



World Food Programme

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WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

August 2019



Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel, with a population of 4.6 million, living over a vast but mostly arid 1,030,700 km² territory. Mauritania is exposed to recurrent cycles of drought resulting in the degradation of natural resources and structurally affecting the coping capacity and resilience of populations. High levels of food insecurity are still recorded, particularly in the eastern and southern regions.

The most recent drought in 2017 sparked acute pasture and water shortages, raised food costs and caused livestock prices to plummet, adding further stress to already impoverished households and food insecure vulnerable people.

The projections of the March 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé* estimate that 559,900 people will be food insecure during the 2019 lean season. A total of 10,000 pregnant and lactating women and 128,000 children (of whom almost 41,000 suffering from moderate acute malnutrition) will need nutritional assistance. Overall, 23 departments were identified as the most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition in 2019.

Mauritania hosts the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel, with close to 55,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: **4.6 million**

2018 Human Development Index: **159 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **23% of children between 6-59 months**

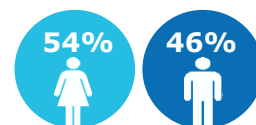
In Numbers

630 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 1.01 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 9.5 m six months (September 2019 – February 2020) net funding requirements, representing 26% of total annual budget

154,333 people assisted in August 2019



Strategic Updates

- In response to the drought, WFP continues to intervene in high priority departments of Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Charghi. For the first time this year and in areas where it is deployed, the household targeting is based on the Social Registry (SR). The SR is a means for gaining efficiency and for harmonizing household targeting with partners and with the Government's El Maouna (seasonal cash transfer programme) to centralize information from potential beneficiary households. In this regard and at the instigation of the Food Security Group, a workshop was held on 1 August 2019 to draw lessons learnt from the use of the SR for targeting beneficiaries during the lean season response, and to make recommendations to improve its efficiency and relevance in the event of renewed use in 2020. Moreover, door-to-door verifications showed that the data extracted from the SR (filtered with the targeting criteria agreed by the partners) were sufficiently reliable to continue to be used for future targeting operations.
- WFP continues implementing the recommendations of the integrated livelihood strategy for Bassikounou. Two rounds of vulnerability-based targeted assistance took place in April (group 6) and in July (group 5) and a total of 649 households were removed from general food assistance. Nutrition support as well as school feeding activities were maintained for all groups regardless of their levels of vulnerability. The next step of the targeting process, scheduled for September, will be to notify households of group 4 about the reduction by half of the food assistance ration (withdrawal of the food portion). Moreover, the households removed from general food distribution will benefit from the food assistance for asset creation (FFA) that WFP plans to introduce for refugees and host populations towards the end of the year. At this regard, WFP organized two Community-based Participatory Planning (CBPP) exercises, gathering together 13 villages in Hodh El Charghi region to seek, together with all UN agencies and NGOs, convergence activities that can be implemented around the refugee camp.
- As part of the African Risk Capacity's Replica Coverage programme (a climate risk insurance coverage to improve the effectiveness of emergency humanitarian response in vulnerable African countries prone to climate risks), WFP provided to *Commissariat à la sécurité alimentaire* with the opportunity to attend to a disbursement simulation workshop in Bamako (Mali). The aim of the atelier was to simulate the roll-out of an implementation plan for insurance-funded interventions.
- Rainfall continues to be below average across the country, raising alarms for both pastures and crops, particularly in the southern areas. Vegetative cover in the areas of Assaba, Brakna, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Hodh El Gharbi and Trarza are well below the average and are lower than at any time in the last 20 years. These areas suffered successive droughts since 2016. While short-range forecasts point to potential improvements in rainfall over the northern and south-eastern corner of the country, continued deficit are expected in the south-western areas. Moreover, price monitoring underlines rising prices in the country, due to poor agricultural production of last years and farmers and traders' reticence to sell stock in the face of rainfall deficits and potentially poor agricultural output this coming year.

Contact info: Maria Ludovica Carucci: marialudovica.carucci@wfp.org

Country Director: Nacer Benalleg, nacer.benalleg@wfp.org

Further information: <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/mauritania>

Main photo

Credit: WFP/ Maria Ludovica Carucci

Caption: WFP beneficiary in Agmamin, Assaba region

Country Strategic Plan (2019)

2019 Total Requirement	2019 Allocated Contributions in August	Six Month Net Funding Requirements
USD 36 m	USD 0 m	USD 9.5 m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Crisis-affected people, including refugees, are able to meet basic food and nutrition needs during and in the aftermath of crises.

Focus area: Crisis response

Activities:

- Provide food/cash assistance (conditional and/or unconditional), school meals, and preventive nutrition ration and MAM treatment to refugees

Strategic Result 2: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 2: Food-insecure populations, including school-age children, have access to adequate and nutritious food all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide seasonal food assistance to food-insecure Mauritanian populations, including malnutrition prevention and treatment
- Provide school meals to vulnerable Mauritanian children

Strategic Result 3: No one suffers from malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Nutritionally vulnerable populations, including children and pregnant and lactating women and girls, have improved nutritional status all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- MAM treatment and cash transfers to pregnant and lactating women and girls attending pre/post-natal care

Strategic Result 4: Improved food security and nutrition of smallholders

Strategic Outcome 4: Food-insecure populations and communities exposed to climate shocks have more resilient livelihoods and sustainable food systems all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide livelihood support to food-insecure and at-risk Mauritanian households, including the development or rehabilitation of natural and productive assets

Strategic Result 5: Country strategic capacities

Strategic Outcome 5: National institutions have strengthened capacities to manage food security, nutrition and social protection policies and programmes, including an adaptive (shock responsive) social protection system, by 2030.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide training and technical support to government institutions

Strategic Result 6: Global partnership support

Strategic Outcome 6: Humanitarian and development partners have access to common services that permit them to reach and operate in targeted areas all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide flight services to humanitarian partners, towards humanitarian interventions

- In **Mbera camp**, food and cash distributions took place in a calm atmosphere without major incidents. A hybrid food basket composed of 335 g of rice per person per day, oil and salt and 200 MRU per person per month was distributed to 51,888 people (95 percent of the target). A total of 3,240 children aged 6-23 months received prevention of malnutrition treatment (100 percent of the planned figures). This activity was preceded by a day of awareness-raising campaigns. During this distribution, no cases of moderate or severe acute malnutrition were reported. 586 children aged 6-59 months were assisted with treatment of malnutrition activities. 122 children were healed and discharged, while 465 children remained on the programme and were renewed at the beginning of September. For both activities, pregnant and lactating women were not assisted because lack of availability of nutrition food items. 1,408 students, enrolling in remedial classes, received meals in the five schools of the camp.
- **Lean season interventions** for the most vulnerable Mauritanian populations continued in August in Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Chargui region, assisting 82,883 people with general food distribution and prevention of malnutrition activities, and 2,136 people with treatment of malnutrition. These figures represent 72 and 5 percent of WFP planned figures and 16 percent of the integrated partners and government's response plan. The food security and nutrition sector (ACF, Oxfam, Save the Children and WFP) and the Government reached round 183,000 people (36 percent of planned figures). In Guidimakha region, heavy rains made some areas very difficult to access. As part of **food assistance for asset (FFA)** creation activities, WFP implemented maintenance works in the assets damaged by flooding due to heavy rains. In parallel, WFP started the planification of community-based participatory exercises to discuss and agree on priority activities for the upcoming months in regions of Assaba and Guidimakha. Under the *Projet d'Adaptation à la Résilience et aux Changements Climatiques*, 4,600 beneficiaries benefited from the setting up of nurseries for the production of seedlings and tree planting.
- **Complaints and feedbacks mechanism:** Thanks to the complaints and feedbacks mechanism, WFP through a voice server, was able to provide answers to 631 calls (91 percent of the calls received), increasing accountability, transparency, and credibility, as well as a deeper understanding of the impact of assistance on beneficiaries.

Monitoring

- Irregular and poorly distributed rainfall since the beginning of the rainy season has led to poor vegetation development compared to normal across much of the Sahel, but particularly pronounced in Mauritania. Despite an increase in rainfall received in the month of August, vegetative cover remains well below average and lower than anything seen in the last 20 years. South western regions of the country, areas already highly vulnerable after experiencing successive years of drought-like conditions, again face major pasture and surface water deficits.
- The huge deficits in pasture across southwest regions is creating extremely difficult conditions for the pastoralists and livestock owners in the concerned areas. In addition, the less than average rainfall conditions raise concerns for agricultural output this year. Dry spells have forced re-seeding, increasing the risk of food insecurity for these households.

Challenges

- USD 9.5 million are urgently needed for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months, (September 2019 – February 2020). The biggest funding deficit is for lean season assistance (USD 4.7 million). Assistance to Malian refugees face a deficit of 3.3 million. USD 1.4 million is needed for the implementation of FFA activities.
- Heavy rains in some parts of the country (Guidimakha region) made many areas inaccessible, thereby retarding the delivery of assistance to remote villages and damaging food stocks in warehouses.

Donors

Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Denmark, Japan, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, UN Agencies, United Kingdom and USA, Spain,