

Alert

Mauritania

Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Mauritania

Geneva, 20 December 2011

1. Brief description of the emergency

During the planting season in from July to October 2011, Mauritania had a serious shortage of rain. The drought has caused a severe decline in agricultural production. A low coping capacity resulted in a worsening livestock production and grain prices are likely to grow far above average which will be unaffordable for the poor. A joint assessment of the food security situation, conducted in October 2011 by the Government and UN organisations, revealed that the number of people potentially affected by the drought reaches 834,400 persons which is slightly over 25% of Mauritanian's total population. The most affected areas are in the south, namely Guidimagha, Gorgol, Brakna as well as Assaba and Hodh Echarghi in the south-east of the country.

2. Impact

The agriculture sector occupies 67% of the Mauritanian workforce and constitutes some 17% of GDP, at the same time livestock production involves about 60% of the population and constitutes 12% of GDP. Cereal production, which in normal years covers 30% of the needs in the country, is estimated to decline from about 120,000 tonnes in 2011 to 29,000 tonnes in 2012. 60% of these crops come from rain-fed production systems. The decline in rainfall has led to serious consequences in terms of:

- Significant decline of agricultural production compared to the last 5 years ;
- Deficiency of herbaceous pasture that severely affects livestock development;
- Livestock are dying by the hundreds – lack of pasture;
- Decline in milk production (largely for self consumption) with consequences of malnutrition especially for children;
- Rising crop prices;
- Insufficient food supplies – serious famine especially in the south and south-east of Mauritania.

The situation in Mauritania is aggravated by the fact that the neighboring countries of western Mali and northern Senegal also suffer from low delayed rainfall and droughts in parts of the countries meaning they are also facing deficits in the production of staple cereals and healthy livestock. Cross-border exchange of basic grains and seasonal movement of livestock, traditionally providing a safety net for Mauritanian farmers during lean periods, will also fail.

3. National and international response

The Government of Mauritania has officially declared an emergency situation throughout the southern and south-eastern territories and developed a response plan with various components. These components relate in particular to the sourcing of community food security reserves, a program of food distribution for extremely vulnerable groups, nutritional support for children from 6 to 59 months, a price subsidy for basic food items and assistance with fodder for livestock.

Costs involved amount to USD 157 million. State budget support will cover USD 80.2 million, or 51%. The Government appeals for assistance from the UN system and international NGOs operating in Mauritania in order to bridge the financial gap needed for the realisation of the emergency plan in order to save human life.

4. ACT Alliance response

ACT Alliance partners operating in the Sahel regions of West Africa have met in Accra/Ghana in November 2011 to discuss ways of working together in a regional forum and to coordinate emergency appeals which would contribute to the alleviation of malnutrition in the drought-hit Sahel region.

5. Planned activities

LWF Mauritania will contribute to the emergency response, together with other national and international NGOs and coordinated by the Government of Mauritania. LWS is currently providing blankets, sanitary/hygiene kits, baby bundles and other items, received from Canadian Lutheran World Relief and is planning to provide food through with financial assistance through an ACT appeal.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jean-Daniel Birmele, ACT Chief Finance Officer (Jean.Daniel.Birmele@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

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