Hello summer!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bumper wheat harvests
- Oyster mushroom bloom
- Moroccan Locust outbreak response
- LSD vaccination campaign on track
- Preventing festivities zoonotic disease spread
- Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak
- Summer crop distribution underway
- Farm tools distribution for better crop yield
- More experts to measure food insecurity levels
- Educational farmer field days
- Poultry for nutrition and income
- Cushioning vulnerable farmers
- Enhanced real time monitoring for learning and accountability
- Rehabilitation of Irrigation schemes for improved agriculture productivity

Bumper wheat harvests

Despite the threat of Moroccan Locust invasion in the north and northeast and continued drought in some provinces, the country has witnessed bumper harvests of wheat grown out of certified seeds. Farmers now have enough stock to feed their families for one year, with enough surplus for seed for the coming for the next planting season. Wheat is Afghanistan’s staple crop and an important source of energy for the population.

Oyster mushroom bloom

Women mushroom farmers are now harvesting oyster mushrooms – having been taught by FAO on the best ways to cultivate it. Mushroom production requires simple technology and limited effort. The production takes 30–35 days and can be grown several times in a year.

Mushroom cultivation at home makes a substantial contribution to Afghan women’s household food security, improves food diversity, and is a source of income for vulnerable women and girls.
Moroccan Locust outbreak response

In April, there were reports of Moroccan Locust in North and Northeast regions of Afghanistan. FAO and its implementing partners sprang into swift action to mechanically control the hatching hopper bands.

Rain-fed crops and pasture were the most affected by the Moroccan Locust. These include: pasture (fodder crops), wheat (irrigated and rainfed), flax, chickpea, barley, devil dung (hing), orchard (pistachio), alfalfa, and vegetables (tomato, onion and melon, watermelon and cucumber).

In Northeast region, the total area affected is approximately 14,500 ha with 9,300 ha in the North region. 56,000 household from North region and 75,000 household from Northeast were directly and indirectly affected by the Moroccan Locust. The total area and household affected in the western region, particularly Badghis and Herat will be confirmed post-harvest.

LSD vaccination campaign on track

The prevalence of the cattle Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) poses a threat to small-scale farmers who depend on cattle production for both food and nutrition security as well as income generation - particularly women who are part of the dairy cooperatives.

In response to the LSD outbreak, FAO aims to vaccinate 3,600,000 cattle for 1,500,000 households across 34 provinces by the end of July 2023. As of 30 June, FAO had already vaccinated 3,026,306 cattle belonging to 1,392,565 households in 33 provinces.

801 Veterinary Field Units and 53 provincial facilitators carried out public awareness campaign on LSD prevention among 1,731,132 households (equivalent to 12.12 million individuals).

Preventing festivities’ zoonotic disease spread

To prevent the spread of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) during this year’s Eid-Al-Adha, FAO carried out public awareness on the dangers of the virus if there’s uncontrolled animal movements within the country as well as unprofessional slaughtering by everyone in rural and urban areas.

CCHF is a zoonotic viral disease caused by a tick-borne insect. CCHF virus is transmitted by bites from infected ticks or by direct contact with the blood or tissues of infected ticks, livestock, and humans. The prevalence of CCHF has increased year by year in the country, and these concerns are due to the lack of a vaccine and insufficient public health and veterinary infrastructure to prevent and diagnose infectious cases of CCHF in Afghanistan.

Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) virus is known as the most highly transmissible and is primarily a disease of cloven-hoofed animals. Some of the symptoms are: fever, vesicular lesions, and subsequent erosions of the mouth, tongue, nipples, feet, and teats. The illness and accompanying lesions result in reduced feeding, lameness, loss of milk and meat production, rapid deterioration of the animal condition, with high mortality of young ones.

FMD does not affect humans but is highly infectious among cattle, buffalo, sheep, and goats. The FMD outbreak is currently reported in many provinces, and it is one of the transboundary animal diseases (TAD) and can be considered the most significant threat due to its impact on animal production, livelihoods, and rural economies in Afghanistan.

The FAO/OIE Global Strategy for the control of FMD recognizes the importance of combining the control of TADs with other diseases to maximize the impact of control efforts. FAO Afghanistan will procure some FMD vaccines to protect rural farmers’ food security and livelihoods by improving their animals’ health.
Summer crop distribution underway

The timely distribution of Soybean packages in eight provinces has started. The beneficiaries received technical training on good agronomical practices including land preparation, seed treatment, optimum sowing time as well as use of fertilizers. Soybean is an excellent source of protein for the family as well as good for animal feed and edible oil.

Greenhouse installation for year-long production

Vulnerable female beneficiary from Bala Murghab and Qala Naw districts of Badghis Province can now produce vegetables during summer and winter season, after a 50M2 micro poly greenhouse equipped with all materials as well as a drip irrigation system was installed.

The greenhouse skeleton can be in use for 10-15 years if well taken care of - with the plastic sheet being replaced every three years.

Farm tools distribution for better crop yield

FAO distributed well-designed good quality hand tools to enhance the farmer’s ability to maximize their small-scale crop yield across the country. In addition to this, soil type and crop selection play an important role in the utilization of farm equipment.

More experts to measure food insecurity levels

A three day Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity Level-1 training was conducted in Herat city targeting 20 participants from national NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies. The training aimed at supporting participants in becoming qualified “IPC Analyst” at global, regional and country levels. This allows analysts to use IPC tools and procedures for classifying acute food insecurity. The Level 1 training is also part of the IPC Certification Programme, which includes specific requirements and steps to become a qualified “IPC Trainers and Facilitator” (Level 2).

Educational farmer field days

In May and June, we conducted five field days in Herat, Balkh, Parwan, Urozgan and Badakhshan provinces where farmers, experts, FAO, implementing partners, students, lecturers and other stakeholders in the agriculture sector compared improved wheat varieties with local wheat. They discussed the varieties, agronomic practices which boost wheat yield, as well as pests and diseases.

Poultry for nutrition and income

Women in Daikundi, Jawzjan, Badakhshan, Kabul, Logar, Parwan and Laghman provinces received live pullets to enable them start their backyard poultry farm. This is to boost their nutrition as well as create a source of income. The women beneficiaries are supported on poultry management, vaccination, expansion of their farm, feed preparation and linkages to market in provinces.
Cushioning vulnerable farmers

Vulnerable farmers in Badakhshan received livestock protection package and cash to cushion themselves and their livelihoods. The livestock protection package includes 200Kg concentrated feed, 1.4kg fodder seed and 200 ml de-wormer medicine (anti-parasitic medicine) for small and large ruminants.

These households also received USD 90 (AFN 8,218) for them to buy some food for their families as they are facing severe malnutrition due to limited access to adequate food.

Enhanced real time monitoring for learning and accountability.

To provide real-time oversight of project implementation at the grassroot level, 169 field monitors dispersed across 34 provinces continued to perform real-time monitoring of FAO intervention.

This quarter, 2,820 monitoring visits were carried out. Real-time monitoring ensures compliance with technical requirements, humanitarian standards, zero tolerance for fraud, sexual exploitation and abuse policy, as well as standard operating procedures that govern activity execution.

Rehabilitation of Irrigation schemes for improved agriculture productivity

For the last three months, FAO rehabilitated 140 irrigation schemes to facilitate water flow for 176,545 beneficiaries in Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. This is to enhance access to water for irrigation for small-scale farmers to strengthen agricultural productivity to reduce hunger and poverty.

FAO is also applying water conservation practices, drought mitigation measures, groundwater recharge and flood protection.