



World Food Programme

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WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

February 2020



Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel with a population of 4.7 million that lives 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 reproductive capacity, resilience and food security of the population. In 2019, Mauritania's southern agropastoral regions experienced for the third consecutive year drought-like conditions, putting additional hardship on already impoverished communities. According to projections from the November 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé*, 609,000 people will face "crisis" conditions between June and August 2020. Major concerns relate to subsistence farmers who rely primarily on rainfed agriculture and pastoralists whose livelihoods depend on largely depleted rangeland. Against this backdrop, the August 2019 SMART survey indicated that the global acute malnutrition rate stands at 11.2 percent at national level, with 21 departments (out of 53) above the severe acute malnutrition emergency threshold of 2 percent. WFP operations are currently focused on recovery-interventions to improve food security and reduce malnutrition, enhance education achievements, minimise gender inequalities as well as strengthen institutional capacity and help communities adapt to climate change. Mauritania hosts the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel, with more than 58,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: **4.7 million**

2018 Human Development Index: **161 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **19.6%** of children between 6-59 months

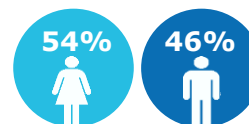
In Numbers

702 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 0.5 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 11.1 m six months (March– August 2020) net funding requirements

87,330 people assisted
in February 2020



Operational Updates

- Data collection on food security, nutrition and pastoral surveillance continues in all sentinel sites. This led to the production of the first bulletin on pastoral surveillance in Guidimakha and of two other newsletters on food and nutritional security validated at regional level by the prefect and shared with the national food security observatory.
- The food security group in charge of the preparation and implementation of the 2020 lean season response continued its coordination efforts in order to finalise the plan and the methodology of the response by end of March, before the start of the lean season.
- WFP completed in February a market analysis in the regions of Tagant and Guidimakha in order to better inform the choice of the transfer modality in these areas. The markets evaluated are moderately or highly functional and are able to support the provision of cash transfers. The analysis will also be conducted in the regions of Gorgol, Assaba, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh El Charghi to assess the feasibility of cash transfers and market absorption capacity in view of scaling up this modality in Mauritania.
- In the framework of the Malian refugees' profiling and targeting methodology on the basis of their food security and livelihoods profile, a mid-term review of the targeting process was conducted at the end of the 2019, following which WFP and UNHCR agreed to pursue the process in 2020. Verification at once of the remaining households in groups 1, 2 and 3 was finalised in February. The aim of this new approach is to (i) estimate the size of the remaining groups as accurately as possible and (ii) detect any cases of inclusion error as early as possible. There were desk-based verifications and, where necessary, there will be door-to-door follow-up (non-systematic) visits in the following month.
- WFP supported the national commission for food security (CSA) in the consolidation, formulation and appropriation by the technical working group of recommendations made by food security and nutrition actors, which will feed into the future permanent early warning and shock response mechanism. WFP continues its advocacy efforts to sensitize the highest governmental authorities on the importance of the rapid implementation of the mechanism. Following the advocacy activities, the mechanism will be presented to the Council of Ministers.

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Main photo Credit: WFP/Francesc Galban

Caption: Children sitting on WFP wooden pallets

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

2020 Total Requirements (in USD)	2020 Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
32.6 m	14.5 m	11 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**, unconditional assistance through in-kind and/or cash transfers took place from 24 to 28 February, reaching 53,568 individuals. Food was also distributed to 787 new refugees, arriving from the city of Mopti (460 km northeast of Bamako). Activities for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition resumed, reaching 491 children aged 6 to 59 months with lipid-based nutrient supplements. A total of 131 were healed and discharged (27 percent) while 359 children and 189 pregnant and lactating women remained in the programme for the month of March.
- In the framework of the **food assistance for assets (FFA)** programme, asset creation activities continued in the regions of Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Charghi, mainly consisting of harvesting of flood recession crops and vegetable gardening production (2,134 participants). A joint WFP/CSA mission was carried out in the three regions to monitor activity implementation and main outputs.
- Through the **school feeding programme**, 31,628 Mauritanian children received a morning porridge and a hot lunch to help them concentrate on their classes.
- The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (**UNHAS**) transported 129 passengers and 511 kg cargo in February, connecting Nouakchott-Nema-Kiffa, through over 28 in-country rotations.

Monitoring

- WFP provided technical support to the CSA for the March 2020 Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS). Training of the interviewers started in February and data collection disaggregated at the department level will be done starting from the end of the month, for one week.

Challenges

- USD 11.1 million is urgently needed for WFP's operations in Mauritania for the next six months, representing 57 percent of the period requirements under the approved Country Strategic Plan. USD 4.4 million are required for assistance to Malian refugees while the 2020 seasonal assistance to food insecure Mauritanian populations, including malnutrition prevention and treatment to pregnant and lactating women and children, faces USD 5.3 million shortfall. USD 1.4 million is required for the implementation of FFA activities.

Donors

European Commission, Germany, Monaco, Private Donors, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and UN Fund (SGD and CERF)