



25 August 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

- The events in the Central African Republic have left more than **2.5 million people in need of humanitarian** assistance and displaced one out of five people; around 509 000 are still internally displaced (of a total population of 4.6 million), however displaced people, including returnees, are resuming agricultural activities thus contributing to food production.
- **Localised security incidents continue to be reported**, including several attacks on trucks transporting humanitarian aid, which resulted in the delay of seed distributions as well as the looting of seeds.
- **FAO has distributed crop seeds and tools to the targeted 80 000 farming families for the current planting season.** Strategic partnership with 20 national and international NGOs was established to implement the countrywide distribution plan. Each family received 25 kg of crop seeds and two hoes to plant in time and produce at least 500 kg of groundnuts, maize and rice that will contribute to feed them for about four months. **Although the main planting season finished at the end of June, FAO is supporting an additional 34 750 families with the distribution of seeds** (beans, maize, millet, niébé, sesame and sorghum) and tools for the short cycle agricultural season, throughout August, depending on the geographical areas. Currently, 18 020 families received seeds (52 percent of the target) in the Ouham, Ouham-Pende, Ouaka, Kemo, Nana-Gribizi, Nana-Manbere and Ombella-Mpoko prefectures. **The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification** carried out in late April 2014 indicated that 45 percent of the rural population (1.7 million people) is food insecure and has been classified in Crisis (26 percent) and Emergency (19 percent) phases.
- **FAO has also secured additional support from donors to strengthen the resilience of an additional 500 women's and youth groups as well as 100 seed multiplier groups** (representing over 60 000 beneficiaries) to help them build up their financial capacities, agriculture techniques and social protection to improve food and nutrition security through a global approach called "*caisses de résilience*".
- The peace process started in Brazzaville in July 2014 and led to the signing of the ceasefire agreement; during the three-day forum, there was a limited presence of representatives of farmers and cattle keepers despite transhumance will resume in September/October, which could lead to increased tensions in the country.
- FAO, the World Food Programme, Cluster partners and the Government are coordinating the phases of the Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (end of August) and the Emergency Food Security Assessment (beginning of September).

BACKGROUND

In light of the findings of the **Multisectoral Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)**, the [Revised Strategic Response Plan](#) was launched on 19 January, outlining the humanitarian strategy for the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014. The **MIRA** confirmed that food reserves are almost non-existent. People interviewed indicated that they were now eating just one meal a day. In spite of insecurity, 78 percent of farmers were planning to cultivate, confirming the importance of cropping and livestock rearing to ensure their income and access to food. However, 94 percent of communities reported they would not have enough seeds to plant for the next agricultural season. People outside Bangui must urgently resume production activities, without which they cannot eat, generate income or even relocate.

The results of the **FAO/World Food Programme (WFP) Markets and Food Security Assessment mission** released in April indicated that the agricultural sector was the most affected by the crisis, which contracted by 37 percent and agricultural production declined by 38 percent. It is crucial to restore production, as agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy, representing 57 percent of the GDP. The joint FAO/WFP assessment mission warns that the humanitarian operation in CAR over the next 18 months will be long and expensive, especially if the current planting season is missed.

CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURE

- ❖ Despite efforts from FAO and partners, many farmers lack adequate agricultural inputs to secure enough food and income.
- ❖ Bad road access since the start of the rainy season and insecurity disrupt market linkages and represent serious constraints for humanitarian operations increasing logistics costs; thus far, over 100 tonnes of seeds have been stolen from FAO's and/or partners' warehouses and trucks.
- ❖ Standing crops, stored seed/grain and productive assets have been widely lost since the start of the conflict in December 2012, leaving the population food insecure and unable to resume crop production.
- ❖ Rural populations have been affected by the numerous Séléka and anti-Balaka clashes, yet their protection is key in order for FAO and its partners to access the areas where they are located to implement humanitarian and resilience programmes.
- ❖ Lack of immediate assistance will affect the resumption of activity and risks to trigger further losses and longer-term suffering.

PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS

FAO can prevent further deteriorating of livelihoods and provide planting opportunities with timely donor support, saving families from a domino effect of continued losses, as well as preventing farmers from adopting negative coping strategies with long-term effects (joining militias and bandits, economic migration, etc.). Restoring productive assets will enable crisis-hit farmers to produce their own food and take advantage of local opportunities to generate income to cover their needs as they return to their villages.

As co-lead of the Food Security Cluster, FAO works closely with partners to improve the food security and livelihoods response. Strategic partnership between FAO and WFP is particularly important to ensure a complementary response by providing crop seeds and food rations to limit the risk of planting material consumption. FAO, WFP, Cluster partners and the Government are coordinating the phases of the Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission as well as the Emergency Food Security Assessment that will be undertaken at the end of August and beginning of September, respectively.

FAO and NGO partners have distributed agricultural kits to the targeted 80 000 farming families as well as 100 seed multiplier groups to plant groundnuts, maize and rice, representing a total of 2 000 tonnes of seeds. Each family received 25 kg of crop seeds and two hoes to plant in time and produce their own food. **Although the main planting season finished at the end of June, FAO is supporting an additional 34 750 families with the distribution of seeds** (beans, maize, millet, niébé, sesame and sorghum) and tools for the short cycle agricultural season, throughout August, depending on the geographical areas. Thus far, partners reached over 18 020 families (52 percent of the initial target).

Extensive discussions with CAR's Ministry of Rural Development, NGO partners and farmers' associations show that farmers across the country are actively taking part in the agricultural campaign despite localized insecurity. Early harvests started in August and monitoring and evaluation missions are being carried out. As a safety measure, farmers are planting strategic crops (cassava and sweet potatoes) in bush areas where they have been hiding and can return in case of attacks, as they are less visible to looters. Other crop seeds (groundnuts, maize and rice) are planted near the villages where they are returning.

In response to the aggravation of the situation in CAR, FAO provided vegetable producers with immediate assistance before the start and during the crop season. Over 450 farmers' groups, including women's associations, and 880 households received vegetable seeds and tools. Preemptive measures are also being taken by prepositioning vegetable seed contingency stocks in FAO suboffices if needed in case of emergencies.

Training is being provided to 250 young professionals, including ministry officials, on the "*caisses de resilience*" approach, specifically on Saving and Loans schemes and Farmer Fields School techniques. These activities will then be implemented by national and international partners.

FAO priority agricultural programmes

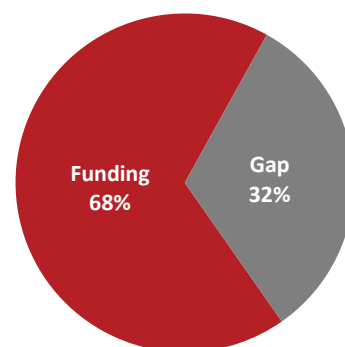
1. Immediate support to production of staple food and vegetable: These two production systems (short and long cycles) are complementary, which allows the farmers to access food throughout the year. Vegetable production is mainly initiated in urban and peri-urban areas such as Bangui and Bossangoa to generate food and incomes and support returnees in rural areas after the main agricultural season.

2. Build resilience through producer and women's associations: FAO is developing an approach called "*caisses de resilience*" that will help families to accumulate, diversify and protect assets by building their capacities in terms of agriculture techniques, financial capacities and governance structures at community level. This approach has been successfully implemented in crisis and post crisis context in several countries in the region. Participating families will be engaged in contractual production of quality seeds and food, support to school gardening and feeding, nutrition surveillance and cash transfer initiatives to boost their community managed savings and loans schemes. After the harvests, these activities will be completed with the distribution of small processing machines and the constitution of food and seed reserves.

Both programmes are building social cohesion: FAO is partnering with specialized national and international institutions to integrate concepts of peace dialogue around social and productive activities such as agriculture and rural livelihoods.

Total funding 2014

FAO total funding needs: USD 45 million
Total funds received: USD 30.5 million



PLANNED BENEFICIARIES
150 000 FAMILIES
for each programme

Under the Strategic Response Plan (SRP), FAO has requested USD 45 million to support 150 000 farming families and has received over USD 30.5 million¹. This allows FAO to assist 120 000 farming families for the current agricultural season in 14 of the 16 prefectures. However, **an additional USD 14.5 million is still required** to meet the SRP objectives. FAO aims at building resilience through a comprehensive approach addressing social, technical and financial aspects. These activities will enable families to generate income before the first harvest to purchase food from the market. As they are not dependent on the rainy season, resilience activities provide opportunities for households to diversify and accumulate assets on a regular basis year round.

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¹ USD 3 million are committed for activities that are not covered by the SRP: aquaculture, cluster coordination, training, rice irrigation, etc.