market monitoring missions in January 2012.

MAURITANIA

Priorities: In response to this crisis, FAO Mauritania is seeking USD 9 million to:

- provide income to severely affected herders and reduce pressure on the ecosystem through destocking;
- improve the nutrition of vulnerable people through gardening activities, deepening wells and ponds, rehabilitating small dams (in collaboration with WFP, within food-for-work schemes) and distributing meat, from destocking;
- improve fodder production by introducing varieties that are adapted to the ecosystem;
- provide animal feed and veterinary inputs; and
- strengthen women's capacity to address child malnutrition through nutrition education.

Ongoing response activities: one project funded by Belgium (USD 300 000) is providing assistance to 8 000 vulnerable households through the distribution of agricultural inputs (seeds and tools), establishment of vegetable gardens and training on the use of nutritious food for improved diets. Another project funded by CERF (USD 600 336) supports 9 500 vulnerable agropastoral households, through destocking, provision of veterinary supplies and inputs for fodder production.

Coordination mechanisms: FAO actively participates in the Food Security and Livestock Cluster meetings, and the emergency coordination forum, which brings together UN agencies, NGOs and donors. In collaboration with CILSS, FEWS NET, WFP and the Government of Mauritania, FAO participated in crop assessment missions in September and October 2011, as well as food security and market monitoring missions in January 2012.

NIGER

Priorities: The Niger launched a CAP for 2012, including a component on food security, which will be implemented in part by FAO. In response to the forthcoming food and livelihood crisis, FAO presents two project profiles that amount to USD 23.3 million, and aim to:

- rapidly assist the livelihoods of vulnerable pastoralists affected by the pasture deficit in the Niger; and
- provide emergency assistance to agricultural households affected by the 2011 food crisis.

Ongoing response activities: The funds mobilized to support the response to the crisis in the Niger amount to USD 2 815 296 and consist of (i) one CERF project (USD 700 000) providing emergency assistance to vulnerable herders affected by the 2011 fodder deficit; (ii) a contribution from Sweden for USD 1 415 296, corresponding to a budgetary increase of an ongoing project to address the current crisis by assisting 82 600 pastoralists with animal feed and vaccines for small ruminants, and (iii) an earlier approved Belgium regional project, contributing USD 670 000 to support cereal and vegetable production of vulnerable households, as well as technical and nutritional training. In addition, four projects for an amount USD 8.5 million have been submitted (or are being prepared) for donors consideration (Sweden, France, United States).

Coordination mechanisms: FAO participates in national meetings on the prevention and management of food crises. FAO co-leads the Food Security Cluster with WFP, which is chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture. FAO, in collaboration with CILSS, FEWS NET, WFP and the Government of the Niger participated in crop assessment missions in September and October 2011, and food security and market monitoring missions in January 2012.

SENEGAL

Priorities: In response to the crisis, FAO Senegal is seeking USD 5.1 million to:

- strengthen the agricultural production capacity of vulnerable households through the distribution of food crop and vegetable seed; and
- strengthen vulnerable households' resilience through training on production techniques, awareness of disaster risk management (DRM) and dissemination of agro-meteorological information.

Ongoing response activities: while no contributions were received so far for Senegal, funds allocated through the Swedish contribution for the CAP 2011 (USD 228 000) are being used to restore the livelihoods of vulnerable populations affected by the current crisis through provision of agricultural inputs for vegetable production to women associations.

Coordination mechanisms: FAO coordinates its crisis response with partners participating in coordination meetings on food safety. In Senegal, FAO participated in the follow-up survey of at-risk areas in collaboration with WFP and the Executive Secretariat of National Food Security, and continues to support the Early Warning System.

LINKS

- DRM Regional strategy for West Africa and Sahel, 2011-2013 (FAO 2011): <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/home/news/emergency-news/emergency-detail/en/item/120920/icode/?uidf=1345>
- Interagency (IASC) Strategy for the Sahel "Preparation for a food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and neighbouring countries: <http://ochaonline.un.org/UrgencesEmergencies/Sahel2012/tabid/7773/language/fr-FR/Default.aspx>
- FAO and emergencies: http://www.fao.org/emergencies/country_information/list/
- FAO and emergencies on twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/FAOemergencies>

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