



Background

Soaring food and fuel prices, adverse weather conditions and declining remittances resulting from the global economic slowdown have contributed to a precarious food security situation for many vulnerable households in Kyrgyzstan. The October 2008 Emergency Food Security Assessment conducted by the World Food Programme revealed that one household in five is at high nutritional and health risk because of poor food consumption. Some 800 000 people are vulnerable to the effects of water, energy and food insecurity.

Pressure on limited water resources is likely to increase during the winter, as 93 percent of domestically consumed electricity is produced by hydroelectric plants on the Naryn River. The situation presents difficult trade-offs between the use of water supplies for winter energy production or for agricultural production in 2009.

On 6 August 2008, the Prime Minister requested the United Nations to assist with the coordination of donor actions to avert winter difficulties. Support is needed urgently to ensure that basic services remain accessible, water supplies continue uninterrupted and the most vulnerable people have access to shelter, heating, medical care and food throughout the winter, in order to ensure that their precarious livelihoods are not further jeopardized.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

The winter of 2007/08 was the worst experienced in Kyrgyzstan for 44 years. The country was able to provide essential energy and food to its population, but at the cost of severe depletion of its water reserves. The subsequent locust infestation, hail storms, lack of precipitation and spring frosts inflicted an estimated USD 65 million in damage to the agriculture sector, which employs 65 percent of the country's workforce.

Additionally, the global increases in food and energy commodities are causing significant shortages in family income. The Ministry of Economic Development reported that food prices had risen more than 20 percent in 2008. Food security may be further undermined during the upcoming winter by rises in costs for coal, electricity and other heating sources, particularly because fossil fuels

from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan may not be available. As a result, Kyrgyzstan may be forced to rely heavily on its water supply for energy production, thus reducing the resources available for the 2009 spring and summer agricultural seasons. Commodity price increases and electricity cuts will impact food security in both urban and rural areas.



Resources will be limited during the winter

The immediate restoration and improvement of local agricultural production, as well as assistance to ensure the survival of livestock, will be vital to sustaining the livelihoods of the most vulnerable rural households through the winter, thus avoiding negative coping strategies and further degradations in food security.



FAO's response

Within the framework of the Kyrgyzstan Flash Appeal 2008, as well as FAO agricultural and livestock assessments, FAO has appealed for **USD 2 000 000** to assist vulnerable communities in sustaining and improving their food production and income-generation capacity.

Under the strategic priorities agreed upon by the Food Security Group, in consultation with the Government of Kyrgyzstan, donors and humanitarian agencies, FAO aims to increase household level food production through the provision of seeds, fertilizers, training and support to reduce crop losses, as well as animal feed and health services. These activities will build upon a USD 500 000 project, funded by FAO, which provided 500 tonnes of winter wheat seed to vulnerable farmers, thus supporting local agricultural production.

Project title: Immediate support to most vulnerable farming households to protect their livelihoods and restore agricultural production

Objective: To protect key livestock assets and increase spring crop production.

Beneficiaries: 25 500 farming households and livestock-owning families.

Partners: United Nations agencies, Ministry of Agriculture, Pasture Institute and non-governmental organizations.

Funds Required: USD 2 000 000.



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