Key points

- For more than a decade, people in Mali have been experiencing various types of shocks that have severely deteriorated their food security and livelihoods. These include insecurity triggering forced population displacements, and agricultural and livestock value chain disruptions; erratic distribution of rainfall and the effects of climate change; the COVID-19 pandemic; and the recent political crisis combined with the financial and economic sanctions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa.

- Food and agricultural input prices have increased dramatically in the last few months, which is likely due to reduced agricultural production in 2021 coupled with the effects of COVID-19 on the local economy as well as international sanctions. The drop in the livestock/cereals terms of trade from 20 to more than 30 percent has severely reduced the purchasing power of pastoral households. Furthermore, the situation is exacerbated by the general increase in food and oil prices due to the war in Ukraine and related global speculation.

- The upcoming lean season is expected to be particularly harsh for vulnerable households as food stocks from previous harvests as well as pastures and water sources for livestock are almost depleted, especially in areas where population and animal density has increased due to significant displacements.

In numbers

- **1.8 million people** projected to be in high acute food insecurity (June–August 2022)

- **1.2 million** children acutely malnourished – a 53% increase compared with 2021

- **362,907** internally displaced people (IDPs), 162,921 refugees and 742,342 returnees

- **20–70%** increase in food prices compared with the five-year average

The upcoming months are a critical opportunity to scale up humanitarian agricultural assistance in order to sustainably improve the food security of thousands of people, particularly IDPs and host communities.
Response

FAO is supporting 53,500 households (321,000 people) through the following emergency response activities:

**Provision of cereal kits** (20-30 kg of maize, millet, sorghum and rice seed according to the agro-ecological zone and preference of the beneficiary and 200 kg of fertilizer per household) to 12,000 households to cultivate an average area of 2.5 ha/household and ensure improved household production, incomes, access to food for the wider community and food security.

**Provision of horticultural kits** (100/200 g of amaranth, cabbage, okra, onion and tomato seed, 25 kg of organic fertilizer, and two hoes and one watering can per household) and training to 28,500 IDP and host families in order to diversify diets, increase household production and restore the livelihoods particularly of displaced households who have lost all their belongings and productive assets.

In line with the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan, FAO is ready to scale up its support to vulnerable households affected by irregular and extreme weather conditions, insecurity and food price increase through livelihoods protection and rehabilitation interventions by proving households with (i) cereal, vegetable and fishery production support to promote sustainable and resilient food production among vulnerable communities including IDPs, as well as (ii) emergency livestock protection support; and (iii) strengthening analysis and coordination of the food security response.
Challenges facing food security and agriculture

Due to insecurity in the northern and central areas of Mali, rural households are experiencing significant difficulties in accessing fields, pastures, technical support, and regular transhumance routes to feed and sell their animals. Roads are insecure, and productive and rural infrastructures – livestock vaccination points, warehouses and wells – have been destroyed or are inaccessible. In addition, several rural markets have been forced to close, leaving households unable to buy and sell agricultural and pastoral inputs and products. This has negatively affected food production, and the livelihoods of households who mainly rely on subsistence farming. Population displacements are also significant – mainly in Gao, Menaka, Mopti, Séguéla and Tombouctou – and currently 55.5 percent of displaced people are women (February 2022).

The latest Cadre Harmonisé carried out in Mali (December 2021) indicates that 1.8 million people are projected to be in Phase 3 and above (June–August 2022), of whom 156,560 in Phase 4. However, as Mali wasn’t included in the updated analysis in early 2022 due to political instability in the country, this figure is expected to be much higher, especially if compared with results in neighbouring countries with similar humanitarian contexts (e.g. +31 percent compared with 2020 in Burkina Faso). High levels of food insecurity combined with anaemia, inadequate access to clean water and the spread of diseases such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, malaria and measles, particularly among children, are leading to a worrying rise in acute malnutrition across the country. Of the 1,235,000 people expected to be acutely malnourished by August 2022, the cases of severe acute malnutrition are likely to increase by 48 percent.

In this context, rural families need urgent livelihood support to restore their food production. Combining cash-based transfers with the provision of productive assets during the lean season, for instance, enables vulnerable households to cover basic needs while engaging in agricultural production, to quickly improve their food security.