

# TURNING THE RISING TIDE OF HUNGER



FAO and EU Food Facility





## WHEN FOOD PRICES HIT RECORD HIGHS IN 2007-2008, LEVELS OF HUNGER IN THE WORLD REACHED UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS.

Today, nearly one out of six persons on earth is undernourished.

The European Union (EU) responded quickly and massively with the €1 billion EU Food Facility (EUFF), a two-year programme to help developing countries move towards long-term food security, launched in 2009.

Set up in close collaboration with the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, the Food Facility focuses on programmes with a quick and lasting impact on food security.

Over €228 million (US\$315 million) is being channelled through FAO, allowing the Organization to field operations in 28 countries

in Africa, Asia and Latin America, touching the lives of more than nine million people in rural areas.

Targeting the transition period from emergency aid to longer-term development, FAO is helping to boost agricultural production by working with local communities and farmer organizations on quality agricultural inputs, seed and livestock production, extension, access to markets, storage, irrigation and conservation agriculture.

A small portion of funds were diverted to contribute to relief efforts following emergencies in countries where FAO was already operating Food Facility projects, such as Haiti and Pakistan.

EUFF projects are embedded in government policies for food security and poverty reduction and are in line with government programmes to address the food price crisis.

## Pakistan /

### GIVING SMALLSCALE FARMERS THE MEANS TO GROW

**Botay Wala** – Farmers in this village in Pakistan's Punjab province were lucky. The 2010 floods did not hit them or their land. But, as Mohammad Shabaan, a 29-year old farmer explains, they have their own trouble. Soaring expenses are one: over the past two years, the price of fertilizer more than tripled. "I can't afford to buy enough," Shabaan says.

In October 2009, 300 smallholder farmers in Botay Wala received seed and fertilizer, just in time for the upcoming wheat planting season. They were among the 97 500 farmers throughout the country who FAO provided with the means to grow food under a €24 million EUFF project in Pakistan.

"Rural areas have been doubly hit," says Faizul Bari, FAO's project manager. Prices of food, seed and fertilizer are higher in the countryside than in the city, while the rural population earns less.

Yet, Shabaan can be considered among the luckier farmers of his village. Some of his peers have grown so discouraged that they have sold their land and moved to the city in search of work. Shabaan on the other hand combines farming with a part-time job at a seed production company. Meanwhile, his wheat harvest still covers his household consumption needs.

And he would like to keep it that way, he smiles. Recently married, he thinks it best to wait a while before having children.



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### EUFF CONTRIBUTES TO PAKISTAN FLOOD RELIEF

In the summer of 2010 Pakistan suffered the worst flooding it has ever known. Some EUFF funds were immediately reallocated to contribute to FAO's large-scale distribution of planting material, which has allowed nearly five million people to grow food during the first planting season following the floods. Two million seven hundred thousand euros (US\$3.5 million) of EUFF funds were used to reach flood-affected households with wheat, canola and vegetable seeds and fertilizer.

# Lesotho /

## INPUTS FOR THE RURAL POOR

**Ha Barete** – A broken down tractor is the showpiece of 70-year-old Ralesoai Makhorole’s yard. It has not worked for years though.

Since Makhorole stopped working in a mine in South Africa a decade ago, his family’s survival depends on three acres of maize and sugar beans that he grows through a sharecropping arrangement and on a vegetable garden downhill from his house.

Makhorole is one of 36 000 farmers who received agricultural inputs through FAO’s EUFF project in Lesotho.

Together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), FAO organizes Input Trade Fairs where

local suppliers offer a variety of seeds, tools and fertilizer. Farmers like Makhorole “purchase” the inputs of their choice using a voucher system.

Thanks to the success of this approach the ministry has started using fairs for other purposes, says Deputy Principal Secretary Liteboho Stephen Mofubetsoana. For example, to promote open-pollinated seeds among poor farmers, as an alternative for hybrid seeds, which they can’t afford.

After the trade fair Makhorole said: “I will have enough produce to consume and make money. That will help me pay for my son in school.”

Today, he is toiling in his garden, hoeing patches of soil that had compacted during recent hard rains. Locusts ate his emergent cabbage crop, but with cabbage seed from the fair he is now replanting.

His prognosis for next year’s cropping season is upbeat. “I’m going to save seed from what I am growing. I hope to double my acreage of beans and maize.”

Still he laments the tractor that stands as a reminder of what might be. “If it was working, it would have done wonders.” The tractor will continue to sit idle. But at least the Makhorole family can picture better times ahead.



# Liberia /

## BUILDING SKILLS TO BOOST RICE CROP

**Tappita** – Elizabeth Roberts learned to cultivate rice from her parents, who had learnt it from their parents. She also learned that it was not unusual to lose much of the year’s crop after harvest.

Roberts, 44, has become part of an ambitious national plan to boost the production, quality, durability and marketability of Liberia’s rice crop. The plan is funded in part by the EU Food Facility with technical support from FAO.

Straddling a dirt embankment in a rice field in her village Tappita, Roberts explains that she and other members of the Tappita Women’s Structure, a cooperative of female farmers, have

learned how to turn overgrown swamps into lowland rice fields, how to improve rice yields and quality throughout the growth cycle, use various techniques to protect the rice from pests, and how to add to the value of the crop with proper post-harvest processing and storage.

Sarah Mendoabar, mayor of Tappita, says female-headed households have been especially hard hit by higher food prices in recent years. In addition to training, they have also received seeds, fertilizer and pest-control supplies from FAO.

For Roberts, the most surprising part of the training was the sight of a large metal vat, poised over a wood fire



and filled with steaming, parboiled rice. This, she learned, would help to preserve nutrients in the rice grains, and increase their marketability.

Roberts now helps to train other members of the Tappita Women’s Structure. “I’ll pull my women together. We will share what we learn.”



# Nicaragua /

## REVIVING AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL

**Pantasma** – In one of Nicaragua’s most fertile valleys, malnutrition is rife. This is a high-potential area, where the EU and FAO help small-scale farmers increase their yields.

“Land has been our primary asset,” says Ramiro Rizo, a farmer from Pantasma. “It is thanks to the land that we survive.”

Survival has not been always easy in this northern Nicaraguan town, located on one of the frontlines of the civil war that ravaged the country in the 1980s.

“You could hardly work,” Rizo recalls. Many of his family members fled. The valley of Pantasma, named after the river that flows through it, once considered Central America’s bread

basket, turned into a wasteland.

Although the war is long ago, not all the scars have healed. Recent shocks, such as high food prices in 2007-2008 and a drought in 2009, have put increasing strain on the livelihoods of many. According to Carlos Villagra, an official of Pantasma’s city council, almost one out of five persons in town is chronically underfed.

FAO, with € 3 million from the EU Food Facility, helps Nicaraguan organizations of smallscale farmers boost the productivity of staple crops, like beans, maize and rice. Areas with a high agricultural potential, such as the valley of Pantasma, are especially targeted.

Each farmer receives quality bean

seeds, as well as fertiliser. Yields were double that of the national average, says Offman Salinas, FAO’s project supervisor for northern Nicaragua.

Farmers also get training in agricultural techniques, such as pest control, crop rotation and storage. Capacity building is one solution, says Salinas: “Reducing poverty starts with education.”

Sitting on the porch of his ranch overlooking the valley, Rizo recounts how after the war his family started coming back. Now they’re reunited. According to him, it is all about land. “If you have nowhere to sow, you have no harvest. That’s where poverty is.”



# Burkina Faso /

## A SEED CHAIN REACTION

**Kokologo** – Pauline Koné, a government worker in the capital Ouagadougou, says: “In February 2008 women united and marched in protest against the high cost of living. The price of rice had risen from 11 000 to 35 000 CFA francs (from € 17 to € 53) for a 50-kilo bag!”

Some 45km to the south, in the village of Kokologo, Koumba Kabré feels overwhelmed. She has six children to feed. From the family’s store she collects a scant portion of millet and sorghum to make porridge for the evening. “We only have one meal a day,” Kabré says.

She makes pottery and keeps chickens to sell on the market. The small amount

she earns should cover the coming lean period. Otherwise, her family will be forced to eat the seeds needed for the following planting season.

“You can really feel the extreme fragility,” says Jean-Pierre Renson, FAO’s emergency coordinator for Burkina. He explains that a total of 400 000 vulnerable households benefit from FAO’s € 18 million EU Food Facility operation in the country.

In the irrigated areas of Banzon, in the south, over 600 seed producers have involved their cooperative in the production of improved seeds.

Diallo Yacouba farms quality rice and maize seeds on a 0,75 ha plot. By



selling the seeds Yacouba not only increases his own profits, he has prompted a chain reaction: the seeds are used by FAO to assist vulnerable families like Koumba’s in Kokologo.

Meanwhile, in Ouagadougou, Pauline hopes that the price of a sack of rice will be going down soon.



## BOOSTING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

Helping developing countries move towards long-term food security, FAO projects under the EU Food Facility cover the following areas:

- expanding certified seed production;
- ensuring access to quality inputs and appropriate extension;
- strengthening existing farmer-based organizations;
- improving storage infrastructure;
- facilitating linkages to markets;
- establishing and strengthening community-managed irrigation schemes;
- increasing livestock production;
- promoting conservation agriculture.



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## FAO-EUFF PROJECTS BY REGION

• GLOBAL (rinderpest eradication) / **2%**

• LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua / **13%**

• ASIA Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka / **32%**

• AFRICA Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe / **53%**



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