

Agriculture and Food Security Sector Update

HIGHLIGHTS OF FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2014 ACTIVITIES | OCTOBER 2014

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Drought, floods, insect infestations, and other natural disasters can destroy crops and kill livestock, while conflict often prevents farmers from planting and harvesting crops and tending to animals, impacting the food security and livelihoods of affected populations. USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports agriculture and food security interventions that address the immediate needs of disaster-affected populations unable to meet their basic food requirements or carry out livelihoods activities. USAID/OFDA also works to strengthen local disaster response capacity and increase community resilience to shocks that could negatively affect agricultural activities and food security.

In the aftermath of disasters, USAID/OFDA projects assist farmers in rehabilitating agricultural infrastructure and facilitate economic recovery by supporting agriculture-based livelihood activities. USAID/OFDA-funded programs also benefit livestock and fisheries, implement pest control initiatives, support animal health endeavors, and supply agricultural inputs to vulnerable households. In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$87 million to U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support agriculture and food security activities in 25 countries, as well as regional programs throughout Africa and South America.

ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE OF SEED AID



The Seed System website provides guidance and tools to humanitarian and development practitioners working on seed aid.

In the wake of a disaster and in times of chronic stress, understanding seed systems can be crucial to reducing the vulnerability of smallholder farmers and maintaining food security. To enhance the knowledge and practice of humanitarian and development actors as they undertake seed assistance, USAID/OFDA supports the Seed System project—a collaboration among national and international organization led by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)—that aims to better understand seed systems. Supporting better assessment and mapping of seed systems allows implementing agencies to assist disaster-affected and chronically stressed communities by strengthening seed systems used by farmers, restoring productivity, and enhancing seed system resilience without doing harm to local and commercial seed systems.

In 2013, with USAID/OFDA funding, the Seed System project launched <https://seedsystem.org>, a website that houses a variety of seed-related tools and assessments for practitioners, including aid response advice, sample implementation plans, and other resources to help communities respond to emergencies, address chronic stress, and implement development activities. Continuing support from USAID/OFDA in FY 2014 enabled the development of two new practice briefs on seed interventions, with a focus on vegetable seed. The briefs highlight issues pertaining to vegetable seed programming, such as challenges to the programming, principles for project design, and vegetable seed sourcing, saving, and production. Please visit <http://seedsystem.org/aid-response-advice> for more information.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL LOCUST PREVENTION IN THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA



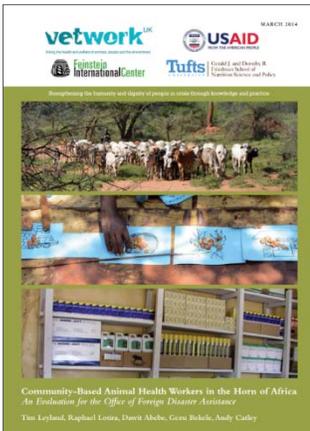
In Georgia in late April, locust specialists participate in a joint training on a new automated system of locust data collection designed by FAO. (Courtesy of a ASDC training participant from the Georgian Ministry of Agriculture, Lasha Nutsudbuzde)

Three locust species—the Italian locust, the Moroccan locust, and the migratory locust—are a persistent threat to the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. With their primary breeding habitats crisscrossing national borders, these locusts could potentially infest more than 25 million hectares of cultivated and grazing land and significantly affect the food security and livelihoods of up to 20 million people, including in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In 2011, with financial assistance from USAID/OFDA and other sources, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) initiated a multi-year prevention program in the Caucasus and Central Asia that provides training, material support, and technical assistance to strengthen national and regional locust surveillance, monitoring, and early warning systems while institutionalizing preventive intervention strategies.

In April 2014, FAO assisted the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to launch their first-ever joint, cross-border monitoring and surveillance exercise, which involved 10 locust specialists from the two countries. The exercise allowed participants to evaluate and better understand the locust situation beyond their national borders. FAO conducted similar activities with six locust experts from Afghanistan and Tajikistan in July 2014.

The USAID/OFDA-supported FAO program also successfully field tested a newly designed automated system of data collection (ASDC) in Georgia and Uzbekistan during the 2014 March-to-October anti-locust campaign. In addition, in April and May, FAO provided training on the ASDC to a combined 26 locust specialists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, and Uzbekistan. With USAID/OFDA assistance, FAO is also working to develop a locust geographic information system for the Caucasus and Central Asia that will help facilitate collection, storage, analysis, and sharing of standardized and geo-referenced data on locusts in the regions.

IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN COMMUNITY ANIMAL HEALTH CARE



The findings of the USAID/OFDA-commissioned evaluation of CAHWs were released by the Feinstein Center and Vetwork U.K. in July 2014.

Since the 1980s, community-based animal health workers (CAHWs) have provided basic veterinary services to communities in rural areas in the Horn of Africa and other remote parts of East and Central Africa where conventional veterinary services were limited or absent. During the intervening decades, the use of CAHWs has expanded in emergency response, particularly to provide veterinary support in pastoralist areas during droughts.

In 2013, USAID/OFDA commissioned an evaluation to assess the impact of USAID/OFDA-funded CAHW programs on animal health and husbandry practices, access to animal health services, and livelihoods in communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan; the Feinstein International Center and Vetwork U.K. released findings in July 2014. The evaluation report notes that CAHWs continue to be the preferred animal health care provider at the community level across the region, with many handling a wide range of livestock health problems with positive results. However, CAHWs face a number of challenges, from inadequate drug and equipment supply to transport constraints, as well as weak veterinary governance at national levels. The evaluation results also highlight best practices and lessons learned, which will help guide humanitarian implementers working in the livestock sector and inform future USAID/OFDA programming. For more information, please see the report at <http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/community-based-animal-health-workers-in-the-horn-of-africa>.

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USAID/OFDA information products are available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis>