In a country where two out of three people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, the earthquakes have been disastrous for many of Nepal’s farmers.

Following the earthquakes and hundreds of aftershocks–some ranging in magnitude from 4.0 to 6.6–an estimated 1 million people have been exposed to food insecurity without immediate support for crop and livestock production and to rebuild agricultural livelihoods, according to the Nepal Food Security Cluster.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is meeting the immediate needs of the hardest-hit farmers, providing cereal and vegetable seeds, airtight grain storage bags, and nutritional supplements and shelter for animals.

FAO is also helping farmers become more resilient and better able to cope with future crises, such as landslides, in natural disaster-prone Nepal.

FAO led the Food Security Cluster’s Agricultural Livelihoods Impact Appraisal in May and co-led the agriculture section of the Nepal Government’s Post Disaster Needs Assessment.

FAO has already distributed 5 kilogram bags of rice seeds to 40 000 households in the six most-affected districts, in time for farmers to plant before the monsoon.

IT IS NOW DISTRIBUTING:
- airtight grain storage bags to 40 000 households;
- packets of mixed vegetable seeds to 50 000 households;
- 25 kilogram bags of animal feed supplements to 20 000 households.

NEXT PRIORITIES TO HELP NEPAL’S FARMERS

In the coming months, FAO will expand support to vulnerable farmers, including more seeds, mineral blocks and corrugated iron to provide shelter for livestock. FAO will also work to stabilize mountain slopes, and identify, monitor and warn farmers of major new landslide risks.
INCREASING THE RESILIENCE OF NEPAL’S MOST VULNERABLE FARMERS

The earthquakes in Nepal triggered many landslides, which have severely affected agricultural land and irrigation channels in the mountains. Many mountain slopes are now dangerously unstable, which could lead to more landslides in the near future.

To help Nepal’s most vulnerable farmers cope better with future crises, FAO will look at mapping major earthquake cracks in key districts, monitoring changes and establishing early warning systems to advise farmers of new landslide risks.

Other options include planting deep-rooted and fast-growing trees and bushes, installing cages full of stones, known as gabions, to stabilize soil, or building small, temporary ‘check’ dams to slow water flows.

HOW WE WORK

FAO plans and delivers support in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agricultural Development; District Agriculture Development Offices; District Livestock Service Offices; District Disaster Relief Committees; and local communities. Distribution is planned and targeted in coordination with the Food Security Cluster and local implementing partners, within set criteria.

Access to remote farming villages in the six worst-affected districts is becoming increasingly difficult, as the monsoon season progresses.

FAO is using a range of transport options, to ensure seeds and other support reach those who need it most.

Some vegetable seeds are being distributed by helicopter to inaccessible villages high in the hills. Other support is being transported on tractors, as some roads are already impassable to other vehicles.

WOMEN: A DRIVING FORCE IN AGRICULTURE IN NEPAL

In the six worst-affected districts, around one in four farming households are headed by women. This is partly due to many male farmers leaving to find work overseas, or in major cities. In all farming households, women are generally responsible for managing the family’s food and seed supplies, and livestock.

Ambika Nepal, 35, runs the family farm in Kubinde, in Dolakha district and cares for her two teenaged children. Her husband has been away for more than two years, working in Afghanistan and Kathmandu. Ambika lost all of her stored grain seeds when her home collapsed in the earthquakes. She received rice seeds distributed by FAO and planted them in time for the monsoon. “After the rainy season, we’ll think about how we will rebuild, but I’m not sure what we will do,” she said.

MORE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT NEEDED

As part of the revised United Nations Flash Appeal for Nepal, FAO urgently seeks USD 23.4 million, to assist around 900 000 people in 200 000 households. The majority of these are women and children. To date, only 13 percent has been received, leaving a funding gap of USD 20 million.