



Background

Starting on 26 December 2010, Sri Lanka was struck by the heaviest rains in almost one hundred years, causing devastating floods and landslides. Prior to the floods, recent returnees in the North and East had started to resume sustainable livelihood activities, including planting their own crops, following the end of more than two decades of civil conflict. A second and more devastating phase of flooding began in late January and lasted well into February. At its peak, the floods claimed dozens of lives, displaced over 360 000 people and affected more than 1.2 million people, throughout the Eastern, Northern and North-Central provinces.

Damage was incurred to homes, infrastructure, schools, water supply and sanitation systems, among other vital resources and services. The recent floods are yet another setback for those vulnerable farmers who are still rebuilding their livelihoods, following the December 2004 Tsunami and years of civil conflict. High water levels have submerged roads and damaged bridges, which have rendered many areas difficult to access for relief operations.



Almost 400 000 acres of paddy have been destroyed by the floods

The Sri Lanka Flash Appeal 2011 was launched on 19 January 2011 to support Government efforts in responding to the most critical needs created by the flood damages over a six-month timeframe. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is co-leading the Food Security, Agriculture and Livelihoods Sector together with the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme. The Flash Appeal was revised on 25 March 2011.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

The damages caused by the floods to agricultural production and livelihood assets have impacted farmers' ability to produce sufficient food and income. It is estimated that almost 25 percent (750 tonnes) of the national harvest from the *Maha* planting season (September–January) has been lost. Poor flowering is expected to reduce yields by an additional 10-15 percent.

The floods have destroyed approximately 388 000 acres of rice paddy – the staple crop of the country. Rice production during the *Maha* season accounts for about two-thirds of total annual production. Interventions, thus far, have focused on the irrigation dependent *Yala* season (April–August). There are still pressing needs for those flood-affected households that are solely dependent on the *Maha* season and other vulnerable households that have yet to receive assistance. Replacing lost agricultural inputs and assets will be crucial in reviving sustainable agricultural livelihoods.

In addition to the damages on agricultural land, the floods have also destroyed much of the irrigation systems, including tanks and channels. FAO is coordinating with relevant partners to provide additional support for the repair of irrigation networks. Failing to act now would risk the adoption of negative coping strategies and dependency on food aid.



FAO's response

Within the framework of the Sri Lanka Flash Appeal 2011, FAO seeks approximately **USD 6.5 million** to replace losses in productive assets and to provide seeds to meet the requirements for the upcoming planting season in the Eastern province. With donor funding, FAO aims to provide agricultural input packages consisting of paddy seeds, other field crop seeds (including maize, ground nut, green gram, black gram and chili) and vegetable seed packages for home gardens to the most vulnerable farming households.

Project title: Emergency Agricultural Assistance to Flood Victims in Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts

Objective: To replace lost assets and restore productive agricultural livelihoods that have been destroyed by floods in the Eastern Province.

Beneficiaries: 91 500 households.

Partners: Eastern Provincial Council, Department of Agrarian Development and Department of Agriculture.

Funds Required: **USD 6 467 568.**

For more information please contact:

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