



Background

On 12 January 2010, the Republic of Haiti was rocked by its strongest earthquake in 200 years. The earthquake, measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale, hit Ouest Province – including the capital city, Port-au-Prince – causing extensive damage to urban and rural areas in the south and west of the country and leading to massive loss of life.

The true scale of the destruction will not be known for some time as relief teams are only just beginning to reach the most affected areas. On 15 January, the Government of Haiti estimated that over 100 000 people had been killed as a result of the earthquake and some three million directly affected by the damage.

The country is the poorest in the western hemisphere and faces frequent and recurrent natural disasters in the form of hurricanes and tropical storms, which have severely impacted on livelihoods and food security across Haiti. This was particularly the case in 2008, when four hurricanes hit the country in rapid succession. Haiti was also hit hard by rising food prices in 2008 and efforts are ongoing to improve domestic food production and reduce reliance on imports.

In response to the earthquake, the United Nations and its partners have launched the **Haiti Earthquake Flash Appeal 2010, seeking USD 575 million** to implement rapid, life-saving and early recovery activities.

Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Urgent support is required to reduce food insecurity and poverty in the aftermath of the earthquake. Preliminary reports indicate considerable damage to agricultural infrastructure and the disruption of market chains. There is a very real risk that millions of already vulnerable people will be pushed further into a situation of food insecurity.

About 62 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas and 80 percent relies on agriculture for its livelihood, including small-scale production in the form of backyard gardening and small animal rearing in urban areas. It is, thus, essential that key inputs be rapidly distributed to earthquake-affected families to help them resume farming when the next planting season begins in March 2010 and ensure they have enough nutritious food to meet their needs.



FAO response

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is currently implementing both emergency rehabilitation and longer-term development projects in Haiti through its FAO Representation and Emergency Rehabilitation and Coordination Unit offices across the country.

Under the Haiti Earthquake Flash Appeal 2010, the Agriculture Cluster, led by FAO, is seeking **USD 23 million** to rebuild the productive capacities of impoverished households. A key priority is to ensure that ongoing food production activities in areas not directly affected by the earthquake are continued, while at the same time rebuilding the food security and incomes of families directly impacted by the disaster.

The Cluster also aims to rebuild the food security and nutrition status of earthquake-affected people, thereby preventing a worsening of the situation in a country where over half the population is undernourished and about two million people will depend on food aid. Support will therefore be provided to rapidly restore food production through input distribution

and technical support to small-scale urban and rural farmers in time for the planting season that begins in six weeks.

Having lost their homes and most of their possessions, large numbers of people are leaving the cities to find shelter with families or friends in rural areas. They will need help to find a source of livelihood. The Agriculture Cluster response, led by FAO, will therefore seek to increase the absorption capacity of communities hosting these displaced groups.

Preliminary information from Haiti indicates that the priority needs for the agriculture sector in the aftermath of the earthquake are to:

- build capacities for effective Agriculture Cluster coordination and leadership, and the assessment of agriculture-related food security humanitarian responses (USD 500 000);
- re-establish the livelihoods of about one million people living in urban and rural areas that were directly or indirectly hit by the earthquake by supporting field-based and backyard food production, and providing essential inputs for small-scale agricultural and livestock production, including seeds, fertilizers, seedlings, and small animals (USD 14.5 million); and
- rehabilitate basic rural infrastructure in the affected areas, i.e. rural roads, irrigation facilities, food storage, farm infrastructure, for about one million people. This will be accompanied by the re-establishment of commercial food chains (USD 8 million).



Immediate aftermath of the earthquake in Port-au-Prince. (Photo: © AFP_Thony Belizaire)



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THE AGRICULTURE CLUSTER RESPONSE TO THE 2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE



Photos of ongoing FAO activities in Haiti

Support is urgently required to ensure that the food security situation in the country does not worsen and prevent increasing dependence on food aid

Project title: Building capacity for effective coordination and leadership of the Agriculture Cluster responses and ensuring evidence-based community-level needs assessments

Objectives: To ensure effective, coordinated and integrated humanitarian responses related to agriculture based on the needs and capacities of earthquake-affected households

Beneficiaries: 50 000 families directly affected by the earthquake and a further 50 000 families indirectly affected by market chain failures

Implementing Partners: Agriculture Cluster and food security partners (particularly non-governmental organizations), the Government of Haiti and other partners

Funds Requested: USD 500 000

Project title: Rapid restoration of the food production capacity of the worst-affected households

Objectives: To provide urgent, high quality agricultural inputs and poultry and small ruminants to the worst-affected households in time for the March 2010 planting season

Beneficiaries: 100 000 families

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development, and Agriculture Cluster and food security partners, including national and international NGOs and farmers' associations

Funds Requested: USD 10 000 000

Project title: Emergency assistance to restore food production and ensure dietary diversification for urban and rural families through backyard gardens

Objectives: To ensure the availability of agricultural inputs and small animals for backyard garden production among affected families

Beneficiaries: 100 000 families

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development, and Agriculture Cluster and food security partners, including national and international NGOs and farmers' associations

Funds Requested: USD 4 500 000

Project title: Emergency assistance for the immediate restoration of critical production infrastructure

Objectives: Immediate restoration of critical production infrastructure, including on-farm irrigation, food storage and food processing facilities and small feeder roads to ensure agricultural production in 2010 and restoration of local agricultural markets, which are vital for food security

Beneficiaries: 100 000 families

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development, and Agriculture Cluster and food security partners, including national and international NGOs and farmers' associations

Funds Requested: USD 8 000 000

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