

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

MAURITANIA: FOOD INSECURITY

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: N/A

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. The information is based on a full report on food insecurity compiled by the Mauritanian Red Crescent in September 2002. Copies of the full report (in French) are available on request by email. Support for the activities identified below may be directed to the Mauritania Red Crescent Society (MRCS). The Federation will also facilitate contributions directed to the MRCS.

The Situation

With a population of 2.5 million, of which 70 percent of people located in rural areas live below the poverty line, Mauritania is classified by WFP as a low-income, food deficit country. Mauritania is vulnerable to drought and desertification, which is progressively diminishing the potential of arable and pasture land. The country has been hit by drought since mid-2001. In January 2002, unexpected heavy rains and cold weather caused the death of 120,000 cattle, sheep and goats; destruction of 25 percent of already harvested crops and loss of lives and property. The rains also ruined pasture land for surviving animals. The situation aggravated the already deteriorated food situation in the country.

In July 2002, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net) reported rainfall had been insufficient throughout the country and access to basic food supplies was at alarming level.

Though no part of the country has been spared by the food shortages, six regions (Aftout, Senegal River Valley, Hodh el Gharbi, Hodh el Chargui, Adrar and Tiris Zemour) are reported to be the worst hit. However, the capital city, Nouakchott, and other big towns like Nouadhibou and Zouerate are also hard hit, and have experienced rising prices as people move from rural to urban areas.

In Nouakchott, the price of rice, oil and beans has risen between 5-10%. In the north of Mauritania, the cost of dates and wheat grain have risen around 35% against last year's prices. Similar price increases are registered in the centre and the south of the country. The traditional cereals (millet/sorghum) are unavailable in local markets, and prices are about 120 to 160 percent above normal when available.

On 1 September 2002, the Mauritanian government appealed for urgent food aid in the form of 37,000 mt of cereal and 14,000 mt of complementary foodstuffs to meet the most urgent needs in 2002. Total cereal production for Mauritania is estimated at 161,800 mt (FAO) - a reduction of 9% from the previous growing season.

In spite of significant rains during September and the first half of October, the overall food security situation is deteriorating as a result of delayed rains and a low cumulative rainfall (for a recent update please see FAO GIEWS <http://www.fao.org/giews/french/cp/cp0111/pays/mau0111f.htm>). The existing pasture land in the south

of the country will not survive more than two to three months due to influx of cattle from other regions (please see WFP Emergency Report no. 43).

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

The Mauritanian Red Crescent Society (MRCS) considers itself autonomous and independent, while working closely with the government. The MRCS drought operation in 1997 strengthened the national society's institutional development through the reactivation of 16 of its 56 branches. The national society has the human and logistics capacity to carry out a large relief operations in most parts of the country.

In its capacity as a member of the National Food Security Committee comprising of government and non-governmental agencies, the Mauritanian Red Crescent (MRC) took part in all the evaluation missions carried out in affected zones. Support is requested for the following three small scale food security projects in the most affected zones for a period of 6 months (an estimated cost of CHF 74,500).

1. Support for small livestock breeding in 2 females cooperatives

The MRCS will provide families in the high risk zones with 3 to four sheep including food and veterinary services. A herdsman will be employed to take care of the animals. Milk produced by the animals will be sold by members of the cooperatives as a means of increasing their source of income. This project will also avail the local population of meat.

Type of needs	Recipients	Inputs
Small livestock breeding	2 female cooperatives from families who have lost all their animals (30 families of 150 persons)	90 sheep 30 mangers 30 drinking troughs
Animal feed (6 months)	Sufficient for 90 sheep	13 metric tons
Veterinary drugs	n/a	1 kit for 90 sheep

2. Boundary fencing for agricultural communities in drought-prone areas.

Beneficiaries of this project are families identified in the zones that are at a high risk of structural food insecurity. Each family will receive 10 to 15 heads of goats or sheep. The fenced grazing ground will provide a feeding place for the animals during drought periods of the year, thus assuring the production of meat and milk for the local community.

Type of needs	Recipients	Inputs
2 Fenced grazing grounds	40 vulnerable families based in two villages at high risk of food insecurity. They will be provided with 160 small livestock which will stay within the fenced grazing grounds during drought periods.	4,000 metres of barbed wire. 800 pegs 40 bags of cement 160 sheep
Animal feed (6 months)	Sufficient for 160 livestock	22 metric tons

3. Strengthening production and harvest conservation capacities of 15 female cooperatives in at-risk areas.

The MRCS will organize workshops on agricultural production and preservation of harvested crops for female co-operative associations in areas prone to food insecurity.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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