



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Syrian Arab Republic

Project update

Building resilience of the crisis-affected
vulnerable farmers and herders



Targeted beneficiaries
8 850 households



Budget FAO received
USD 3 million from Kuwait



Implementation period
**19 September 2019–
30 June 2021**



Intervention area
**As-Sweida, Dara'a,
Deir Ez-Zor and Hama
governorates**



Project code
OSRO/SYR/908/KUW

Context

The ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has resulted in a continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation. As a consequence of ten years of conflict, insecurity, displacement, drought and other climate-related shocks, millions of Syrians need humanitarian assistance in both the short and medium term.

Assessments carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have shown a decline in the production of cereals, livestock and vegetables during the crisis compared to pre-crisis levels. In response, Syrians have adopted negative coping mechanisms, including selling productive assets, borrowing money to buy food, and reducing the number and quality of meals. Overall, in 2020 there was a significant increase in the number of people who were food insecure and malnourished (from 40 percent to almost 60 percent of the population). Wheat production has decreased due to a lack of access to inputs and damage to irrigation infrastructure. Moreover, the livestock subsector has been negatively affected by the reduction in the number of animals, lack of animal feed, and absence of veterinary services.

The number of female-headed households in the Syrian Arab Republic has increased considerably during the crisis. As women have traditionally contributed to agricultural production (livestock, vegetable and food processing), supporting them with inputs and training is vital to enabling them to generate an income to support their families.



Objectives

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the resilience of crisis-affected people and their communities, and improve their food security and nutrition. The specific objective is to build the productive capacity of the most affected populations in the target rural areas.

The project plans to distribute good quality wheat seed; provide vegetable production kits to female-headed households; and rehabilitate fodder nurseries to benefit vulnerable small-scale livestock breeders in Al-Badia Region. Each intervention includes a specific capacity-building component to enhance the technical skills of farmers and enable them to resume their production under challenging conditions. Women's access to market is also being improved through the establishment of a marketing unit in Damascus, which is the main market for vegetables produced in southern governorates of the country.

The project is also supporting a review of the national seed production system to ensure that farmers can access a greater quantity of improved seed for their cereal production. Finally, the project will complement another ongoing project that is rehabilitating irrigation schemes in Aleppo Governorate to benefit vulnerable small-scale farmers.

Response to date

Increase vegetable production capacity of vulnerable households

- Distributed vegetable seedlings and drip irrigation kits to 3 000 female-headed households in Dara'a and As-Sweida governorates. Along with an irrigation kit, each beneficiary household received 240 eggplant seedlings, 240 pepper seedlings and 240 tomato seedlings. An additional 1 000 households benefited from this activity than were initially planned.

Improve feed availability for small-scale breeders in Al-Badia Region

- Rehabilitating two fodder nurseries, where beneficiaries representing 350 households work and earn an income. This activity will also indirectly benefit about 10 000 herding households.
- Conducted studies on animal fodder nurseries, including engineering studies in Deir Ez-Zor and Hama governorates on irrigation canals.
- Conducted an assessment on the nursery in Deir Ez-Zor Governorate, revealing the need to rehabilitate an irrigation canal branch.

Increase wheat production

- Restored the wheat production capacity of 5 500 farming households who were affected by field fires. A total of 1 100 tonnes of wheat seed were distributed, with each household receiving 200 kg of seed.
- Trained 550 farmers on climate-smart agriculture, covering land preparation and planting, fertilization methods, irrigation, integrated pest management, and harvesting and post-harvest activities to reduce waste.
- Reviewed the national seed production system and proposed recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture to enhance the country's seed multiplication system and its supply chain of quality seed.
- Extended the project to Aleppo Governorate to complement another FAO intervention that is rehabilitating a pumping station in Tal Hasel. This station pumps water into Queiq River, which reaches the southern plains of Aleppo. This will help around 2 000 farmers gain access to water for irrigation, which will increase the overall production in the area, contributing to the improvement of food security and nutrition.



Planned response

- Raise awareness of technicians and farmers on good animal nutrition.
- Finalize the establishment of a marketing unit in Damascus to connect women's groups (producers and processors) and improve their linkages to markets. The marketing unit consists of a prefabricated room 63 m² in size and equipped with a refrigerator, shelves, tables and other needed tools for marketing.
- Assess the impact of FAO's approach to assisting rural women by supporting them to produce, process and market vegetables. The results will inform future FAO programmes that aim to empower rural women.

Expected results

- Improved wheat production capacity, with an expected production of 13.75 tonnes (2.5 tonnes/ha, which is above the average yield of 2 tonnes/ha).
- Increased productive capacity and/or income of least 85 percent of the targeted households.
- Increased access to irrigation, supplying water for irrigation to 4 000 ha of agricultural land and benefiting more than 3 000 farmers.
- Increased awareness of 550 people on climate-smart agricultural practices and enhanced wheat production practices, and 100 people on good animal nutrition.
- Increased women's producers' groups access to vegetable markets in the south, enhancing their capacity to generate incomes for their households.
- Increased vegetable production of 3 000 households.

Challenges encountered and measures taken

- The contracting process has been delayed, as contractors have declined offers due to fluctuations in the exchange rate and the effects of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Several tenders were issued and repeated to guarantee maximum participation and to expedite the process of internal clearances to reduce any potential losses as a result of the changing exchange rate.
- Training, travel and rehabilitation works were delayed due to the health-related containment measures implemented to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. The project team implemented all necessary protection measures to ensure the safety of beneficiaries and workers.



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