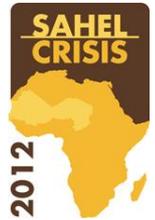




SITUATION UPDATE

The Sahel crisis



29 October 2013

HIGHLIGHTS

- The lean season is coming to an end as food crop harvests are ongoing in the Sahel. The poorest households begin to supply their exhausted food stocks but are still facing difficulties accessing adequate food on markets.
- Aggravating factors such as population displacements and floods affect livelihoods of already vulnerable and food insecure households.
- FAO is assisting more than 1.7 million beneficiaries by supporting food and livestock production, and providing livelihood protection and technical assistance.
- To date, FAO has received USD 29 million. Additional funding is urgently needed to support food production, particularly for vegetables during the off-season campaign from October 2013 to April 2014. This is an important opportunity to enhance vulnerable farmers' production and income, mostly in the areas where the main season has not been successful. Funding is also urgently required for protection of animal health and livestock restocking.

PERSISTENT FOOD INSECURITY AT THE END OF THE LEAN SEASON

With the ongoing harvests in countries of the Sahel, the availability of seasonal crops over most parts of the region is increasing. Preliminary harvest assessment missions are currently being undertaken jointly by the CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET, WFP and Governments in countries of the Sahel region, in order to assess the cereal production at national levels (Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad).

According to the estimations of the Consultation of the Regional information system for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC) held in September 2103 in Niamey (Niger), the crop prospects for the 2013-2014 agropastoral campaign are expected to be average to good overall. Cereal production is expected to be equal to or higher than the 1971-2000 average in the Sahel region as rains have continued to fall in late October 2013. However, lower yields are expected in some areas of Senegal, the Niger, Mauritania and Chad. Locally, rice yields could be affected by the floods in northern Benin, the River area in the Niger and in the Gambia.

Considering the damages that late rains water surplus could cause on harvested crops (grain deterioration and peanut sprout), measures of surveillance and protection must be undertaken in the Sahel to limit crops losses.

Even if the lean season is coming to an end, food security is still a main concern in the Sahel. Recent recurrent climatic crises have disrupted agricultural livelihoods and reduced the agricultural productive capacity of poor and vulnerable households that have lost access to fertile land and quality inputs, hence increasing their dependency on markets. To ensure any revenue, the poorest rural households have resorted to selling their labour instead of working their own land. This situation, combined with a reduced commitment from donors for the agricultural sector during the main cropping season 2013-2014, will prevent those most vulnerable from benefiting from the expected 2013-2014 normal to good harvest.

The nutritional status of children under five remains a concern, with a continuing high prevalence of acute malnutrition and an upward trend in admissions to nutrition rehabilitation centres close to the 2012 levels, particularly in Chad, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. This reflects the increased vulnerability of the poorest households who continue to face challenges of food access, limited access to basic services and erosion of their livelihoods. Over 1.4 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition in 2013.

Food insecurity aggravated by the impact of population displacements and floods

Vulnerable households depend on their food stocks when available and are forced to rely on markets during a time of high food prices. This causes a decrease in the purchasing power and additional stress on households' food access. After several months, the most vulnerable households have sold their assets including livestock, though many are getting into debt, which only further decreases their capacity to cope with the crisis.

At the same time, insecurity in some parts of the region (in particular Mali and Nigeria) have led to large population displacements that cause further stress on host communities already affected by the recent food and nutrition crises and increase competition

over access to basic services. Many refugees brought their livestock with them, adding pressure to scarce natural resources (grazing land and water), endangering animals in the region with the possible spread of animal diseases and increasing conflict between pastoralist refugees and host communities.

In Nigeria people are fleeing from insecurity in the northeastern region of the country and resettling in other parts of the country or in neighbouring countries (i.e. Chad, the Niger and Cameroon).

Good rainfall during the months of August and September have covered the rainfall deficits observed in June and July in the Sahel, while causing floods that have negatively affected livelihoods. Since the beginning of the rainy season, nearly 525 000 people were affected in West Africa. The most affected countries are the Niger (232 833), Nigeria (80 000), Senegal (73 500), Guinea Conakry (48 229), Mali (35 000) and Benin (33 000). More than 25 000 ha of crops (groundnuts, maize, millet, sorghum and rice) were destroyed in the region and 2 217 farms damaged in Nigeria.

Many struggle to replace what was lost or damaged, such as food stocks, seeds, tools, livestock and animal feed. The losses, including damage to infrastructures and equipment, plunge households already affected by food insecurity into an even more difficult situation. In the flooded areas, stagnant water make it difficult to maintain livestock, which, without proper shelter, veterinary care or adequate feed, easily fall prey to disease or starvation.

Food prices still high in Mali, the Niger and Chad

The first grain harvests improve food availability and cause early decline in grain prices, which will improve the purchasing power of households that cater to markets for food. Overall, cereal prices were well below their year-earlier levels and considerably lower than last year's crisis-affected levels. However, Niger, Mali and Chad, the main coarse grain prices remain above their five-year average. Cereal prices decreased significantly in recent months in Nigeria, leading to lower domestic prices in bordering countries, notably Niger.

Locust outbreak in Mauritania

An outbreak is developing in northwest Mauritania where locust numbers are increasing due to good rains and summer breeding this year. In the Aguilal Faye area east of Nouakchott locust densities have reached up to 40,000 adults/ha. Small hopper groups and bands are forming and adult groups are laying eggs. More hopper groups and small bands are expected to form in October, and groups of adults are likely to form in November. A second generation of breeding could occur in December and cause locust numbers to increase further. Ground control operations commenced in mid-October and have treated so far 830 ha. This outbreak is a potential threat to crops, therefore increased vigilance is required and additional control operations may be needed.

It is also to be noted that in Niger, ecological conditions remain favourable for breeding in parts of the Tamesna Plains and Air Mountains where low numbers of solitary hoppers and adults persist. As vegetation dries out, adults may form a few small groups during October.

FAO and WFP appeal for immediate support for Northern Mali

An Emergency Food Security Assessment conducted jointly by the Government of Mali, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and 15 other partners shows that three out of four households living in northern regions of the country are food insecure and heavily reliant on food assistance. The most vulnerable people in northern Mali, estimated to 1.3 million, have had little chance to recover following the recent conflict and last year's food and nutrition crisis as a result of erratic rains. As internally displaced people and refugees begin to return to their home communities, the limited resources will be further strained and the number of people requiring assistance is likely to increase. The combined effects of the food crisis and the security situation have left little room for recovery. Although the local economy is slowly recovering in the north and food security agencies are strengthening their presence, many farmers have been unable to purchase seeds and fertilizers and continue to require food assistance. In addition, while the security situation is slowly improving, the volatile security situation in the northern part continues to restrict humanitarian access.

In September, FAO and WFP appealed for immediate support to protect and rebuild livelihoods providing agricultural productive means to the most vulnerable people in the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti.

FAO RESPONSE STRATEGY

FAO Strategic Resilience Framework 'Urgent action to support the resilience of vulnerable populations'

FAO is strongly committed to respond to the Sahel crisis under a programmatic resilience framework, anchored in the FAO pillars of Disaster Risk Management (DRM), serving as an overarching umbrella not only for the humanitarian response, but also for the medium-to-long term work of the Organization, including investment. It is entitled "Strategic Response Framework to the Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel" in line with FAO's new Strategic Objective 5 "Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises". **In the short term, FAO's strategy aims to save lives and livelihoods through supporting agriculture and livestock production of vulnerable pastoralists, agro pastoralists and farmers, as well as restoring their productive assets.**

In July 2013, humanitarian partners conducted a mid-term review of both the national Consolidated Appeals (CAPs) and the Sahel regional strategy. FAO, as co-leader of the food security sector, has revised the needs of the agriculture sector, that remain high in a context of persistent food insecurity and the deterioration of poverty levels in some regions of the Sahel.

In 2013, FAO is appealing for a total of **USD 113.1 million** to support almost **6 million people**.

For the last quarter of 2013, FAO's proposed priority emergency assistance is focusing on the following activities:

1. **Support to off-season agricultural production** to enable vulnerable households to produce their own food, including the following activities:
 - a. distribution of agricultural inputs (vegetable seeds, fertilizers, small agricultural tools, irrigation systems, agricultural material to build fences, etc.) targeting the off-season agriculture (October-December) for vegetable production;
 - b. strengthening the food chain and marketing sector (storage, processing and transportation of agricultural goods); and
 - c. integrated food nutrition activities (nutritional education, food preparation and use and consumption diversification).
2. **Support to domestic animal protection and production** to meet evolving market demand for healthy livestock, safe and nutritious animal source-foods in the region, including:
 - a. protection of livestock, provision of veterinary multi-vitamin and mineral food complements and vaccination campaigns;
 - b. technical support for livestock management and animal health; and
 - c. restocking of herds through the distribution of vaccinated small ruminants and poultry.
 - d.
3. **Soil and water conservation and rehabilitation** to enable a better management of natural resources and secure agriculture and livestock activities, focused on the following activities:
 - a. rehabilitation of irrigation systems and water points;
 - b. rehabilitation or construction of pastoral wells; and
 - c. restoration of degraded lands.
4. **Early warning and preparedness support** so that Governments, donors, United Nations agencies and NGOs manage the crisis risk than the crisis itself, focused on:
 - a. strengthening of national Early Warning Systems;
 - b. support to food insecurity and vulnerability analysis, including technical support to the *Cadre Harmonisé*;
 - c. support to national crop assessments and market analysis; and
 - d. contribution to national and regional contingency plans for the Malian refugees crisis.

FUNDING URGENTLY NEEDED FOR VEGETABLE PRODUCTION AND PROTECTION OF LIVESTOCK

Support to vegetable production during the off-season campaign is a great opportunity to fight food insecurity. Activities that aim to provide adapted agricultural inputs, rehabilitate degraded soils and water points, provide irrigation systems as well as strengthen the productive value chains will contribute to improving household food security and resilience. The seeding period goes from October to December; therefore funds are immediately needed in order to put in place relevant logistics, especially procurement of the required inputs in order to ensure assistance during preparation of the off-season campaign.

Vegetables contribute to improve the nutritional status of women and children. When they are sold in the market, vegetable are a valuable source of income for vulnerable farmers. Supporting off-season campaign represent an opportunity to reach millions of vulnerable farmers that did not receive support for the main agricultural campaign. Indeed at mid-year, only a few projects related to agriculture and livelihood activities have been funded through the 2013 CAP process. Including projects funded outside of the CAP process, less than half of targeted beneficiaries have been reached at the regional level.

Funding is also urgently required for activities to support the protection of animal health and livestock restocking. In the drylands of the Sahel, extensive grazing on communal rangelands for livestock production as practiced by mobile pastoralists appears an adapted means of production and support of livelihoods, providing a vast range of products, such as milk, meat, skins and wool throughout the year. Providing small livestock to pastoralists help them rebuild their herds and ensure they can keep producing milk. These activities are essential where animals are weakened by the lack of adequate food due to deficits in fodder productions and also, livestock need to be vaccinated against and treated for disease and pests.

Interventions are complemented by capacity building activities such as training on good practices in livestock management, as well as vegetable processing and marketing.

Early warning and preparedness activities to predict and mitigate future crises, rehabilitation of irrigation systems and water points as well as restoration of degraded lands are also crucial to reinforce the productive capacities and the resilience of the Sahelian populations.

The lack of adequate funding to implement emergency agriculture livelihood activities in the Sahel is preventing vulnerable households and communities from strengthening their resilience and capacities to protect their livelihoods. In absence of assistance, the most vulnerable households risk adopting negative coping strategies including eroding their productive assets, reducing their

investment in quality inputs, selling their assets and becoming indebted. Increasing support to the agricultural sector could help vulnerable households break the cycle of poverty and hunger, instead of keeping them dependent on food assistance.

The main agricultural campaign, based on the production of food crops, has not been adequately funded. A stronger commitment by resource partners is needed. The remaining needs of the region are enormous. Donors and partners still have an opportunity to support households affected by food insecurity in the coming months by protecting and rebuilding their livelihoods (support to livestock and off-season agriculture, October 2013 – April 2014).

FAO's funds received in 2013

Countries	Beneficiaries foreseen	Total requirements 2013 (USD millions)	Received funds 2013 (USD millions)	Unmet requirements (USD millions)
Burkina Faso	1 080 600	14.4	5.9	8.5
Northern Cameroon	50 800	2.4	0	2.4
Chad	715 800	16.4	3.3	13.1
The Gambia	158 000	6.2	0	6.2
Mali	840 000	14.2	4.7	9.5
Mauritania	786 000	4.7	2.7	2
Northern Nigeria	40 000	3	0	3
The Niger	1 774 200	45.8	9	36.8
Senegal	483 500	4	1.4	2.6
Regional	n/a	2	1.6	0.37
Total	5 928 900	113.1	28.6	84.5

Rebuilding the livelihoods of 1.7 million vulnerable people through agriculture and livestock assistance

FAO's distributions of certified food crop seeds and tools for the main agricultural campaign (May–October 2013) in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal allowed assisted farmers to quickly resume production. This has enabled smallholder producers, many of whom have lost part, or all, of their productive assets (including seeds) during the 2012 crisis, to grow their own food and rebuild their lives and livelihoods as quickly as possible. Support to the off season campaign has also begun to enable vulnerable farmers produce vegetable.

FAO's assistance also includes drought-related livestock protection. Herders are provided with small livestock to help rebuild their herds and ensure they can keep producing milk. Livestock, a crucial source of food (especially for women and children) and income, is vaccinated against, and treated, for disease and pests.

Interventions are complemented by capacity-building activities such as training on good practices in livestock management, as well as vegetable processing and marketing.

FAO also provides emergency assistance to families affected by population displacements in the Sahel. In Chad, refugees from Sudan and the Central African Republic, as well as IDPs and host populations are receiving support for agricultural production in the Tissi area. People affected by conflict in Mali and Mauritania are also benefitting from agricultural and livestock production support (IDPs and host families in the regions of Mopti, Segou, and northern Mali and support to livestock in the Hodh Ech Chargui region of Mauritania).

LINKS

- FAO website on the Sahel crisis: <http://www.fao.org/crisis/sahel/the-sahel-crisis/en/>
- FAO Component of the Sahel 2013 Humanitarian Appeals: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/SahelCAP13.pdf
- FAO and emergencies: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/regions/west-africa/en/>
- FAO Locust Watch website: <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/2002/index.html>
- DRM Regional strategy for West Africa and Sahel, 2011-2013 (FAO 2011): www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/tc/tce/pdf/DRM_Strategy_Sahel_2011-2013_web.pdf
- FAO DRR corporate framework: "Resilient livelihoods: Disaster Risk reduction for food and nutrition security": <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2540e/i2540e00.pdf>
- Revised Interagency Sahel Strategy 2013: <http://wca.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/system/files/documents/files/2013%20Sahel%20Strategy.pdf>

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