



Central African Republic



23 July 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

- The events in the Central African Republic (CAR) over the last 18 months have left over **2.5 million people in need of humanitarian** assistance and displaced one out of five people; around 530 000 are still internally displaced (out of a total population of 4.6 million), however 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 distribution. However, the majority of farmers across the country are engaged in planting activities. To meet their needs, FAO is committed to provide appropriate assistance within its funding capacity.
- **FAO has assisted 80 000 farming families (100 percent of its target) for the first cycle of distributions for the current planting season.** FAO has established strategic partnerships with 20 national and international NGOs, 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 will support an additional 40 000 families with the distribution of seeds** (beans, sesame and sorghum) and tools for the short cycle agricultural season, which is expected to last until the end of July or mid-August, depending on the geographical areas.
- **The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)** carried out in late April 2014 indicates 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 another 50 000 households**, who are mostly members of women's associations, to help them build up their financial capacities, agriculture techniques and social protection to improve food and nutrition security, though an integrated approach called "*caisses de résilience*".

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/WFP Markets and Food Security Assessment mission** released in April indicate that the agricultural sector was the most affected by the crisis, which contracted by 37 percent and agricultural production declined by 38 percent. Agriculture, which is the backbone of the economy, represents 57 percent of the GDP and is crucial to restore production. 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.
- ❖ Insecurity and limited food availability in markets have increased procurement and logistics costs up to 40 percent compared with previous interventions.
- ❖ 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 is crucial to 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. In response to the aggravation of the situation in CAR, FAO provided vegetable producers with immediate assistance before the start of the crop season, distributing vegetable kits in February to women's groups and displaced farming families in Bangui from both religious groups. In March, FAO started distributing agricultural kits in Bossangoa for the current agricultural campaign.

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 and NGO partners have distributed agricultural kits to 80 000 families to plant groundnut, maize and rice. Each family received 25 kg of crop seeds and two hoes to plant in time (by mid-July) and produce their own food. Thus far, nearly 2 200 tonnes of seeds and tools have been delivered to partner NGOs across the country (Bangui, Bambari, Bouar and Bossangoa) to be distributed to farming families. **FAO has just received additional funding to provide short cycle seed varieties to assist another 40 000 families.** This will enable farmers to plant seeds of beans, millet, sesame and sorghum until mid-August.

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 are expected starting in August. 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.

FAO priority agricultural components

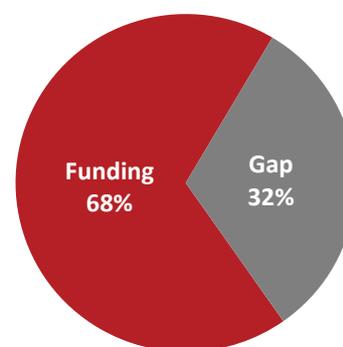
1. Support the immediate production of staple food and vegetables: These two production systems (short and long cycles) are complementary, which allows the farmers to access food throughout the year. Vegetable production is mainly initiated in urban and peri-urban areas such as Bangui and Bossangoa to 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 that will help families to accumulate and diversify assets by building their capacities in terms of agriculture techniques, financial capacities and social protection at community level. This approach called "*caisses de résilience*" 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 components 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

FAO total funding needs: USD 45 million
Total funds received: USD 30.7 million



PLANNED BENEFICIARIES
150 000 FAMILIES
for each component

Under the Strategic Response Plan (SRP), FAO has requested USD 45 million to support 150 000 farming families, and received over USD 30.7 million¹. This enables FAO to assist 120 000 farming families for the current agricultural season in 14 of the 16 prefectures. However, **an additional USD 14.3 million is still required** to achieve the SRP objectives. FAO aims at building resilience through a comprehensive approach addressing social, technical and financial aspects. These activities, especially community saving and loans schemes, will enable families to generate regular income before the first harvest in order for them 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.