

SPECIAL REPORT
FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SECURITY EVALUATION MISSION
TO MADAGASCAR

14 December 2010

Highlights

- Thanks to favourable rainfall overall, Madagascar's 2010 food crop output was generally good, particularly rice, which is estimated to be about 4.7 million tonnes, more than 4 percent over 2009.
- For the 2010/11 marketing season, the cereals supply and demand balance sheet shows a surplus of rice and root crops in cereals equivalent, but also a maize deficit as a result of lower production in the South, which will be covered by increased consumption of rice. It is estimated that 123 000 tonnes of wheat, which is not grown in the country, will have to be imported. Substantial amounts of rice will also have to be imported again, as has been the case in previous years.
- The good overall performance of the 2010 season should not hide the fact that the South West regions (Menabe, Atsimo Andrefana, Androy, Ihorombe and Anosy) had a rainfall deficit, which was also unevenly distributed throughout the period January-April, as a result of which the maize, sorghum and duiebé harvests almost failed completely in the Androy region, with around 40 percent rice harvest losses in the Anosy region in the same period. Flooding in the wake of Cyclone Hubert caused massive losses in the eastern regions of Vatovavy Fitovinany and Atsimo Atsinanana, leading to a 70 percent fall in second season paddy production.
- In the regions affected by drought or cyclones during the agricultural season, over 80 percent of the households suffered a drastic slump in incomes, and have therefore been affected by food insecurity in 2010. About 60 percent of these households, totalling about 2 253 000 people, are suffering from severe food insecurity. In the main rice-growing zones, some 331 000 people are also affected by severe food insecurity.
- The mission therefore recommends stepping up food assistance to the poorest people, and supplying veterinary and phytosanitary care to the people living in the stricken areas. One of the priorities here is to eradicate the plague of locusts in the South. 68 000 tonnes of cereals will be needed to mitigate the severe state of food insecurity in 2010-2011 in the zones at risk.
- In the meantime, measures will have to be taken to boost farmers' productivity and incomes, such as rehabilitating and expanding hydro-agricultural facilities, repairing service roads, building village grain silos, locally producing improved seed, and improving extension services, village associations and micro-financing institutions in order to facilitate the procurement of inputs, promote conservation agriculture and off-season cropping.
- This being so, the mission recommends that the development partners release the funding for the agricultural and rural sector, for Madagascar's economy has succeeded in avoiding total collapse thanks mainly to the good performance of the agriculture sector.

OVERVIEW

An FAO/WFP mission, comprising Ministry of Agriculture technical staff and WFP/FAO consultants, was conducted in Madagascar from 28 June to 31 July 2010 to evaluate the harvests and the state of food security in the country in the 2009/10 agricultural season. The mission's remit was to identify and evaluate the factors influencing agricultural production, such as rainfall, plant diseases and pests, the



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supply of agricultural inputs, farmer supervision, the marketing circuits and the households' conditions of access to staple foods. In its report, it was tasked with drawing up a balance sheet of the nationwide cereals supply and demand, identifying the zones and the households prone to food insecurity, and proposing appropriate solutions.

To collect the information they needed, the members of the mission visited households and officials in the villages, municipalities and districts in the most representative regions: a) the large agricultural production basins, particularly the major rice-growing areas of Alaotra-Mangoro, Sava, Sofia, Vakinankaratra, and South-West North (Morombe district); b) the coastal plains in the East prone to cyclones, Sava (Eastern part), Analanjirofo, Atsinanana, Vatovavy-Fitovinany, Atsimo-Atsinanana, Anosy (Eastern part); c) the South and the South-West which permanently suffer from drought, Anosy, Androy, and Atsimo-Andrefana.

Its analysis of the information gathered and its working sessions with households and officials all confirmed that, on the whole, Madagascar's food production had made considerable progress in the 2009/10 season. It estimated that the production of rice, which is an essential staple in the Malagasy diet, should reach around 4.7 million tonnes, more than 4 percent above the previous year.

For the 2010/11 marketing season, the cereals supply and demand balance sheet showed a rice and root crop surplus in cereals equivalent, but a maize deficit following a decline in output in the South, which will be covered by increased rice consumption. It is expected that 123 000 tonnes of wheat, which is not grown in the country, will have to be imported. Moreover, fairly insignificant amounts of rice will continue to be imported, as in previous years.

But this sound performance, due mainly to comparatively favourable rainfall levels in most of the main production areas, should not be allowed to conceal the fact that the regions in the South West (mainly Menabe, Atsimo-Andrefana, Androy, Ihorombe and Anosy) had a low and unevenly distributed rainfall, which stunted crop development, and the flooding in the wake of Cyclone Hubert caused massive destruction in the eastern regions of Vatovavy-Fitovinany and Atsimo-Atsinanana. In this latter region, Cyclone Hubert, which ravaged the country in March, destroyed about 70 per cent of the second season rice harvest; in the Androy region, the drought, coupled with the uneven distribution of the rain in the period January-May 2010, completely wiped out the maize, sorghum and niébé harvests; the Anosy region is estimated to have lost around 40 percent of the forecast second season rice harvest, due to inadequate and badly distributed rainfall, particularly in the interior part of the region.

In these regions, which are vulnerable to droughts and cyclones, over 80% of the households enumerated (representing about 3 710 000 people) have seen a drastic slump in incomes, exposing them to food insecurity in 2010. Some 60 percent of these households (2 253 000 people) are suffering from severe food insecurity because they earn less than 5 000 MGA per month, and have fewer than 3 months of food reserves produced by themselves.

The survey also found that in the major rice-growing zones some 1 075 000 people are suffering from food insecurity, of whom over 331 000 severely so.

In addition to the vagaries of the climate, plant diseases and pests are also causing substantial agricultural production losses. In the Anosy region, in the Amboasary district and in Western Taolagnaro, the mission saw the havoc caused by passage of migrating locusts in June. Pests also include caterpillars and cochineal, weevil and aphids, while the mosaic virus attacks cassava, and rice blast disease is spreading rapidly in virtually every region visited, threatening to completely wipe out rice farming.

In the flooded paddy fields, the rundown state of the hydro-agricultural infrastructure, the lack of maintenance and the absence of a retention barrage are causing the silting-up of the arable lands. This is the case, for example, in the Alaotra-Mangoro region where some municipalities have estimated that about 10 percent of the arable land is being lost every year due to silting.

The lack of sufficient range lands and adequate veterinary care is hampering the development of livestock in all the regions visited. In the semi-arid zones in the South, cactus is the main source of food for the ruminants during the dry season, and diseases, such as anthrax, are ravaging the herds

that have been shrinking constantly in recent years, as a result of stress sales in successive inter-season periods.

The weakness of the extension services, the non-availability or high prices of quality inputs, such as improved seed and fertilizer, the lack of financial structures to facilitate the procurement of the necessary inputs and equipment, the nonexistence or weakness of the smallholders' organizations are also factors that are hampering agricultural productivity in the localities covered by the mission.

Among its recommendations, the mission stressed the urgent need to adopt or enhance the measures needed to alleviate food insecurity in the regions that have been so seriously damaged by climate disasters and the other scourges indicated above. Such measures include emergency actions such as providing food assistance to the poorest people, supplying inputs to farmers to enable them to maintain, or better still, to improve food production levels, and eradicating plant and livestock diseases and pests. Eliminating the locust plague in the South is one of the priorities in this respect.

At the same time, rehabilitation and rebuilding work must be undertaken to ensure that the achievements of these emergency measures can be sustained in future. The mission report mentions the rehabilitation of hydro-agricultural infrastructure for water management, re-laying feeder roads and building village grain silos, and producing seed at district and municipal levels, upgrading the extension services and improving the village associations and micro-financing institutions to facilitate the procurement of inputs, promoting conservation farming and off-season cropping, all of which are measures designed to improve productivity and grow farmers' incomes.

Against this background, the mission recommends that despite the domestic political crisis, its development partners should release the funds needed to re-launch agricultural and rural sector projects. This recommendation is based on the fact that the Malagasy economy, which has been seriously weakened by the political crisis that has further aggravated the state of poverty of millions of its citizens, has succeeded in avoiding total collapse thanks to the good performance of the agriculture sector. It is therefore important to adopt whatever measures are needed to prevent the degradation of agriculture and to foster its recovery. Furthermore, the long term neglect of agriculture and agricultural practices will considerably hasten the degradation of Madagascar's ecosystem and its flora and fauna which are considered to be the heritage of humanity.

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