WFP Mauritania  
Country Brief  
July 2022

Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel with a population of 4.8 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 impacting the population’s productive capacity, resilience, and food security. According to the March Cadre Harmonisé, 878,921 individuals and 36 departments will face crisis conditions (phase 3+) during the peak of the upcoming lean season (June-August 2022). This corresponds to 20% of the population, one of the highest rates in the Sahel region, and reflects an increase of 64% compared to 2021. It is also the highest level ever recorded by the Cadre Harmonisé in Mauritania.

Mauritania continues to host the largest number of Malian refugees in West Africa. The Malian refugee situation entered its ninth years and the security conditions in Mali remain volatile, resulting in a continuous refugee influx to Mauritania. As of June 2022, 79,610 refugees were registered by UNHCR in and around the Mbera camp.

WFP country portfolio aims to meet the basic food and nutrition needs of affected people as well as to provide UNHAS flight services for all humanitarian and development partners. In parallel, WFP strives to ensure the continuation of resilience programmes, while strengthening institutional capacity and minimizing gender inequalities. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.

In Numbers

- **324 mt** of food, including specialized nutritious food, distributed
- **1.9 m** cash-based transfers made
- **USD 31.1 m** for six months (Aug 2022 – Jan 2023) net funding requirements
- **140,296 people** assisted in July 2022

Operational Updates

- **WFP’s refugee response in the Mbera camp**: WFP provided food and cash assistance, covering July and August, to 51,275 highly vulnerable and newly arrived refugees. Assistance in the form of cash was provided to 74,061 moderately vulnerable refugees. 54 percent of the refugee recipients were women. To treat moderate acute malnutrition, 590 children aged 6-59 months (50 percent girls) and 212 pregnant and lactating women received three mt of specialized nutritious food and 0.1 mt of oil. To prevent malnutrition, 2,048 children (50 percent girls) and 1,220 women received 20 mt of nutritious food. WFP provided a morning porridge to 2,934 primary school children (1,478 girls and 1,456 boys) enrolled in remedial classes in eight schools established in the camp.

- In July, WFP assisted 35,267 people in Koubeni and Monguel, coupled with prevention of malnutrition interventions to 5,641 women and children as part of the **lean season assistance**. Due to slight operational delays, July distributions are still ongoing in other regions and will be finalized in August. WFP expects to reach 200,000 people by then. Moreover, per the agreement signed with the Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) for the department of M’bour, the government finalized a household targeting exercise that identified 34,375 people in need of assistance.

- Under the **treatment of moderate acute malnutrition** programme, 9,641 children aged 6-59 months (4,916 girls) and 4,725 pregnant and lactating women received specialized nutritious foods in 857 health centers located in the three regions where WFP is implementing the resilience package, namely Hodh El Charghi, Guidimakha, and Assaba. WFP pre-positioned food in the department of Boghe and Bababe (Brakna region) to begin activities in August.

- **Food Assistance for Assets** programme was implemented in 55 integrated resilience sites in Assaba, Guidimakha, and Hodh El Charghi, reaching 19,224 beneficiaries and supporting communities to build, or rehabilitate productive assets. In July, newly created agricultural cooperatives (SAMS program) elected their executive committees (nine members per cooperative). Moreover, within the WFP partnership with the Higher Institute of Technological Education of Rosso, three students were recruited as interns to support the WFP sub-office in Kiffa and Bassikounou in implementing resilience activities. This will reinforce students’ knowledge of the resilience approach as well as their capacity to adapt to the labour market.

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Population: 4.8 million  
2019 Human Development Index: **157** out of 189

Income Level: Lower middle  
Chronic malnutrition: **19.6%** of children between 6-59 months

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Main photo’s credit: WFP/ Mohamed Lamine  
Caption: A woman at the market, Nouakchott
An external consultant was deployed to Guidimakha to collect field data for the final evaluation of the UN Peace Building Fund project implemented by WFP and FAO and ending in July 2022. The report is expected by the end of August.

- WFP actively supported the Government’s Response Implementation and Coordination Committee (CCMR), which is responsible for implementing the National Food and Nutritional Crisis Response Plan within the DCAN (Dispositif national de prévention et de réponse aux Crises Alimentaires et Nutritionnelles). A joint effort between WFP, the Government, and the World Bank has also continued to support the operationalization of the Food Crisis Response Fund (FNRCAN), planned in 2023.

- The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) transported 132 passengers and over 287 kg of light cargo connecting Nouakchott to Kiffa, Nema, and Bassikounou, through 31 in-country rotations.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- WFP conducted the baseline survey in nine departments targeted for the 2022 lean season assistance. In parallel, WFP’s Research, Assessment & Monitoring, and Supply Chain divisions finalized the Market Functionality Index (MFI). This will help WFP make informed cash transfer modality decisions and detect changes in market functionality over time.

- WFP continued to closely monitor the local market’s prices. The price of ruminant animals continued to rise, surpassing the last five-year average. Apart from wheat, basic food prices have improved slightly but are still at high levels: corn (+69%), vegetable oil (+20%), sugar (+35%), and wheat (+39%).

- Markets remained supplied with leftover carryover stocks and secondary flows from neighboring countries while awaiting the seasonal resumption of international imports. However, due to global events, there are rising doubts and fears about the resumption of imports, a situation that could negatively affect Mauritanian markets, since the country imports 70 percent of its food items. WFP will continue to closely monitor the situation.

### Challenges

- WFP’s current priority is to advocate for additional resources to assist Malian refugees (Act. 1). WFP has been reducing rations drastically since March 2022 to stretch available resources and to avoid a complete interruption of assistance. Due to reduced rations and the challenging macroeconomic environment, Malian refugees’ food security has significantly deteriorated. The proportion of households having an acceptable food consumption score decreased from 88 percent in July 2021 to 50 percent in April 2022 (Joint Post Distribution Monitoring – April 2022).

- A high level of risk is associated with an increased threat of terrorism and crime throughout Mali. Violence was resurgent in the Koulikoro region when terrorists targeted the Kati military camp, which houses the junta’s head.

### Donors

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