

WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

BACKGROUND

The humanitarian landscape in the West Bank and Gaza Strip worsened in 2006, largely as a result of reduced funding for the Palestinian Authority (PA). This led to the non-payment of civil servants' salaries and overall poverty levels are likely to reach 67 percent by the end of 2006. The unexpected victory of the Hamas party in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in early January resulted in the suspension of funds for the PA by western donors. The new Israeli Government decided to withhold the PA's value-added tax and customs taxes worth approximately 50 percent of the PA's monthly revenues. In addition, Israel has further restricted Palestinian movement and intensified military operations. In July 2006, war broke out between Israel and Hisbollah, diverting attention from the renewed international efforts to reduce hostilities and address the humanitarian needs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are increasingly reliant on outside aid for survival. Palestinian goods have consistently been unable to move outside of Gaza, businesses have shut and moved elsewhere and exports are a fraction of the 2005 level. In addition, the number of checkpoints and roadblocks in the West Bank increased by 40 percent during 2006, further restricting the movement of Palestinians and their produce, while the Jordan valley is now off-limits to all but a few Palestinians living there or working in Israeli settlements.

CHALLENGES FACING FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

In June 2006, a rapid assessment by WFP/FAO estimated that almost two million, or 49 percent of Palestinians, were food insecure. These are the households most in need of assistance to prevent further erosion of their food security. The most vulnerable areas are Hebron, Jenin, Qualqilia, Tubas and Tulkarem in the West Bank and Deir el Balah, North Gaza, Khan Younis and Rafah in the Gaza Strip. Increased food insecurity is the result of reduced access to and loss of agricultural land, trade restrictions and reduced availability of food commodities on the market. Agricultural production and marketing are decreasing, while poverty and nutrition related problems are on the rise. In addition, poor management and operation of agricultural wells in Gaza, which provide both drinking water and agricultural irrigation, has reduced water availability and further hampered agricultural production.

The key needs in the agriculture sector include the restoration of agricultural production capacity and protection of the livelihoods of farmers, shepherds and fishers; harmonization of relief efforts and enhanced agricultural productivity; and access to agricultural support services. However, this sector remains the least-funded under last year's appeal, having received less than one percent of the US\$37 million

KEY FACTS

- Population:
West Bank: 2.4 million; Gaza Strip: 1.4 million
- GDP (PPP) per capita:
West Bank: US\$1 100; Gaza Strip: US\$600
- Population below poverty line:
West Bank: 56%; Gaza Strip: 88%
- Labour force by occupation:
West Bank: agriculture 18.4%, industry 24%, services 57.6%; Gaza Strip: agriculture 12%, industry 18%, services 70%
- Total land area: West Bank: 5 860 sq km, bordering Israel and Jordan; Gaza Strip: 360 sq km, bordering Egypt, Israel and the Mediterranean
- Human Development Index: 102/177

(Source: UN; World Bank)



“nearly half of all Palestinians are food insecure”

FAO IN WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

In 2006, FAO supported vulnerable farmers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip affected by closures and conflict with agricultural inputs, equipment and training. The FAO and WFP also undertook a food security and vulnerability analysis to identify the food insecure and define appropriate responses to their needs.

requested, by the end of September 2006. Poor resource availability to address the problems in the agriculture sector continues to occur despite its critical importance to food security.

FAO RESPONSE

The main objective of FAO's activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2007 will focus on providing a safety net for food insecure households that can no longer rely on traditional sources of assistance. To this end, project proposals include support to female-headed households in diversifying their income sources and improving post-harvest processing, as well as assistance to the most vulnerable civil servants in order to enable them to continue or restore their small-scale production activities to replace their reduced salary. Proposed activities also include support to small farmers in the West Bank to improve the quality of olive oil production through input provision and training, and improved livestock productivity with a focus on better health management and hygiene practices. In addition, the rehabilitation and restoration of agricultural facilities will provide short-term employment opportunities to vulnerable households.

The FAO will also ensure convergence between humanitarian relief and multi-sectoral efforts to address the structural causes of food insecurity through coordination and advocacy, as well as providing technical expertise to national/local authorities and NGOs. In addition to proposed interventions under the agriculture sector, FAO will contribute to employment generation through a joint project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focusing on the rehabilitation of destroyed agricultural facilities and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

PROPOSALS: FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Funding required US\$5 273 100

Alleviating the impact of the fiscal crisis through supporting small-scale animal and plant production activities by the most vulnerable civil servants' families

Objective: To assist the most vulnerable civil servants to restore/continue their small-scale animal and plant production activities and thus increase income and food security for their families.

Activities: Support selected beneficiaries through the provision of livestock inputs of certified quality (broiler baby chicks, goats, sheep and feed); provision of quality horticultural production inputs (seeds and seedlings of vegetable and fruit production, fertilizers, plant protection measures, small irrigation systems, small plastic French tunnels); provision of honey bee hives and accompanying inputs for honey production; support identified beneficiaries with technical know-how and follow-up in their respective production activities and facilitate the organization and/or integration of beneficiaries into existing or new grassroots farmer gatherings, which will enhance collective marketing and purchasing.

Beneficiaries: 1 000 employees (approximately 7 000 people).

Implementing partners: Agricultural grassroots gatherings, women's associations, NGOs.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$1 014 800.

Emergency support and employment generation for female-headed households through backyard farming and cottage industry (Gaza, Jordan valley and Hebron)

Objectives: To enable vulnerable rural and urban female-headed households and their communities to improve their food security, nutrition and income through back yard farming and cottage industry.

Activities: Provide identified families with backyard food production inputs, including vegetable seeds/seedlings and fertilizers, poultry, ewes and goats for household milk production. In addition, beneficiary families (mainly female-headed) will be provided with tools and small equipment for cottage processing of milk, fruits, vegetables, cereals and meats. The project will facilitate the formation of beneficiary groups, such as women's grassroots gatherings, and create linkages between these groups and local marketing companies. Beneficiary groups will be trained in backyard farming, cottage processing, household budgeting and small business management and the awareness of the local community regarding the importance of health and nutritious food will be raised.

Beneficiaries: 1 000 families (approximately 7 000 beneficiaries, including 3 000 children, technical staff and 480 female-headed households).

Implementing partners: Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Women's Affairs, NGOs, CBOs.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$1 000 000.

Improve livelihoods of irrigated farming households through diversification of vegetable and medicinal plant production in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Objectives: To assist the most vulnerable farmers to produce new crops and crop varieties of vegetables and medicinal and aromatic plants, generating higher income.

Activities: Conduct participatory, multi-stakeholder market appraisal to strengthen market routes of new crops/ varieties to be introduced and provide farmers with various inputs, including seeds and seedlings of crops with potential for the target area; irrigation systems; small pumps; tools and equipment for harvesting, processing and packaging; pest control measures; plastic for mulching and small tunnels; and fertilizers. In addition, farmers and extension workers will be trained in production, processing, marketing and small business management.

Beneficiaries: 500 farmers (approximately 3 500 people), including at least 100 women-headed households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Implementing partners: MoA, NGOs, agricultural grassroots movements, marketing companies and universities.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$693 300.

Emergency support to olive farmers in the West Bank to increase their income through olive oil quality improvement

Objectives: To support improved olive oil production and post-harvest techniques of poor farmers in order to produce high quality olive oil with better marketability.

Activities: Provision of inputs for farming, harvesting, post-harvest handling and processing, as well as training for technicians and farmers in production techniques, post-harvest handling and value-added processing to assure quality of fruits and oil to meet market requirements. In addition, technical assistance will be provided to the MoA in quality assurance measures, safety standard guidelines and organic and other certification required by target markets.

Beneficiaries: 1 040 vulnerable farmers in 65 communities (13 districts) in the West Bank, whose main source of income is olive production, and 140 technicians.

Implementing partners: MoA, NGOs, CBOs and research institutes.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$848 000.

Emergency support to small ruminant (sheep and goats) farmers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to maintain the productivity of their flocks

Objectives: To support livestock farmers to improve their livelihoods through emergency interventions in animal hygiene, health and feeding.

Activities: Support small ruminant farmers with necessary farm inputs, particularly animal feed, medicines and veterinary kits, enabling them to improve the health and nutrition of their livestock. In addition, the MoA veterinary services will be strengthened and livestock farmers will be supported with technical expertise, particularly extension, to deliver up-to-date knowledge regarding animal husbandry. The infrastructure of damaged livestock farms will be rehabilitated and renovated and farmers will be assisted in marketing their produce.

Beneficiaries: 350 farm households (250 in West Bank and 100 in Gaza Strip) – 2 000 beneficiaries.

Implementing partners: MoA, local authorities, NGOs, CBOs.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$1 197 000.

FAO Programme coordination

Objectives: To support FAO coordination activities and improve the effectiveness of its interventions in the field of agriculture and food security.

Activities: The project will support FAO's activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, focusing on coordination and advocacy, as well as providing technical expertise to national and local authorities at the government level and local NGOs at the community level. The aim is to optimize the use of resources and impact of interventions, thus improving long-term food security and nutrition. These coordination and advocacy activities will complement FAO's technical expertise, provided under other specific projects.

Beneficiaries: Vulnerable and food insecure Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, stakeholders in the agriculture sector.

Implementing partners: MoA, UN agencies, NGOs.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$520 000.