



**Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations**



## **EL NIÑO RESPONSE PLAN**

**Haiti**

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## Haiti

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, 2016

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## FOREWORD

Over the past three years, we have witnessed a gradual degradation of the already chronically precarious food security and nutrition situation in the Republic of Haiti. This was due to drought and irregular rains that to a certain extent are linked to the El Niño phenomenon and climate change. As a result, agricultural production has sharply decreased and prices of locally grown food commodities have risen significantly, while increasing the dependency on food imports. As the Haitian currency, the Haitian gourde, has continued to lose value against the United States dollar, prices of imported food have also risen sharply in local markets. This combination of factors has triggered the current food insecurity and nutrition crisis.

The resilience of agricultural livelihoods is key to making sustainable development a reality. People with resilient livelihoods are better able to prevent and reduce the impact of disasters on their lives. Over the past years, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has strengthened the resilience of farming families in Haiti through a range of programmes, including the identification and multiplication of food crop varieties that are more resistant to drought and irregular rains. This was possible by selecting and testing best practices together with local farmers to develop more sustainable production systems. Though such programmes take time to have widespread and deep impact, today FAO is better prepared to deal with crises in Haiti, and much of the response needs – seeds and planting material – can be procured within the country. The response will therefore be able to provide locally grown and tested varieties of crops that are more resistant to drought and irregular rains, reducing the vulnerability of farming families to such phenomena. Today, there is a much closer interaction between humanitarian emergency response and medium-term development needs that will contribute to reduce the frequency and severity of food insecurity and nutrition crises in Haiti.

Aloys Nizigiyimana  
FAO Representative ad interim, Haiti



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Haiti was severely hit by drought for three consecutive years, which was exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon in 2015. Food insecurity and malnutrition have worsened dramatically and according to the National Coordination on Food Security there are about 300 000 households severely food insecure (Phase 3 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification). Throughout 2015, agricultural production was deeply affected and the harvest of the main agricultural season (spring) decreased by over 50 percent. There is an urgent need to provide relief assistance to farming families of the hardest hit municipalities in the North-West and South-East departments along with certain areas of the Artibonite, Grand Anse, Nippes and South departments.

The purpose of the FAO Haiti El Niño Response Plan is to (i) contribute to improving the food security and nutrition of vulnerable populations affected by drought, (ii) strengthen their resilience and (iii) improve their livelihoods. FAO will follow a flexible and multidimensional operational strategy to address immediate and medium-term needs in order to facilitate rapid increases in food availability and access, and protect the overall food production capacity in the country as well as the livelihoods of affected populations.

FAO requests USD 7.9 million to support 35 000 vulnerable households (175 000 people). Planned activities will focus on the production and distribution of quality seeds, rehabilitation of water supply and collection systems, support to animal production and fodder banks, capacity development and trainings on good practices and technologies.

## SITUATION AND IMPACT



3.6 million people  
food insecure



50 percent decrease in crop  
production as a result of drought

The Republic of Haiti is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the western hemisphere, with 59 percent of people living in poverty and close to 25 percent in extreme poverty. This is exacerbated by the limited or lack of access to electricity, clean water, proper sanitation and healthcare. The humanitarian context remains complex due to multiple inter-linked risk factors, namely the: (i) persistence of cholera, (ii) aggravation of the food insecurity situation due to the El Niño phenomenon, (iii) bi-national mixed migration crisis with the Dominican Republic, (iv) remaining caseloads of internally displaced people from the 2010 earthquake and (v) the country's high vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. Haiti, as part of the Small Islands Developing States, remains a largely fragile environment from governance and development perspectives. Given poverty, environmental degradation and limited capacity of authorities to respond to a crisis, the country is highly vulnerable to even moderate climate shocks. Over the last two decades, it has been repeatedly affected by severe natural disasters or emergencies, the most recent of which has been the persistent drought that has affected the country with major repercussions on food security and nutrition.

Food insecurity and malnutrition remain one of the heaviest burdens for the country, with one-third of Haiti's population unable to meet their basic food requirements. The number of people experiencing severe acute food insecurity increased from approximately 65 000 in 2013 to 165 000 in 2014, and up to 560 000 in 2015. In February 2016, the National Coordination on Food Security (*Conseil national de sécurité alimentaire* [CNSA]) and the World Food Programme presented the Emergency Food Security Assessment. Results show that about 3.6 million people (720 000 households) – 34 percent of a population of 10 million – are food insecure. This includes 1.5 million people (300 000 households) severely food insecure, of which it is estimated that at least 200 000 households live in rural areas and the livelihoods of 120 000 depend exclusively on agricultural production. This particular category of people needs immediate agricultural assistance to restore their production, improve their livelihoods and reduce dependency on food assistance. In an effort to provide coordinated assistance to those most in need, FAO has identified 35 000 farming families in the most drought-affected municipalities (38 of 145) from the departments of Artibonite, Grande Anse, Nippes, Northwest, Southeast and South. Regarding youth, an estimated 130 000 children under five are suffering from acute malnutrition, of which approximately 56 000 are in need of immediate therapeutic feeding.

During the last three years, Haiti has been hit by severe climatic disturbances characterized by repeated episodes of drought followed by erratic rainfall. In 2015, the impact of the El Niño phenomenon has worsened the food security and nutrition situation and it is expected that several communes in the Northwest, Southeast and Central Plateau remain in Phase 3 (crisis) of the Integrated Food Security Phase classification. Regarding the agriculture sector, prolonged drought has led to a reduction of more than 50 percent of crop production for the 2015 main cropping season (spring) and has affected the other cropping seasons (summer and winter). As a result, food imports have increased and current food price levels remain high for imported staples such as maize meal and beans. To cope with high prices, people are substituting the consumption of these staple commodities for starchy roots and tubers, reducing purchases and/or increasing purchases on credit.

There is an urgent need for immediate relief-oriented assistance. Households facing acute food insecurity, require support to survive the lean season, prevent negative coping mechanisms (e.g. selling assets) and prepare for harvests. To increase the resilience of the population and ensure

proper food security and nutrition, it is crucial to (i) improve access to basic agricultural inputs, (ii) safeguard animal production, support the recovery of degraded areas, (iii) increase access to specific social programmes (e.g. school feeding programme), (iv) boost access to clean water, improved hygiene and feeding practices, (v) increase access to preventive nutrition services, and (vi) address micronutrient deficiencies.

The wider effects of the El Niño phenomenon further exposes the country to the risk of droughts, hurricanes and flooding in the coming months. Considering the impact of drought on livelihoods and the high number of food insecure households, monitoring the development of the upcoming cropping season is important to assess the outlook for recovery. Vulnerable rural communities need support to implement risk mitigation measures and strengthen emergency preparedness. In case of no response and lack of rainfall, CNSA estimates that half of the population in Haiti could suffer severe food insecurity this year. Therefore, preparedness and capacity development are critical elements to mitigate drought impacts and empower the state to take over part of the burden.

## FAO HAITI EL NIÑO RESPONSE PLAN



FAO requires  
USD 7.9 million



To assist  
35 000 households (175 000 people)

**Objective:** Contribute to protect and restore the livelihoods of vulnerable populations affected by droughts in Haiti.

**Outcome:** The livelihoods of vulnerable farmers and breeders are restored and their food security enhanced.

To address the consequences of the droughts that have affected Haiti during the past three years, FAO has moved forward in developing a response plan, the FAO Haiti El Niño Response Plan, integrating recovery and resilience building activities, and supporting the Humanitarian Response Plan launched by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (April 2016).

FAO will follow a flexible and multidimensional operational strategy to address immediate and medium-term needs to allow for rapid increase of food availability and access, and protect the overall food production capacity in the country.

FAO will implement three synergistic and complementary types of intervention, in line with the drought plan developed by the Government of Haiti.

## RESPONSE PLAN OVERVIEW

 <p>Reduce the food gap and enhance nutrition through support to agricultural production</p>	 <p>Safeguard livestock-based livelihoods to diversify income sources as part of the resilience-building strategy</p>	 <p>Enhance the resilience of vulnerable households affected by drought and the El Niño phenomenon</p>
 30 000 households	 5 000 households	 30 000 households
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency seed distribution and organization of seed fairs in the affected areas for the next cropping seasons</li> <li>• Quality seed production of drought-tolerant crop varieties at community level</li> <li>• Backyard vegetable production initiatives to reduce risk of malnutrition</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of water supply systems and water collection for household production</li> <li>• Capacity development on adoption and replication of climate-resilient good practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of cash to destock already weak animals through sale and slaughter</li> <li>• Increase fodder production and banks at community level</li> <li>• Support animal health interventions and vector control through GSBs</li> <li>• Restore livelihoods through restocking with small ruminants</li> <li>• Capacity building on good practices throughout the milk value chain (from production to processing and commercialization)</li> <li>• Risk reduction through enhancement of integrated farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development and training sessions of community-based organizations and rural leaders on climate-resilient practices and technologies</li> <li>• Adoption of the <i>caisses de résilience</i> approach that focuses on engaging and empowering rural smallholders to leverage their existing capacities through systematic actions, to better manage risks and shocks during crises and improve their livelihoods; the main objective is to diversify and accumulate assets that are fundamental to improve resilience</li> <li>• Cash-for-work and cash-for-asset initiatives to protect and/or rehabilitate critical infrastructure for water access and supply</li> <li>• Development and follow up of community-based disaster risk management and climate-change adaptation plans</li> </ul>
 May 2016 - April 2017	 May 2016 - April 2017	 May 2016 - December 2017
 <b>USD 3.9 million</b> 50 % of the total requested budget	 <b>USD 1.5 million</b> 20 % of the total requested budget	 <b>USD 2.5 million</b> 30 % of the total requested budget



## Reduce the food gap and enhance nutrition through support to agricultural production

Domestic food availability has declined significantly in 2015, from its already low level in 2014, due to the drought conditions that predominated for most of the 2015 agricultural season. As a result, some 1.5 million people are severely food insecure and at least 200 000 people are in an extreme food emergency situation. Currently, food availability is being sustained by a significant increase in imports, particularly for rice and wheat.

The aim in the near to medium term is to increase food availability and reduce the high level of food prices. This can be achieved through direct assistance to the most affected regions with necessary inputs (seeds and basic agricultural tools) combined with resilience-building activities, such as promoting water harvesting through the construction of micro-tanks at household level. In the more productive regions of the country (Artibonite, Centre, Grande Anse and Nippes) a focus towards recovering agricultural production will be prioritized. Activities such as reinforcing good agricultural practices, improving or promoting high quality seed production, and facilitating access to extension are envisaged (see also Output 3).

A first priority in the areas hardest hit by the El Niño phenomenon is immediate access to livelihood support to food-insecure populations. FAO will provide direct and time-sensitive assistance through the following two strategies to recapitalize farming families:

- In municipalities where seeds are available, seed fairs will be organized and vulnerable households will be allocated with subsidized vouchers.
- Where seeds are not available, FAO will purchase and distribute quality seeds and planting material to vulnerable households.

To improve seed security in the affected communes, FAO will also strengthen the operational capacity of seed-grower groups on the production and conservation of quality seeds and planting material as well as fodder production and conservation for livestock during the dry season.

To improve the availability of water for agricultural production, the strategy includes a component for the construction of tanks for micro-irrigation of family gardens and pastures, and pasture fodder banks for livestock (see also Output 2).

**Target:** 30 000 households

**Implementation:** June 2016 - May 2017

### Activities:

- Emergency seed distribution and organization of seed fairs in the affected areas for the next cropping seasons.
- Quality seed production of drought-tolerant crop varieties at community level.
- Backyard vegetable production initiatives to reduce risk of malnutrition.
- Rehabilitation of water supply systems and water collection for household production.
- Capacity development on adoption and replication of climate-resilient good practices.



## Safeguard livestock-based livelihoods to diversify income sources as part of the resilience-building strategy

Livestock production is an integral part of the range of activities that farming families engage in to generate income, especially during lean periods. The role of livestock as a savings system is well known. Livestock production in Haiti is mainly characterized by traditional breeding and almost 50 percent of Haiti's agricultural smallholders practice dairy farming. In the selected departments and surrounding areas, there are micro-dairy processing units, which were supplied by milk producers that were severely affected by the droughts. Selling raw milk can be an alternative, a safer and more sustainable/reliable source of income for smallholder producers. This would allow them to generate income on a daily basis if good practices are integrated production systems.

The *Groupement santé Bef* (GSB) is the main service support system for the livestock producers at the communal level. Each GSB has about 25 members of a certain commune, including one or two veterinary agents trained by the Ministry of agriculture and assisted by international agencies such as FAO, to become technical assistants to the producers. GSBs are found across the country, and can be used as the foundation to address vulnerable households' needs linked to the livestock sector. These tight-knit communes, in addition to being effective means for raising awareness on a disease before it spreads, are also promising centers for the existing small-scale milk production facilities, improved breeding stock, animal marketing, vaccination clinics, de-worming centers and more.

The Response Plan will provide technical assistance to milk producers in identified areas in order to help increase livestock productivity through the capacity building of GSBs, livestock producers and employees for the use of dairy units.

In addition, the Plan will assist livestock producer communities to access water drinking facilities and preserved fodder for off-seasons, which is much needed to increase and maintain livestock productivity.

To improve food security in the affected communes, the Plan will also strengthen the operational capacity of livestock producers on the production and conservation of quality seeds and planting material for livestock feed during the dry months. Livestock producers will also be able to prepare multinutrient blocks for highly needed minerals and vitamins.

Finally, the introduction and/or protection of small ruminants to smallholders will contribute to the recovery strategy taking into account the scarcity of grazing lands in the country.

**Target:** 5 000 households

**Implementation:** June 2016 – May 2017

### Activities:

- Provision of cash to destock already weak animals through sale and slaughter.
- Increase of fodder production and banks at community level.
- Support animal health interventions and vector control through GSBs.
- Restore livelihoods through restocking with small ruminants.
- Capacity building on good practices throughout the milk value chain (from production to processing and commercialization).
- Risk reduction through enhancement of integrated farming.



## Enhance the resilience of vulnerable households affected by drought and the El Niño phenomenon

In Haiti, the agriculture and rural sectors are based on smallholder family farming. Over 1 million Haitians living in rural areas are smallholders and they each have access to an average of just over 1 ha of cropland. In general, productivity is very low, land tenure insecure, agricultural services absent, with very poor integration in value chains and lack of incentives to invest in a risk-prone institutional and natural environment. This has resulted in heavy, generalized and continued degradation of land and water resources across all ecosystems in the country that coupled with low agricultural production, and severe food insecurity have exacerbated the country's vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change.

The vicious cycle of vulnerability affecting farming families in Haiti needs to be addressed: weak institutions and lack of constructive incentives lead to environmental degradation of rural areas, deepening the vulnerability of livelihoods to risks and disasters, and increased impact of climatic events decrease food security and nutrition as well as rural incomes, leading to further environmental degradation.

Resilience-strengthening activities seek to support Haiti in reversing the vicious cycle into a virtuous cycle: improving productivity, capacity-building and incentives for family farming, leveraging climate smart agriculture (including conservation farming), improved access to technologies, input and output markets, lead to increased and stable incomes, building more resilient livelihoods. This leads to improved food security and nutrition, as well as reduced pressure on, and rehabilitation of, natural resources. Environmental rehabilitation in turn helps reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events at the farm and landscape levels.

**Target:** 30 000 households

**Implementation:** June 2016 - January 2017

### Activities:

- Capacity development and training sessions of community-based organizations and rural leaders on climate-resilient practices and technologies.
- Adoption of the *caisses de résilience* approach that focuses on engaging and empowering rural smallholders to leverage their existing capacities through systematic actions, to better manage risks and shocks during crises and improve their livelihoods; the main objective is to diversify and accumulate assets that are fundamental to improve resilience.
- Cash-for-work and cash-for-asset initiatives to protect and/or rehabilitate critical infrastructure for water access and supply.
- Development and follow up of community-based disaster risk management and climate-change adaptation plans.

## FAO'S RESPONSE CAPACITY

Haiti is a founding member of the Organization and established a dynamic partnership with FAO that has been present in the country since 1978. Interventions have been implemented to improve food security and nutrition, with assistance ranging from support to policy formulation, agricultural statistics – including the national agricultural census – and a wide range of development projects. Emergency assistance has been a major feature of cooperation in recent years and acting together with other partners, was able to avert a food security crisis situation despite prolonged drought and poor food security outlook in the North Western communes in 2014.

In Haiti, FAO has an important experience in the implementation of emergency response projects seeking to provide agricultural assistance to vulnerable households hit by natural disasters and especially by drought. FAO has also contributed to a number of resilience-building initiatives in various departments - South and South-East, North West, Nippes and Artibonite. In response to the drought that affected the country in 2015, FAO is already providing agricultural support to more than 22 000 farming families to ensure a smooth recovery of their production. It is also providing technical assistance to farmer producer associations specialized in seed multiplication, enabling them to produce climate-resilient crops and varieties under the national quality declared seed scheme. In addition, capacity-building and training to farm and community leaders on good practices for sustainable agricultural production and improved nutrition are provided on a regular basis. Trained people are expected to disseminate the acquired knowledge and technologies to neighbours to leverage a broad adoption of practices that contribute to strengthening the resilience of local farmers and their livelihoods.

