

The sahel crisis

Sociology



Research has clearly outlined that most of the areas stand to experience acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3) from April to September this year. The nutrition status is quite catastrophic in areas worst affected by severe malnutrition with rates ranging between 10-16%. The drivers of this crisis are eroded resilience, compounded by the sporadic rains, prices increases, and insufficient harvests. The agro-pastoral returns of production are reported to have decreased by 50% in the areas that are affected by poverty, and agricultural products market prices, as well increased up from sixty percent to eighty percent for maize and 100 percent for dry cereals. Increased levels of drought in the Sahel have caused a reduction in cereal production on average 26% relative to the previous year. Most notable is the fact that the Gambia, as well as Chad, realized a 50 percent decrease with other countries still experiencing serious localized deficits.

The 2012 Sahel's strategic plan was aligned as a serving response plan for addressing the Food and Nutrition Crisis in the region. This has been developed by the Working Regional Group on Food Security and Nutrition mainly composed of among other organizations, the Red Cross, Crescent Movement, United Nations agency, Non-Governmental Organizations, and donors. In 2011, IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) launched a strategy that effectively responds to food shortage and nutritional crises in the Sahel. The document was done in consideration of joint efforts of the organization of Food and Agriculture of United Nations (FAO), Action against Hunger, the United Nations Child Fund (UNICEF), the United Nation Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Office (OCHA), and the WFP (World Food program) that provides detailed information on funding requirement by country.

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Within the broader IASC framework, FAO has kicked started a response program to Nutrition and Food Security Crises in this region to define FAO'S response interventions in Sahel countries. This has centrally been focused upon recovery to recovery and development while concentrating on protecting, building, and restoring resilient livelihoods of most vulnerable herders and farmers. It is also encouraging that countries such as Canada have come clear to help provide humanitarian assistance in this region. In this respect, Canada is currently known to be supporting the Red Cross. For an instant, in mid-August 2012, Canada contributed to a tune of \$ 57. 5 in an effort to aid the affected people in the Sahel.

The cross-analysis of the current trend of food security in the Sahel region indicates that the severity of acute food shortage is likely not to surpass IPC Phase 3 should the response be adequately robust enough. It is expected that there would be severe food insecurity beginning January extending to March in rain-fed and agro-pastoral farming areas of southern and central Mauritania this year. It is certainly clear from the trend analysis that the chronic and severe constraints on nutritional status imply the level of acute malnutrition would remain beyond 15 percent in areas worst affected. Even though research has shown that regional production is higher than the five-year average, shortfalls continue to negatively impact on food availability. It is well documented that, based on the harvest deficits early this year were, Chad had 50 percent, with Mauritania, and Niger recording 52% and 30% respectively. This has eventually led to a decreased remittance due to the economic downfall in Europe and the downturn of over 250, 000 economic migrants from Cote d'Ivoire/Libya.

The overall mitigation priorities that are towards preventing further crises

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include strengthening the resilience of pastoralists, farmers, and agro-pastoralists, protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable households, supporting the conservation and management of natural resources for instance water, soil and trees, providing emergency nutrition assistance to vulnerable families, reinforcing disaster risk control and management at the regional, local, and national levels, supporting strengthening and coordination of food security data management alongside the warning system. Rapid and early action is needed to help prevent further deterioration of food availability and avoid a full-scale nutrition and food crisis. Medium and long term interventions are needed in reversing the cycle of food insecurity and crises in the Sahel region. Emergency and rehabilitation programs are required to address structural vulnerabilities.