



Democratic Republic of the Congo and FAO

Building resilience and sustainable food and nutrition security

Cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo dates back to 1978 when FAO opened its country office. Assistance has focused on improving food and nutrition security, including support to the formulation of policies and strategies for agricultural and rural development, natural resource management and resilience building in the face of climate change. After nearly two decades of persistent civil insecurity and conflict, FAO is contributing to peace-building and reconciliation by supporting food production and strengthening agricultural livelihoods for vulnerable communities, including returnees and ex combatants.

Food security and conflict prevention

Food insecurity is deepest in conflict-affected countries, where it can be both a cause and a consequence of violence. Improving food security can make an important contribution to peacebuilding processes, reducing the risk of a relapse into conflict. Conflicts mainly affect rural populations, heavily impacting food and agricultural production and smallholder livelihoods. The rehabilitation of agriculture, therefore, has a central role to play in building and consolidating peace while contributing to food security and rural development. As a result of ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2.6 million people are internally displaced and over 440 500 Congolese refugees have fled to neighbouring countries. Given the escalation of armed violence in the Central African Republic, furthermore, the number of incoming refugees has recently increased.

A core objective of FAO's assistance in post-conflict countries is to support recovery and revitalization of the agriculture sector, increasing food production as well as income-generating opportunities for rural communities, including ex-combatants, women and young people. A dual focus on building national capacities and resilient livelihoods is an integral part of FAO's agricultural and food security interventions, particularly in fragile countries. By increasing stability and social cohesion, this approach helps post-conflict countries progress from recovery towards sustainable peace and development.

Supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo's development priorities

FAO assistance in the Congo, DR is shaped by the 2013-2017 FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF), comprising three priority areas:

- **Improving governance of agriculture, rural development, renewable natural resources and the environment, and improving humanitarian aid and crisis management.** Support includes strengthening institutional and technical capacities, coordinating agricultural emergency assistance, supporting agricultural and environmental statistical systems and reinforcing the early warning and monitoring system for food and nutrition security.
- **Developing the agriculture, livestock and fisheries subsectors by adopting a value chain and agribusiness approach,** including provision and support to the production of high-yielding seeds and marketing support to farmers' organizations.
- **Environmental protection and resilience to climate change,** including the adoption of participatory management and biodiversity conservation mechanisms.

Jointly developed with the Government and other partners, FAO'S four-year CPF reflects relevant priorities in national programmes for economic and social development, in particular the **Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy Paper** and the **National Agricultural Investment Plan (2013-2020)**. The CPF is also fully aligned with the UN Development Assistance Framework as well as with FAO's regional and subregional priorities.

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Protecting household food security

As one of the largest countries in the world, DRC's fertile land has enormous agricultural potential, but production is hampered by a number of factors, including local conflicts over natural resources. Fighting has uprooted farming households, causing them to miss vital planting seasons, and lack of income has meant they are unable to afford seeds and basic inputs to resume food production. By

providing quality seed, tools and technical training, FAO is working to restore the country's rural economy by helping returnees, refugees and host families to produce and sell more food, and former soldiers to rebuild productive lives.

One recent example of such an intervention was in North Katanga: together with partners, in 2014 FAO distributed 12 000 tools (including watering cans, hoes, machetes and rakes), 130 kg of seed for vegetables such as amaranth, eggplants, okra and leeks, and about three million sweet potato vines as well as improved cassava breeds. Around 3 000 households (1 648 women and 1 352 men) benefited from these vital inputs, including 2 545 internally displaced people, 455 host families and 24 seed multiplier groups. Input distribution was accompanied by capacity building through Farmer Field Schools, also used as an important forum for addressing social issues.

Based on average market prices, the monetary value of the products harvested was estimated to be US\$831 633, meaning an average gross income of about \$277 per beneficiary. This signifies a strong boost to agricultural livelihoods and resilience-building among conflict-affected communities.

Project funded by the Common Humanitarian Fund.

Consistent support for rapid action

In 2014, operating through FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA), Belgian funding for rapid response activities enabled vulnerable family farmers in the North Kivu region to resume agricultural production. Such rapid response funding enables FAO to acquire quality seeds, fertilizer and tools and immediately launch field activities that reboot agricultural production and safeguard food security.

Soils: easy to lose, hard to recover

Agriculture is the mainstay of the country's economy, employing about 70 percent of the workforce and contributing a significant share of GDP. However, the livelihoods of many Congolese in the eastern territories have been threatened by recent floods and landslides, which have raised serious food security concerns. Moreover, intercommunity tensions over land issues, low agricultural production related to soil erosion and high population density are aggravating pressure on the environment.

Rehabilitation of the Sake-Masisi road in the hilly province of North Kivu is vital for the economic development of Masisi territory. During recent construction activities, FAO contributed to the protection and improvement of soils in the area by raising awareness of the associated environmental and social risks and promoting community-based methods for landslide mitigation.

Thanks to Dutch funding, in addition to establishing a 50 km hedge to mitigate erosion, more than 1 000 people – including local authorities and community leaders – benefited from information sessions not only on soil erosion and nutrition depletion but also on agricultural productivity.

Considering account the extent of erosion in Masisi territory, it is important for this successful intervention to be scaled up to other roads (Bihambwe-Rubaya-Kibabi-Kinigi route). In addition, corrective action should not be limited to areas adjacent to roads.

"Peace is fundamental to food security and food security is fundamental for keeping peace."

FAO Director-General

