



FAO Kenya Newsletter



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

FAO believes in using precious donor resources in the most efficient way possible. One of the most effective ways of doing this is by applying simple solutions to complex problems. Our work in promoting the use of metal silos to prevent post-harvest losses illustrates this belief. It also demonstrates how FAO integrates relief initiatives and development in helping to build food secure and resilient communities.

Following the long rains, some areas of concern have emerged with regard to the food security outlook in Kenya. A poor rainy season in some areas has resulted in poor crop performance (southeastern and coastal areas) and severely impacted pasture performance (northwestern and northeastern pastoral areas). FAO continues to work with the Government of Kenya and partners in monitoring the situation and proposing appropriate solutions.

Mr. Dan Rugabira
FAO Representative in Kenya



A woman selling goats at a market in Wajir. The food security situation in some pastoral areas of northern Kenya may be impacted by poor rainfall and pasture performance. ©FAO/Ami Vitale

FAO monitoring food insecurity following below average rains

Crop losses, pasture performance cause concern

A poor long rains season has raised the spectre of persistent food insecurity in parts of Kenya. While a good maize crop is reported in major growing areas of the north Rift Valley, a near total crop failure is likely in the mixed marginal farming zones in the southeastern and coastal areas. Furthermore, localized flooding in some parts of the country and a maize disease outbreak in the south Rift Valley have impacted more than 31,000 hectares of crops.

Failure of the long rains has also severely affected pasture performance, vital for livestock-owning pastoral communities, in northwestern and

northeastern areas, including in central parts of Garissa and Tana River districts, western Mandera, and southern Ijara and Wajir. With funding from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), FAO is supporting the continued functioning of livestock markets in these areas.

“Livestock markets, even in times of stress, inject a significant amount of money into the local economy,” says Rob Allport, FAO Coordinator for Livestock and Pastoralism in Kenya. “They also enable access to food, fodder and household items, as trucks travelling to buy livestock come

preloaded with these and other fast-moving goods”.

FAO will work with district councils and livestock management committees in maintaining market infrastructure and providing timely market information to traders. FAO will also promote the sale of non-productive livestock among pastoralists. ■

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FAO expands reach with three new field offices

In order to better support the implementation and supervision of activities at the field level, FAO Kenya has recently opened offices in Garissa, Lodwar and Marsabit to serve the northeastern,

north western and upper eastern areas of the country, respectively. FAO crops and livestock officers in these locations will link up with implementing partners and government extension

services to provide technical advice and support needs assessments. FAO’s strengthened field presence in Kenya will help ensure that FAO delivers on its mandate to help build a more food. ■



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FAO promotes simple technology to reduce harvest losses

Post-harvest losses due to poor storage facilities and handling practices continue to be one of the major contributing factors to food and nutrition insecurity in Kenya.

Losses in some cases can reach as high as 50–70 per cent, often negating a good harvest and placing vulnerable farming families and communities at risk. Crop losses following harvest can be devastating in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), which have struggled recently following successive years of below-average rain and resulting reduced yields.

Post-harvest losses are generally caused by biotic agents, such as insects, rodents and fungi, and can be aggravated by factors such as humidity, moisture and temperature. For example, food poisoning from aflatoxins, produced by a fungus which thrives in warm and humid conditions, is a growing threat to both human and animal health. Pests such as the larger grain borer (LGB) have caused serious damage to stored maize, with losses in some areas of up to 100 per cent.

In Kenya, especially in eastern ASALs, farmers typically store grains in burlap bags and wooden containers, both easily susceptible to insect and mold infestation. Farmers without reliable storage options are increasingly forced to sell most grains soon after harvest. This leaves them vulnerable to the vagaries of market prices and to food shortages. With improved storage, farmers are able to store more grain for food, allowing them to cope better during dry conditions, as well as to sell surplus at higher market prices, improving income.

FAO, together with a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kenya, has been promoting the use of metal silo technology for the post-harvest storage of grains. The airtight cylindrical storage silos are made by trained local artisans and come in various sizes. Many farmers using the silos in Kenya have reported reducing post-harvest losses to near zero. The cost per silo is reasonable, depending on the size. For example, a silo with a capacity of 540 kg (or six 90 kg bags of grain) can cost approximately Ksh 10,000 (USD 118).



A skilled artisan puts the finishing touches on a metal grain silo.
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FAO has been promoting the use of metal silos and providing related training through government extension services, field schools and farmer groups, allowing evaluation and adoption by farmers over time. Access to credit through community banks is also facilitated so that farmers without savings may purchase the silos. Funding from the governments of Spain and Sweden has allowed FAO to train some 16 artisans in eastern Kenya in the fabrication of metal silos. Some 300 metal silos have been distributed to farmer groups for evaluation and promotion. Trained artisans, with the support of government extension agents, will continue to manufacture, market and promote the technology throughout eastern Kenya. ■

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The final product can hold more than half a ton of grain and prevent loss to insects and disease.

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