



## SITUATION UPDATE

# The Sahel Crisis



25 February 2014

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Despite the 2013 harvest in the Sahel being equivalent to the last five years average, more than 20 million people are still food insecure. The agricultural production of the poorest households is insufficient to restore their livelihoods and is expected to cover only their nutritional needs for the next two to three months. Thereafter they will depend entirely on markets.
- In order to reduce the food insecurity burden in the Sahel, additional and timely efforts are needed to strengthen the livelihoods and enhance the resilience of poor and very poor households in the region. In 2014, [FAO is appealing for over USD 115 million](#), of which USD 74 million are needed by the end of April 2014 to adequately respond to the main agriculture campaign.
- In 2013, FAO received USD 26.5 million for its operations in the Sahel. Thanks to these contributions, FAO assisted more than 2.5 million beneficiaries by supporting food and livestock production, and providing livelihood protection and technical assistance.

## 2014 OVERVIEW IN THE SAHEL

### I. FOOD SECURITY AND MALNUTRITION : SITUATION ANALYSIS

Despite good and average harvests in 2012 and 2013, persistent high levels of food and nutrition insecurity reflect the chronic challenges faced by vulnerable populations in the Sahel region. In 2013/2014, the average cereal production in the Sahel (excluding Nigeria) is 1% above the 5 year average. While food availability slightly improved in 2013, food accessibility is still a major concern for millions of households: food prices remain high on most markets compared to their five-year average, and rapid population growth coupled with average agricultural production result in a decrease of productivity per capita.

Agriculture is the main source of food and income for the majority of the population in the Sahel. Meanwhile, agricultural and pastoral productivity is dependent on volatile weather conditions. The poorest rural households therefore often resort to selling their labor, instead of working on their land, to ensure a minimum revenue. This coping mechanism renders them highly dependent on markets.

Refugees and internally displaced populations in the Sahel are at particular risk of food insecurity. Along with host populations, they need food and livelihood assistance to avoid falling into a crisis or emergency situation. Households under stress of food insecurity also remain highly vulnerable and will require support to protect their livelihoods, including their livestock. They may also require emergency assistance during the lean season.

Vulnerable households have barely recovered from the previous food security crises (2005, 2008, 2010, 2012) and will have to face the lean season in the coming months. Without a timely and adequate support to restore their livelihoods and make them more resilient, households will be forced to turn to negative coping mechanisms (sale of livestock and agricultural inputs, reducing number and quality of daily meals, accumulating debt, decreasing expenditures for education, health and malnutrition-related care) increasing their vulnerability to future shocks, thus further aggravating food insecurity.

### 2. AGRICULTURE AND LIVELIHOODS NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

In January 2014, more than 20 million people, or one in seven person in the Sahel<sup>1</sup>, suffer from food insecurity. Among them, more than 2.5 million are in crisis situation and require urgent lifesaving food and livelihoods

<sup>1</sup> Burkina Faso, North Cameroon, the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, North Nigeria, Senegal and Chad (cf. regional SRP 2014) METTRE LE LIEN???

assistance. For the remaining millions living in stressed food security conditions, the risk of falling into crisis and emergency situation in 2014 is significant. They will have to face the lean season (April – September) with low levels of food stocks and are likely to suffer from recurring climatic, economic and security shocks.

Whilst it is essential that development actors refine and scale-up their programmes to support resilience, humanitarian assistance has a crucial and complementary role to play in early warning, food security data analysis, support to vulnerable households for resilient livelihoods, risk reduction against future disasters and life saving assistance.

In addition to the life saving and livelihoods restoration initiatives to respond to the current food insecurity, the following additional challenges may also need to be tackled in 2014:

- Possible erratic climatic patterns which may cause loss of crops and livestock hence disrupting livelihoods;
- High food prices
- Population displacements due to possible natural or man-made disasters ;
- Desert locust constitutes a perennial threat to crops if not timely controlled;
- Humanitarian access, regularly jeopardized by armed group;
- Timely funding of agriculture and livestock activities;
- Important livelihood needs unaddressed in the past years. In fact while the assistance provided in response to the Sahel crisis has been crucial, millions of households didn't benefit from adequate support and will require reinforced assistance in 2014.

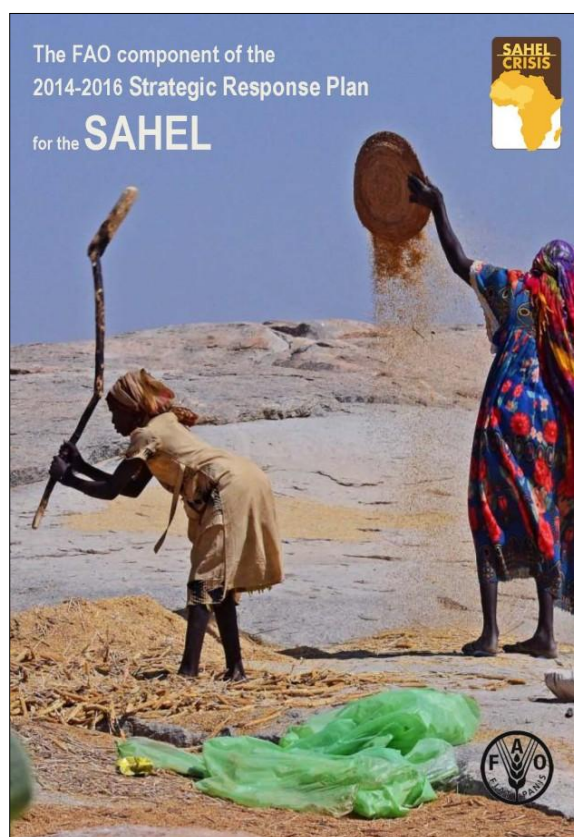
### 3. 2014 RESPONSE PLAN OVERVIEW

Under the 2014-2016 Strategic Response Plan for the Sahel, FAO is appealing for over USD 115 million in 2014 (including USD 36 million for Niger only) to **restore and strengthen the livelihoods** of more than 7.5 million farmers, agro pastoralists, pastoralists and fishermen affected by crisis. Out of these needs, USD 74 million are needed by the end of April 2014.

The overall objective is to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households to shocks in order to promote food and nutrition security.

[FAO's response plan](#) is structured around the three following strategic objectives:

- Enhance Early Warning Systems, information management and coordination;
- Strengthen livelihoods (sustainable agriculture, livestock, fisheries activities) and protect natural resources (smart water and soil management) to help households to better cope with future shocks;
- Restore the livelihoods of destitute farmers, agro-pastoralists, pastoralists and fishermen affected by the former crisis (cash transfer, agricultural and livestock inputs provision).

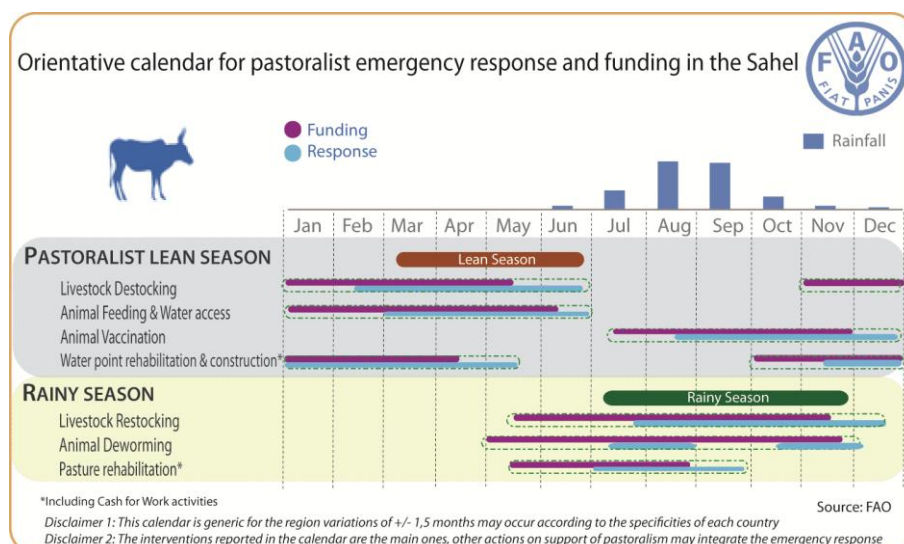
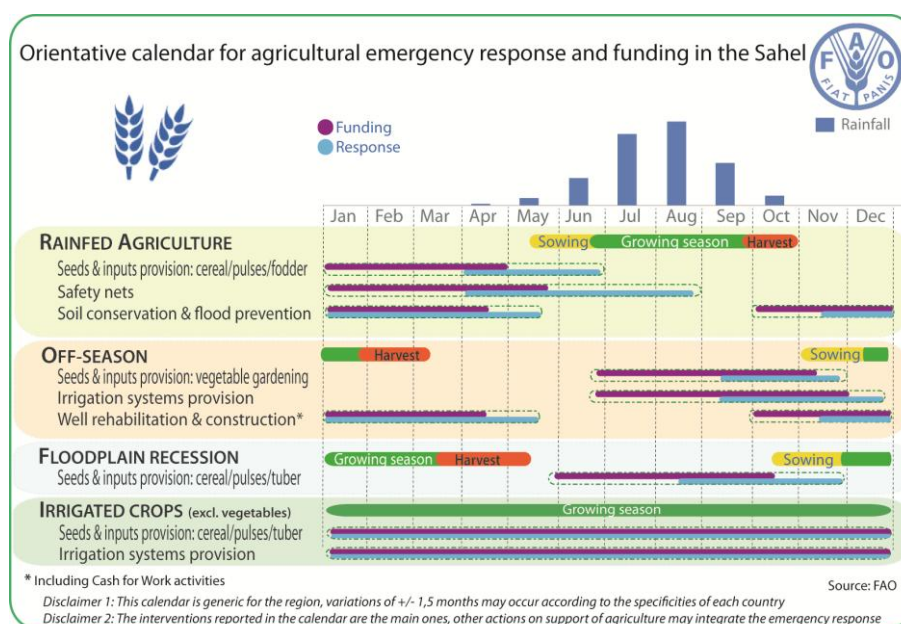


**Inter-agency cooperation and coordination** will be enhanced in order to create **cross-sectoral synergies** among agriculture, food assistance, nutrition and water-related activities. Nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions can contribute to diet diversification thanks to the introduction of appropriate crops. Food assistance, through food-for-work and distributions of seed protection rations, plays a crucial role in addressing under nutrition and in fostering agricultural activities. Food production surplus can moreover be used for food assistance programs at the local level.

## 2014 FAO's funds appeal

Countries	Total requirements 2014 (USD millions)	Immediate requirements (USD millions) <i>(by end April 2014)</i>
Burkina Faso	11.5	9.3
Northern Cameroon	1.4	1.3
Chad	9.3	5.9
The Gambia	3.3	1.5
Mali	29.4	19.5
Mauritania	5.6	2.8
Northern Nigeria	2.6	1.6
The Niger	36.0	21.6
Senegal	13.4	9.2
Regional	2.9	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>115.4</b>	<b>74.2</b>

Interventions that require urgent funding will focus on the provision of essential agricultural inputs to vulnerable farmers for the preparation of the **main agricultural campaign** starting in May 2014, based on the production of cereals. Timing is also crucial to support **pastoralists who risk losing their herds** due to the lack of animal feed and access to veterinary services. The calendars below illustrate the indicative timeframe for funding and implementation of related activities throughout 2014.



## 4. FAO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR RESILIENCE IN 2013 IN THE SAHEL

In line with FAO's new Strategic Objective 5 aiming to "Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises", **FAO's response strategy to the Sahel crisis in 2013 aimed to save lives and livelihoods through support to the agricultural and livestock production of vulnerable pastoralists, agropastoralists and farmers, as well as restoring their productive assets.**

In 2013, more than 2.5 million individuals were assisted by FAO in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad thanks to contributions received from donors through the 2013 humanitarian appeals and national response plans.

The support provided has enabled smallholder farmers and pastoralists, many of whom have lost part, or all, of their productive assets during the 2012 crisis, to grow their own food and rebuild their livelihoods as quickly as possible. The interventions were based on (i) the protection and early recovery of productive assets through the distribution of agricultural inputs to farmers (cereals and vegetable seeds, fertilizers, tools, fencing material, etc.) and support to pastoralists in protecting livestock and increasing animal production through animal health campaigns, restocking, distribution of animal feed and food supplements. These interventions were complemented by (ii) capacity building activities on Disaster Risk Reduction and trainings on good practices in agriculture and livestock management. Furthermore, initiatives were implemented to (iii) rehabilitate and create an enabling environment for livelihoods through the support for soil and water conservation and restoration of degraded lands, as well as strengthening of the food chain and marketing sector and integrated food nutrition activities.

FAO also supported the strengthening of national early warning systems, food security analysis (including to the "*Cadre harmonisé*") as well as national crop and market assessments. The Organization also played a key role in coordination mechanisms in affected countries.

## LINKS

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- [FAO website on the Sahel crisis](#)
- [FAO Component of the Sahel 2014-2016 Strategic Response Plan](#)
- [FAO DRR corporate framework: "Resilient livelihoods: Disaster Risk reduction for food and nutrition security"](#)

## CONTACTS

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