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FINANCE COMMITTEE

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**Report on the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities
(SFERA)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) enables the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to take rapid and effective action in response to food and agricultural threats and emergencies. The fund has three components: (i) a working capital component to advance funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis; (ii) a revolving fund component to support FAO's involvement in needs assessment and programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 (scale up) emergency¹ preparedness and response activities; and (iii) a programme component, which pools resources in support of a programme framework for large-scale emergencies or strategically complements ongoing programmes, including the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window as well as the Anticipatory Action (AA) window triggered by corporate early warnings.
- From its inception in 2004 through 31 December 2022, SFERA has received USD 359.5 million. Under the programming component USD 154.4 million were allocated to large-scale programmes (e.g. locust response, sudden onset disasters, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza, protracted crises, and COVID-19); USD 79.4 million were disbursed under the AIRC window; and USD 22.1 million under the AA window. Under the revolving fund USD 37.5 million were used to set up or reinforce Country Office emergency response capacities and support needs assessments and programme formulation and USD 15.8 million were allocated to the Level 3 (scale up) emergency preparedness and response window.
- Since SFERA's inception, under its working capital component, USD 582.2 million have been advanced to fund immediate emergency projects, of which USD 87.3 million were advanced over the reporting period. Outstanding advances as at 31 December 2022 amounted to USD 37.1 million.
- SFERA's cash balance as of 31 December 2022 was USD 13.1 million. This relatively low balance reflects the high level of advances made in support of drought affected countries.
- As the 2022 year-end accounts closing activities were still ongoing at the date of preparation of this document, the final figures reported for SFERA for 2022 may be subject to change.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- This document is provided for information.

¹ Sudden onset, large-scale disasters and crises that require a corporate response.

I. Background

1. During its Hundred and Second Session in May 2003, the Finance Committee supported the creation of SFERA, with the purpose to enable the Organization to rapidly initiate emergency operations by participating in interagency needs assessment and coordination activities, establishing an emergency coordination unit, preparing a programme framework and projects, and providing advance funding for procurement of inputs when a resource partner's commitment has been obtained.²

2. This annual report provides a brief description of the major operations initiated with SFERA funds for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2022. The report contains financial data for this period, as well as data since the Fund became operational.

II. SFERA Set up

3. SFERA has three components: (i) a working capital component to advance funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities, or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis; (ii) a revolving fund component to support FAO's involvement in needs assessment, programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 (scale up) emergency³ preparedness and response activities; and (iii) a programme component to support work on specific large-scale emergency programmes, or strategically complement ongoing programmes through the AIRC window, as well as the AA window triggered by corporate early warnings.

Table 1. SFERA components and windows

Working capital component	Revolving fund component	Programme component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advances to enable rapid response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency coordination and response capacity window Needs assessment and programme development window Level 3 (scale up) emergency preparedness and response window 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large-scale programme window (e.g. sudden onset disasters, highly pathogenic avian influenza, the Sahel, El Niño, protracted crises and COVID-19) AIRC window AA window

4. The **working capital component** reduces the reaction time to emergencies by enabling FAO to initiate activities and procure the most critical assets before funding from resource partners is received. By enabling a rapid response, this component helps to mitigate the impact of threats and emergencies and hastens the recovery of those affected.

5. The **revolving fund component** supports the efforts of FAO's emergency country teams to identify the most critical needs of affected populations, strengthen response capacity, and develop and coordinate technically sound response programmes. Through the Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window, FAO can prepare for and respond to the extraordinary challenges facing the agriculture sector during a Level 3 (scale up) emergency.

6. The **programme component** facilitates faster and more programmatic assistance that can be tailored to evolving needs on the ground. SFERA's pooled funding approach provides the flexibility to adjust activities and support according to the geographical and thematic areas of greatest need. Likewise, the programme approach enables operations to adapt as the situation changes, streamlining activities to ensure the most appropriate assistance reaches affected populations sooner. The programme component also includes the AIRC window that channels pooled funds towards the

² FC 102/14

³ Sudden onset, large-scale disasters and crises that require a corporate response.

immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. With the AA window, FAO is enabled to act early once an impending threat has been identified, before disaster losses are sustained in the agriculture sector or livelihoods compromised.

III. SFERA resources

7. **Receipts.** Since SFERA's inception in April 2004, the fund has received a total of USD 359.5 million. Of this amount, USD 261.1 million were provided by the Members listed in **Table 2**, including USD 9.5 million provided by resource partners that transferred the balances of closed emergency projects to SFERA. During the period of January–December 2022, deposits to SFERA amounted to USD 24.5 million.

Table 2. SFERA funding receipts

Contributors	Since inception USD (000)	January – December 2022 (USD 000)
Australia	218	111
Austria	1 131	0
Belgium	74 084	5 611
Canada	12 229	857
Chile	5	0
China	500	0
Czechia	36	0
Finland	3 747	0
France	9 539	43
Germany	7 549	3 487
Greece	227	0
Holy See	30	0
Ireland	7 424	0
Italy	1 490	0
Japan	430	0
Jordan	60	0
Kuwait	50	0
Lao People's Democratic Republic	14	0
Luxembourg	8	0
Malta	43	20
Monaco	59	0
Netherlands	9 681	0
New Zealand	13	0
Norway	44 175	9 703
Portugal	43	43
Others (less than 5 000)	41	0
Saudi Arabia	1 377	0
Slovenia	53	53
South Africa	452	0
Republic of Korea	76	76
Spain	520	0
Sweden	42 755	4 111
Switzerland	4 942	0
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	38 105	0
Total Members	261 107	24 116
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	10 000	0

Direct operating cost recovery	86 468	0
Louis Dreyfus Foundation	327	220
Total United Nations	1 559	160
Total received	359 461	24 496

As of 31 December 2022 – Source: compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger

8. In view of the growing number of crises and responses, the resources received in 2022 were critical for the effective functioning of the working capital fund enabling a quick and at scale response, including semi and unearmarked contributions. Additional efforts are required to reach a target of USD 75 million, which would ensure a fully flexible and efficient SFERA, providing the tool to cope with three simultaneous large-scale crises.

IV. Use of SFERA funds

9. Under the working capital component, USD 582.2 million was advanced to projects after resource partners' commitment, but before receiving the cash contributions. Of this amount, USD 37.1 million remain outstanding, pending receipt of resource partner funds.

10. Of the USD 359.5 million contributed, USD 53.3 million were approved under the revolving fund component. A total of USD 256 million was allocated under the programme component, of which USD 154.3 million were disbursed under the thematic and regional window. The use of funds is detailed in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Funding components

	Since inception (USD 000)	January – December 2022 (USD 000)
Advances		
Working component		
Total advances made during the period	582 184	87 337
Refunds on advances paid during the period	545 089	57 525
Outstanding advances	37 095	
Applications		
Emergency coordination unit setup and reinforcement	20 190	34
Needs assessment and programme development missions	17 287	233
Level 3 emergency preparedness and response	15 847	0
Total revolving component	53 324	267
Programme component		
AIRC	79 432	11 403
AA	22 140	4 057
Thematic and regional window		
Desert locust campaign	51 105	0
Avian influenza campaign	45 928	0
Typhoon and hurricane	15 598	0
Horn of Africa (regional programmes)	13 748	0
Tsunami campaign	10 002	0
Protracted crisis	4 786	0
El Niño	4 552	0
The Sahel (regional programmes)	3 552	0

COVID-19	2 934	0
Initiative on soaring food crisis	1 168	0
Fall armyworm	1 001	0
Subtotal thematic and regional window	154 374	0
Subtotal programme components	255 946	15 460
Grand total applications	309 270	15 727
SFERA balance	13 093	

A. Working capital component

11. **Advances.** During the reporting period, 80 percent of SFERA advances were in support of projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. SFERA advances from resource partners

Resource partner	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
Central African Republic *	0	4 813
European Commission	560	766
France	1 120	1 120
Germany	4 850	4 850
Guinea Bissau *	400	400
Kuwait	300	0
Italy	0	1 500
Madagascar *	2 000	2 000
Somalia *	7 030	6 700
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	1 000	500
United States of America	70 012	34 812
World Organisation for Animal Health	65	65
Total	87 337	57 525

* Funding from World Bank

12. Advances mainly supported major programmes covering Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sri Lanka representing more than 87 percent of all advances between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2022, as shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. SFERA advances for country programmes

Country	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
Afghanistan	300	1 500
Central African Republic	0	4 813
Ethiopia	11 700	11 700
Global	5 475	5 475
Guinea Bissau	400	400
Madagascar	2 000	2 000
Philippines	1 000	500
Somalia	55 362	20 032
South Sudan	1 800	1 800
Sri Lanka	9 100	9 100
Timor-Leste	200	0
Viet Nam	0	206
Total	87 337	57 525

13. During 2022, Tigray region of **Ethiopia** faced a complex humanitarian situation. Insecurity, recurring environmental shocks and the residual impacts of a desert locust upsurge and the COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread disruption of agricultural activities and food supply chains, negatively impacting the livelihoods and food security of the most vulnerable communities. Without timely access to key production inputs, especially improved seeds and fertilizers, farmers were expecting a considerable drop in production. In response, FAO and members of the Food Security Cluster placed a particular focus on procuring and distributing fertilizers and seeds for the *Meher* season, which is the most important agricultural season for most farmers in Tigray. In this context, SFERA Advances enabled the Organization to fast-track the procurement and distribution of improved seeds and fertilizers. SFERA's contribution was critical in ensuring continued local food production and food availability, thereby improving the food security and resilience of crisis-affected populations in the region.

14. In 2022, as a result of a severe drought, consecutive failed rainy seasons and “La Niña” phenomenon, among other aggravating factors, food security conditions in **Somalia** were expected to deteriorate. FAO and humanitarian partners collaborated with the Government of Somalia to urgently scale up the humanitarian response. Thanks to SFERA Advances, the Organization was able to scale-up cash-based interventions targeting vulnerable rural communities; distribute early recovery agricultural inputs packages; provide emergency livestock treatment and livestock production inputs; rehabilitate productive community assets; and support small-scale fishers through the provision of fishing and processing tools. Moreover, SFERA Advances supported the provision of timely information and analyses on food security conditions as well as floods and droughts risk management through enhanced early warning systems and the provision of evidence-based information on floods and droughts.

15. During 2022, the impacts of the economic crisis in **Sri Lanka** threatened the livelihoods of rural communities and disrupted the national food system. Moreover, agricultural production was already on a downward trend due to the unavailability of fertilizers and other essential agricultural production inputs. In this context, the Organization's response focused on protecting rural livelihoods and increasing food production capacities through the distribution of time-critical inputs. In support of the response, SFERA Advances enabled the Organization to rapidly procure and distribute urea, muriate of potash and triple super phosphate. Thanks to SFERA, Sri Lankan farmers (especially paddy rice farmers) were able to resume production and improve the food security of their communities.

B. Revolving fund component

16. The **emergency coordination window** of SFERA's revolving fund component facilitates the rapid deployment of emergency experts, as well as the reinforcement of the existing teams to support additional activities or fill short-term funding gaps. **Table 6** shows the allocation of resources by country.

17. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency contributed USD 308 356 under the Needs Assessment and Emergency Coordination. An amount of USD 703 086 has been allocated under the revolving component for Needs Assessment and Emergency Coordination from the contribution received from Norway.

Table 6. SFERA emergency coordination

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Afghanistan	8
Bangladesh	130
Burkina Faso	30
Central African Republic	206
Democratic Republic of the Congo	30
Djibouti	95
Eastern Africa	329
Asia Countries (the Philippines, Viet Nam and Bangladesh)	50

Haiti	10
Honduras	35
Iraq	20
Latin America and the Caribbean	50
Mali	200
Republic of Moldova	45
Mozambique	214
The Niger	116
Nigeria	30
Pakistan	31
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	48
Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa	57
Somalia	30
South Sudan	30
Sri Lanka	60
Subregional Office for West Africa	89
Subregional Office for Central Africa	30
Subregional Office for Eastern Africa	45
Subregional Office for Mesoamerica	28
Subregional Office for Southern Africa	121
Syrian Arab Republic	45
Türkiye	132
Ukraine	27
West and East Africa	95
Total	2 466

18. The **needs assessment and programme development window** of the revolving fund finances needs assessment activities at the onset of a crisis to support FAO and its partners in obtaining the information needed to formulate rapid response programmes as well as longer-term resilience strategies. During the reporting period, needs assessment and programme formulation exercises were implemented in the countries shown in **Table 7**.

Table 7. Needs assessment mission allocations

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Burkina Faso	26
Cameroon	12
Central African Republic	10
Chad	58
Colombia	45
Democratic Republic of the Congo	115
Ecuador	20
Ethiopia	16
Guatemala	43
Haiti	81
Horn of Africa	40
Kyrgyzstan	10
Lao People's Democratic Republic	47
Madagascar	126
Republic of Moldova	65
Nigeria	206
Pakistan	9
Peru	30

Sahel	100
South Sudan	16
Southern Africa	100
Southern Africa countries (Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe)	50
Sri Lanka	95
Sudan	58
Syria Arab Republic	85
Tajikistan	32
Tonga	54
Uganda	59
Ukraine	218
West Africa and Sahel Region	199
Total	2 025

19. Under both the **emergency coordination and needs assessment, and the programme development windows**, SFERA has allocated funds to support the **Food Security Cluster** in several countries including Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Haiti, Iraq, Pakistan and South Sudan. This included funding to sustain cluster coordinators and information management officers (IMOs), along with support for food security cluster needs assessments and surge missions. Four surge missions of the Global Food Security Cluster support team were covered by SFERA in 2022 in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Haiti and South Sudan. The objective of the surge missions was to fill the gap (in Central African Republic and Haiti), to strengthen the Food Security Cluster team in Pakistan (following the severe floods in 2022) and to implement participatory review and learning exercise of five selected joint Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus projects. During the gap filling and the surge missions, the staff enhanced the coordination mechanism at national and subnational level, supported coordination of assessment and analyses, enhanced advocacy efforts and contributed to the formulation of Humanitarian Needs Overviews, Humanitarian Response Plans, and Flash Appeals. SFERA also contributed to funding IMO positions in Burkina Faso and Iraq for a total of ten months. The two IMOs led the development of –inter alia– information management products such as gap analyses and partners’ presence maps, among other key information products.

20. Moreover, one collective example was the allocation of funds to conduct **Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM)** surveys in Chad, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti and the Sudan under the **needs assessment and programme development window**. In these five countries, agrifood systems and food security are fragile and were put under additional stress by compounding crises in 2022. DIEM provides quality, granular, and timely data that can be actioned to design emergency and resilience programming. Household surveys deliver critical information to target the most vulnerable areas and population groups, as well as programmatic entry points based on analyzed needs. The focus on agricultural livelihoods is unique in the food security systems landscape and enables a better understanding of trends, which can lead to AA triggers. DIEM has proven instrumental for FAO Country Offices to mobilize new resources. For instance, in Colombia, DIEM data have been used extensively to develop proposals. In addition, DIEM activities are being developed in close collaboration with the FAO regional offices, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) platform, and the food security clusters with qualified FAO human resources in place. Several rounds of monitoring have already been implemented where FAO operates through agreements with local partners (e.g. ministries of agriculture, national Early Warning Systems and non-governmental organizations) as well as global service providers. DIEM represents a strong opportunity for the food security and agriculture analysis ecosystem and to reinforce linkages with stakeholders at various levels including donors, ministries of agriculture and disaster management and the Food Security Cluster at global and national levels.

21. The **Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window** was established under the revolving fund component following the Finance Committee’s endorsement at its Hundred and

Forty-Seventh Session.⁴ This window focuses on (i) preparedness measures and activities strengthening FAO's capacity to respond to large scale emergencies and (ii) Level 3 emergency response and corporate surge.

22. Funds allocated under the “**Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response**” support FAO's immediate response actions on a ‘no-regrets’ basis, which is defined as the commitment of resources in the absence of detailed needs assessments and response plans. During the reporting period, resources were approved on a ‘no-regrets’ basis for emergency response activities in Ukraine.

Table 8. Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response allotments

Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response	USD (000)
Ukraine	500
Total	500

23. SFERA Level 3 funds were allocated to support the Organization's response in Ukraine, following the agreement of the Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to activate the IASC System-Wide Emergency Activation Procedures (Scale-Up Protocols). Using SFERA funds, the Organization rapidly mobilized and deployed internal resources to support the Corporate Scale-Up and respond to the humanitarian crisis in the country. Overall management support was provided along with administrative and technical support for programme and project formulation in a complex operating context.

C. Programme component

24. Under the SFERA programme component, USD 79.4 million were allocated under the AIRC window, and USD 22.1 million under the AA window since inception.

Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window

25. In 2022, under the AIRC window, USD 14.4 million funding was received from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Louis Dreyfus Foundation, Norway, the Republic of Korea and Sweden. Contributions by these resource partners have supported FAO's country teams to respond quickly to large-scale crises through the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. In 2022, the funds were allocated to interventions in 19 countries as shown in **Table 9**.

Table 9. Allocations under the AIRC window

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
Allocations Belgium		
Bangladesh	Emergency support to severely flood-affected agriculture and fisheries- based livelihoods in North-eastern districts of Bangladesh	500
Cuba	Protection of the livelihoods of poultry producers and rehabilitation of poultry production for the food security of the people in the most affected municipalities by hurricane Ian	500
Ethiopia	Emergency support to enable the delivery of agricultural inputs in Tigray region	510
Kenya	Safeguarding livelihoods and increasing immediate food access for vulnerable rural households affected by drought	500
Mauritania	Strengthening the resilience of agropastoral households affected by the drought of 2021	500
Myanmar	Life-saving emergency livelihoods support to vulnerable food insecure households in selected conflict-affected states of Myanmar.	500

⁴ FC 147/8

Pakistan	Restoration of livelihoods in the flood affected district of Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Rajanpur in Punjab Pakistan	500
Philippines	Emergency assistance in restoring food security and agriculture-based livelihoods in Typhoon Rai affected areas in Region VIII	500
Tonga	Response to Hunga Tonga - Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami emergency assistance to address impacts on agriculture and fisheries	400
Ukraine	Emergency food security and livelihoods assistance to conflict affected people in Ukraine	500
Total Belgium		4 910
Allocations Sweden		
Burkina Faso	Emergency response for supporting agropastoralist and internally displaced people affected by the security conditions in the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso	300
Colombia	Emergency assistance for vulnerable indigenous and afro-descendant populations in the department of Chocó in Colombia affected by violent restrictions to their mobility and the impact of floods	300
Madagascar	Emergency response to Malagasy Migratory Locust resurgence	540
Mali	Rapid emergency response to protect the livelihoods of pastoral communities affected by the conflict in the Menaka region.	316
Niger	Emergency response to improve the agricultural and livestock livelihoods of the most vulnerable households affected by food insecurity in Niger.	300
Somalia	Emergency multipurpose drought support	300
Total Sweden		2 056
Allocations Australia		
Ukraine	Emergency agricultural livelihoods support for conflict affected households in Ukraine.	111
Allocations Canada		
Sri Lanka	Addressing production issues of the local food system due to COVID-19 pandemic	107
Allocations Louis Dreyfus Foundation		
Ukraine	Emergency food security and livelihoods assistance to conflict affected people in Ukraine	220
Allocations Norway		
Burkina Faso	Improving food security and protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Boucle du Mouhoun region of Burkina Faso	1 000
Democratic Republic of Congo	Improving access to nutritious food and income for vulnerable people in North Kivu and Tanganika, Democratic Republic of the Congo	1 000
Mozambique	Building the resilience of vulnerable communities for food and nutrition security in Cabo Delgado	1 000
Niger	Improving food security and resilience of communities in Tillabéri, Diffa, Tahoua and Agadez	1 000
Total Norway		4 000
Grand total		11 404

26. In mid-June 2022, heavy monsoon rains and water flowing downstream from northeast India triggered flash floods in nine north-eastern districts in **Bangladesh**. In support of national early recovery efforts, through SFERA AIRC funds, FAO provided flood-affected farmers and fishers with

time-critical production inputs. The support included production inputs for key crops (e.g. rice, vegetables, pulses and oilseed crops) as well as the provision of productive assets for fishing communities. The emergency assistance packages enabled the affected communities to restore their livelihoods and increase crop and aquaculture production.

27. In **Burkina Faso**, the main drivers of food insecurity since 2016 have been weather extremes, with the country prone to the adverse effects of climate change and hazards dominated by drought and floods, coupled with a fragile security situation. Through SFERA AIRC funds, the Organization provided the most vulnerable communities in the Centre-Nord region with cash-based assistance, emergency agricultural production packages, and supported income-generating and capacity development activities. This support was critical in protecting rural livelihoods and improving food security of the targeted communities.

28. During 2022, instability and extreme weather events continued to threaten food security conditions of the most vulnerable rural communities in **Colombia**. Using SFERA AIRC funds, FAO implemented community-based strategies for rapid recovery of agricultural livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities in Chocó who were affected by instability and climate-related disasters. Furthermore, to enhance the overall food security response, SFERA AIRC funds enabled FAO to design a technical guide for the implementation of rapid recovery actions in the agriculture sector. This support was instrumental in enabling FAO to provide timely livelihoods support for the most affected communities in Chocó.

29. In September 2022, Category 3 Hurricane Ian hit the western region of **Cuba**, affecting the provinces of Pinar del Río, Artemisa and La Habana, as well as the Special Municipality Isla de la Juventud. The hurricane caused damages and losses in the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors. In support of national early recovery and rehabilitation efforts, the Organization used SFERA AIRC funds to contribute to rehabilitating poultry production facilities of small-scale poultry producers in the municipalities of the provinces of Pinar del Río and Artemisa. The intervention contributed to restoring the livelihoods of the targeted small-scale poultry producers and increased the supply of poultry products for vulnerable communities.

30. In 2022, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** continued to face a complex humanitarian crisis. Moreover, as a result of challenging security conditions in North Kivu and Tanganyika provinces, the livelihoods of the most vulnerable farmers have been significantly affected. For example, the majority of farmers in both provinces were not able to cultivate during the previous seasons due to prevailing insecurity. To enable the most affected communities to restore their lost livelihoods and improve their food security, the Organization utilized SFERA AIRC funds to distribute agricultural inputs and implement cash-based interventions in Tanganyika; plus distribute agricultural inputs and livestock feed in North Kivu. This support mainly targeted internally displaced persons and returnees in order to contribute to community stabilization, re-integration, and self-reliance.

31. As explained in paragraph 13, FAO and Agriculture Cluster partners' response to the crisis in Tigray region of **Ethiopia** focused on procuring and distributing agricultural production inputs for the *Meher* season, which is the most important agricultural season for most farmers in Tigray. In support of the scale-up, SFERA AIRC funds enabled the Organization to rapidly procure and distribute needed fertilizer to boost agricultural production of the targeted communities. This time-sensitive and cost-effective support contributed to improving the food security situation and enabled targeted communities to increase local production thereby strengthening their resilience at the same time as meeting urgent food requirements.

32. In 2022, **Kenya** was facing a severe La Niña-induced drought. FAO and its partners have warned that in a worst-case scenario in which agriculture-dependent communities do not receive urgent support, the number of food insecure people could rise. To contribute to preventing further deterioration in food security conditions, SFERA AIRC funds were used to support the most affected households through the provision of livestock protection services (e.g. veterinary services and the distribution of animal feed) as well as the distribution of time-sensitive agricultural production inputs.

This support was essential in protecting and restoring productive livelihoods and building back self-reliance in drought affected communities.

33. **Madagascar** is highly prone to natural disasters, including droughts, floods, tropical cyclones, and locust invasions. An exceptionally prolonged drought in southern Madagascar most likely due to the effects of climate change compounded by multiple other shocks has led to a deterioration in food insecurity conditions. Aggravating an already challenging situation, an outbreak of Malagasy Migratory Locust was expected in 2022. In response, SFERA AIRC funds were used to support Malagasy Migratory Locust surveillance, prevention and control operations and to provide national actors with the needed materials along with technical training.

34. In 2022, **Mali** continued to experience high levels of food insecurity. In a context of high food prices and low output from agricultural production, rural families required urgent livelihoods support to restore their food production and protect their livelihoods. In response, the Organization used SFERA AIRC funds to distribute emergency livestock production inputs (e.g. animal feed, licking blocks and veterinary products) to vulnerable households in the most food insecure areas of the country. This support was also coupled with technical trainings for the production of multi-vitamin blocks. The use of SFERA AIRC funds in Mali was instrumental in maintaining core livestock assets and enabling the most vulnerable livestock keepers to sustainably improve their food security and enhance their self-reliance.

35. In 2022, livestock keepers in drought-affected areas of **Mauritania** were unable to sustain their livestock assets and were increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms. The pressure on livestock keepers was even more pronounced along the border strip with Mali as herders were unable to move freely due to insecurity. To contribute to protecting livestock assets of the most affected communities, the Organization utilized SFERA AIRC funds to complement national efforts through the distribution of livestock feed and through providing essential veterinary products and services. Moreover, SFERA AIRC funded interventions contributed to restocking the national stock of veterinary products that are key for the prevention and control of potential animal diseases.

36. In 2022, the conflict in Cabo Delgado was the main driver of food insecurity in northern **Mozambique**. FAO continued to work with key partners to support affected people in the most remote and hard-to-reach areas in the north. In 2022, through SFERA AIRC funds, the Organization distributed time-critical crop production inputs, supported the existing capacities of local seed producers, and provided small-scale fishers with productive assets.

37. Humanitarian needs in **Myanmar** continued to rise in 2022. The multidimensional nature of the crisis compounded the impacts of recurrent climate-induced shocks and COVID-19, threatening the livelihoods and food security of agriculture-dependent communities. Through SFERA AIRC funds, the Organization mitigated the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable households by providing emergency agricultural assistance to vulnerable households in Kayin and Kayah states in eastern Myanmar. The activities included cash-based interventions to enable the most vulnerable food-insecure households (e.g. female-headed households) to cover their immediate needs. Moreover, FAO provided the beneficiaries with vegetable production packages to enable them to produce nutrient-rich vegetables and meet their food security needs.

38. In 2022, irregular rainfall patterns, bushfires, floods and insecurity, among other factors, continued to threaten the livelihoods and food security of the most vulnerable rural communities across **the Niger**. While the Niger experienced high levels of food insecurity, agricultural and livestock support activities were underfunded. It was therefore imperative for the Organization to support vulnerable households with key inputs such as seeds and tools along with technical assistance to enable them to produce their own food and withstand the consecutive shocks. Using SFERA AIRC funds, FAO distributed crop seeds (e.g. rainfed millet and cowpea seeds); provided livestock production inputs and related services (e.g. veterinary services and animal feed); and provided cash-based assistance (e.g. Cash+), among other types of support targeted at the most vulnerable farming households. The SFERA funded interventions focused on areas with food insecurity, including Tillabéri, Tahoua and Agadez, as well as interventions to support the reintegration of returnees in Diffa.

39. In mid-2022, floods and landslides in **Pakistan** wiped out agricultural lands, livestock assets, forests and critical agricultural infrastructure. Moreover, the climate-induced disaster struck rural communities amid growing economic and food security challenges, compounding their vulnerabilities, and exhausting their resilience. In this context, SFERA AIRC funds enabled the Organization to rapidly implement livestock vaccination campaigns, distribute animal feed and build shelters to protect livestock assets from harsh weather conditions. This support protected livestock's health and body conditions, which in turn helped maintain households' food consumption and nutritional intake through dairy products. Importantly, the rapid release of SFERA funds, was essential for preventing and controlling the spread of foot-and-mouth disease, lumpy skin disease and *peste des petits ruminants*, among other animal diseases.

40. Super Typhoon Rai (16-17 December 2021) was the strongest storm to hit **the Philippines** in 2021. Super Typhoon Rai damaged the limited assets of small-scale coconut farmers and exacerbated their vulnerabilities. Using SFERA AIRC funds, in early 2022, the Organization collaborated with national partners to support severely affected coconut farming households, particularly women-headed households in the province of Southern Leyte. In close coordination with national authorities, FAO provided coconut farming households with inputs for intercropping (e.g. assorted vegetable seeds, banana seedlings and sweet potato cuttings), fertilizer, and farming tools/equipment, among other agricultural inputs. Furthermore, FAO facilitated technical trainings on sustainable and resilient coconut-based farming systems and climate-smart coconut varieties.

41. Based on close consultations with **Somalia** Cash Consortium and Food Security Cluster partners, SFERA AIRC funds were used to provide cash transfers in the most-affected geographical locations with the aim of preventing further deterioration of food security conditions. Geographical prioritization was based on the percentage of total populations by district that are categorized in IPC 3 and above. This support enabled the most vulnerable farming and livestock keeping households to protect their productive assets and avoid reliance on irreversible negative coping mechanisms.

42. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded the impacts of **Sri Lanka's** economic challenges and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of rural communities. Through SFERA AIRC funds, the Organization contributed to national COVID-19 response priorities by supporting domestic agricultural production to enhance the self-resilience of the poorest rural communities. Using SFERA AIRC funds, FAO supported national extension services as well as national efforts to produce and distribute high quality seeds and promote water conservation methods. The allocation of SFERA funds was critical in enabling FAO to support national efforts in response to COVID-19 and reduce the impacts of the crisis on the most vulnerable rural communities.

43. In January 2022, the Hunga Tonga - Hunga Ha'apai undersea volcano erupted. The eruption and ensuing tsunami caused damages to crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, negatively impacting the agriculture and fisheries sectors of **Tonga**. In response, SFERA AIRC funds were used to rehabilitate agricultural production systems, through providing critical agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, livestock feed, fencing materials, land and land rehabilitation services, among others). Furthermore, SFERA funds were used to support the restoration of small-scale fishing activities through providing small-scale fishers with needed tools and inputs.

44. The outbreak of the war in **Ukraine** on 24 February 2022 has impacted rural livelihoods and food value chains at the national and global levels. In response, FAO deployed its technical capacities and scaled up its emergency interventions to support the Government of Ukraine in protecting rural livelihoods and enhancing the resilience of agrifood systems. In support of the response and national strategic priorities, the Organization released SFERA AIRC funds to rapidly respond to the most urgent and time-sensitive needs of rural communities across Ukraine. SFERA allocations were used to provide the most vulnerable and conflict-affected households with access to cash-based interventions, agricultural production inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizer) and livestock production inputs (e.g. animal feed) to enable them to sustain food production and avoid negative coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the timely release of SFERA AIRC allocations also contributed to increasing the supply of food at the community level and supporting communities that are hosting large numbers of internally displaced people.

Anticipatory Action (AA) window

45. AA is an approach that translates early warnings into activities that reduce the impact of disasters. These activities can consist of different prevention and mitigation measures, which vary depending on the anticipated hazard, the context and sectors at risk. Some key parameters that characterize AA are:

- **Timing:** AA interventions should be implemented ahead of a hazard's impact. More specifically, for sudden onset events, AA interventions should be implemented before the hazard (e.g. prior to a cyclone making landfall) while for slow onset events, these should be implemented before the peak of the impact.
- **Forecast:** AA interventions should be triggered by an early warning/forecasting information combined with the analysis of the current situation.
- **Objective:** the action's objective is to protect food security and agricultural livelihoods from the potential impact of hazards on the most vulnerable households and build their resilience to future shocks.

46. FAO is among the agencies leading global efforts in testing and upscaling AA approaches to prevent food crises. Curbing the deterioration of food security is crucially linked with protecting livelihoods and people's means to sustain themselves, and their food security. FAO's AA aims to protect agricultural assets and livelihoods from the impact of hazards in order to prevent the adoption of negative coping strategies which lead to hunger and destitution.

47. SFERA-AA window enables Country Offices to access the kind of pre-allocated financing necessary for the timely implementation of AA interventions. It releases funds upon accurate early warning signals of an impending disaster, also called triggers. The trigger mechanisms are adapted to the context and priority hazards. They are based on quantitative thresholds (e.g. based on climate forecasts, food security projections, remote sensing data, etc.), and corroborated with qualitative information and expert judgement.

48. In 2022, FAO allocated SFERA-AA interventions in eight countries as shown in **Table 10**. Under the AA window, USD 8.7 million funding was received from Belgium, Canada, Germany, Norway and Sweden. Evidence shows that rapid, flexible and anticipatory financing prevents humanitarian needs at lower costs, through a more dignified and empowering form of assistance.

Table 10. Allocations under the AA window

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
Allocations Sweden		
Burkina Faso	Anticipation of flood risks through strengthening and protecting the livelihoods of pastoralists in the Commune of Djibo	400
Niger	Anticipatory action for addressing the high risk of flooding and animal diseases in Maradi region	400
Sri Lanka	Protecting the livelihoods of smallholder farmers to mitigate expected food security impacts of the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka	700
Total Sweden		1 500
Allocations Belgium		
Cabo Verde	Safeguarding the food security and the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations in anticipation of the expected consequences of the war in Ukraine on the food crisis in Cabo Verde	400
Iraq	Support to Iraqi farmers as anticipatory actions to drought and water shortage through provision of production inputs	625
Rwanda	Emergency anticipatory actions to support farmers resilience impacted by low rains in Rwanda	500
Total Belgium		1 525
Allocations Germany		

Madagascar	Anticipatory action to reduce the impacts of the expected drought in the districts of Amboasary Atsimo, Bekily and Betroka	900
Tajikistan	Preventing the locust spreads in Tajikistan and neighbouring countries, particularly Afghanistan	132
Total Germany		1 032
Grand total		4 057

49. The high risk of floods flagged in the seasonal forecast (May 2022) triggered the activation of the SFERA-AA fund in **Burkina Faso**. Pastoralist livelihoods were considered particularly at risk of flood impacts, considering the hazardous ramifications of floods on animal health such as the increase of waterborne diseases and loss of lives in exposed localities. Thanks to SFERA-AA funds, FAO provided veterinary services to safeguard livestock health, including deworming and vaccination to protect livestock against water-borne diseases; and financial assistance through unconditional and conditional cash transfers, which enabled the most vulnerable pastoral households to cover their immediate food needs. The intervention prioritized households in flood-prone areas, and those headed by women, with pregnant and lactating women, with children under five years of age and with people living with disabilities, as well as internally displaced people given their greater vulnerability.

50. In early 2022, the situation in **Cabo Verde** was deteriorating significantly following five consecutive years of drought. Scenario analyses estimated that disruptions to global trade/transport and price instability would strongly impact Cabo Verde, requiring AA to protect agricultural livelihoods and mitigate subsequent effects on food security. Thanks to SFERA-AA funds, FAO acted promptly to support vulnerable communities in the islands of Santiago and Santo Antão. Specific actions included support with income-generating activities through the realization of community works including vulnerable households; provision of water for animals; support local agricultural production in favour of school canteen programmes, including through training on good agricultural practices, harvesting and marketing.

51. In September 2022, forecasts indicated below average rainfall during the winter wheat production season in **Iraq**, leading to limited water availability for both rainfed and irrigated areas. Driven by La Niña, such rainfall deficits were expected to further threaten the livelihoods and food security of Iraqi farmers, who were already suffering from past climate hazards and soaring input prices. Such forecasts triggered the activation of SFERA-AA. FAO utilized SFERA-AA funds to distribute drought-tolerant wheat seed and fertilizer to vulnerable farming households in Diwaniyah, Erbil, and Kirkuk. Additionally, the project trained national extension service staff and the targeted beneficiaries on climate smart irrigation management and good agricultural practices.

52. **Madagascar** is faced with a socioeconomic crisis marked by high levels of poverty and food insecurity, with the situation worsening as a result of the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and of the war in Ukraine. Over the past few years, the South of the Island, the Grand Sud, has been plagued by a striking and prolonged drought, severely hindering local capacities to produce food. FAO, in consultation with key partners, has developed an AA protocol to mitigate the impacts of predicted drought in southern Madagascar. In late August 2022, an increased risk of dry conditions was expected to coincide with the 2022/23 main agricultural season in the Grand Sud. These results have been confirmed by vulnerability and weather early warning information at regional and country levels. The AA protocol was therefore activated. Thanks to SFERA-AA funds, FAO supported vulnerable farming households in the districts at highest risk (i.e. Amboasary Atsimo, Bekily and Betroka). Activities focused on the provision of short-cycle and drought tolerant seeds along with micro-irrigation kits, and the distribution of small livestock to ensure food production and diversify incomes. Targeted households also benefitted from unconditional cash transfers to enable them to meet their most immediate needs during the lean season while protecting their productive assets.

53. **The Niger** is affected by multiple crises that continue to impact the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable farming communities. The effects of climate change are worsening irregular rainfall and climatic shocks such as floods. In May 2022, the seasonal forecast for the Sahelo-Sudanian zone pointed to a high risk of flooding possibly leading to losses in human and animal lives, crops and assets. Among the most impacted from flooding is usually the Maradi region,

one of the key millet producing areas, the main cereal crop in the Niger. Thanks to SFERA-AA funds, FAO acted to mitigate the impact of potential floods on those most at risk. Cash-for-work activities were implemented to reinforce dikes, river guards, irrigation canals and protect crop plots. FAO also provided vaccination and animal health support, unconditional cash transfers, and support for the control of the millet caterpillar, a pest that damages crops in particular during heavy rains. These activities were complemented by trainings and awareness raising on prevention and preparedness against floods.

54. Seasonal forecasts for agricultural season A in **Rwanda**, which runs from mid-September to early December, indicated an increased probability of below-average rainfall, which was expected to cause dry spells in some parts of the country, especially in the Eastern province and Amayaga region. Both the forecast rainfall deficits and the increased cost of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and tools, were expected to reduce crop yields. Thanks to SFERA-AA funds, FAO promptly helped vulnerable farmers to cope with the predicted impacts of drought, protect their assets and maintain their food security. FAO distributed water harvesting structures and small irrigation equipment, thus complementing the distribution of seeds and fertilizers by the Government of Rwanda.

55. In early 2022, the impacts of the economic crisis on the agrarian sector were fast evolving into a food security crisis in **Sri Lanka**. Challenges in public finance and the significant reduction in agricultural production compounded by rising prices and limited availability of fuel were disrupting livelihoods. Furthermore, the depreciation of the national currency was reducing households' purchasing power, potentially leading to food shortages in the upcoming months. In April 2021, the import of chemical fertilizer was banned. Although the ban was lifted in November 2021, crop production of the 2021/22 *Maha* agricultural season (October–March) was nearly halved. Due to insufficient and increased costs of inputs, only a small portion of farmers were expected to be able to cultivate their fields for the 2022 *Yala* season (May–September). Thanks to SFERA-AA's contribution, FAO rapidly distributed unconditional cash to vulnerable smallholder farmers to enable them to purchase farming inputs as well as food to consume while their crops were growing. The intervention focused on farmers growing green gram (or mung bean), a crop that does not require much fertilizer nor land preparation, and is a staple, protein-rich household cooking item for many Sri Lankans.

56. In March–April 2022, **Tajikistan** witnessed an increase in Moroccan locust infestations in its southern areas. The infestation threatened the bordering regions of Afghanistan, namely Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, with the potential of spreading to northern Samangan and Baghlan provinces. Most of the agricultural areas of the Afghan provinces are located on the banks of the lower Panj and Vakhsh Rivers in proximity of the Tajikistan border. Pastures, vegetable and orchard productions were at risk of being infested when crops were in early vegetation period. Considering the prevalence of winds in south and south-west directions in the southern oblast of Khatlon, a cross-border invasion was highly probable. This triggered the activation of SFERA-AA, enabling FAO to provide equipment and operational assistance for locust survey and ground treatments, thus supporting the timely control of locust infestations and preventing a direct threat to agricultural production and food security in the Afghan provinces.

V. Conclusions

57. SFERA continues to provide FAO with a tool for increasing predictability and continuity in its response at the country level, enhancing support to Members as a result. Contributing to SFERA, including through semi and unearmarked allocations, renders FAO the means to provide rapid, high-impact emergency assistance to the most vulnerable populations affected by various shock categories, including protracted crises, natural disasters, and food chain crises. It enables FAO to be quicker and more flexible in its response and puts the Organization in a position to swiftly upscale its operational capacities at times when needs increase rapidly and exponentially after a disaster. The approach remains focused on results across key priority areas, addressing cross-cutting issues and working with partners.

58. SFERA interventions identify and integrate the different needs and strengths of women and men, boys and girls. Specific attention is given to ensure that SFERA interventions include supporting female-headed households in emergency response, disseminating technologies and practices that prevent and mitigate disaster impact, while reducing women's work burden, promoting women's access to information and training as well as increasing women's access to productive resources and assets.

59. Through timely advances, catalytic revolving allotments, AA and the adoption of a programmatic approach, SFERA accelerated FAO's response capacities leading to strengthening of local, regional and national capacities to combat animal and plant pests and diseases, ultimately protecting millions of rural and pastoral households from livelihood loss and distress.

60. Finally, anticipating the deterioration of food security is critical to protect livelihoods and people's means to sustain themselves, and their food security. AA is also cost-effective, evidence built over the past years shows that for every USD 1 FAO invested, households had a return ranging from USD 2.5 to 7.1 in avoided losses and added benefits. These empirical studies provide a critical insight into the value for money of acting before an anticipated crisis has become a humanitarian disaster.