IN NUMBERS

10.2 million
People food insecure
(2016 Humanitarian Requirements
Document)

>1.7 million
Households need emergency
seed support

654 000
Households require livestock feed
assistance

USD 50 million
needed for the
implementation of FAO’s
El Niño Response Plan

KEY MESSAGES

- **Humanitarian needs in Ethiopia have tripled since the beginning of 2015** as one of the strongest El Niño events on record has caused severe drought, leading to successive crop failures and widespread livestock deaths.

- **Food insecurity and malnutrition rates remain high.** Insufficient access to and availability of food has caused humanitarian needs to increase. The current situation requires simultaneous and immediate scaling up of multi-sectoral lifesaving and livelihood support along with investment in resilience building efforts in the most affected and at-risk areas.

- **Escalating needs require scaled up response.** With extremely limited means of production for the upcoming planting season, farming communities will remain vulnerable and increasingly unable to access food.

- **The El Niño-induced drought is not just a food crisis – above all, it is a livelihood crisis.** Over 80 percent of the population depends on agriculture for their food and income – significant production losses have severely diminished households’ food security and purchasing power, forcing many to sell their remaining agricultural assets and abandon their livelihoods.

BACKGROUND

Ethiopia is experiencing one of the most severe droughts in half a century due to the effects of El Niño. Significant rainfall deficits – up to 50 percent below average – have severely impacted the lives and livelihoods of farmers and herders throughout the country. Following two consecutive poor rainy seasons – *belg* (February to May) and *kiremt* (June to September) – harvests were well below average, with some regions experiencing between 50 and 90 percent crop loss. The livestock sector has seen high mortality and morbidity rates and abnormal migration in search of pasture and water; with insufficient access to feed and water sources, livestock will become increasingly weak unless normal rains resume. Many families dependent on agriculture have become indebted and dependent on external assistance.

The agriculture sector in Ethiopia typically supplies up to 85 percent of the country’s food supplies and employs more than 80 percent of the labour force. With insecure sources of food and income as a result of the drought, vulnerable rural households face widespread hunger and malnutrition, huge economic losses and long-term environmental damage. In late 2015, a Government-led multi-agency *meher* assessment found that 10.2 million people were food insecure, while 2 million required agricultural input support to resume food production. Malnutrition rates are staggering, with over one-third of Ethiopia’s *woredas* now officially classified as facing a food security and nutrition crisis. These figures are increasing as the effects of drought continue to grip the country. The recent revision of hotspot *woreda* classification data conducted in April indicates that 15–20 percent of *woredas* identified as Priority 2 or 3 in December 2015 have slipped into Priority 1 or 2, respectively.
CHALLENGES FACING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

The ongoing belg rains arrived late, impacting planting especially in the north. While the season contributes to only about 10 percent of national annual crop production, the spring rains are extremely important for crops in the northeast and south, the establishment of long-cycle crops in the west (making up 45–50 percent of annual cereal production). In pastoral areas, the extended dry spell is delaying long-awaited recovery and threatening food and income security. If the belg harvest is below average, this is likely to further increase humanitarian requirements beyond the current scale.

Seed reserves are severely depleted – nearly 1.7 million households do not have seed to plant in the meher agricultural season according to regional Bureaus of Agriculture. This is a doubling of the figure reported in January 2016 (838 000 households) and a near-quadrupling of the figure reported in the Humanitarian Requirements Document in December 2015 (477 000 households). The vast increase is a result of several factors, most notably increased availability and accuracy of information and the increasingly dire situation—for example, the ongoing lean season and related food insecurity, high food prices and constraining purchasing power have caused many households to consume their remaining seed stores as food.

High livestock mortality rates and worsening animal body conditions due to poor grazing resources, feed shortages and limited water availability have led to sharp declines in milk and meat production and increased incidence of disease and death. Current estimates indicate 654 000 livestock-dependent households require animal feed support. Access to pasture and water will continue to deteriorate until the expected peak of the ongoing rainy season in April.

FAO PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>Building resilience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Emergency seed support for meher season planting</td>
<td>- Provision of survival feed to protect draught and core breeding animals</td>
<td>- Cash-for-work initiatives to improve critical infrastructure for water access</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Quality drought-resilient seed production</td>
<td>- Support fodder production</td>
<td>- Adoption of the caisses de résilience approach for better mitigation of future crises</td>
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<td>- Backyard vegetable production initiatives</td>
<td>- Conduct animal health interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Nutrition-rich and high-value root and tuber crop production support</td>
<td>- Restore livelihoods through restocking with small ruminants</td>
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FAO requires USD 50 million To assist 1.8 million people

FUNDING

- Funding to-date: USD 8.3 million
- Funding gap: USD 41.7 million

Donors: Belgium, CERF, European Union, Italy, Japan, FAO, Netherlands, OCHA, Spain and United States of America.

CONTACT

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ASSESSMENTS

FAO recently conducted a rapid agricultural and food system assessment covering six of the most affected regions: Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Somali and Tigray. Consulting concerned stakeholders, the survey explores themes related to agricultural livelihoods—crop production prospects, seed and livestock conditions, the status of markets and prices for key inputs, coping strategies and relief assistance, among others. The results will help to evaluate the impact of ongoing humanitarian interventions and identify potential gaps to avoid unnecessary food security-related problems commonly caused by lack of information.

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<td>- Improving access to water for livestock through the rehabilitation of 18 water points, benefiting 125 480 livestock owned by 12 783 households.</td>
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