

Background

Beginning on 13 October, Tropical Depression 16 caused widespread flooding and devastation throughout Honduras. Heavy rains, which doubled the average level of precipitation for the month in just over two weeks, caused the Ulúa and Choluteca Rivers to overflow in the north and south, respectively. Flooding and landslides swept through 17 of the country's 18 departments, affecting over 271 000 people, of which nearly 58 000 suffered total losses to shelter and livelihoods. Conditions deteriorated further as Tropical Depression 43 passed through eastern Honduras between 23 and 25 October.

Key infrastructure, such as roads, and water and sanitation systems, was severely impaired. Thousands were forced to abandon their homes, leaving behind their personal and productive assets and livelihoods. Extensive areas of cropland were destroyed, which means the depletion of food stocks, labour opportunities and income, against a backdrop of widespread poverty and soaring food costs. In 2008, minimum wage covered merely 64 percent of household food needs.



Small-scale farmers affected by landslides in western Honduras

Support is urgently needed to ensure that timely assistance reaches populations most affected by the crisis. The 2008 Honduras Flash Appeal was launched on 29 October to mobilize funding to respond to the lifesaving and early recovery needs of families most in jeopardy.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

Agriculture provides the primary source of food security, income and livelihoods to families in the flood-affected areas. Honduras is highly prone to recurrent natural disasters, such as floods, hurricanes, drought and the *El Niño* and *La Niña* phenomena. These shocks continually affect the national economy and deepen pockets of food insecurity among the rural populations that rely on agriculture for subsistence.

Prior to Tropical Depressions 16 and 43, soils were already saturated from heavy rainfall, which increased crop losses in main production areas. Floods and landslides damaged over 72 000 hectares of agricultural land, on which the country depends for its national supply of staple foods, such as rice, maize, plantains and beans.

Over 10 000 small-scale farmers in 12 departments suffered total losses to their annual crops. The floods also caused serious damage to permanent crops, such as plantain, cocoa and coffee. In the west of the country, many small producers, including coffee producers, saw their livelihoods destroyed by the landslides. Pastures were inundated, reducing available grazing land. Small animal species, such as pigs and poultry, which constitute a primary source of livelihood in Honduras, will be more prone to disease. Small-scale aquaculture also suffered the loss of fish, such as tilapia.

The degree of damage to the agriculture sector is expected to deplete the food supply and income of agriculture-dependant families, who will experience increased hardship in meeting rising market costs to supplement their food basket. Rehabilitation of the sector is paramount to increasing the food security of the affected population and to strengthening their resilience to future shocks.



FAO's response

Within the framework of the 2008 Honduras Flash Appeal, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has appealed for **USD 3.1 million** to support Government efforts and the people of Honduras to restore food production and livelihoods.

FAO's proposed interventions aim to:

- **restore crop and horticultural production** of small-scale farmers through provision of basic inputs, such as seeds, seedlings, tools, fertilizer and storage facilities;
- **safeguard the health of livestock** through vaccination campaigns and distribution of forage seed and fertilizer;
- **rehabilitate the irrigation network** to ensure access to water in time for the upcoming cropping season; and
- **rehabilitate crop and fish seed-producing institutions** to ensure availability of seed for crop and aquaculture farmers.





FAO's COMPONENT OF THE 2008 HONDURAS FLASH APPEAL

Total Funding Requirements: USD 3.1 million



Rebuild the livelihoods of small farmers affected by flooding in October 2008

Objectives: Distribute quality agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, fertilizers, storage facilities, etc.) to small-scale farmers affected by flooding from Tropical Depression 16; provide seed for the upcoming rice crop in Comayagua and Yoro; and rehabilitate the capacity of the SAG research station, La Lujosa, in Choluteca, to assure the provision of the seed needed by farmers for future rice crops.

Beneficiaries: 8 000 farming households.

Implementing Partners: Secretary of Agriculture; NGOs (ICADE in El Paraíso and Francisco Morazan); ADIAC in Copan; local organizations in the south of El Paraíso; rural financial organizations (*cajas rurales*), mostly operated by women.

Funds Requested: USD 2 046 800.

The aim of this project is two-fold: to equip flood-affected farmers with the basic inputs they need to resume crop production and to restore the capacity of the La Lujosa research centre to produce seeds for use by farmers in future planting seasons.

Donor support will enable 8 000 farming households to plant rice in time for the upcoming agricultural season, securing a much-needed harvest in terms of food security and income generation. Further, improved storage facilities will prevent additional losses to agricultural inputs and stored crops, which will increase the resilience of farmers to future disasters.

Emergency assistance to small livestock farmers most affected by flooding in October 2008 through provision of appropriate inputs and vaccination of animals

Objectives: To provide quality forage seed and fertilizer to small livestock farmers hit by the recent emergency and to improve household food security (in particular female-headed households) by preventing disease and death in household swine and poultry.

Beneficiaries: 1 000 small farmers in 1 400 hectares of Atlántida, Olancho, Choluteca, Valle, Yoro, Colón, Cortés and 6 000 household yards (50 000 pigs and 100 000 poultry) in Cortés, Atlántida, Yoro and Colón.

Implementing Partners: SAG; local livestock farmer organizations.

Funds Requested: USD 584 800.

Small livestock, such as pigs and poultry, provides a primary source of livelihood for Honduran families. This project seeks to protect animals from the impact of the floods, which inundated natural pastures and created conditions for livestock diseases to spread.

Project efforts will reduce the risk of animal losses, enhance productivity through the provision of animal health services and increase available rangeland through the distribution of fast-growing fodder crops to secure dry-season feeding.

Rebuild the livelihoods of small horticulturists affected by excessive rains in El Paraíso, Comayagua and Intibucá in October 2008

Objectives: To provide key inputs to 500 horticulturists in Comayagua and Intibucá in 390 hectares, whose lands were either washed out or flooded by the effect of Tropical Depression 16 in October 2008.

Beneficiaries: 500 small horticulturists on 390 hectares of land.

Implementing Partners: SAG; private sector.

Funds Requested: USD 157 700.

The October floods caused severe damage to horticultural production. Household vegetable gardens suffered severe losses and the damage incurred to permanent crops will both reduce and delay yields. This project aims to provide agricultural inputs to 500 small-scale horticulturists, and thus restore production on 390 hectares of land. The fruits and vegetables produced will increase availability of vitamin-rich foods and contribute to enhancing nutrition in affected areas.

Rehabilitation of the irrigation network in the irrigation districts affected by flooding in October 2008

Objectives: To ensure access to irrigation water to guarantee agricultural production in the upcoming cropping season.

Beneficiaries: 600 small farmers in four districts in El Paraíso and Comayagua.

Implementing Partners: SAG; irrigation district boards.

Funds Requested: USD 124 400.

If not addressed, the flood-induced damage to irrigation infrastructure will bear serious repercussions on the upcoming cropping season.

FAO's proposed activities aim to clear out distribution canals and drainage systems and thereby ensure that farming households in the irrigated plains can access water during the dry season, when crop yields gain a clear advantage under irrigated conditions.

Emergency assistance to small scale aquaculture farmers through rehabilitation of the Aquaculture Centre El Carao, Comayagua

Objectives: Ensure availability of fish seed for tilapia farmers affected by flooding in different areas (Choluteca, Valle, Comayagua, Cortés and Colón).

Beneficiaries: 4 000 tilapia farmers.

Implementing Partners: SAG; small local organizations; municipalities.

Funds Requested: USD 171 200.

Rehabilitation of the Aquaculture Centre in Comayagua will ensure the availability of seed for fish farmers in areas affected by the floods. The planned intervention will directly impact the productivity of 4 000 tilapia farmers in Choluteca, Valle, Comayagua, Cortés and Colón. Further, strengthening the production capacity of the centre will have a lasting impact on future access to fish seed.

For more information please contact:

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