

# FAO Kenya Newsletter



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Welcome to the first newsletter of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Office in Kenya this year.

This edition of the newsletter looks back at the challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Kenya last year, the opportunities this presented during the implementation of FAO programmes and activities, together with some of our achievements in 2012.

We also visit with a group of girls from a school in a refugee camp to appreciate how Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools are developing future leaders today.

Mr. Dan Rugabira  
FAO Representative in Kenya



James Ekadelin inspects his mature maize crop in Turkana. Unstable food prices experienced in 2012 contributed to food insecurity in the country. ©FAO/Eric Kimani

## 2012: Year in review

### A look at FAO activities in the past year

As the UN's lead technical agency for agriculture, food security remained at the heart of our activities in 2012 and we worked closely with the Government of Kenya as has been the practice for decades.

#### The agricultural sector in 2012

The year saw improved rainfall performance in many parts of Kenya that had been reeling from the effects of drought and unstable food prices in 2010 and 2011. However, the cumulative impact of drought from previous years was still felt in the north-western, north-eastern and coastal regions of the country.

A maize disease that causes infected plants to stunt, turn pale and die—Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease—struck parts of the Rift Valley and has been reported in other parts of the country, with the implication of yield reduction on affected farms. Furthermore, the price of

maize, Kenya's staple food, continued to trend above the 5-year average. Floods were also reported in several agricultural areas.

Meanwhile, underinvestment in agriculture continued to hinder the development of the sector. Only with adequate investment can proper policies and practices transform Kenya's agricultural sector from subsistence farming to modern, business-oriented agriculture.

#### Our activities and programmes in 2012

##### Development programme

FAO's development programme is designed to respond to the priorities of the Government as outlined in the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy (ASDS) 2010-2020 and Vision 2030. Through the sharing of knowledge and best practices, we aim to strengthen the capacity of the Government and other partners. We are also striving to build the capacity of stakeholders

to mainstream HIV and gender issues in food security responses and agricultural livelihoods.

In 2012 and going forward, FAO has been providing support to the following priority areas: policy and institutional reforms; agricultural productivity and competitiveness; natural resource and environmental management; food security and nutrition initiatives; and agricultural information and knowledge management. Achievements in this area in 2012 included:

- Promoting sustainable land, water and forestry management practices
- Addressing agribusiness challenges related to market access, value addition and food quality to make the sector more competitive
- Improving access to nationally owned, quality statistics on food and agriculture
- Supporting the development of forestry legislation.

Maize plants showing Maize Lethal Necrosis disease (MLND). This serious disease that results from the combined infection of two viruses appeared in parts of the Rift Valley in 2012. © CIMMYT



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## Humanitarian and early recovery programme

Our humanitarian and early recovery programme takes a twin-track approach which provides immediate support in emergencies and crisis preparedness while simultaneously protecting livelihoods and building resilience.

During the year, FAO continued to coordinate the agriculture and livestock sector under the Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan for Kenya 2012. Working with the Government of Kenya, the UN and NGO partners, we implemented a comprehensive relief programme in areas of the country affected by drought.

The main areas of our work for the year included: early warning and food security information assessments; support to livestock, including rangeland management, disease surveillance and control; crop production; and, building resilience through climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction approaches.

Some main achievements in 2012 included:

- Four early warning and food security information assessments were conducted
- Seven million animals were vaccinated and treated

- 2,600 disease surveillance reports were completed through digital pen technology, an innovation that allows for rapid transmission of disease reports
- 860 MT of drought-tolerant seeds distributed to 264,000 beneficiaries, in turn producing 124,000 MT of grains
- 10,000 households participated in the construction of soil and water conservation structures, thus conserving over 5,000 acres of land

## Coordination

In 2012, FAO, with its unique position as an independent UN agency, continued to act as a neutral partner to the Government on complex issues related to policies, institutions, legal and regulatory reform. We therefore continued to offer a critical link between the Government, development partners, NGOs, CSOs and the private sector. In this role, we enhanced cohesiveness among relief and development partners and supported the alignment of multi-sectoral programmes to Government strategies.

## Our resource partners

FAO's vital work in Kenya would not be possible without the generous support of the donor community. In 2012, donors to FAO's

programmes in Kenya included: Belgium, the European Union (DEVCO and ECHO), France, FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America, United Kingdom through UN Joint Programme, UN World Food Programme, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS).

## Looking into the future

With the completion of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) for Kenya, FAO has now set out priority areas to guide our partnership with and support to the Government over the next five years. The CPF outlines FAO's contribution to the achievement of national agricultural priorities and objectives as defined in the ASDS. The strategy foresees a food secure and prosperous nation by 2020 and aims to achieve a paradigm shift from subsistence to business-oriented agriculture. Given FAO's mandate and expertise in agriculture, we are uniquely positioned to support the continued development of the agricultural sector in the country and improve the lives and livelihoods of Kenyans. ■

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## Developing future leaders today

### How Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools are nurturing leaders for today and tomorrow

Habiba Athumani, a refugee from Somalia, is a student at Angelina Jolie Girls Primary School in Kakuma. This school, started by a film star by the same name has been a refuge for her and over thirty other girls. Habiba has cultivated leadership skills thanks to lessons gleaned from Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS). She is the chairlady of Bidii JFFLS. Her eyes glint with a ray of hope. She knows that her dim yesterday is gone and her tomorrow can only get brighter. "I would like to be the Minister for Agriculture for my country Somalia when we attain peace", Habiba confides. She knows

Habiba addresses a gathering at her school. ©FAO/Eric Kimani

that she'll have to forge ahead and forget her past that has been filled with war, pain and self doubt.

The JFFLS is a training approach designed to empower vulnerable youth and provide them with the livelihood options and gender-sensitive skills needed for long-term food security while reducing their vulnerability to destitution and providing risk coping strategies. One of the other major objectives of the JFFLS is to promote the creation of gender-equal attitudes, by enabling youth to exercise the same roles and responsibilities and developing their capacities to critically assess relationships and understand the risks and resources present within their community. "As the leader of Bidii JFFLS, I have learned to lead by example and to

inspire confidence in my fellow students when rallying support for the various projects we carry out", quips a confident Habiba.

The strength of the JFFLS is its unique learning methodology and curriculum, which combines agricultural, life and entrepreneurship skills in an experiential and participatory learning approach suited to vulnerable communities. This methodology is also suited to other contexts of low literacy levels.

Under the astute leadership of their chairperson, the girls diligently attend to their plots of maturing tomatoes, cowpeas, okra, water melons and kales. Aged between ten and eighteen years, the girls know that the value realised from being members of JFFLS far exceed their expectations and they are glad they belong.

"My fellow Ministers," Habiba mentally rehearses her speech in preparation for the day she presents the Somalia cabinet with an agricultural policy paper. She knows it's a long way but with the leadership skills honed through JFFLS, she knows her dream is never too far out there. Ask Obama. ■

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