

# West Bank and Gaza Strip

## Background

Since the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000, the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) has continued to endure severe economic, humanitarian and social consequences. Following the escalation of hostilities in June 2007, the political landscape has evolved, with Hamas seizing control of the Gaza Strip and Fatah governing the West Bank.

The main driver of Palestinian food insecurity is of a political nature. Increases in West Bank checkpoints, frequent closures of the Karni crossing, restricted movement of people and goods, the expansion of settlements and lack of access to key resources are ongoing processes that perpetuate the livelihood crisis in the WBGS.

## KEY FACTS

- Population: 3.9 million
- GNI per capita (USD): 1 230
- Population below poverty line:  
Gaza Strip-80%, West Bank-46%
- Life expectancy: 72.9 years
- Total arable land:  
Gaza Strip-29%, West Bank-16.9%
- Population in agriculture:  
Gaza Strip-12%, West Bank-18%
- Population undernourished: 16%
- Total land area: 6 000 sq km
- Human Development Index: 106/177

(Source: UN; World Bank; World Factbook)

Soaring food and commodity prices, falling incomes and widespread unemployment are jeopardizing the livelihoods of ordinary Palestinians, leading to debt and food insecurity. Previously self-reliant families are progressively falling into the poverty trap in the absence of job opportunities. Furthermore, those with work are confronted with unadjusted salaries, a degrading economic environment and increasing numbers of dependents to support.

## Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

The agriculture sector in the WBGS is a source of sustainable employment, income-generation and food security for many Palestinians and represents the main coping mechanism in rural areas. A joint FAO/WFP/UNRWA Rapid Food Security Survey, in April 2008, indicated that 59 percent of Palestinian households are relying on credit to buy food, while food insecurity affects 38 percent of the population. The combination of decreased incomes and increased food prices has forced poorer households to change their food consumption patterns, shifting to lower quantity and lesser quality of food.

Food security in the WBGS is heavily dependent on food imports with local production covering less than 5 percent of staple cereal and legume consumption. As a result of soaring food and input prices, a regional drought and a late frost in 2008, many poor farmers in the WBGS have incurred severe economic losses and become unable to reinvest in the 2009 agricultural production cycle. Small ruminant herders have already started to reduce their flock sizes in order to

generate sufficient income for family survival. Through the denial of permits, extended closures and persisting land confiscations, the local population of the Jordan Valley is isolated from basic services and the already fragile economy is being stifled.

Moreover, economic difficulties leave many women engaged in the cottage industry on the brink of selling their productive assets, thus endangering their livelihoods and the food security of their families. In addition, poor management and operation of agricultural wells in Gaza, which provide both drinking water and crop irrigation, have reduced water availability and further hampered food production. Although an important livelihood asset, fishing has become increasingly rare among Gazans, because of limited access to fishing grounds and the unavailability of fuel and spare parts.



### FAO response

FAO's activities in the WBGS in 2009 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 the distribution of key agricultural inputs, including drought-tolerant seed varieties, organic and chemical fertilizers, animal feed, medicines and veterinary kits. Income generation through backyard food production and cottage industries will also be promoted, specifically aimed to assist female-headed households. With adequate funding, FAO seeks to optimize available water resources through the delivery of water cisterns, irrigation systems and plantlets, the rehabilitation and enlargement of existing wells and the provision of technical expertise to encourage water conservation. Other planned interventions include the training of women on farm management, milk processing and improved hygiene practices.

In collaboration with partners, FAO will continue to bolster coordination among actors in the food security and livelihoods sector through improved information sharing, regular stakeholder consultations, and the institutionalization of food security monitoring systems. This, in turn, will pave the way for evidence-based and decentralized coordination to improve the impact of emergency and rehabilitation activities.

*“Previously self-reliant families are progressively falling into the poverty trap in the absence of job opportunities”*

PROPOSALS: FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Total funding required: USD 6 163 750

Emergency support to vulnerable farmers in the West Bank to increase the availability of water for agricultural purposes	
Objectives:	To improve the food security of drought-affected farmers by optimizing existing water resources and increasing water storage capacity at the household level.
Activities:	Distribute plastic tanks, irrigation systems and plantlets to increase water storage capacity and reduce water run-off; rehabilitate and enlarge existing wells and related catchment areas; and assist small ruminant farmers through the provision of technical expertise and equipment on improved water conservation practices.
Beneficiaries:	5 400 individuals (1 800 children, 1 800 women and 1 800 male farmers).
Implementing partners:	Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and farmers' associations.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 1 500 000.

**Mitigating the impact of soaring food and input prices on vulnerable farmers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by restoring agricultural production**

Objectives:	To ensure the restoration of agricultural production in response to soaring food and input prices.
Activities:	Distribute and encourage the adoption of drought-tolerant seed varieties (wheat, barley, chickpea, lentil and broad bean); distribute production inputs (organic and chemical fertilizers); and introduce enhanced pest-control measures.
Beneficiaries:	6 000 individuals (2 000 children, 2 000 women and 2 000 farmers).
Implementing partners:	Ministry of Agriculture and farmers' groups.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 1 452 000.

**Emergency support and employment generation for female-headed households through backyard farming and cottage industry in the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

Objectives:	To enable vulnerable female-headed households to improve their food security status, nutrition and income through backyard farming and cottage industry.
Activities:	Assist vulnerable female-headed households through the distribution of inputs (vegetable seedlings, fertilizers, ewes, goats and honey bee hives); provide tools and equipment to selected families (mainly female-headed) for the cottage processing of dairy products; and bolster the skills of female-headed households through awareness raising initiatives on improved nutrition practices.
Beneficiaries:	2 800 vulnerable female-headed households, including disabled persons and households lacking resources.
Implementing partners:	Ministry of Agriculture and women's groups.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 682 000.

### Emergency support to small ruminant herders

Objectives:	To restore the livelihoods of small ruminant farmers through emergency interventions in animal hygiene, veterinary services, health and feeding.
Activities:	Distribute inputs (animal feed, medicines and veterinary kits) to improve the nutrition and health of livestock herds; and promote local feed production, conservation and storage techniques in order to reduce dependence on purchased inputs.
Beneficiaries:	900 herder families (including 1 800 children, 1 800 women and 900 youths engaged in agriculture-based activities as informal family labour).
Implementing partners:	Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and herders' associations.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 1 306 000.

### Socio-economic and food security assessment in 2009 (joint project with WFP)

Objectives:	To improve evidence-based food security programming and policy-making.
Activities:	Conduct biannual food security assessments to gauge changing beneficiary needs and collect information on food acquisition and consumption levels; analyse socio-economic and food insecurity indicators, determinants and trends; ensure stakeholder consultations at central and decentralized levels; disseminate assessment findings through publications, workshops, briefings and meetings; and extend basic knowledge on food security among national and international actors through decentralized courses.
Beneficiaries:	PA ministries and food-insecure populations in the WBGS, including women and children.
Implementing partners:	PCBS.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 258 500.

Building the capacity of women farmers in the Jordan Valley (joint project with UNIFEM)	
Objectives:	To improve household income in beneficiary localities in the Jordan Valley through the provision of agricultural tools, awareness raising and training.
Activities:	Provide women with agricultural tools and equipment for the collection and processing of milk according to hygienic standards; train women on enhanced farm management practices and life skills; raise awareness among women on their role in agricultural production, nutrition and health; and facilitate farmers' access to local markets through the establishment of a network between women's cooperatives and marketing institutions and companies.
Beneficiaries:	2 800 individuals (2 400 vulnerable household members and 400 women).
Implementing partners:	CBOs.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 253 000.

Agriculture sector coordination and food security monitoring	
Objectives:	To improve evidence-based programming and decentralized coordination to enhance the effectiveness of interventions in the fields of agriculture and food security.
Activities:	Consolidate and institutionalize a socio-economic and food security monitoring system to identify gender-based needs and appropriate response options; strengthen local capacities in the area of evidence-based policy and programming; extend basic training in food security through decentralized courses; and expand sectoral coordination in partnership with UN agencies, NGOs and Palestinian counterparts, through decentralized stakeholder consultation forums.
Beneficiaries:	Poor farmers and food-insecure individuals in the WBGS, PA Ministries, PCBS, donors, NGOs and UN agencies.
Implementing partners:	N/A.
Duration:	January 2009 – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 712 250.

