



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**Cash+**  
FAO's approach



FAO's Cash+ programming ensures families have what they need to restore or enhance their livelihoods, while enabling them to meet their immediate needs.

#### **MAURITANIA**

A woman enrolled in FAO's Cash+ programme in Mauritania, who received unconditional cash transfers, goats, animal feed and technical training.  
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FAO defines Cash+ as an intervention that combines cash transfers with productive assets, inputs and/or technical training and extension services to enhance the livelihoods and productive capacities of poor and vulnerable households.

By providing unconditional cash transfers plus livelihood inputs and training, FAO addresses not only the needs of vulnerable households in emergency situations, but also those in development contexts.

The modality is impactful, enhancing the economic impacts of cash transfers while enhancing livelihoods potential. Evidence from various contexts shows that Cash+ can significantly improve households' agricultural production, income generation, asset ownership, economic empowerment, as well as dietary diversity and food security.



# A flexible tool for promoting resilience and social protection

FAO promotes the use and scale up of Cash+ to support short-term humanitarian and recovery interventions in response to shocks affecting agricultural livelihoods, as well as longer-term social protection and resilience programmes in stable environments, protracted crises and fragile contexts.

Cash transfers can help restore food security and alleviate poverty, supporting beneficiaries to address their basic needs while protecting their assets from being sold out of distress. Cash transfers are used to respond to specific vulnerabilities triggered by shocks, as well as to encourage productive investments and remove financial barriers to access to social services. In rural areas specifically, they can help farmers bridge the food gap often faced before a harvest. In most cases, the cash transferred under Cash+

interventions is unconditional – meaning beneficiaries do not have to fulfil certain criteria to receive the transfer. Beneficiaries have the freedom to spend the cash on the needs that they themselves identify as most important or pressing.

While evidence shows that beneficiaries receiving cash transfers often invest in livelihoods activities, implementing complementary interventions can maximize economic and productive opportunities and impacts. Studies by FAO and the World Bank examining comparisons of cash transfers, in-kind assistance and combined approaches in livelihood sector have found that cash transfers generated a broad range of positive social and economic effects, though they also pointed to the need to complement them with other types of support to enhance and sustain their impacts.

Cash+ packages are specifically designed to fit to each context, and generally include three main components: unconditional cash transfers, productive inputs or assets, and technical training and extension services.

## UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER

To address basic needs  
and protect assets



PLUS



**PRODUCTIVE INPUTS and/or ASSETS**

To increase agricultural  
production and improve  
income generation

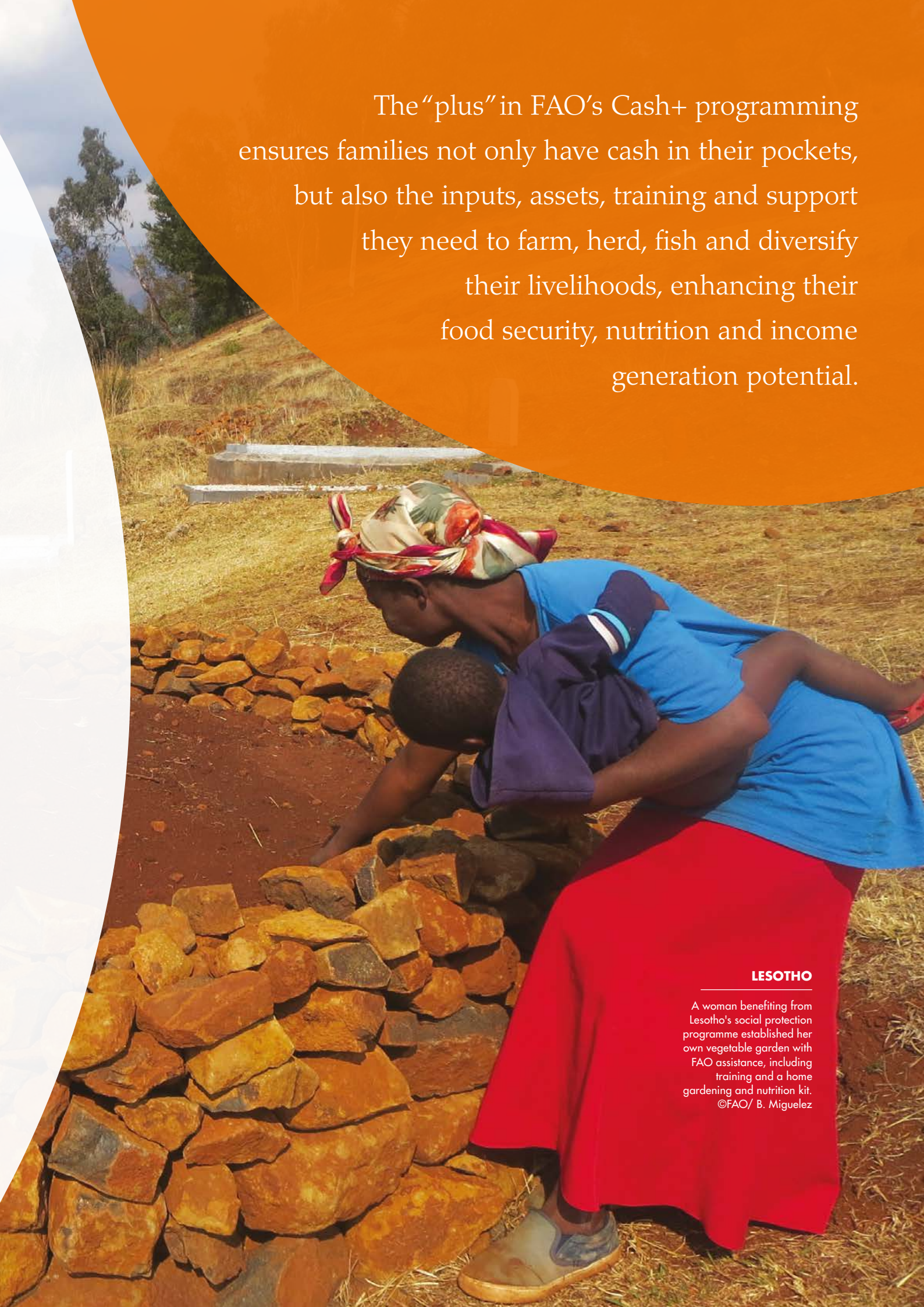


**TRAINING and EXTENSION SERVICES**

To strengthen  
knowledge and  
productive skills



The “plus” in FAO’s Cash+ programming ensures families not only have cash in their pockets, but also the inputs, assets, training and support they need to farm, herd, fish and diversify their livelihoods, enhancing their food security, nutrition and income generation potential.



#### **LESOTHO**

A woman benefiting from Lesotho's social protection programme established her own vegetable garden with FAO assistance, including training and a home gardening and nutrition kit.

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# Intervention design

The overall impact of Cash+ programming is dependent on its design as it relates to beneficiaries' needs and the situation on the ground, as well as short- and longer-term objectives. The cash and "plus" components are tailored accordingly.



## The cash

To maximize effectiveness, the cash component of Cash+ is designed based on specific operational contexts, assessed needs and socioeconomic and market analyses. Identifying the appropriate type of cash transfer depends on programme objectives and duration, implementation capacity, cost, seasonality and markets, among other considerations. These will impact the frequency, duration, timing, adequate regularity and size of the cash transfers. For example, to maximize productive impact in Cash+ programming, cash transfers need to be made according to agricultural and pastoral seasons.

The main cash transfer types vary based on their operational implementation, and include the following.

- ➡ Short-term regular transfers are provided over a short period of time in response to a humanitarian crisis, where the objective is to enable households to meet their immediate needs and/or provide the means to kick-start productive activities if they have lost their assets.
- ➡ Longer-term regular transfers are provided frequently and predictably, providing liquidity and certainty for poor vulnerable households. This enables uninterrupted access to basic

needs, and can allow beneficiaries to better engage in their livelihoods and improve profitability, including investing in agricultural productivity, re-allocating their labour to on-farm activities, enhancing human capital development and increasing participation in social networks and traditional solidarity mechanisms (an important risk management strategy).

- ➡ Lump sum transfers are singular, more substantial amounts that are delivered as humanitarian or development assistance. They can be used in emergency contexts where regular cash transfers are not feasible.
- ➡ A combination of transfers can provide a rapid boost to beneficiaries' livelihoods, enabling investment in assets or to quick recovery after an emergency hits. Evidence shows that combining lump sum transfers with regular, small transfers can increase productive potential, enabling households to make larger purchases (investing in productive assets) while they use the smaller amounts to smooth consumption, though careful attention must be paid in order to not minimize the risk management role that regular transfers provide.



## The “plus”

To enhance the economic and productive potential of the cash transfers, the “plus” – productive inputs, assets, activities, training and extension services – must match households’ needs in terms of relevance and suitability. Identifying what beneficiaries need to resume or maintain their livelihoods can be based on needs assessments, local context-specific livelihoods and market analyses, analysis of relevant local agricultural value chains and economic opportunities, among other means.

Defining the right content, value and timing of the livelihoods support is informed by beneficiaries’ choice and preferences as much as possible. Furthermore, defining the best timing of the “plus” component is key, and is based on locally specific agricultural calendars and seasonality patterns as relevant to livelihood categories (e.g. farming, pastoralism). Cost-benefit analysis of inputs and services is also carefully considered to ensure the resources required for beneficiaries to derive an income from the assistance received is not too high (for example short-cycle crop varieties are preferred).

When the “plus” component includes the provision of inputs or assets, distribution can be in-kind or, where suitable, through voucher systems. Voucher systems – providing beneficiaries access to certain amount of a selection of inputs (such as seed) supplied by local producers or traders at fairs in exchange for paper or electronic vouchers – are prioritized where possible as they offer choice and flexibility for beneficiaries, trigger a greater impact on local economies and have the potential to be more cost-effective than direct distribution.

Enhancing productivity through livelihoods support via Cash+ interventions can enhance the integration of poor vulnerable households in local agricultural value chains. This can increase their access to markets and services (such as finance and information), thereby improving the sustainability of the intervention and contributing to value chain development.

### ➡ **Productive inputs and assets**

are provided to enhance agricultural production and improve income generation potential. Productive assistance packages can include either inputs or assets, or a combination of both. Productive inputs can include crop, legume and vegetable seeds, planting materials, fertilizers, animal feed and fishing kits, among others. Productive assets can include tools, livestock (e.g. poultry, small ruminants), processing equipment, etc. This can also include productive activities such as kitchen or homestead vegetable gardens. Where possible, nutrition-sensitive approaches are promoted through the selection of nutrient-rich and diverse inputs and assets.

➡ **Training** enhances capacity related to the content of the productive assistance package, such as specialized technical training on crop and/or livestock production, climate-smart, sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices, enhanced post-harvest management and food preservation skills, training in entrepreneurship skills and financial literacy, vocational training and other activities according to beneficiaries’ demand. This can also include engagement in farmer or pastoral field schools.

➡ **Extension services** can bring knowledge and information that beneficiaries may not have to improve their decision-making, increase efficiency, improve natural resource management and enhance adaptation to climate change.





## MALI

A woman receives the first  
tranche of the cash  
transfers under FAO's  
Cash+ programme in Mali.  
©FAO/Sonia Nguyen



## MALI

In FAO's Cash+ programme in Mali, 99 percent of the beneficiaries were women – improving their potential to generate income and enhancing their livelihood security.

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### Implementation modalities

Based on interactions between agricultural and social protection interventions, Cash+ programmes can be implemented in two ways, as single or complementary programmes.

Under Cash+, a single programme provides households with both cash transfers and inputs, assets and/or training, while complementary programme is

designed to supplement another cash transfer or agricultural intervention. Complementary programmes are coordinated and aligned by targeting the same households, with a view to boosting the interventions' synergies. For example, a government social protection programme providing cash transfers can be complemented by an intervention targeting the same beneficiaries with seeds, tools and training.





## Impact evaluation

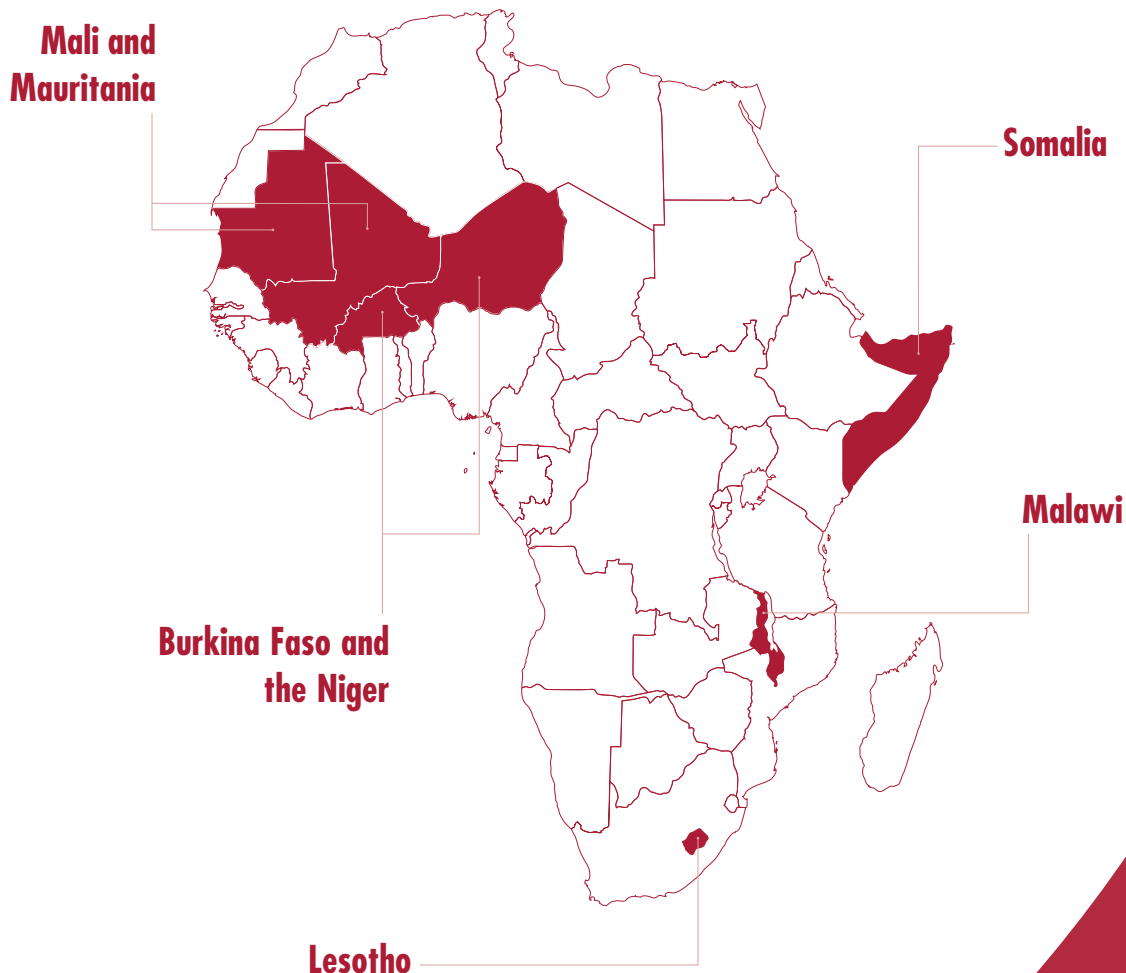
Cash+ interventions benefit from dedicated monitoring and evaluation, enabling the analysis of how beneficiaries use the assistance received and how the intervention impact their food security, income generation, nutrition and resilience. Depending on intended outcomes, measuring and evaluating Cash+ impacts can include baseline and endline surveys, post-distribution surveys, impact evaluations, and market

monitoring pre- and post-implementation, among others. The timing of such analyses take into account seasonality implications, frequency requirements and security considerations. Analysis results are critical to help inform future programming, identifying the most effective Cash+ modalities for potential replication and scale up in similar contexts. same beneficiaries with seeds, tools and training.



# Experience from Cash+

FAO has implemented Cash+ programmes in development, humanitarian and recovery contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa, and conducted analyses of other programmes and complementarities. While the current availability of impact evaluations on programmes that combine cash transfers with in-kind assistance and/or training is limited, FAO recently concluded that the existing evidence is rich enough to allow the assertion that combined programmes can have positive impacts that go beyond the effect of an individual intervention. Experience has shown that the integrated approach of Cash+ improves households' incomes, assets, productivity potential, as well as dietary diversity and food security, and reduces households' need to resort to negative coping strategies.





## Burkina Faso and the Niger

Analysis of a FAO pilot project in Burkina Faso and the Niger (2013-14) that provided beneficiaries cash transfers and productive assets (poultry and small ruminants) revealed that the combined assistance helped increase households' incomes and asset ownership and contributed to a marked increase in food security and nutrition. In Burkina Faso especially, the intervention enabled beneficiaries to increase their incomes and build their assets faster than input distribution or cash transfers alone. FAO also observed increases in revenue and savings. Significant improvements in food security were observed – from 35 percent of households food secure at the beginning of implementation to 75 percent by the end. In terms of dietary diversity, 82 percent of beneficiary households had an acceptable diet two years after the intervention. Two impact evaluations, undertaken one and two years after the baseline survey, confirmed the sustainability of the results, and allowed a detailed analysis of the respective impacts of the different programmatic combinations.

## Lesotho

Using a complementary approach in Lesotho, an FAO pilot initiative focused on one district, providing seeds and training on homestead gardening and food preservation practices to households benefiting from cash transfers under the Lesotho Child Grant Programme. An impact evaluation of the pilot revealed that combining the government's cash transfers with FAO's provision of inputs and training had an enhanced impact on households' agricultural production, food security and nutritional status, as compared with each programme in isolation (especially among labour-constrained households). Based on this success, and as part of the response to the El Niño-induced drought, the initiative was scaled up at national level in 2015 by the government, thereby ensuring future scale-up and sustainability.

## Mali and Mauritania

FAO initiatives in Mali and Mauritania (2015-17) distributed small ruminants and cash transfers to beneficiaries, which were reinforced with education on nutrition and essential family practices. In both countries, analysis of the intervention has demonstrated the positive impacts of Cash+. Food security improved

by about 23 percent among beneficiary households in Mali, global acute malnutrition decreased from 6 percent to 2 percent among children aged 6-59 months in Mauritania, dietary diversity increased by 25 percent among children (aged 6-59 months) in Mali, and income generation improved in Mali, with the proportion of beneficiaries having an above-average income increasing by 20 percent (from 41 percent before the intervention to 61 percent after).

## Malawi

In terms of creating synergies, a 2017 FAO study explored the synergies between two of Malawi's government programmes, the Social Cash Transfer Programme and the Farm Input Subsidy Programme. The study assessed whether the combined impacts of both interventions (cash transfers and heavily subsidized agricultural inputs) implemented together was larger than their sum as well as the incremental impact of receiving one programme's benefits when a household already received support from the other (and vice versa). Results indicated that there are positive synergies between the two, mainly in terms of incremental impact of each programme over the other in increasing expenditure, agricultural production and livestock.

## Somalia

Cash+ activities formed an important part of FAO's response to the declaration of famine risk in Somalia in 2017. Farming and agropastoral households with little to no food or seed stocks left received monthly unconditional cash transfers for the full duration of the main planting season, plus agricultural inputs (cereal, pulse and vegetable seeds and hermetic bags to store their harvest). The cash transfers enhanced their ability to meet their immediate food needs, while the resulting harvests expected in August/September are expected to boost household food security. Similarly, marginalized rural families in riverine areas received cash transfers combined with fishing kits to help bridge the food gap, and solar-powered fridges are also being distributed for use by the community. A study of FAO's work distributing fishing kits in 2016 found that beneficiaries were able to increase the amount of fish caught, which resulted in an increase in fish consumption at household level (85 percent reported consuming fish on a daily basis) and an increase in fish sold at the local market.





# Cash+ The way forward

## Scaling up Cash+

Analysis and evaluation of current modalities and the success of implementation have illustrated the potential for scaling up Cash+ in emergency and development contexts, as well as provided lessons learning to improve programme design. The approach can help bridge the gap between humanitarian and development interventions by enhancing resilience to shocks and crises.

While more work is required to develop the body of evidence on the impacts of Cash+ interventions, experience has shown that the combined effect of cash transfers and productive inputs enhances food security, nutrition and income among vulnerable rural populations.

Integrating Cash+ into existing social protection policies and programmes provides further opportunities, enabling poor and marginalized families to build assets and engage in economic and productive activities.



## Enhancing policy coherence

FAO is working to enhance the coherence between social protection and agriculture, and promotes Cash+ as one of the programmatic components that can help contribute to this coherence.

When Cash+ interventions are leveraged for social protection purposes, strong and regular interactions between social protection and rural development sectors are required at policy and programmatic levels. Context allowing, working to strengthen policy coherence between social

protection and rural development sectors are essential to mobilize political commitments for Cash+ interventions. This would ensure Cash+ interventions' quality, ability to sustain financial capacities, and guarantee longer-term impacts of the programmes on beneficiaries.

At country level, developing policy coherence between agriculture and social protection for Cash+ interventions should be based on political commitment and policy framework, institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms, and financial capacities.





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## Resources

- FAO in Emergencies – Cash and Voucher Programmes:**  
[www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/cash-and-vouchers/en/](http://www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/cash-and-vouchers/en/)
- FAO Resilience:** [www.fao.org/resilience/home/en/](http://www.fao.org/resilience/home/en/)
- FAO Social Protection:** [www.fao.org/social-protection/en/](http://www.fao.org/social-protection/en/)
- FAO from Protection to Production:**  
[www.fao.org/economic/ptop/home/en/](http://www.fao.org/economic/ptop/home/en/)





## **MALI**

Vaccinated goats ready to be distributed to FAO Cash+ beneficiaries in Mali. Livestock assets represent an investment that can lead to increased income, for example through the sale of milk or kids.

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Cover photo: ©FAO/Simon Maina







Today, member states face an increasing myriad of demands and challenges in agricultural development. To support them, FAO has identified five key priorities on which it is best placed to intervene. These priorities or Strategic Objectives represent the main areas of our work to achieve a world without hunger, malnutrition and poverty and do so in a sustainable manner – contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To help accomplish our Strategic Objectives, FAO works through five Strategic Programmes, incorporating gender, governance, nutrition and climate change impacts in all aspects of our work.



HELP ELIMINATE HUNGER,  
FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION



MAKE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES  
MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE



REDUCE RURAL POVERTY



ENABLE INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT  
AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS



INCREASE THE RESILIENCE OF LIVELIHOODS  
TO THREATS AND CRISES

FAO's approach to Cash+ specifically contributes to  
**reducing rural poverty and increasing the resilience  
of livelihoods to threats and crises.**

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