

# Agriculture and Food Security Sector Update

OCTOBER 2013

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## 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 their crops and tending to their 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 resilience to future emergencies that could negatively affect agricultural activities and food security. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, 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 initiatives, supported animal health endeavors, and supplied agricultural inputs. In total, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$72 million in FY 2013 to support agriculture and food security activities in 26 countries, as well as regional programs throughout Africa and South America.

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## USAID/OFDA SUPPORTS THE LAUNCH OF SEEDSYSTEM.ORG

USAID/OFDA has supported the work of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture to develop methods to assess and understand seed systems in the wake of a disaster and in times of chronic stress. Now, all of the tools and assessments are housed under the same roof for easy access. In FY 2013, USAID/OFDA supported the launch of [seedsystem.org](http://seedsystem.org), a website dedicated to strengthening smallholder farmer seed systems. The website includes assessment tools, aid response advice for practitioners, sample implementation plans, and other resources to help communities respond to emergencies, address chronic stress, and implement development activities. Please visit [seedsystem.org](http://seedsystem.org) for more information.



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## FARMERS GO HIGH TECH IN PEST MONITORING, REPORTING, AND EARLY WARNING

Farmers in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania are receiving training in armyworm monitoring, reporting, and early warning using mobile phones with a special short messaging system (SMS) protocol. Armyworm, the caterpillar life stage of the night flying moth, is one of the most devastating pests of cereal crops and pasture across Africa, parts of the Middle East, Asia, and



Farmer forecasters send armyworm information to NAF using a mobile phone. (Courtesy of DLCO-EA)

elsewhere. To improve data collection and response time to armyworm threats, selected farmers in rural communities are receiving training through a USAID/OFDA-funded FY 2013 program with the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA). To enter data and report on armyworms, local farmer forecasters simply select an icon on the DLCO-EA-issued mobile phones. A drop-down menu with a DLCO-EA log appears and walks the farmers through the reporting process. Once farmers complete the data entry and press send, the message instantly appears on a dedicated computer at the national armyworm forecasters' (NAF) office, which is usually located in the country's capital city, hundreds of miles away from the remote rural locations of the farmer

forecasters. This new forecasting method is vastly different from the existing method, which involves filling out several forms and traveling long distances to reach a fax machine or waiting for the next dispatcher to hand deliver the forms to the NAF, delaying assistance and allowing pests more time to devour crops and pasture. With the new USAID/OFDA-funded technology, national governments and the DLCO-EA will become aware of armyworm threats more quickly, allowing them to reach farmers and rural communities with timely assistance to reduce crop losses.

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## IMPROVING VETERINARY SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PASTORAL HOUSEHOLDS

Téra Department, Niger, lies within a transhumance corridor crossing western Niger and neighboring areas of Burkina Faso and Mali. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists from all three countries travel through the area to find pasture land for their livestock. The area, which is subject to recurrent drought and food crises, continues to suffer from the effects of the 2012 Sahel drought and the ongoing armed conflict in northern Mali, which has resulted in an influx of refugees and their livestock. These shocks have worsened livestock health conditions and left the region at increased risk of animal disease epidemics. In FY 2013, USAID/OFDA supported Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) to improve animal health and production in the region by expanding local veterinary service in Téra and neighboring Séno Province in Burkina Faso. VSF is also providing training to local pastoralists and agro-pastoralists on animal health, as well as herd and natural resource management, to improve the resilience capacity of livestock keepers to cyclical drought and limit the risks of conflict over access to pastoral resources. The cross-border program is benefiting more than 100,000 pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the region, including Malian refugees.



Community animal health workers participating in a USAID/OFDA-supported VSF program vaccinate a goat in Niger. (Photo by Terry Wollen/USAID)

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## PARTNERS SHARE LESSONS LEARNED FROM HOUSEHOLD SEED STORAGE PROGRAMS

In April 2013, USAID/OFDA brought together several of its partners funded to develop and implement innovations in household-level seed and grain storage to discuss challenges and lessons learned. Between FY 2009 and FY 2011, USAID/OFDA supported the partners to design pilot activities for new storage methods, as well as technical modifications of traditional storage models, all in areas with documented post-harvest losses of more than 20 percent. The overarching goal of these activities was to support the research and development of low-cost, replicable seed storage methodology to protect against post-harvest seed and grain loss. The key lessons learned included the importance of involving farmers in design and decision making, coordinating with national ministries of agriculture, and establishing strong market linkages for sustainability. As a result of the meeting, USAID/OFDA partner Catholic Relief Services plans to develop a series of practice briefs highlighting major technical issues related to design and implementation of household-level seed and grain storage activities.

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## EXAMINING THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY IN COMMUNITY ANIMAL HEALTH CARE

Community animal health worker (CAHW) programs must incorporate sustainability elements from the beginning in order to remain in service. To ensure this, USAID/OFDA supports programs that include technical and business management training. CAHWs must also work within the policy environment of their government. Unfortunately, some governments take protective measures to support their professional veterinarians by limiting or eliminating authorization for CAHWs to conduct their duties in rural communities. While some regions may have adequate veterinary service provided by graduate and accredited veterinary health professionals, CAHWs are the sole rural animal health care providers in most countries where USAID/OFDA works. Policies that limit CAHWs leave livestock producers with little animal health and husbandry services. To explore this problem, USAID/OFDA is supporting an evaluation of USAID/OFDA-funded CAHW programs in East and Central Africa. Results will help USAID/OFDA develop clear guidance on the role of veterinary professionals, as well as CAHWs, to help advise humanitarian partners on working within the policies of their national governments, while serving the needs of livestock keepers during rapid- and slow-onset disasters. Completion of the evaluation is scheduled for early 2014.

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