

Alert

Mauritania – No. 12/2010

Food insecurity in Mauritania due to Drought situation in the Sahel region

Geneva, 12 May 2010

Description of the emergency

In 2009, Mauritania experienced prolonged dry spells during the rainy seasons. Water levels in the dams in the south east were insufficient leading to reduced flood irrigation activities for food production. The vast irrigated schemes of large scale farmers have been severely affected by their failure to honor credit engagements and as a consequence new capital for a new production cycle has been unavailable. Mauritania has therefore been faced with a situation of food insecurity since the beginning of this year.

World Food Programme (WFP) and the national commission for food security, Commissariat de la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) carried out a crop assessment in 2009 and a food security assessment in March 2010 in the Senegal River area and in the border area with Mali. Findings indicated that 11.5% of households in the area (369.711 persons) are already in a moderate to severe situation of food insecurity. It was observed that among the most vulnerable population, 143.000 persons had already adapted to survival strategies normally reserved for the last three critical months before the first rains starts.

Impact

Current food insecurity levels in the LWF intervention areas assessed in March have reached high levels of between 16-20% and in some cases more than 20%. Such levels are normally reached only in June.

Moderate to severe malnutrition levels have been reported to be between 5% and 9% (weight/size). Chronic malnutrition levels for children between 6 to 59 months old ranged from 17 to 25%.

An alarming drop in the water table near the border areas with Mali has also led to increased difficulties in accessing water for drinking and also for small scale irrigation in the communities.

National and international response

The Government spokesperson responsible for food security has confirmed that the Government will engage in emergency food distribution activities distributing 6.500 tons of food for those

affected. After the present and projected intervention of WFP and the Government of Mauritania, there will be a significant shortfall of emergency food as shown in the following table:

Scenario	Number of beneficiaries	Needs (MT)	Shortfall (MT)
Best case	669 000	27 173	10 148
Most likely	839 000	33 956	16 931
Worst case	1 064 000	42 710	25 212

ACT Alliance response

LWF-WS is the only ACT Alliance member in the country. The response will be coordinated with the National Emergency Coordination Committee of which LWF is an active member. LWF-WS aims to fill the gaps in immediate food needs with the communities concerned and the focus will be on the most vulnerable which include: women, children and the elderly. LWF-WS also plans to address the deepening of wells that will allow for extra capacity for small scale irrigation.

Planned activities

The intervention will cover the whole hunger period from June until end September 2010 (4 months) and will include:

- Additional support (where gaps occur) to nutrition / recovery centers (partnership with WFP), and LWF organized community emergency response groups with high energy biscuits BP5
- Assistance with access to water for small irrigated family vegetable plots especially in the border area with Mali, where extreme high temperatures this year have caused a premature drop in water tables.
- Support to local food transformation activities like the fabrication of improved/enriched flour (Ceramine) from locally available foods in order to improve nutritional status and income generation.
- In the worst case scenario, the programme may have to implement food distribution activities.

The full appeal will be issued shortly with a target of USD 180,000 for the duration of 4 months. The country representative in Mauritania will provide regular updates to the ACT Alliance on the situation.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jessie Kgoroadira, ACT Chief Finance Officer (jkg@actalliance.org).

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