



# Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

## FAO'S ROLE IN THE 2008 BOLIVIA LA NIÑA PHENOMENON

### FLASH APPEAL

March 2008

#### Background

La Niña is a coupled ocean-atmosphere phenomenon during which the sea surface temperature is 0.5 degrees lower than normal, affecting global climatic patterns. La Niña conditions tend to recur every few years. Since November 2007, La Niña conditions have exacerbated the rainy season in Venezuela, Colombia, northern Peru, southern Chile and northern and southern zones of Bolivia.

Extreme rainfall in Bolivia has resulted in floods, mudslides and landslides which have led to loss of life, injuries and population displacement, as well as causing damage to housing, infrastructure and agricultural production. By mid-February 2008, heavy rainfall across the country and extreme flows of water from upstream areas towards lower regions have raised river levels in several departments (including Santa Cruz, Beni and Cochabamba), leading to extensive flooding.

Landslides, mudslides and flooding have also restricted access to some areas of the country. Most of the communities affected have been hit by floods for the third consecutive year, which is deepening their vulnerability and further reducing their capacity to recover their livelihoods. These largely rural and indigenous populations are heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture. The flat savannahs of Beni department have been flooded by waters that have largely surpassed historical levels.

#### Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Recurrent floods have led to the loss of assets and reduced agricultural and livestock production in Bolivia. The most vulnerable groups have also lost an alternative source of income as temporary labourers given that larger farms have also experienced production losses. These factors have led to a further deterioration in the already poor nutritional status of affected households in rural areas.

Although the surface area flooded is larger than the past year, it seems that the impacts on cattle and rice production will be lower. To-date, only 30 000 cattle have been reported dead. In addition, the losses in rice production could be balanced by gains in other areas.



Overcrowding in temporary shelters



An abandoned household

In addition, considerable losses are anticipated in pasturelands and in rice, corn, grains, tubers and root crops. Small farmers and indigenous groups are likely to lose their ability to meet household food needs and risk becoming increasingly dependent on food aid. The losses in food crops are also likely to inflate the prices for basic food items, which will severely affect the poorest households.

#### FAO in Bolivia

In 2007, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been providing support to almost 5 000 livestock-owning households in the form of vaccinations against key animal diseases, distribution of vitamins and anti-parasite drugs and training small-scale livestock producers in improved production techniques. However, although over 80 000 cattle have been reached by this intervention; they represent only a small portion of those at risk.

FAO has also supported the resumption of agricultural activities for indigenous households and small farmers affected by the recurrent floods with distribution of quality seeds, fertilizers, small livestock and hand tools to vulnerable people. Through its emergency and rehabilitation programme in Bolivia, FAO aims to restore farmers' agricultural production capacity, thus reducing their dependence on food aid and increasing their self-reliance.

As part of the 2008 Bolivia La Niña Phenomenon Flash Appeal, FAO is seeking **US\$1 487 200**. The main objective of the agriculture component of the Appeal is to focus on the most affected areas of the country and help to **restore the food production and livestock raising capacity** of small farmers; and **set up risk management systems** aimed at building local capacity to deal with natural disasters that have the potential to impact on agriculture and food production activities.

## FAO'S COMPONENT OF THE FLASH APPEAL FOR BOLIVIA 2008

**Project Title: Emergency assistance to small farmers affected by floods in the lowlands of Beni and Santa Cruz**

**Objectives:** Restore the farming capacity through the provision of basic farming inputs to small farmers and vaccination, anti-parasites and vitamins supply to surviving livestock

**Beneficiaries:** 5 000 households living in the 20 most affected municipalities

**Implementing Partners:** Two departments, 20 municipal governments of Beni and Santa Cruz, the national Civil Defence system, the national Service for Animal and Vegetal Health, several small farmers and indigenous organizations

**Funds Requested: US\$987 200**

In order to assist affected farming households in restoring their food production and livestock raising capacities, FAO's proposed project "**Emergency assistance to small farmers affected by floods in the lowlands of Beni and Santa Cruz**" will seek to provide basic farming inputs, including seeds and hand tools to small-scale farmers and key veterinary supplies, such as vaccinations, vitamins and anti-parasite drugs, to households with surviving livestock.

By rebuilding farmers' capacity for food production, the project will contribute to longer-term food security in the affected areas and reduce dependence on food aid.

The expected improvement in food production will not only help the beneficiary households, but will also benefit the country as a whole. Vaccinations, vitamins and parasite controls for livestock will help prevent the spread of disease and reduce animal losses, particularly of cattle.

With donor funding, FAO will assist small-scale, vulnerable farmers in Beni and Santa Cruz departments to recover their agricultural production capacities, meet household food needs and generate income through the sale of any surplus produce. In addition, survival rates among cattle herds will increase as a result of the distribution of veterinary vaccines and drugs, improving the income generation ability of vulnerable people.

**Project Title: Setting up local risk management systems**

**Objectives:** Establish and maintain 20 risk management systems

**Beneficiaries:** The same 5 000 households

**Implementing Partners:** Two departments, 20 municipal governments of Beni and Santa Cruz, the national Civil Defence system and the Federation of Municipalities.

**Funds Requested: US\$500 000**



**Flooded road**

**Families awaiting aid**

Given the recurrent nature of the floods in Bolivia, a key feature of FAO's proposed project "**Setting up of local risk management systems**" is the building of local capacity to deal with natural disasters that have the potential to affect agricultural production activities.

Under the project, risk management systems will be established at the municipal level. This will involve:

- the elaboration of objectives, distribution of responsibilities, appointment of staff and allocation of financial resources;
- training and simulation of real hazards, risks and accidents; and
- communication and networking with relevant stakeholders, particularly indigenous people, small farmers, local authorities and central Government, and
- provisions for the review and improvement of newly-established risk management systems.

The intervention will be based on solid assessment criteria and will build on previous and ongoing FAO projects in Bolivia.

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