



## Disaster risk reduction in the Arab Region

Understanding and responding to the changing nature of risk | 2014

The World Food Programme's (WFP) approach to disaster risk reduction focuses on supporting the most food insecure and vulnerable communities in the world. WFP's disaster risk reduction interventions build on decades of experience working with governments, communities and other partners. Our work cuts across all areas of WFP programming and policies, it bridges emergency response, recovery and development, as well as recognizing the close links with resilience building and climate adaptation.

WFP's approach to disaster risk reduction is closely aligned with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 - 2015 which recognizes the need to "promote food security as an important factor in ensuring the resilience of communities to hazards that can weaken agriculture-based livelihoods."

Aligned to comparative advantages and corporate strengths, WFP's support to implement the global agreements on disaster risk reduction is focuses on:

- Identify, assess and monitor disaster risk and enhance early warning;
- Reduce underlying risk factors;
- Strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

Partnerships with governments and local authorities, including inter-agency and joint UN

policy frameworks and programmes, is a key pillar of WFP's efforts and will continue to guide the organization's engagement.

### WFP & Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts in the Arab Region

WFP's work in the Arab region centres on supporting the capacity of all relevant stakeholders to prepare for, assess and respond to shocks. At the institutional level, WFP delivers vulnerability assessments, early warning systems, social protection mechanisms and productive safety nets to manage the risk of natural disasters and supporting pro-poor climate change adaptation.

Working with communities at local level, WFP's interventions include improving soil and water conservation practices through training, constructing and rehabilitating community assets and infrastructure, increasing safe water access and protecting agriculture systems from weather-related hazards.

WFP is also involved in policy dialogue for disaster risk management and supports the implementation of the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020, in particular how it relates to food security issues and challenges for the most vulnerable groups.

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# 43.7m

Undernourished people in the region

# 92%

live on 3%  
of the land


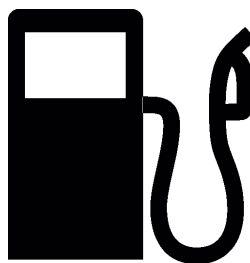
The interdependence of natural disasters, rapid urbanization, water scarcity, resource mismanagement and climate change has contributed to an increasingly complex and unpredictable risk landscape in the Arab region.

Combined, these risks have rendered food security into a state of extreme fragility, prone to a variety of internal and external factors where a single shock may result in loss of livelihoods and development gains as well as increased risk of adverse social and political consequences.

*Climate change will compound existing human development challenges in Arab Region Existing risks to food security in the natural sphere (drought, ground water scarcity, crop disease) and in the human sphere (social instability, inflation, food price spikes) will likely be exacerbated by climate change and increased climate variability and extreme events.*

UK MET Office & WFP, 2013

High fuel prices have pushed  
**132million people**  
into poverty



Water demand is forecast to increase by **50 percent** between 2000 - 2015, whilst available water will **fall by half** in 2050.



# 35-65%

household income spent on food



# 20%



Domestic food production will **decline**, directly impacting employment in agro-countries

## ECONOMIC VOLATILITY & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Arab region is unique due to its high food production deficit. More than 50% of all food consumed is imported resulting in a specific vulnerability to market and food price volatility. The region's food trade deficit may further rise due to increasing and changes in food demands as well as challenges on the supply side. Increases in the prices of food commodities adversely impact low-income consumers in particular and hampers efforts to reduce poverty, as well as the political and social stability of the countries.

The effectiveness and provision of basic services, for example through social protection and safety net mechanisms, would also be impacted, including because of high unemployment rate, with additional effects on social stability. According to recent data of the World Bank 54% of MENA's working age population is jobless; 1 of every 4 of MENA's 15-25 years old is unemployed. This is the highest youth unemployment rate in the world; 3 out of 4 working age women in MENA do not participate to the labour force.



## POPULATION GROWTH & RAPID URBANISATION

Urban citizens already account for 62 percent of the total population and are expected to double in the next three decades. Fast population growth in many areas of the sub-region will pose severe challenges for job creation, public services, rural urban migration and food security. Food security and the deterioration of rural livelihoods will increase social mobility of the poor and challenge social and political stability.

The impact of urbanization is especially important in the region's coastal areas, where the largest cities and economies are located. Approximately 60 million people (about 17% of the sub-region's total population) live in coastal areas and are confronted with regular floods, with limited structural protection and weak mitigation Measures.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION & RESOURCE SCARCITY



Natural resource endowments have witnessed extreme overexploitation over the past 40 years. Pressure from population growth and the resulting increase in demand for food and water have led to serious land degradation, pollution of surface and ground water and increased risks for the loss of biodiversity. In 2050, the region will likely face a 50 percent renewable water supply gap. Thus, water will need to be imported or desalinated, with high cost to the driest economies in the region.

In many countries, desertification, loss of fertile lands and reduction in fresh water resources, have resulted in largely irreversible environmental conditions. Moreover, the low water availability combined with inefficient water use and overuse - especially in the agricultural sector - has resulted in a reduction of the average amount of water per capita, which is already among the lowest in the world, with increased hardship for vulnerable communities.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & natural hazards



Climate change is expected to severely exacerbate existing risks in the Arab region and pose additional challenges for food security. Since the 1980s, the average number of natural disasters has almost tripled in the region. Food systems are particularly vulnerable due to low and disparate precipitation which, combined with limited availability of arable land, results in a region inherently struggling to be self-reliant in terms of meeting food needs.

Several of the Arab region's major cities are situated in low-lying, coastal zones, exposed to flash floods and sea level rise. Already, flash floods affect up to 25 million people living in cities, largely due to sealed surfaces unable to absorb water and inadequate drainage. In the longer term, these densely populated areas are likely to become even more vulnerable, which may result in millions of people being displaced.



## Deploying the Right Tools in the Right Place at the Right Time

WFP works with regional organizations, governments, communities, and other relevant stakeholders to design and deliver programmes that reduce disaster risks and enable the poorest and most vulnerable to become food secure and more resilient to shocks and stresses. WFP's programmes aim to strengthen the capacity of communities and countries to manage underlying risks, save lives and livelihoods, and meet their own food and nutrition needs—using a large range of tools based on a rigorous analysis of needs and context, community preferences, operational goals, efficiency and evidence of potential impact.

### WFP's main approaches and tools for DRR\*

- DRR and resilience building at local level to provide a means and incentive for beneficiaries to contribute to their own Longer-term food security and nutrition.
- Food security analysis and early warning to help communities anticipate shocks and take swift and informed steps to enhance preparedness and response.
- Emergency preparedness and contingency planning to ensure readiness to respond both natural disaster and man-made disaster and to reducing their impact on vulnerable population.
- Capacity development to contribute to innovative solution, as well as coherent and well –coordinated responses to food security and nutrition challenges.
- Inter-agency coordination as lead of the logistic and emergency & telecommunication clusters and co-lead with FAO of the food security cluster.

\* WFP's Strategic Plan 2014/17, Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (2011), Building Food Security and Resilience (WFP, 2011) Climate Change and Hunger: Towards a WFP Policy on Climate Change (WFP, 2011).



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

WFP has **over 50 years experience** in addressing disaster risk and natural hazards in the Arab Region, including Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Yemen. Working in partnership with government and other agencies, WFP improves people's food security and resilience through a variety of approaches. These include contingency planning, capacity building on social protection and early warning systems, enhancing the assets and systems of the most vulnerable and emergency response.

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