



Central African Republic

3 April 2014



HIGHLIGHTS

- **2.5 million people need immediate humanitarian assistance;** and one in five Central Africans has been internally displaced. These figures are likely to rise as the conflict places millions at risk of a full-scale food and nutrition security crisis due to low production in 2013 coupled with prevailing chronic countrywide malnutrition, extreme poverty and inappropriate sanitation.
- The results of the **Multisectoral Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)** undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and its partners indicate that, in spite of insecurity, **78 percent of farmers will be cultivating** in the coming weeks. However, **94 percent of communities** report that they do **not have enough seeds** to plant for the next agricultural season.
- In light of the MIRA findings, the **Revised Strategic Response Plan** was launched on 19 January, outlining the humanitarian strategy for the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014. A substantial scaling up of operations is necessary in the short term to ensure the provision of protection and life-saving assistance to 1.9 million people. The Food Security Cluster is seeking USD 180 million to assist 1.25 million people.
- FAO has scaled up its presence and response in CAR to restore agriculture-based livelihoods and improve food security.
- **FAO aims to support 150 000 crisis-hit families** in CAR to enable them to produce their own food, protect their scarce resources and earn some income. The success of the 2014 maize, rice, sorghum and millet planting seasons, starting in April and May respectively, will be a turning point for food security.

BACKGROUND

- **Widespread civil insecurity caused a sharp reduction in 2013 crop production,** and is likely to severely impact the 2014 cropping season.
- Due to persistent insecurity, households have relied on stress or crisis coping mechanisms, putting their livelihoods at risk.
- **Food prices have almost doubled in Bangui due to severe market disruptions.**
- The **MIRA** confirmed that food reserves are almost non-existent. People interviewed indicated that they were now eating just one meal a day. All communities reported that livelihood assets have been lost – abandoned or looted. In spite of insecurity, 78 percent of farmers plan to cultivate in the coming weeks, confirming the importance of cropping and livestock rearing in ensuring their income and access to food. However, 94 percent of communities reported they will not have enough seeds to plant for the next agricultural season. People outside Bangui must urgently resume production activities, without which they cannot eat, generate income or even relocate.

Clusters activated:

- Coordination: OCHA
- Early recovery: UNDP
- Education: UNICEF/COOPI
- Emergency Telecoms: WFP
- Food Security: FAO/WFP
- Health: WHO
- Logistics: WFP
- Refugees: UNHCR
- Nutrition: UNICEF
- Protection: UNHCR
- WASH: UNICEF

CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURE

- ❖ Disruption of market linkages due to insecurity, and production hampered.
- ❖ Insecurity and limited size of the market have increased procurement and logistics costs by 40 percent compared to previous interventions.
- ❖ Standing crops, stored seed/grain and productive assets have been lost, leaving the population food insecure and unable to resume crop production.
- ❖ Rural populations have been affected by the numerous Séléka – anti-Balaka clashes, yet their protection is key in order for FAO and its partners to access the areas where they are located to implement humanitarian and resilience programmes.
- ❖ Lack of immediate assistance will trigger further losses and longer-term suffering.
- ❖ Delayed action will lead to the worsening of the food security situation.

PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS

FAO can prevent further deteriorating of livelihoods and missed planting opportunities with timely donor support, saving families from a domino effect of continued losses, as well as preventing farmers from adopting negative coping strategies with long-term effects (joining militias and bandits, economic migration, etc.). Restoring productive assets is crucial to enable crisis-hit farmers to produce their own food and take advantage of local opportunities.

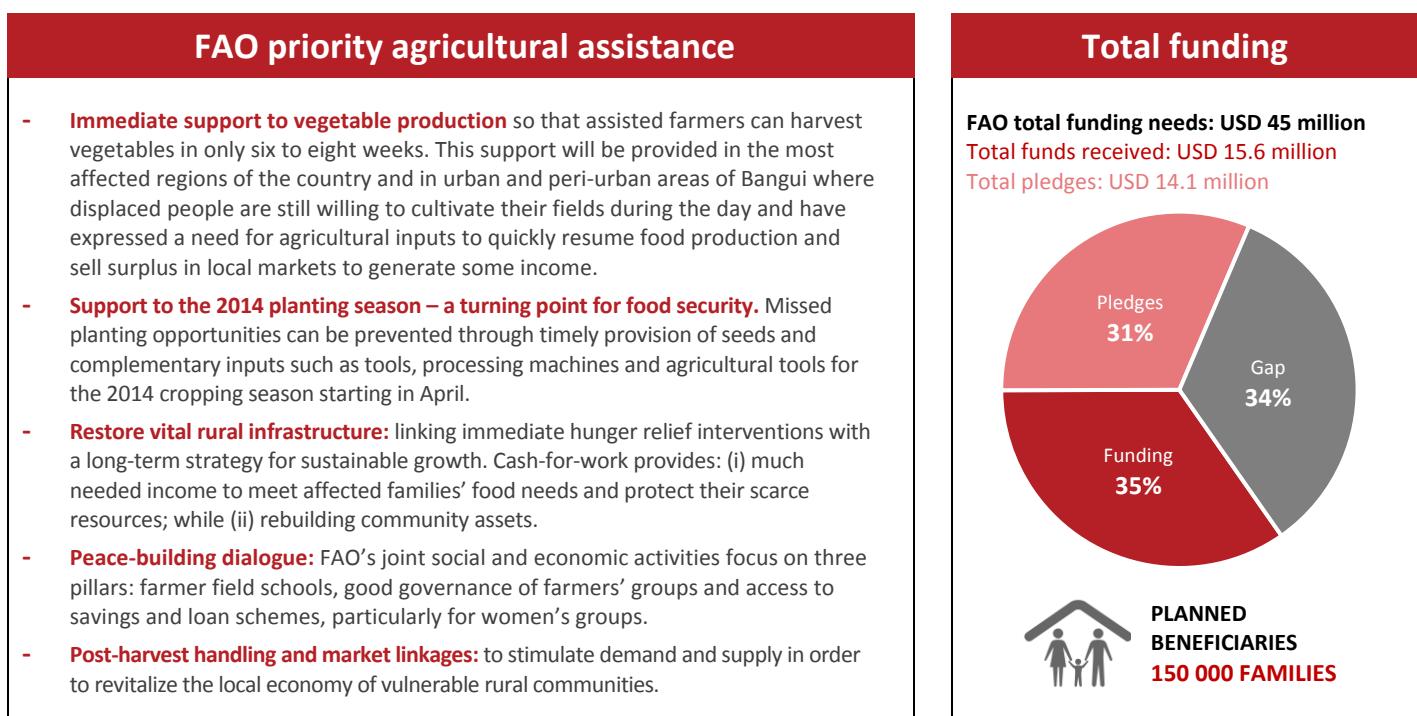
FAO's scaled-up response

In response to the aggravation of the situation in CAR, FAO immediately set up a multidisciplinary team in Bangui with support from its regional and subregional offices as well as its headquarters in Rome. Three suboffices have been opened in Bossangoa, Bambari and Bouar to serve the most affected areas of the country.

FAO regularly coordinates joint field visits with partners to assess the food security situation and needs of conflict-affected populations.

Given the most urgent needs, FAO is preparing distributions of agricultural inputs to women and men farmers in the most affected regions to “plant peace” and protect and restore resilient livelihoods. In recent weeks, in the presence of H.E. the Minister of Rural Development, FAO has been providing vegetable production kits to women’s groups, vegetable farmers’ groups and displaced farming families in Bangui from both religious groups (Muslim and Christian).

As co-lead of the Food Security Cluster, FAO works closely with partners to improve the food security and livelihoods response. Strategic partnership between FAO and WFP is particularly important to prevent duplications in the crisis response, ensure a greater impact of implemented projects and increase cost-efficiency of both agencies operating in the country. In fact, people benefiting from the help of FAO, through distributions of agricultural kits containing seeds and small tools to help them start their activities, will also receive food supplies from WFP. The goal is to prevent people from eating seeds because of lack of food and ensure that seeds are planted when the rainy season starts (April) which will guarantee that the country has sufficient crops in the near future.



Of the total funds requested by FAO under the Strategic Response Plan (USD 45 million to support 150 000 farming families), FAO has received USD 15.6 million and pledges for over USD 14 million. With funding received FAO has been able to procure around 2 000 tonnes of seeds and small tools to assist 76 000 farming families for the upcoming agricultural season.

An additional USD 15 million is required to provide continuous support to the population immediately after the agricultural season through asset diversification and protection in order to increase resilience.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- All up-to-date information is available on our Website: www.fao.org/emergencies
- Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (Dominique.Burgeon@fao.org)
- Alexis Bonte, Designated Responsible Official, FAO Central African Republic (Alexis.Bonte@fao.org)