



## **Europe joins ‘Professional Football against Hunger’**

**Expanding partnership for support to hungry people in need**

**The European Commission's humanitarian aid sector (ECHO) has joined with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Association for European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) to raise awareness of the EU and FAO's efforts to restore the self reliance of hungry people in need.**

Natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity. 2010 alone has seen three of the largest humanitarian crises in recent times: the Haiti earthquake, floods in Pakistan and drought in the Sahel. Meanwhile, human suffering due to man-made disasters goes unabated.

Emergencies have the most devastating consequences for rural communities, where people mainly depend on agriculture for survival. When disaster strikes, the EU works with FAO to help these communities return to farming so that they can feed themselves again.

Providing relief in crisis situations is highly complex work under the most difficult of circumstances. What is required to get this job done is very similar to what it takes for a football team to be successful: commitment, team work, perseverance.

## **Engaging a massive European audience**

Football, with its worldwide appeal and the power to engage massive audiences, has an ever more prominent role to play in society. In Europe, the industry is increasingly willing to take on the responsibility that goes with this.

The EPFL, representing the 30 largest professional football leagues and almost 950 clubs across Europe, teamed up with FAO in 2008, launching the 'Professional Football against Hunger' campaign to foster support for those who suffer from hunger.

Since then, two editions of the European Match Day Against Hunger have been celebrated. Last year, this truly European event brought together 16 European football leagues and 314 professional football clubs at 157 stadiums in 14 countries across Europe.

The campaign supported the "1billion hungry project", a worldwide petition, which gathered over 3.3 million signatures of people who joined the call to "blow the whistle" on hunger in which 925 million people live today.

The 'Professional Football against Hunger' campaign now welcomes the European Union (EU), the world's biggest humanitarian donor. The EU, sharing a large part of its geographic base with the EPFL, rallies to the cause of alleviating human suffering. Both institutions are driven by one of Europe's core values, solidarity.

The EPFL will continue to mobilize its vast network of member leagues and football clubs across the continent, including world famous players, to steer the attention of Europe towards the plight of the increasing number of hungry people in the world.

## **Restoring self reliance**

ECHO and FAO respond to hunger by restoring the self reliance of people in need distributing quality seeds, tools and fertilizers, rehabilitating agricultural infrastructure or roads to markets, and training farmers and professionals in agriculture.

By building back better, FAO and ECHO bring immediate relief. However, their efforts also aim to tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability and to increase people's

resilience to future shocks. Currently, FAO is operating 27 emergency projects in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle-East and Latin-America with ECHO-funding, for a total budget of €37 million.

In response to the devastation caused by the worst flooding ever to have hit Pakistan, more than 300 000 people are being assisted. In the Sahel country of Burkina Faso, hit first by drought and then torrential rains, livestock and animal feed has been provided, as well as support to urban gardening and training, reaching around 80 000 people.

In Haiti, FAO has distributed seeds and fertilizers to 50 000 people for the planting of peri-urban and rural vegetable gardens, and parallel training programmes have promoted better nutrition, hygiene and food preparation.

### **Communication is key**

To ensure the continued support to people in Haiti, Burkina Faso, Pakistan and in many other countries around the world, it is crucial to communicate effectively on the results of the actions undertaken to help them.

Moreover, European citizens have a right to be informed as to how the funding they provide to the EU is spent, and to be reassured that it is being spent well.

The “Professional Football Against Hunger” campaign offers an ideal stage to respond to these requirements by reaching out to a wide European audience and engaging citizen support for the humanitarian programmes involved.

**ECHO:** The European Union (EU) is the world's largest humanitarian donor. Many millions of people are helped each year through the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department's (ECHO) 200 relief partner organizations: non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross family, and UN agencies like the UNHCR, FAO and the WFP. The EU constantly strives to improve its aid to third countries struck by natural disaster or conflict in order to make it more effective. ECHO reflects this objective. Its assistance is based on the humanitarian principals of neutrality, non-discrimination and impartiality, which sets it apart from other types of aid given by the European Commission. The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) was established in 1992. In 2010, the coordination of European Union civil protection assistance to crisis victims also became part of its responsibilities. [www.ec.europa.eu/echo](http://www.ec.europa.eu/echo)

**EPFL:** The Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) is a non-profit sporting organisation dedicated to constructively represent the common views of the major 30 Leagues and more than 950 Clubs across Europe – all Clubs, regardless of the sporting or economic dimensions. It gives the Leagues a forum and a platform to decide how best to deal the questions facing the modern world of sport and business. The Association embodies the common voice of Professional Football Leagues. Fostering co-operation, friendly relations and unity between all its Members Leagues and Associate Members, and exploring joint synergies with football authorities and relevant stakeholders, it aims to positively transform and add significant value to the football fabric of Europe. [www.epfl-europeanleagues.com](http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com)

**FAO:** The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. It helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. Since its founding in 1945, FAO has focused special attention on developing rural areas, home to 70 percent of the world's poor and hungry people. [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)