

HIGHLIGHTS

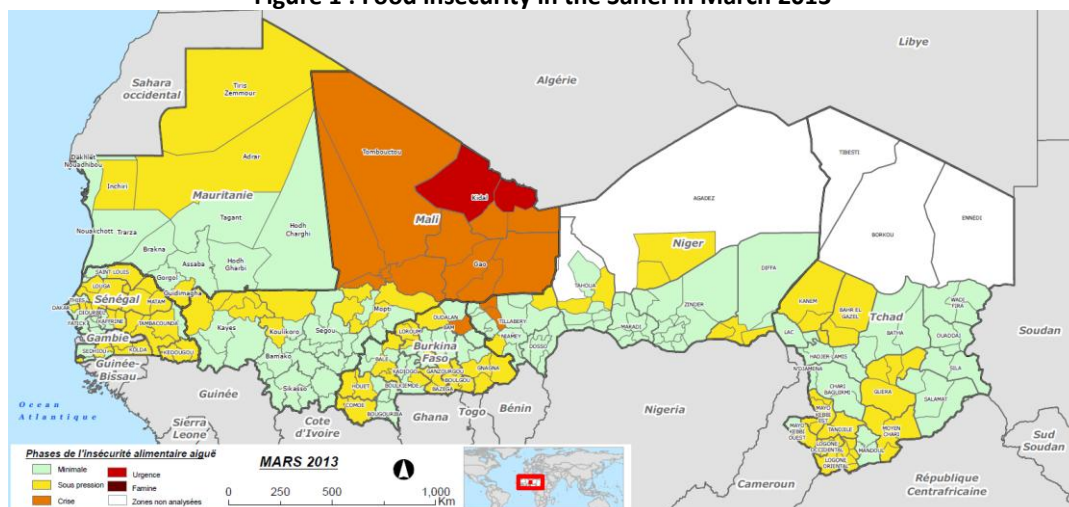
- Despite good agricultural production in 2012 and stable conditions for pastoralists, the situation in the Sahel remains of great concern, mostly due to the impact of the 2012 crisis as well as previous recent crises. Approximately **10.3 million people are food insecure in 2013** and over **1.4 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition**.
- In **Mali**, the food security situation in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu regions is critical, while population movements within the country and in the region are causing further stress on host communities already affected by food insecurity, also generating competition for access to basic services and scarce resources.
- Countries of the Sahel are entering the **lean season** (June –September), and when food crops are not yet harvested, households rely on food reserves and must turn to markets for their consumption. The food security situation is likely to worsen for vulnerable households, especially in northern **Nigeria and surrounding countries** where coarse grain prices are increasing due to both insecurity in 2013 and low agriculture production in 2012 in Nigeria.
- For 2013, FAO is requesting a total of USD 135.3 million to support nearly 6 million people with livelihood interventions in the Sahel, including those related to the Malian conflict. So far, **only USD 14.8 million has been received** and the main agricultural campaign, based on the production of food crops, has not been funded adequately. **A stronger commitment of resource partners is urgently needed.**

STRESSFUL SITUATION IN THE SAHEL AS LEAN SEASON STARTS

Despite good harvest, food security crisis situations still remain in localized areas of the Sahel

Although in 2012 extreme food insecurity was averted and the worst crisis was mitigated, an estimated 10.3 million people, including those that could not benefit from adequate or sufficient livelihood support in 2012, will remain food and nutrition insecure and highly vulnerable to external shocks in 2013. In six countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger), national food security stakeholders agreed on the level of food insecurity (see figure 1: “Cadre harmonisé¹” below) which ranges from “Minimal food security” (phase 1) to “Emergency situation” (phase 4 in Kidal, Mali due to insecurity and food flows disruption). Other Districts of Northern Mali (Gao, Timbuktu), as well as the province of Seno in Burkina Faso, and the Districts of Tillabéry and Téra in Niger are classified as phase 3 (“food crisis”) due to poor food consumption score, high rate of acute malnutrition and livelihoods erosion of the local population. In Northern Mali the situation in Gao and Timbuktu may deteriorate to phase 4 if no significant food and livelihoods assistance is brought on time.

Figure 1 : Food insecurity in the Sahel in March 2013



Source: CILSS

¹ The Cadre Harmonisé is the approach promoted by the CILSS, to collect detailed food accessibility data and to cross-check these data with other food security and nutrition data. One of the goals is to classify the food security severity on a five-phase scale (phase 1: minimal food insecurity; phase 5: famine).

The nutritional status of children under five remains a concern

The Restricted Meeting of the Regional Food Crisis Prevention and Management Mechanism in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC) held from 17 to 19 June 2013 in Cotonou, Benin highlighted the continuing high prevalence of acute malnutrition and the upward trend in admissions, at times higher than expected and close to the 2012 levels, particularly in Niger, Mali, Chad and Nigeria. This reflects an increased vulnerability of the poorest households who continue to face challenges of food access, limited access to basic services and erosion of their livelihoods. Over 1.4 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition in 2013.

Difficult lean period for vulnerable households

The Restricted Meeting of the PREGEC recommended immediate action to support the vulnerable populations who are facing a difficult lean period. Indeed, in countries of the Sahel between May and September, households suffer a harder food situation. During this period, food crops are not yet harvested and food reserves get completely exhausted. Particularly vulnerable rural households are facing an early lean season because of the effects of 2012 crisis (sale of cereals to pay debts, livestock losses and low livestock birth in 2012 leading to a reduced offer). Poor and very poor rural households that have limited access to agriculture and that did not benefit from livelihood support during the past season, will continue to depend on casual labor for revenues, as well as on markets to access food. This causes a decrease in the purchasing power and a stress on household's food access. The most vulnerable households have started selling their poor assets, including livestock, though many are getting into debt, which only further decreases their capacity to cope with this crisis. For pastoralists, both the quality of the vegetation and the availability of water are decreasing, and the transhumance to southern Sahelian regions is going on. Breeding conditions increasingly deteriorate with the scarcity of pasture and the drastic decrease in the level of water points, which makes livestock watering increasingly more difficult.

Volatile and high food prices are likely to worsen the most vulnerable households' food access.

In Niger, current prices exceed the prices prevailing during the peak of the 2012 food crisis. It is most likely that the prices will continue to increase throughout the lean season (with a peak in July-August) due to a combination of factors. In particular, the insecurity prevailing in Nigeria disturbs and slows down trade with surrounding countries, since food availabilities (during the lean season in Niger and in the West of Chad) depend on the flow of food coming from Nigeria. In particular, the pastoral households in these two countries saw their income decrease as a result of the lower price of cattle in the Nigerian market. In addition, the 2012 floods in Nigeria directly affected the millet production, which contributes to exacerbate the price increase. For the moment, there is no foreseeable prospect of a price decline before the confirmed 2013 agricultural outlook and the 2013 harvests (September 2013). In the short run, only the security situation in Nigeria and the progression of the rainy season of 2013 could have a strong impact on cereal prices. Currently, the situation remains worrisome in Maradi, the largest market for millet which supplies almost all Niger and a large portion of northern Nigeria.

The food security situation in the region has been rapidly deteriorating as a consequence of the conflict in Mali.

It is estimated that there are currently 353 455 IDPs in Mali and 174 129 refugees in neighbouring countries, primarily Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger (OCHA 21 June 2013). The food security situation in northern Mali is alarming, with a severe lack of food. Families are relying on household food stocks, and will be forced to turn to markets just as the lean season starts and prices are highest. They could resort to consuming or selling off seed stock intended for planting, as well as selling off other assets, such as farming tools and supplies, to get by.

The insecurity, limited access to social services, continued fighting, mines, and unexploded ordinances are severely affecting the population. Rapid assessments undertaken in areas under Malian control are showing deteriorating food security conditions.

In neighboring countries, the living conditions of refugees and their host families remains a matter of critical concern. Mass migrations are causing further stress on communities already affected by recent food and nutrition crises, creating greater competition over access to basic services. Many refugees brought their livestock with them, adding pressure to scarce natural resources (grazing land and water), endangering animals in the region with the possible spread of animal diseases, and increasing conflict between pastoralist refugees and host communities.

The area where humanitarian efforts are still possible is shrinking, and reaching people in rural areas in the north remains difficult. The presence of humanitarian organizations in the north continues to increase with the improving security situation. However access remains limited in some rural areas and in Kidal.

The Desert Locust situation in the Sahel is currently calm

Successful control operations in the Sahel during the summer of 2012 reduced the scale of the autumn migration to Northwest Africa. Nevertheless, locust populations have increased in Algeria, Libya and Morocco as a result of winter/spring breeding. Despite control operations, adult groups and perhaps small swarms formed and are expected to move to the northern Sahel of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in June and breed with the onset of the summer rains, causing locust numbers to increase further.

FAO RESPONSE STRATEGY

'Urgent action to support the resilience of vulnerable populations' FAO Strategic Resilience Framework

FAO is strongly committed to support the Sahel crisis under a programmatic resilience framework, anchored in the FAO pillars of Disaster Risk Management (DRM), serving as an overarching umbrella not only for the humanitarian response, but also for medium-to-long term work of the Organization, including investment. It is entitled "Strategic Response Framework to the Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel" (last update July 2012). Recognizing the need to break the vicious cycle of recurrent crises and emergencies in the region, the Strategic Framework set priorities not only for humanitarian support, but also for medium-to-longer term interventions, including investment.

At the regional level, humanitarian actors launched the 2013 Humanitarian Sahel Strategy in December 2012 in Dakar. The Strategy aims to ensure a coordinated and harmonized approach for humanitarian response, both at the national and regional level. It includes a shared regional analysis of the context and situation, common regional strategic goals and objectives, and agreed performance indicators for delivery and systematic monitoring which provides evidence-based needs and gaps analysis. **In the short term, FAO's strategy aims to save lives and livelihoods through increasing agriculture and livestock production of vulnerable pastoralists, agro pastoralists and farmers, as well as restoring their productive assets.**

2013: A RENEWED COMMITMENT NEEDED

For 2013, FAO has renewed its commitment to **zero hunger in the Sahel** through rapid scaling-up measures to meet the immediate food security and nutritional needs of those at-risk, while building longer-term resilience by tackling the root causes of hunger. The Organization is appealing for a total of USD 135.3 million to support almost 6 million people, including those that could be affected by the Malian conflict.

In 2013, FAO's priority proposed emergency assistance is focused on the following activities:

1. **Support to rainfed and floodplain recession agriculture and off-season production**, including the following activities:
 - a. distribution of agricultural inputs (food crop seeds, fertilizers, small agricultural tools, agricultural material to build fences, etc.), targeting both the main agricultural season (rainfed agriculture [May – September] and floodplain recession agriculture [August – December]: production of cereals such as rice, maize, sorghum, millet, cowpeas, groundnuts, sweet potatoes) and the off-season agriculture (November – April) : vegetable production; introduction of drought resistant vegetable varieties;
 - b. strengthening the food chain and marketing sector (storage, processing and transportation of agricultural goods); and
 - c. integrated food nutrition activities (nutritional education, food preparation and utilization and consumption diversification).
2. **Support to domestic animal protection and production**, including:
 - a. protection of livestock, provision of veterinary multi-vitamin and mineral food complements and vaccination campaigns;
 - b. technical support for livestock management and animal health; and
 - c. restocking of herds through the distribution of vaccinated small ruminants and poultry.
3. **Soil and water conservation and rehabilitation**, focused on the following activities:
 - a. rehabilitation of irrigation systems and water points;
 - b. rehabilitation or construction of pastoral wells; and
 - c. restoration of degraded lands.
4. **Early warning and preparedness support**, focused on:
 - a. strengthening of national Early Warning Systems;
 - b. support to food insecurity and vulnerability analysis, including technical support to the *Cadre Harmonisé*;
 - c. support to national crop assessments and market analysis; and
 - d. contribution to national and regional contingency plans for the Malian refugees crisis.

Table 1: FAO's funds received in 2013

Countries	Beneficiaries foreseen	Total requirements 2013 (USD millions)	Received funds 2013 (USD millions)	Unmet requirements (USD millions)
Burkina Faso	1 080 600	22.7	5.4	17.3
North Cameroon	50 800	2.4	0	2.4
Chad	715 800	16.4	0.8	15.6
The Gambia	158 000	6.2	0	6.2
Mali	840 000	22	3.1	18.9
Mauritania	786 000	5.7	1.1	4.6
Northern Nigeria	40 000	3	1	2

The Niger	1 774 200	48.3	1.3	47
Senegal	483 500	6	0.9	5.1
Regional	n/a	2.6	1.1	1.5
Total	5 928 900	135.3	14.8	120.5

With the contributions received so far, approximately USD 14.8 million (11 percent of the appeal - table 1), FAO is supporting vulnerable farmers with the distribution of certified food crop seeds and tools for the main agricultural campaign in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. FAO also assists vulnerable pastoralists through the recapitalization of herds, the distribution of veterinary products, and trainings. This activity is essential, as animals are weakened by the lack of adequate food due to deficits in fodder productions, and are highly sensitive to diseases. The assistance will also focus on the support to the off-season vegetable production with the distribution of farming kits (seeds, fertilizers, phytosanitary products) and trainings.

The main agricultural campaign, axed on the production of food crops, has not been funded adequately. A stronger commitment of resource partners is needed now. The remaining needs of the region are in fact enormous and donors and partners still have the opportunity in the next coming months to support households affected by food insecurity by protecting and rebuilding their livelihoods (flood plain recession and dry season agriculture; support to livestock).

Strong FAO expertise in the Sahel

FAO makes every effort in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, the Niger and Senegal to support vulnerable households through livelihoods interventions. In addition, the FAO Subregional Emergency and Rehabilitation Office based in Senegal, and the FAO Subregional Office in West Africa based in Ghana, with the support of FAO headquarters, are planning and regionally coordinating the FAO global response to the crisis. This is to be done in short, medium, and long term methods and interventions, including investment as well as sharing of best/most efficient practices throughout the subregion. These offices also contribute, together with key partners, to food and nutrition security information analysis.

Fostering partnerships and coordination mechanisms

FAO is closely partnering with the host governments and local authorities at all levels, as well as national and research institutions, other United Nations agencies, the donor community and civil society, local associations and international non-governmental organizations.

FAO also participates and often has a prominent, if not lead coordinating role in national thematic working groups/clusters on food and nutrition security, humanitarian and emergency coordination and early warning. FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) co-lead the Food Security Clusters that are active in Chad, the Niger and Mali, and the food security coordination group in Senegal. In Mauritania, FAO participates in the consultation process on food security with the Government and partners. At the regional level, FAO and WFP co-lead the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group based in Dakar.

In collaboration with the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET), WFP and host governments, FAO regularly offers its support and technical expertise to monitoring exercises such as crop assessments, food security and market surveys, vulnerability assessment and targeting evaluations.

Within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)/Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process, FAO is also supporting the formulation of National Agricultural and Food Security Investment programmes. National Programmes for Food Security (NPFS) have been prepared by all of the Sahel countries, with Mauritania as the most recent to be completed. Two NPFS (Chad and Mali) are under implementation. The NPFS for the Sahel countries require an investment of about USD 1.89 billion.

FAO has supported the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)² in the development of the CAADP Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (PRIA). A thematic programme from PRIA focuses on the reduction of vulnerability to food crises and the promotion of stable and sustainable access to food, estimated at USD 176 million. This programme aims to establish a system of regional emergency humanitarian food reserves. It includes the review and adoption of the Charter for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises, covering both West African countries (beyond the Sahel) and actors (beyond states, to include regional organizations and non-state actors). The charter stresses the importance at regional level, to avoid and tackle food crises. FAO also supports ECOWAS, through the Dakar based IASC Emergency Preparedness and Response Working Group, to develop its strategy, mechanism and Plan of Action to intervene in humanitarian crises.

² The following Sahel countries are members of ECOWAS: Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Mali, the Niger and Senegal. Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania are not members.

LINKS

- FAO website on the Sahel crisis: <http://www.fao.org/crisis/sahel/the-sahel-crisis/en/>
- FAO Component of the Sahel 2013 Humanitarian Appeals: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/SahelCAP13.pdf
- FAO's response to the 2012 Sahel crisis: <http://www.fao.org/crisis/sahel/en/>
- FAO and emergencies: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/regions/west-africa/en/>
- FAO Locust Watch website / Sahel threat: <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/2002/index.html>
- DRM Regional strategy for West Africa and Sahel, 2011-2013 (FAO 2011): <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/home/news/emergency-news/emergency-detail/en/item/120920/icode/?uidf=1345>
- FAO DRR corporate framework: "Resilient livelihoods: Disaster Risk reduction for food and nutrition security": <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2540e/i2540e00.pdf>
- Interagency (IASC) Strategy for the Sahel "Preparation for a food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and neighbouring countries": <http://wca.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/system/files/documents/files/2013%20Sahel%20Strategy.pdf>

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