



**HUMANITARIAN FRIENDS OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**  
**Exchange on food insecurity**  
**10 February 2016**

**FAO statement -**

Extremely grateful for ECHO for taking the initiative of organizing this side event. Indeed, the global response to this crisis cannot lose sight of the challenges that threaten the food security and livelihood opportunities of the people of the Central African Republic, a country where more than half the population is food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance.

The high level of food insecurity in the country remains of serious concern. As Suzanne said, so is the fact that the crisis may become a forgotten one again. We need to maintain high the media and public attention. Here, I would like to mention the tweeting campaign that, together with WFP and ECHO, we are launching today. We have common key messages to highlight the very worrying situation and our work towards sustainable solutions. Our common hashtag is #CARcantwait.

While the Central African Republic is not in the news anymore, the latest EFSA, CFSAM and IPC all highlight that the needs are still immense and that the situation has even recently worsened.

According to preliminary information from the IPC analysis (as of December 2015 pending clearance from the government), the number of people facing severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 crisis and 4 emergency) and are in need of urgent humanitarian intervention to protect and save lives and livelihoods. For comparison, almost one year ago, the previous figure was 1.3 million in phase 3 and 4 (April 2015).



The CFSAM also shows that crop production in 2015 was estimated at 54 percent lower than the pre-crisis average but 10 percent higher than 2014 mainly thanks to increased cassava production (+12 percent) while at the same time cereal production continued to decline (-4 percent) and is 70 percent lower than the pre-crisis average.

In terms of Livestock, cattle population in 2015 was 46 percent below the pre-crisis levels with a 57 percent decrease of goat and sheep due to killings, lootings.

Fisheries also has been badly affected, output in 2015 was 40 percent the pre-crisis levels, due to damage to infrastructures and insecurity that hindered fishing activities.

In October 2015, prices of maize and cassava in the capital were around pre-crisis levels. This was mainly due to trade disruptions, as a result of insecurity, that hampered their transportation away of the surrounding area of Bangui where they were produced. However this relatively good news is for Bangui and a few commodities. The situation is quite different out of Bangui in northern prefectures, prices of groundnut, which is imported from Chad, were 74 percent higher than pre-crisis levels. Prices of beef were almost double the pre-crisis levels; similarly, prices of fish were, on average, about 70 percent above pre-crisis levels.

As Denise said, CAR should be a food secure country.

I also wish to refer to the cash crop, a big potential source of employment and revenue which is essential if the government has to restore its authority throughout the country.

Prior to the start of the crisis, coffee and cotton were the main cash crops grown in the country with a yearly average production of about 18 000 and 12 000 tonnes, respectively. Both cotton



and coffee production were heavily affected by the crisis given the interruption of the activities of parastatal organizations that used to promote and market production.

In 2015–2016 cotton and coffee production are estimated to be 42 and 28 percent lower than their pre-crisis levels, respectively.

As indicated by Denise, the IPC, CFSAM and EFSA all show that the food security situation has deteriorated and the analysis is alarming. Like WFP, FAO is deeply concerned about this situation and we will continue to provide an immediate response to the most vulnerable population of farmers and pastoralists.

The Food Security Cluster co-led by FAO and WFP and co-chaired by the French NGO ACTED (with ECHO grant) plays an important role here, in terms of needs assessments (EFSA but also CFSAM and IPC) and planning of the response (through the Humanitarian Response Plan). You probably remember how instrumental the cluster was in 2014 during the agricultural campaign to put together seed distribution along with food assistance (as seed protection ration). In 2016, cluster partners are targeting 1.9 million people and the sector appeal is USD 209 million. It represents 37 percent of the country humanitarian appeal.

While the situation is volatile and unpredictable, to give a chance to peace, we must kick start food production for the country and revitalize the agriculture sector.

In that context and for 2016, FAO appeals for USD 86 million to assist 1.5 million people, thus far only USD 6.5 million was received.

Yet by March 2016, we need to secure USD 43 million to assist 550 000 vulnerable farmers. We need to procure and preposition seeds and tools to be ready for the main planting season starting in April.



## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Here, I would like to remind of you the strategic partnership between FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP) and NGOs that has been instrumental since the beginning of the crisis. To maximize the impact of implemented projects, families benefiting from FAO's assistance have also received food rations from WFP to reduce the risk of eating seeds instead of planting them. FAO's assistance during the 2015 main agricultural campaign included the provision of crop and vegetable seeds to 180 000 households (900 000 people). For this investment, we can already measure its impact: USD 100 worth of seeds and tools, for example, enabled a farmer to harvest for a value of approximately USD 500. This equates to enough food (cereal, groundnut and sesame) to feed a family of five for up to nine months — reducing their dependence on humanitarian assistance and stabilizing their incomes.

By the beginning of September we also need to secure USD 28 million to support families' vegetable production and communities through *caisses de résilience activités* which in 2015 benefitted 275 000 youth, vulnerable populations and returnees across the country. The *caisses de résilience* is an integrated approach implemented by FAO in CAR and other countries which combines social, technical and financial support to communities. Very importantly in the Central African context, the *caisses de résilience* approach strengthens social dynamics and cohesion within the community, making members able to better recover. This programme is providing critical assistance in the process of stabilization and peace to boost the involvement of youth in agriculture and take them away from armed groups and militia in areas of high unemployment.

With the remaining USD 15 million requested under the appeal we will need to support livestock production through a vaccination campaign of 1.5 million animals and 600 000 small ruminants. In addition we will support income generating activities, as well cluster coordination activities including food security monitoring and analysis.



## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

We must also simultaneously continue supporting government efforts towards stabilization and peace building, and in that respect, it is clear that agriculture has a key role to play.

The agriculture sector offers the most opportunities for economic growth, therefore income, particularly among the youth and returnees who are seeking work. They can indeed engage in agricultural activities to rapidly generate an income, while contributing to rebuilding the country's economy. This understanding makes sense given that agriculture is the main, if not the only, source of income and livelihood for nearly 75 percent of the population.

Agriculture must be an integral part of the humanitarian response to prevent the dire and complex food security situations around the world from getting worse

If we are to have any chance at success in helping the people of the Central African Republic, we must continue to make further gains and leverage the resilience work that has been put in place.

Allow me to take this opportunity to highlight the Fonds Bêkou initiative, established by the European Commission, France, Germany and the Netherlands. This very innovative funding instrument shares our objective in strengthening the resilience of the population and the promotion of social cohesion among the vulnerable communities. It's also a funding mechanism that is bridging the gap between the humanitarian and development response by allowing the implementation of sustainable support while continuing the ongoing immediate response.

When addressing the immediate and longer term needs of those affected by this crisis — agriculture cannot be an afterthought. In the face of enormous challenges, it remains the backbone of rural



## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

livelihoods. What is crucial right now is maintaining food production and rebuilding the agricultural sector while we have this window of opportunity.

The agriculture sector is an engine of stabilization and recovery for the people of the Central African Republic. It's not only essential in order to feed the country's population now, it also has all the potential to contribute significantly to peace and will be key to the long term recovery of the country.

*There will be no peace without food security and no food security without peace!*