



FAO and Japan together to prevent the worsening of food insecurity in northern Mali

For the first time, the Government of Japan is supporting FAO's efforts in Mali to assist food-insecure households and improve their access to food during the 2014/2015 campaign. FAO project, entitled "Immediate assistance to vulnerable populations in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu in Mali by restoring agro-aquaculture productivity and improving food security", aims to assist 4 000 households (or 28 000 people, of which at least 44 percent are women) in the most food-insecure areas in the three selected regions.

In Mali, the agricultural sector represents 80 percent of the active population and 23 percent of the national trade balance. However, in the past few years, recurrent droughts and floods have negatively impacted small-scale farming and food security in the country. The humanitarian situation worsened during the socio-political instability in 2012, which affected food and nutritional security, requiring emergency agriculture interventions in the country.

The project focuses on three main areas: support to (i) agriculture (food crop production), (ii) aquaculture and (iii) market gardening (vegetable production). Following the identification of the most vulnerable households, direct support is provided to agriculture and aquaculture through the distribution of seeds and farming inputs. Activities under all three components are accompanied by capacity building sessions for beneficiaries and implementing partners.

Since its start (September 2014), the project has reached 80 percent of its objectives. The impact of the project will be assessed upon its completion in a few months time.

Completed Activities

Support to agriculture (food crop production)

- Distributed improved seeds (selection of varieties based on each geographical area): cowpea (3 500 kg), maize (400 kg), millet (1 100 kg), rice (1 950 kg) and sorghum (1 100 kg).
- Distributed mineral fertilizer to boost irrigated rice production: 198 tonnes of NPK (15-15-15).
- Distributed tools: hoes (3 500), watering cans (700) and wheelbarrows (350).

As a result, a total of 3 500 farming families assisted should be able to resume agricultural activities during the 2014/2015 campaign.

Support to aquaculture

A total of 45 000 hatchlings (25 000 tilapias and 20 000 sheat-fish) have been distributed to 500 beneficiaries to enhance fish production in ponds.

Ongoing Activities

Support to market gardening (vegetable production)

Distribution of vegetable seeds: cabbage (36 kg), carrot (36 kg), potato (36 000 kg), onion (30 kg), shallot (30 000 kg) and tomatoes (30 kg).

Support to aquaculture

Delivery of 70 000 hatchlings on site for distribution.

In addition to the assistance provided to food-insecure households affected by political tensions and recurrent climate hazards, contributions from generous donors such as Japan will also be sought to follow up on the activities implemented.



Agriculture

To ensure that agricultural activities are resumed, support focused on the distribution of seeds, fertilizers and farming tools, as well as the monitoring of the activities' development.

Photo 1: A farmer planting the seeds received in his field during the rainy season.

Aquaculture

To address overfishing in areas of displacement as a result of the ongoing conflict, aquaculture is reinforced through the production of hatchlings (young fish) and fish stocking in ponds. The ponds in three villages (Diambadougou, Kindia and Soufouroulaye) in the region of Mopti were stocked with 45 000 tilapia and sheat-fish hatchlings. Fish stocking provides an additional source of food and income.



Photo 2: Some of the 25 000 tilapia hatchlings already released in the pond.



Market gardening

To support displaced and host families, market gardening is being implemented to improve and diversify diets, as well as promote social cohesion among communities. Market gardening activities, which are ongoing, aim to assist a total of 1 000 farming families (70 percent women). Vegetables seeds and tools are being distributed, as well as equipment to build fences to protect the vegetable gardens against wandering animals.

Photo 3: A farmer is proudly showing okra she just harvested.

Capacity building

Training sessions for beneficiaries and implementing partners accompanied all three components. For aquaculture, in-depth training was provided to enhance understanding of the project and ensure the success of fish stocking activities. Capacity building of beneficiaries under the agricultural component focused on cultivation techniques for dryland farming (cowpea, maize, millet and sorghum) and rice. Training sessions to accompany market gardening activities are being organized to enhance vegetable production techniques and ensure best practices in nutrition.



Photo 4: Beneficiaries learning about fish stocking.