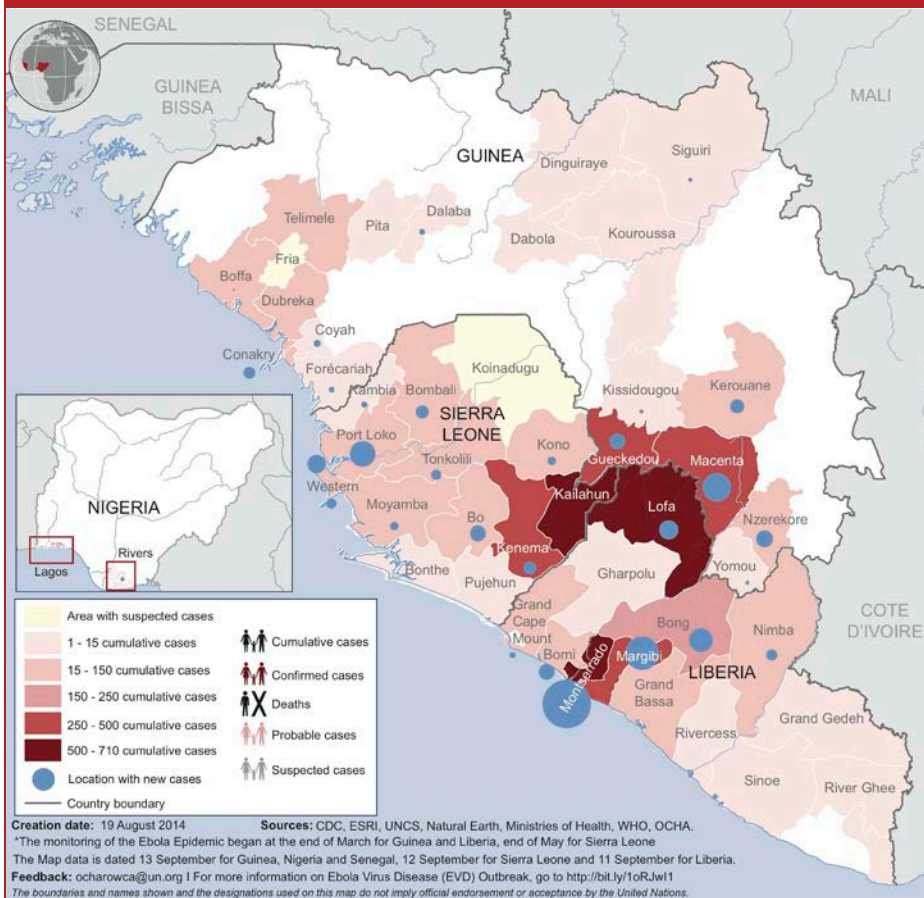




Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in West Africa

22 September 2014

HIGHLIGHTS



>2/3 people depend on agriculture in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone

Chronic malnutrition:

- 34.7% in Guinea (SMART 2012)
- 35.57% in Liberia (CFSN 2012)
- 34% in Sierra Leone (SFSN 2011)

Ongoing 2014 main crop harvest threatened

Panic buying of food in Liberia leading to **food price spikes (>150% in some areas)**

1.3 million people to receive food aid assistance

FAO appealing for USD 30 million to reach 90 000 farming households

BACKGROUND

The past six months have witnessed an unprecedented Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak that has affected five countries in West Africa. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are the most affected countries, and some cases were reported in Nigeria and Senegal. This outbreak is unprecedented in scale and geographical spread and is having multisectoral impact on affected countries. The outbreak is anticipated to further deteriorate the already fragile food security situation in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

- ❖ Disruption of market linkages due to travel restrictions, leading to sharp price hikes.
- ❖ The likely labour shortages on farms would have severe implications for food and cash crop production in the affected areas, with the peak of the crop harvesting, mainly cereals, due in the coming months.
- ❖ Reduced crop production forecasts reported in areas with high incidences of Ebola, which constitute some of the most productive regions of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

FAO'S RESPONSE

- ❖ **Save lives** as part of UN coordinated response through social mobilization, training and awareness raising activities via FAO networks of extension service and animal health workers.
- ❖ **Evaluate the impact of EVD on food security and nutrition** to understand needs and target vulnerable households most in need.
- ❖ **Mitigate EVD impacts on agriculture** through support to crop and livestock production, post-harvest activities and commercialization of agricultural produce.
- ❖ **Build resilience of communities** to future disease shocks by reducing risks of EVD exposure and by strengthening preparedness in at risk countries.
- ❖ **Enhance regional coordination** for effective response.

SITUATION IN MOST-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

Information from the Special Alert n°333 of FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), 2 September 2014.

Guinea

Reports indicate a reduction in agricultural produce entering the markets of the capital, Conakry. This has resulted in upward pressure on food prices. However, import inflationary pressure is estimated to be less significant compared to Liberia and Sierra Leone, given the stable exchange rate and the relative low import dependency ratio (16 percent). Guinea exports small volumes of rice, maize and millet; border closures are expected to negatively impact export opportunities and farmer incomes, while concurrently reducing available supplies for Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Liberia

Authorities have imposed quarantine and movement restrictions in several parts of the country. This has led to a sharp decline in market food supplies. Reports also indicate that the distribution of imported food from Monrovia's seaport to rural markets has been reduced. This is a key source of rice supplies for rural areas. These abnormal supply shortages have contributed to driving food prices even higher.

A rapid market assessment indicates that prices of some food items have increased rapidly. In addition, increasing transportation costs have added further upward price pressure. The country retains a high dependency on cereal imports, with an average import dependency ratio of 66 percent. Given the heavy reliance on external cereal supplies, and the depreciation of the Liberian dollar, upward pressure is expected to be exerted on food prices.

Sierra Leone

The outbreak erupted at the beginning of the rice and cocoa harvest season (i.e. July/August) when traders were expected to exchange food and other items with cocoa. Movement restrictions are impeding these important marketing activities. This is negatively impacting household incomes. Market closures, internal travel restrictions and fear of infection have curtailed food trade and caused supply shortages.

Although price data is not available, reports have indicated food price spikes. Despite the fact that the country's dependency on imported rice has been decreasing, Sierra Leone still remains a net importer, with a cereal import dependency ratio of about 18 percent. The depreciation of the national currency, which has quickened since June, is expected to add inflationary pressure.

FAO'S ONGOING ACTIVITIES

FAO has made available a total of USD 1.75 million from its resources: USD 1.2 million through its Emergency Technical Cooperation Programme to support risk communication and social mobilization in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and USD 550 000 through the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities to strengthen FAO's regional response team and provide timely, high level expertise and guidance on needs assessment and coordination.

In order to evaluate the impact of the outbreak on agriculture, food security and livelihoods, FAO and partners are carrying out joint, rapid assessments to understand food security needs in the most-affected regions of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Data should be available by the end of September.

Since July 2014, FAO has been supporting Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to strengthen EVD response capacities at the human-wildlife-ecosystem interface. The Organization is working with governments, WHO, UNICEF and other partners to increase understanding and raise awareness among affected and at-risk populations, including rural communities who rely on bush meat as a source of livelihood and food.

FAO'S FUNDING NEEDS

FAO is appealing for a total of USD 30 million for its Regional Response (September 2014 – September 2015).

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