



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

22 OCTOBER 2014

EBOLA
VIRUS DISEASE
OUTBREAK

HIGHLIGHTS

- W** The current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in West Africa is the world's largest Ebola outbreak recorded to date. The epidemic is severely affecting Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, resulting in deaths and adversely impacting the food security of affected populations.
- W** If not addressed now, the consequences of the outbreak could lead to long-lasting impacts on farmers' livelihoods and rural economies. A multisectoral approach is required to contain the outbreak and stabilize affected areas.
- W** FAO is urgently calling for USD 30 million to support activities linked to its Regional Response Programme to the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak over the next 12 months in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and at-risk countries. FAO is following a twin-track approach to help halt the tragic loss of life while at the same time protecting incomes, nutrition levels and food security.

BACKGROUND

The areas with high incidences of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) are among the most productive regions of the three affected countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), with both cash and food crop production impacted. The outbreak has caused serious incomes opportunities losses, market disruptions and restricted trade flows both internally and across borders, leading to food price spikes in several markets, notably in Liberia. However, prices of some agricultural commodities have fallen significantly in producing areas, negatively affecting farmers' income and access to food.

CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

- § Disruption of market linkages due to travel restrictions, leading to sharp price hikes and incomes opportunities losses.
- § The likely labour shortages on farms would have severe implications for food and cash crop production in the affected areas, with the start of the crop harvesting, mainly rice and cocoa.
- § Reduced crop production forecasts reported in areas with high incidences of EVD, which constitute some of the most productive regions of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

FAO'S RESPONSE

FAO launched in October 2014 its **Regional Response Programme** to provide immediate assistance to 90 000 vulnerable households in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and at-risk countries.

FAO's strategy is to provide immediate support to affected and at-risk countries, complemented by medium- to longer-term assistance. FAO's approach focuses on supporting humanitarian response, protecting food security and improving the overall resilience of vulnerable and fragile populations in a region that is particularly vulnerable to crises and shocks. Programme activities are organized around four key objectives:

- § **save lives by stopping the spread of the disease** through social mobilization, training and awareness raising;
- § **boost incomes and agricultural production** to safeguard livelihoods;
- § **build resilience of communities** to disease threats; and
- § **strengthen coordination** for improved response.



FAO ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Food security assessments

In order to evaluate the impact of the outbreak on agriculture, food security and livelihoods, FAO along with WFP and partners is carrying out Crop and Food Security Assessments missions (CFSAM) to estimate agriculture production and understand food security needs in the most-affected regions of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the three countries, FAO will support governments in collecting secondary data related to agriculture production, prices, trade and stocks. Along with the outcomes of the rapid assessments, these data will contribute to the CFSAM report.

- § In **Liberia**, a rapid Food Security Assessment was conducted jointly by FAO, WFP, Food Security Cluster partners and the Government of Liberia from end September to mid-October 2014. Data analysis is ongoing and results will be available early November. FAO has also conducted an assessment of the impact of the EVD outbreak on the savings and loans schemes of women's associations in October 2014.
- § In **Sierra Leone**, a rapid Food Security Assessment was conducted jointly by FAO, WFP, NGOs and the Government of Sierra Leone from 11 to 18 September 2014. Overall, 702 households and 351 community leaders (chiefs, women and youth leaders) were interviewed. In addition, 39 rural market sites, 26 markets in district headquarter towns and 8 agri-business enterprises were visited and assessed. The preliminary outcomes indicate that about 47 percent of the respondents claimed that Ebola is having considerable adverse effects on farming activities. Reports indicated that a few families have abandoned their farms and moved to areas perceived as 'safe' from EVD. The study shows that price increase ranges from 13 percent for imported rice to over 40 percent for fish. Other commodities affected include cassava, ground nuts and palm oil. This may decrease the purchasing power of the most vulnerable households depending from markets to access to food.
- § In **Guinea** the rapid Food Security Assessment, conducted jointly by FAO, WFP, NGOs and the Government of Guinea, has started on 14 October 2014 and will be completed in November.

Social mobilization

With its own emergency resources, FAO is working with governments, WHO, UNICEF and other partners to help stop the spread of the disease. Agricultural extension services, veterinary and forestry workers are participating in raising awareness efforts and mobilizing communities to reduce transmission.

- § In **Liberia**, FAO has supported surveillance and monitoring of the EVD outbreak by providing training on epidemiology data collection to partners, including to extension agents of the Ministry of Health. In addition, 120 community leaders were trained on EVD awareness to lead sensitization efforts in both rural and urban communities in 15 counties. This will enable farmers and forests users to adopt preventive hygienic measures to stop any further spread of the disease.
- § In **Sierra Leone**, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with FAO, the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and other partners have trained 700 people who have been deployed all over the country to help create awareness about the EVD, its modes of transmission and prevention. FAO is supporting 127 staff from the Ministry of Agriculture in social mobilization activities.
- § In **Guinea**, FAO is training 90 social mobilization agents from the Ministries of Livestock, Agriculture, Water and Forestry/Environment and Trade in communication skills and prevention against EVD. They will unfold an awareness programme on behavioural change for approximately 9 000 rural households and will facilitate distribution of hygienic materials, in close coordination with UNICEF.

FAO FUNDING NEEDS

FAO is appealing for a total of USD 30 million for its **Regional Response Programme** (October 2014 – September 2015). FAO has already committed USD 1.76 million: USD 1.2 million through its Emergency Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to support needs assessment and risk communication and social mobilization in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and USD 560 000 through the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) to strengthen FAO's regional and national response teams and provide timely, high-level expertise and guidance on needs assessment and coordination.

CONTACT

Bukar Tijani | Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa | Accra, Ghana | +233 30 2610930 | Bukar.Tijani@fao.org

Vincent Martin | FAO Representative in Senegal, Head of Subregional Resilience Hub for West Africa | Dakar, Senegal
Tel. + 221 33 889 1659 | Vincent.Martin@fao.org

Dominique Burgeon | Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division | Rome, Italy | Tel. +39 06 570 53803 | dominique.burgeon@fao.org