



IN NUMBERS



13.5 million

people are severely food insecure (IPC Phases 3 and 4)



300 000

People displaced by drought



1.4 million

people targeted by FAO in 2019



USD 35 million

required by FAO for 2019

KEY MESSAGES

- Afghanistan is currently facing one of the world’s largest and most complex humanitarian crisis, with alarming increase of food insecurity and loss of livelihoods, as a result of the combined effect of widespread conflict and insecurity, recurrent natural disasters and ensuing mass displacements.
- The food security and livelihoods situation has significantly deteriorated over the past months, driven mostly by the severe drought in 2018. An estimated 13.5 million people are severely food insecure and require emergency assistance.
- El-Niño conditions have induced above-average precipitation during the wet season (winter/spring); however, the outlook for the upcoming harvest (June-September) is unfavorable, due to the lack of access to agricultural inputs.
- El Niño-induced above-average temperatures sparked flash floods and landslides throughout the country as snowpack melts unusually early in the season, endangering cultivated areas and households’ productive assets, including livestock, and inducing further displacements, especially in the western, southern and eastern regions.
- Plant pests and diseases are some critical challenges faced by farmers and will likely affect cultivated areas during spring/summer.
- Mass distress sale of livestock, high morbidity and mortality of animals and low productivity continue to be a major concern for pastoralists (70 percent of the population). Emergency animal health protection assistance is essential and cost-effective to avoid further loss of productive animals.

MAP

Projected acute food insecurity situation (November 2018–February 2019)



CURRENT SITUATION

The severe drought during 2018, compounded by increased conflict and displacement, has sharply deteriorated people’s food security throughout Afghanistan. An estimated 13.5 million people are facing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC Phases 3 and 4). Ninety percent of the rural population (or 12.9 million people) live below the poverty line, demonstrating the lack of capacity of vulnerable people to recover from shocks, with extremely limited resilience to cope with extreme events. Flash floods were reported in the southern city of Kandahar, which is estimated to be experiencing an emergency level of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4).

More than 300 000 people have been displaced due to the drought, especially in the western region of the country. Of those displaced, 80 percent are hesitant to return to their places of origin for several reasons, including the inability to sustain their agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. As part of an integrated Humanitarian Country Team response, the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), co-led by FAO and the World Food Programme, will contribute to a returns package with a combination of food and livelihood assistance over the coming months as an incentive for internally displaced people to return to their places of origin.

CHALLENGES FACING FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

Although above-average precipitation was recorded throughout the main planting season (October 2018–March 2019), it did not contribute to soil moisture in most parts of the country, including in the Afghan grain belt. An estimated 92 percent of farmers did not have enough or no seeds at all to cultivate wheat – the main staple of the country. Eighty percent of agricultural water in Afghanistan derive from snowmelt from higher elevations during spring, which provides suitable conditions for cultivation of wheat, summer and cash crops. Likewise, the spring/summer cropping season is critical as it ensures access to nutritious food, including vegetables, combined with other essential staples, such as maize and pulses. It is unlikely that the June–September harvest will meet farmers' subsistence and income needs. Plant pests and diseases are also some of the critical challenges faced by farmers and will likely affect cultivated areas during spring/summer, according to FSAC's Emergency Food Security Assessment. To avoid an even larger humanitarian catastrophe, investments in crop production and livestock will be essential. In normal conditions, emergency wheat seed packages (containing 50 kg of certified seeds and quality fertilizers) can provide 30 percent higher yields compared with traditional seeds and fertilizing practices. This ensures an average of 1.2 tonnes of wheat per household, which not only feeds a family but also provides them the opportunity to sell their surplus for income and residues, which are used as fodder for livestock.

The drought, followed by harsh winter months, has led pastoralists to negatively cope with the deteriorating conditions of animals through stress sale, as the low harvest did not yield enough residues (straw), pastures were severely degraded, and water was not available to rear livestock. In order to protect core breeding animals, increase meat and milk productivity and avoid further depletion of productive assets, emergency livestock assistance with concentrated feed, parasites control and rehabilitation of pasturelands with fast-growing fodder crop seeds must continue more intensively until the harvest. Protecting animal health is cost-effective because vulnerable farmers are unlikely to purchase productive animals in the short and medium terms due to a lack of resources.

In response to El Niño conditions that predict early snowmelt due to above-average temperatures, FAO and partners are working to ensure that agricultural land in flooded areas are protected in order to avoid further damages and loss in agricultural production, including livestock.

FAO PRIORITIES, RESPONSE AND FUNDING

2019 PRIORITIES



90 000 households (700 000 people) to receive certified maize and wheat seeds, quality fertilizers and training on good agricultural practices



90 000 pastoral households (700 000 people) to receive concentrated animal feed, fast-growing fodder crop seeds, deworming treatment for over 620 000 small and large ruminants, and training on animal husbandry



16 000 households (123 000 people) to receive assorted vegetable seeds and tools for nutrition-sensitive kitchen gardening, poultry kits and training on disaster risk reduction



5 700 households (44 000 people) to receive cash+ assistance (unconditional cash, in-kind inputs and training)



8 000 households (60 000 people) to benefit from cash-for-work through the construction and rehabilitation of community-based water infrastructure

ACHIEVEMENTS as of March 2019



41 580 households (320 166 people) received emergency agricultural assistance for wheat production



70 130 households (540 001 people) received emergency livestock assistance and more than 140 000 animals were dewormed



7 000 households (53 900 people) received kitchen gardening kits and training

APPEAL AND RESPONSE TO-DATE

Under the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan and Drought Response for Afghanistan, FAO has already delivered emergency livelihoods assistance to more than 860 000 people.

These results have been achieved thanks to the generous contributions received from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, Belgium, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Denmark, France, Japan, Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In 2019, FAO is appealing for USD 35 million to assist 1.4 million people.

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