

USAID/OFDA AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY SECTOR UPDATE – OCTOBER 2012

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports agriculture and food security interventions that address the immediate humanitarian needs of populations whose livelihoods and ability to meet basic food needs have been affected by disasters. USAID/OFDA also works to strengthen local disaster response capacity and increase resilience to future emergencies that could negatively affect agricultural activities and food security. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, USAID/OFDA worked with farmers to rehabilitate agricultural infrastructure and facilitate economic recovery by supporting agriculturally based livelihood activities in the aftermath of disasters. USAID/OFDA-funded programs benefited livestock and fisheries, implemented pest control programs, and supplied veterinary medicine and agricultural inputs. In total, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$78 million in FY 2012 to support agriculture and food security activities in 30 countries, as well as regional programs in west, east, and southern Africa.

RESPONDING TO ACUTE NEEDS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE SAHEL

USAID/OFDA provided more than \$17.2 million in FY 2012 to support agriculture and food security programs in drought-affected areas of Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. In addition to meeting acute needs in the Sahel, USAID/OFDA supported programs that strengthen community resilience to future agriculture and food-related crises.

In Mali, USAID/OFDA responded to critical needs by supporting emergency agriculture and food security activities, including initiatives that promote home gardens, strengthen pastoral livestock breeding programs, and reinforce local drought early warning systems. In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$284,000 to ACDI/VOCA to assist drought-affected households in central Mali's Mopti Region. To address households' basic food needs during the lean season, ACDI/VOCA provided cash transfers and temporary employment opportunities to drought-affected populations, thereby improving their access to cash to purchase food and other necessary household items. ACDI/VOCA also aims to protect households' livelihoods through the provision of fodder vouchers that support livestock-raising activities, as well as to improve access to high-yield, drought-resistant seeds while educating farmers about the benefits of these seeds to increase agricultural production. With USAID/OFDA funding, ACDI/VOCA also aims to strengthen communities' long-term food security and disaster management capacity through trainings on preparing livestock for sale in markets, producing improved seeds locally, and conducting village-level early warning and disaster risk reduction activities.

PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK STANDARDS IN EMERGENCIES



Livestock interventions protect livelihoods of drought-affected households in Mali. (Photo by USAID/OFDA)

Communities that rely on livestock for social and economic well-being can experience long-term consequences as a result of misguided livestock interventions following a disaster. For example, emergency veterinary services offered free of charge may save animals' lives in the short term but can undermine the capacity of local service providers to provide more long-term support. USAID/OFDA promotes best practices in emergency livestock activities by supporting Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS), a set of international principles for improving the design, quality, and impact of livestock interventions during humanitarian crises.

The African Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Tufts University, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Vetwork UK, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals initially developed and published the LEGS handbook in early FY 2009 with funding from USAID/OFDA and other donors. In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$300,000 for ongoing LEGS activities, including evaluating the effectiveness of LEGS and translating the guidebook into Spanish, French, and Arabic.

LEGS has become internationally recognized as a key reference for livelihoods-based livestock programs in humanitarian crises and has been recognized as a companion guide to the SPHERE Handbook—common principles and universal minimum standards to guide life-saving aspects of humanitarian response.

SEED SECURITY: BEYOND SEEDS AND TOOLS

Providing seeds and tools in the aftermath of a disaster does not always ensure increased food security for communities facing recurring agricultural stress. In some cases, providing seeds can disrupt local seed channels and markets, delaying long-term recovery. Since FY 2001, USAID/OFDA has supported the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) to develop tools, including the Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA), to better understand seed systems and to better assess seed-related needs to help determine the most appropriate and effective humanitarian response. In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$650,000 to support CIAT to finalize the SSSA toolkit, which aims to assist individuals, even those not formally trained in seed systems, to carry out rapid and accurate assessments using SSSA methodology and analysis tools. Additionally, CIAT plans to launch an online training course to teach SSSA methods to members of the humanitarian community. Through trainings and awareness campaigns, CIAT continues to stress the importance of assessing seed security separately from food security through distinct field assessments.



An individual trained using SSSA methods reports assessment findings to his community. (Photo by Louise Sperling)

PREVENTING PEST INFESTATION AND PROVIDING PEST MITIGATION SUPPORT

Crop damage due to agricultural pest infestations can further deteriorate food security among populations already susceptible to poor crop yields due to various factors, including climatic uncertainty, soil erosion, and declining soil fertility. Throughout Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, pests, such as grasshoppers, locusts, grain-eating birds, and the armyworm, adversely affect the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable agricultural communities. In response to pest threats, USAID/OFDA has supported various interventions to prevent pest infestation and provide pest mitigation support. In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$280,000 to the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa to promote the use of the Community-based Armyworm Monitoring, Forecasting, and Early Warning tool as a mechanism to reduce crop and pasture damage caused by the armyworm in vulnerable farming communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. In addition, through ongoing support from USAID/OFDA, FAO aims to strengthen national government capacity and improve coordination among countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus to prevent, manage, and control locusts in the regions.

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