



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

SOMALIA 2017

Cash for food purchases today, seeds for food production tomorrow

Back-to-back failed harvests in 2016 pushed Somali farming families into an untenable position. Their much-reduced carry-over seed stores were quickly used up. Many went into debt to feed their families, buying food on markets. Others liquidated hard-to-replace assets. As the 2017 *Gu* planting season approached, vulnerable agropastoral households were stretched to the breaking point. With no cash for food and no seeds to sow, they faced a stark choice: Stay at home and starve, or leave their livelihoods behind to seek relief elsewhere.

Ahead of *Gu*, FAO provided at-risk farming families with high-quality, locally-procured seeds so that they could get a crop in the ground – combined with ongoing cash payments to cover household food needs until their plants mature. FAO-selected, hardy- and drought-resistant seeds are proving resilient to

this season's sporadic rains; beneficiaries of our cash plus interventions will see a harvest in July/August. Giving rural families a reason to stay home and plant – and the means to do so – has kept livelihoods intact, helped stave off famine, and is rebooting local food production.



**KURTUNWAREY,
LOWER SHABELLE**

Corn growing in the irrigated fields of farmers participating in FAO's *cash plus* program.
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Results and impacts

- **1,000 metric tonnes of seeds** sourced locally and supplied to farmers for planting.
- Potential cereal yield on each participating family farm: **1.8 metric tonnes**.
- **500+ kg of cereal** will be saved per family through reduced losses, thanks to FAO-provided storage bags.
- Each beneficiary farm's production could yield enough cereal to feed four Somali families **for six months each**.
- **\$2 million injected** into rural Somalia via seed purchases.
- **\$4.4 million in payments** to farming families delivered so far; \$6.5 million by August.
- Cost of the FAO seed package, on average: **\$140**. Average value of each household's production: **\$1,400**.
- Projected profit gained through sales of surplus, per beneficiary family: **\$1,200**.
- **1,800 acres of land** tilled ahead of planting with FAO-funded tractor support.
- **4,000 hectares** being watered via FAO-funded irrigation.

A lifeline for livelihoods

Over 35,000 of the most food-insecure farming families in rural Somalia, comprised of around 200,000 people, have received sorghum, maize, and vegetable seeds – plus cash payments – through FAO’s voucher system. They will get two more infusions of cash to tide them through the lean season.

The average monthly payment is around \$90 per family – enough meet 80 percent of their food needs, buying on local markets.

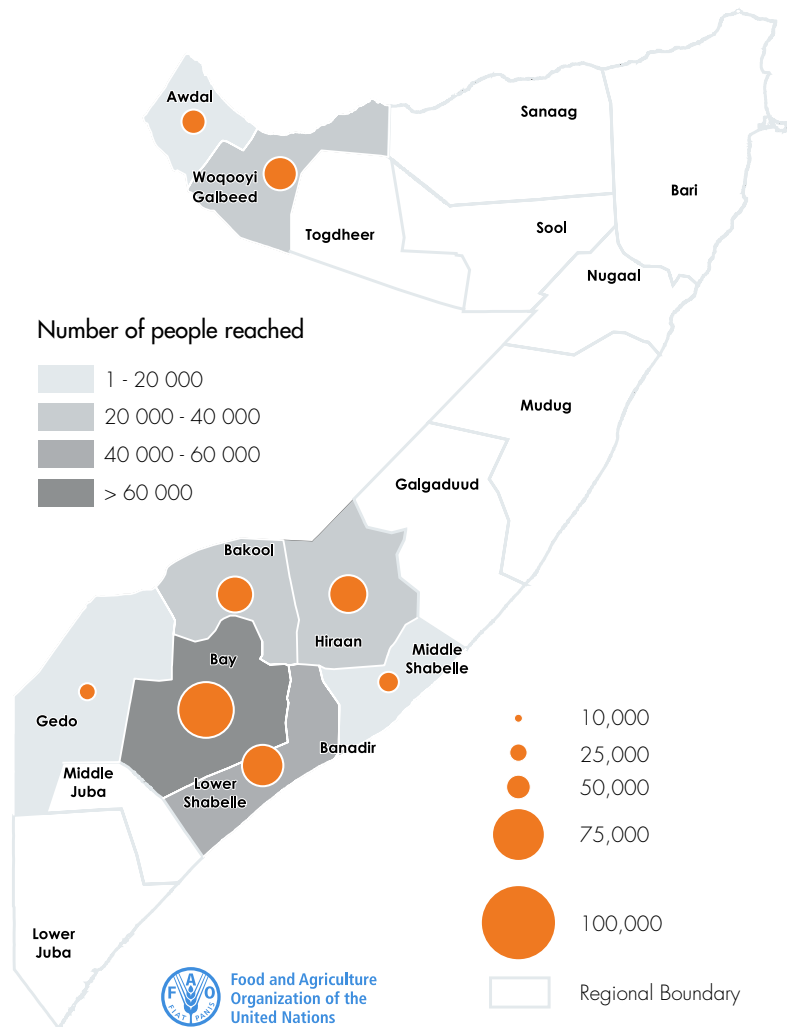
In the north, FAO hired tractors to help families prepare land for planting – saving them labour and gaining them time. In southern riverine areas, we’ve contracted for irrigation services so farmers can water crops. And alongside their final cash transfer, each family will receive 30 pest-resistant cereal storage bags that should cut their post-harvest losses by 15 percent.

A strategic combination

Somalia imports about half of its food each year – its internal food markets are well established and continue to function, despite the drought. Food *is* available, but high prices mean it is not accessible for the poorest of rural households. Seeds too can be bought – if one has the money.

FAO cash payments are giving vulnerable small farmers the assurance that they’ll be able to meet their immediate food needs through the *Gu* harvest. They are helping them avoid

CASH PLUS SEEDS & AGRICULTURAL INPUTS: THROUGH 2 JUNE 2017



selling productive assets. Without cash, many families would not have managed to stick it out through the agricultural lean season; having cash has enabled them to stay home and resume production.

Seeds round out the equation. Two types of seed packages have been deployed in Somalia so far this year. One – tailored for use on rain-dependent farms – features sorghum, a main staple; in areas where irrigated agriculture is practiced, kits contained maize.

All packages included drought-resistant cowpea, a protein-packed pulse whose stalks and husks are collected after harvest and used for animal fodder. Tolerant of shade, cowpea is being intercropped with other cereals and has the added benefit of fixing nitrogen and increasing soil fertility.

Packages also contain vegetable seeds that will soon start yielding produce. That gives families a quick source of vitamins and minerals as well as the opportunity to earn extra cash through the sale of surplus produce.

The promise of a harvest

Seeds provided by FAO are drought resistant varieties and laboratory tested to assure quality. Field reports indicate that fields sown with lower-grade seed experienced wilting in May/June due to poor rain; crops sown with FAO-provided seeds are proving more robust and will yield cereal despite adverse weather.

If the rains pick up and harvests are good, one FAO seed package will see each participating family produce enough food to feed themselves for six months and sell surplus sufficient to feed another four families for the same length of time.

If rains are poor and harvests in rainfed areas are reduced yet again this season, household production should still be enough to meet each beneficiary family's cereal needs for several months, seeds for planting in October, and some surplus to sell.

A reduced harvest is better than none at all. And by preserving livelihoods and keeping local agriculture operational, FAO's *cash plus* interventions are helping mitigate displacement pressures and putting communities in a better position to climb out of crisis more quickly once the drought ends.

Sourcing locally stimulates local economies

In early 2017 FAO identified decimated household seed stores as a critical issue. Field surveys allowed us to identify where need was most critical, and – importantly – determine

the availability of quality varieties on internal markets. Despite the drought, larger-scale seed operators with capital and other resilience assets either had inventories on hand or viable options for sourcing. Well-established relationships with over 140 Somali suppliers let us quickly confirm that they had the capacity to

supply large amounts of seed, lab test seed to ensure quality, and move it into position.

Sourcing within Somalia is important. It sustains local economies, keeps seed markets working, and avoids disruptions caused when exports are injected *en masse* into local markets.

REACHING PEOPLE, MEETING NEEDS

- **FAO works with well-established *hawala* money agents to move cash into Somalia.** To help reduce the risk of cash being diverted from intended targets, we use vouchers that beneficiaries redeem via local agents.
- **FAO's NGO partners issue a uniquely-numbered voucher to each beneficiary for each cash payment.** The voucher bears the head of household's unique ID, biometric data, and photograph. The NGOs use the same system to issue vouchers that farmers can exchange for seed from our network of pre-positioned suppliers.
- **FAO receives confirmation from our partners when cash and seed vouchers are handed over;** money venders and seed sellers confirm once each voucher has been exchanged.
- **Our local partners stay in contact with communities to ensure that assistance is arriving and that seeds are of good quality;** FAO's call centre also contacts beneficiaries to monitor delivery and satisfaction. On site visits take place during and after delivery to track progress and impact.

SEEDS OF HOPE

Farmers in Bulo Burte receive cereal and vegetable seeds ahead of the 2017 *Gu* season. They are also getting monthly cash payments to buy food while they wait for their crops to come in.

Some of these families are former pastoralists who lost their herds due to recurring droughts decades ago and took up a new way of life in Bulo Burte.

Consecutive failed harvests last year left them without seed stocks and

stripped of cash. They had lost their livelihoods once before; they were on the brink of losing everything once again. With cash in their pockets to ease the pressures they face, they stayed home and sowed their fields, keeping their lives intact.



BULO BURTE,
HIRAAN

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Richard Trenchard,
FAO Country Representative

FAO-SO@fao.org
www.fao.org