

Haiti earthquake

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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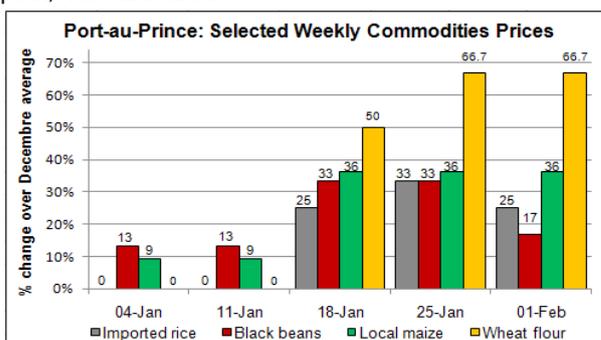


Situation overview

The Haitian earthquake, one of the deadliest in modern times, caused a dramatic humanitarian crisis and led to one million homeless people in Port-au-Prince and at least 500 000 people fleeing the capital for the provinces. It also seriously impacted food security nationwide and a hunger crisis is looming.

Populations that already did not get enough to eat, now share their family food baskets with relatives that have fled the quake zone.

Damage to supply chain infrastructure has made food much more expensive. The prices of wheat flour, sorghum, imported rice and beans, the main source of protein for the poor, have all soared.



Agriculture is an important part of the solution to the Haiti crisis as it can provide food self-reliance, employment and a productive safety net through cash for work.

FAO's immediate priority is to sustain and ramp up domestic food production by providing support to poor farmers for the March planting season which accounts for 60 percent of national food production.

FAO asked for USD 23 million under the initial Haiti Earthquake Flash Appeal to keep national food production



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going and support vulnerable farmers and poor families reeling from the disaster. It is a deep concern for FAO that only 8 percent (USD 1.7 million from Belgium, Brazil, CERF and FAO) of the requirements under this appeal have been so far received, while needs are already being revised to USD 50 million.

Agriculture plays a key role in the solution to the Haiti crisis. It can provide food self-reliance as well as productive safety nets through cash-for-work and create employment. FAO promotes a people's centred approach for the reconstruction of Haiti. It is important to build capacity both at the national institution and local organization levels.

In the medium and longer term, substantial investment in agriculture and support to poor farmers, the drivers and beneficiaries of rural development, must play a major role if lasting national recovery is to be achieved in Haiti.

International investment in natural resource management, to preserve fresh water supplies and reforest the country's denuded hills is also vital to increase Haiti's resilience to future natural disasters.

Haitian agriculture was in the grip of a renaissance before the disaster struck, showing recovery is possible. The earthquakes must not be allowed to reverse that positive trend.

Facts and figures

- Even before the earthquake, three quarters of Haitians survived on less than two dollars a day
- 1.9 million Haitians did not have enough to eat, even though they spent most or all of their income on food
- More than 50% of Haitians lived in rural areas before the quake
- 85% of the rural population practices some kind of farming
- Agriculture accounts for 27% of Haiti's gross domestic product and employs half the country's labour force
- Haiti used to be self-sufficient in agriculture but today 60% of its food is imported
- In 2009, the amount of land cultivated with maize, beans and sorghum increased by 15 to 20%
- Overall agricultural production jumped 12%
- The number of food insecure people had fallen by half a million since April 2008

Growing from past experience

FAO has been working in Haiti since 1978 and has gained priceless experience in local agricultural production and methods, land resource management, land ownership issues and environmental rehabilitation. Before the earthquake, FAO was working hand in hand with the Government, NGO, UN and bilateral partners to boost agricultural production.

In response to the 2008 soaring food crisis in Haiti, exacerbated by a series of back-to-back storms, FAO implemented a USD 10.2 million IFAD-funded seed and plant multiplication and distribution project. The scheme benefited 240 000 smallholder farmers and their families.

In addition, a EUR 10 million two-year European Union Food Facility project was launched in May 2008 to improve the food security and livelihoods of some 300 000 rural

households in Haiti's northeastern province. Substantial gains have already been made in the diversification of agriculture, livestock and agroforestry, improved natural resources management and strengthened people's resilience to natural disasters.

In Marmelade and Plaisance in northern Haiti, a five-year project focusing on environmental conservation financed by Canada started in 2005, building upon FAO work that began in this area in 1999. Watersheds, diversifying and scaling up agroforestry, food processing and improvements in agricultural marketing to help boost farmers' earnings are the main activities. With the support of the same donor, FAO also provides vegetable crop seeds in peri-urban areas to improve the nutrition of women headed households.

FAO's Investment Centre has helped formulate and implement a broad range of agricultural and rural development programmes in Haiti worth USD 78 million, with USD 70 million provided by donor partners.

Work is also being carried out to strengthen local governance and capacity in agriculture policy and statistics.

Crop calendar by livelihoods zone

MAIZE	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Agro-pastoral Zone			First Season				Second Season					
Dry Agriculture and Fishing Zone			First Season				Second Season					
Dry Agro-pastoral Zone			First Season				Second Season					
Humid Mountain Agriculture Zone												
Plains under Monoculture Zone												
Plateau Agro-pastoral Zone					First Season				Second Season			

Sowing
 Growing
 Harvesting

The March planting season accounts for 60 percent of national food production

FAO earthquake response

The acute crisis triggered by the earthquake has reinforced the Agency's commitment to the Haitian government's ownership of national agriculture, environment and rural development policies. FAO is supporting the Government in the agriculture sector recovery efforts and long term development plans.

FAO has completed an emergency clearance scheme of earthquake and landslide debris from irrigation canals in and around the epicentre in the rural areas near Léogâne to save crops.

FAO has also started to distribute seeds from emergency stocks it had in the country and is purchasing tools and more seeds to complete this in time for the March planting season. However lack of funding for agricultural recovery is restricting its activities in this area.

FAO experts on the ground are currently assessing the medium- to long-term needs for the recovery and development of the agriculture sector.

The FAO programmes in Haiti are supported by: Belgium, Canada, Italy, Spain and the European Union as well as IFAD, the World Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development, the Inter-American Development Bank and OCHA (CERF).



FAO emergency seed stocks as well as tools are being distributed for the March 2010 planting season



For more information:
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