



The Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA), established in 2004, enhances the capacity of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to respond rapidly to food security and agricultural emergencies. Through strategic resource partner funding, SFERA provides FAO with the financial means and flexibility to react promptly to humanitarian crises, reducing the time between funding decisions and action on the ground.

## Components

### Working capital

- ▶ Funds advanced for the immediate procurement of inputs

This component advances funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis. It reduces the reaction time to emergencies by enabling FAO to initiate activities and purchase the most critical assets before funding from resource partners is received.

### Revolving fund

- ▶ Emergency coordination and response capacity
- ▶ Needs assessment and programme development
- ▶ Level 3 emergency preparedness and response

This component supports the efforts of FAO's country teams to identify the most critical needs of affected populations, strengthen response capacity, and develop and coordinate technically sound response programmes. Through the Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window, FAO can prepare for and respond to extraordinary challenges facing the agriculture sector during an emergency.

### Programme

- ▶ Large-scale programme (e.g. sudden onset disasters, desert locust and COVID-19)
- ▶ Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC)
- ▶ Anticipatory Action

This component facilitates faster and more programmatic assistance that can be tailored to evolving needs on the ground. SFERA's pooled funding approach provides the flexibility to adjust activities and support according to the geographical and thematic areas of greatest need. Likewise, the programme approach enables operations to adapt as the situation changes, streamlining activities to ensure the most appropriate assistance reaches affected populations sooner. The AIRC window channels pooled funds towards the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. With the Anticipatory Action window, FAO is able to act early once an impending threat has been identified, before disaster losses are sustained in the agriculture sector or livelihoods compromised.

SFERA is essential to FAO's continued ability to provide rapid, high-impact assistance to the most vulnerable populations affected by disasters. It enables FAO to be quicker and more flexible in its response, and be in a position to quickly scale up its operational capacities at times when needs increase rapidly and exponentially after a disaster. SFERA plays a critical role in strengthening the operational, preparedness and response

capacities of FAO country offices, and enables the Organization to be in a position to play its role in Level 3 emergencies. Access to **SFERA funding enables FAO to support highly vulnerable populations to anticipate, prepare for, withstand and adapt to shocks and stressors.** These efforts save lives and livelihoods, and reduce humanitarian needs and requirements down the line.

## Why invest in SFERA

### Most of the poor and hungry depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

These natural resource-based livelihoods are most affected by natural hazards, transboundary pests and diseases, socioeconomic shocks, conflict and protracted crises, making smallholder farmers, fishers and herders more vulnerable to shocks. **During a crisis, many productive assets such as seeds, livestock and fishing gear are lost.** FAO's first priority is to help affected farming families produce their own food and rebuild their lives and livelihoods as quickly as possible, while strengthening their resilience. When effective agriculture-based response is delayed, communities suffer a domino effect of further losses that plunge them deeper into poverty and reliance on external aid.

## Benefits

- Enables rapid, flexible and effective agricultural assistance thanks to the quick release of funding within a few days after a disaster, even before official resource partner agreements are finalized.
- Supports quick recovery of crisis-affected populations through rapid agricultural input delivery to restore food production and stabilize livelihoods.
- Increases cost-effectiveness by reducing time and transaction costs for all stakeholders.
- Can be used throughout the year based on emerging needs (e.g. response to COVID-19).
- Has a global reach as any country in the world can benefit from SFERA funding, provided that the criteria are met.
- Supports Anticipatory Action and a proactive humanitarian system.
- Facilitates the mobilization of additional funding from other resource partners.
- Plays a critical role in coordinating a collaborative, longer-term response focusing on strengthening livelihoods, and resilience capacities and strategies.
- Advances our Grand Bargain commitments to provide more unearmarked funding.

## How to contribute

FAO resource partners can:

- provide unearmarked direct contributions to SFERA's revolving fund;
- allocate a grant to a programme for more strategic assistance to a specific crisis;
- provide funding to SFERA's AIRC or Anticipatory Action windows; and/or
- authorize the transfer of interest or unspent balances from closed projects to SFERA's revolving fund.



### REQUIRED CITATION

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