



HIGHLIGHTS

- **On 13 March, Tropical Cyclone Pam caused severe damage to agriculture** (crops, fisheries, livestock and forestry) in Vanuatu's six provinces, posing an immediate and long-term threat to food security. Tafea is the worst affected province, followed by Shefa, Penama, Malampa, Torba and Sanma.
- **Around 80 percent of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihood.** Cash crops and agriculture exports have also been heavily affected.
- **Damages**, according to preliminary observations and initial rapid assessments (21 March):
 - Fully damaged plants: banana, all fruit trees, coconuts, yam and soft yams
 - Partially damaged plants: taro, manioc, strong yams and kumala
 - Livestock losses: chickens, pigs, pens and shelters
 - Fisheries damage/losses: canoes, small boats, fishing gear and infrastructure
- **In all provinces, much of the population will be without local staple food supply from the end of March** until at least mid-June when fast-growing crops can be harvested if replanting starts immediately.
- **Affected families urgently need food and agricultural assistance** – including seeds, planting material and farming equipment – to avoid food shortages and quickly replant crops.
- **Preparedness measures undertaken by the Government are helping to reduce the impact of this disaster.** FAO is supporting government-led efforts, working closely with the Vanuatu Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity) and co-leading the national Food Security and Agriculture Cluster.
- **Initial response efforts of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster include:**
 - ✓ **Communication with communities:** agricultural messages delivered pre- and post-cyclone
 - ✓ **Assessments:** participating in all Initial Rapid Assessments and commencing in-depth agricultural assessments
 - ✓ **Planning of domestic planting material exchange:** from less affected islands to more affected islands
 - ✓ **Agricultural input package:** procurement of local seed supply and stocktaking of regional seed stocks for import
 - ✓ **Food distribution guidelines:** distribution through community committees.
- **A Flash Appeal will be launched** this week to support ongoing response operations, for a three-month period.
- **Even at this early stage, hand in hand with relief efforts, FAO is working closely with the government to lay a foundation for longer-term recovery and more resilient livelihoods.**

BACKGROUND

On 13-14 March, Tropical Cyclone Pam swept through Vanuatu with 250 km/hour winds and heavy rains. A state of emergency was declared in all six provinces. The category 5 storm has affected 166 000 people on 22 islands, destroyed critical infrastructure, displaced thousands and severely affected agriculture and food security.

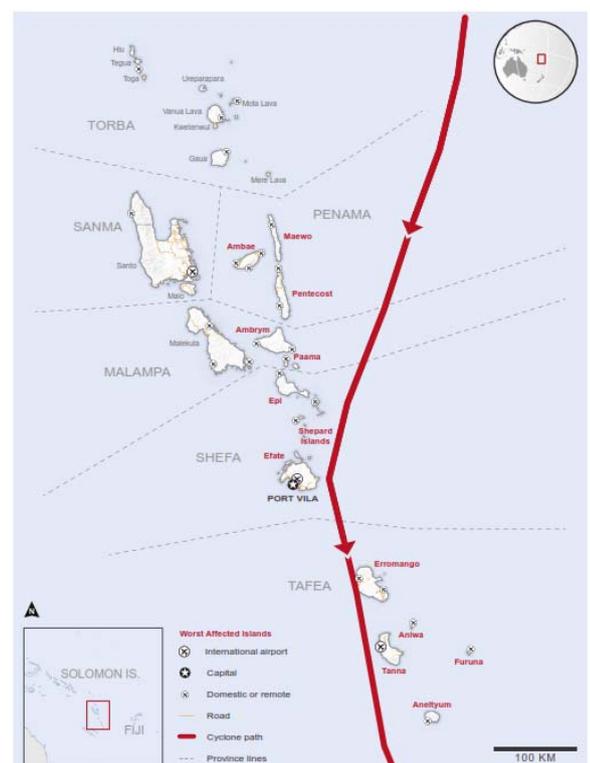
FAO is working closely with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and partners of the national Food Security and Agriculture Cluster. The ongoing planning and response efforts build on a strong collaboration in disaster preparedness work prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.

AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE, NEEDS AND RESPONSE

❖ Severe devastation to agriculture and livelihoods

Around 80 percent of Vanuatu's population relies on agriculture for their livelihood, mostly at the subsistence level. Early findings of government-led rapid assessments in all six provinces are dire. The national banana crop appears almost entirely destroyed, as well as inland cabbage, leafy vegetables and most coconuts. Many root crops have been uprooted or inundated, and most fruit trees stripped. The death of small livestock, such as pigs and poultry, have diminished vital sources of protein. Fisheries infrastructure, including canoes, small boats and fishing gear, were also destroyed. In-depth sectoral assessments are ongoing, using the Damage and Loss Assessment methodology employed in official Post Disaster Needs Assessments. The complete assessment results are expected within two weeks.

Vanuatu reference map (source: OCHA)



❖ Vital food and seed stocks must be replenished urgently

In all provinces, local staple food supply will largely run out by the end of March until at least mid-June – when fast-growing crops could be harvested if replanting starts immediately. Rural families need support to restore sources of food and income from fishing, livestock, forestry resources, backyard gardening and on-farm labour. The Government of Vanuatu is providing immediate assistance packages, including locally available agricultural and food items. The government has relayed timely messages to rural families to: quickly save planting materials; begin planting anywhere possible, especially planting materials that will rot quickly; preserve available foods (e.g. drying, salting, slow cooking and burying); watch for livestock and plant pests and diseases; and prepare for food aid distributions.

❖ Pre-cyclone disaster risk reduction work jump starts response

FAO has been collaborating closely with the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (led by the Vanuatu Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) to enhance preparedness for and management of disasters such as Tropical Cyclone Pam. FAO has conducted in-depth training on needs assessment methodologies with partners, producing validated guidelines and tools for post-disaster agricultural assessments. The FAO/UNDP/UNICEF initiative “Community resilience and coping with climate-change and natural disasters in Vanuatu” includes a FAO pilot programme on food preservation techniques to enhance food security after disasters, while past FAO activities to enhance local capacity for off-season vegetable production will also help farmers cope and rebuild in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam.

❖ Laying a foundation for longer term recovery and more resilient livelihoods

FAO is developing a strategy for the post-humanitarian phase where, over the next 12 months (and likely beyond), FAO will support the Government as it rebuilds the major economic sectors within agriculture, ensuring that subsistence farmers are included. This work will feature the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and resilience into agriculture sectors at all levels.

SNAPSHOT OF ACTIONS TAKEN FOOD SECURITY & AGRICULTURE CLUSTER

- ✓ Minimum food ration standard published
- ✓ Stock and pricing assessment of the food and farming tools available in-country
- ✓ Preliminary analysis of food aid requirements by island
- ✓ Key messages on food security
- ✓ Sharing of agricultural extension documents
- ✓ Detailed and budgeted action plans for food security and agricultural assessments
- ✓ Distributions of an initial package of food (15 days) and seeds commenced in 21 islands.

OTHER PACIFIC ISLAND NATIONS IMPACTED BY TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM

- **Kiribati.** Most islands were severely affected by king tides exacerbated by strong winds, especially Tamana and Arorae. Most food crops and other valuable plants were heavily impacted by sea water. Food crops – particularly pandanus and coconut – at the shoreline were uprooted or wiped out, and much of the shoreline cannot be cultivated due to salinization. As most families have fruit trees and food plants around their home, the impact on food security is significant.
- **Solomon Islands.** In **Malaita**, most gardens were destroyed; copra and coconut dryers were damaged; and fallen trees and strong winds impede planting. In **Temotu**, reports indicate damage to breadfruit and gardens, and fallen fruit trees. In **Guadalcanal**, many gardens were destroyed; coconut and cocoa are reported destroyed in Duidui Ward; and waterlogging in the plains may affect food supply in the coming weeks. In **Isabel** and **Makira**, gardens are inundated and/or destroyed.
- **Tuvalu.** Storm surges peaked on 11-12 March, bringing massive waves and flooding to Tuvalu’s islands and affecting 80 percent of its people. Extensive damage was caused to the staple root crop ‘pulaka’ (including total destruction on Nui and Nukulaelae islands) and to livestock, especially in Nui. Heavy damages were also caused to water tanks and cisterns and sewage systems. Immediate and more in-depth assessment missions were fielded on 15 and 20 March, respectively.

FAO DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE WORK IN THE REGION

- FAO leads the Pacific Food Security Cluster and supports national Food Security Clusters.
- Over the last year, the regional Food Security Cluster has assisted national authorities in five Pacific Island Countries with disaster preparedness training and needs assessment.
- In the last 18 months, FAO has deployed a regional emergency adviser and post-disaster needs assessment expert, and finalized an agreement with RedR Australia for surge capacity for preparedness and response. FAO, as lead agency of the Cluster, has preparedness deployments underway in the Cook Islands and the Marshall Islands.
- FAO is helping to build institutional capacity in agricultural disaster risk management, national preparedness systems, needs assessment and data collection and management, and enhanced collaboration with key partners.
- With recent funding from DIPECHO, FAO is implementing a project to enhance national and local capacity to integrate disaster risk reduction in agriculture in Vanuatu and Fiji.



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