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 November 2022 Cadre Harmonisé, 694,612 individuals and 13 regions will face crisis conditions (phase 3+) during the peak of the upcoming lean season (June-August 2023). This corresponds to 16 percent of the population and reflects a decrease of 4 percent compared to 2022.

Mauritania continues to host the largest number of Malian refugees in West Africa. The Malian refugee situation entered its tenth year and the security conditions in Mali remain volatile resulting in a continuous refugee influx into Mauritania. As of November 2022, close to 89,000 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.

Operational Updates

- **WFP’s refugee response in the Mbera camp:** WFP provided food and cash assistance to some 56,000 (55 percent women) highly vulnerable and newly arrived refugees, covering October and November needs. To treat moderate acute malnutrition, close to 600 children aged 6-59 months (50 percent girls) and 200 pregnant and lactating women received specialized nutritious food and oil. To prevent malnutrition, close to 3,500 children (6-23 months, 50 percent girls) and 1,700 women received nutritious food. As schools reopened this month, WFP resumed the provision of two meals per day, breakfast porridge of fortified food and a lunch meal, to some 5,500 students (50 percent girls) in the eight schools of the camp.

- As part of the **2022 lean season response**, WFP and the Food Security Commission (CSA) concluded distributions for the lean season response in the department of M’bout reaching 28,500 beneficiaries with USD 894,935. The assistance represents a considerable improvement in the Government-to-people transfer model with support from WFP. The Government was able to implement informed and evidence-based assistance throughout the project cycle by enhancing the quality of targeting and minimizing inclusion and exclusion errors.

- In collaboration with the Government, WFP is planning the first-ever **Nouakchott urban response**. The urban response, supported by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), will kick off in early 2023 for a period of four months. The response will utilize Government social register data to determine the targeting criteria and reach the most vulnerable.

- Under the **treatment of moderate acute malnutrition** (MAM), WFP provided specialized nutritious foods to some 9,000 children aged 6-59 months and 1,500 pregnant and lactating women in 916 health centres located in six regions. As a result of the treatment, 99 percent of children were discharged from the MAM management programme (out of 1,871 children discharged, 1,853 were cured).

- For the **Food Assistance for Assets** (FFA) programme, WFP conducted a bootcamp to train 60 beneficiaries (34 percent women) on water and soil conservation techniques. The workshop took place in the Assaba region and involved staff from government technical services, non-governmental organizations, and WFP field staff. The bootcamp was a training of trainers, following which participants are expected to train FFA communities in land resource management to improve their agroforestry production system.
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 crisis.

Focus area: Crisis response

Activities:
- Provide food/cash assistance (conditional and/or unconditional), school meals, and preventive nutrition ration and MAM treatment to refugees
- Provide food assistance and supplementary feeding to pandemic affected populations/households.

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 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 governmental 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 for humanitarian interventions
- Provide on-demand logistics services to Government, United Nations and Non-Governmental partners to facilitate effective field operations (CPA Service Provision and platform activities)

In preparation for the FFA implementation cycle (November 2022 to April 2023), WFP is engaging NGO partners in planning for the construction and rehabilitation of community assets in the regions of Guidimaka and Hodh El Chargui.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) transported 187 passengers and over 323 kg of light cargo connecting Nouakchott to Kiffa, Nema, and Bassikounou, through 32 in-country rotations.

During the month of November, two donor visits took place: one joint BMZ UNHCR-UNICEF-WFP high-level mission and one ECHO monitoring mission. The five-day BMZ visit included Ministerial-level discussions and a field trip to Hodh El Chargui to highlight the three agencies’ joint work on the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus. For more information on the visit, please refer to the press release available here.

November marked the start of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, scheduled from 25 November to 10 December. In line with the campaign, WFP Mauritania conducted several activities to raise awareness of gender-based violence. A cooking competition was organized by the Kaedi sub-office in Youmane Yeri to initiate discussion on gender disparities and spread messaging on gender, nutrition, and hygiene.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In November 2022, small ruminant prices were higher than in October 2022 (+3 percent for sheep), and still high compared to October 2021 (+6 percent for sheep) and the five-year average (+42 percent for sheep). Food commodity prices were generally high in November 2022. Compared to November 2021, all commodities have increased in price except for rice (which has decreased by -1 percent). Corn was up by 19 percent, oil by six percent, sugar by 24 percent, and wheat by 29 percent. Compared to October 2022, only the price of imported rice and sugar fell by two percent and one percent respectively. The trend is also upward for wheat (+2 percent) and corn (+2 percent). Oil prices have remained stable between October and November 2022.

The results of the November 2022 Cadre Harmonisé point to a continued food insecurity situation in Mauritania in 2023. An estimated 694,612 individuals and 13 regions are projected to face crisis conditions (phase 3+) during the peak of the upcoming lean season (June-August 2023). This corresponds to 16 percent of the population and reflects a decrease of 4 percent compared to 2022. However, the number of people in phase 4 is 27 percent higher than in 2021. A summary of the results of the November Cadre Harmonisé can be found here.

Challenges

WFP’s current priority is to advocate for additional resources to assist Malian refugees. WFP has been drastically reducing food and cash rations for refugees since July 2022 to stretch available resources and avoid a complete interruption of the assistance. To ensure that rations can maintain or improve food security, WFP is exploring options to revise its refugee response strategy and seek additional resources for sustainable solutions and income-generating activities.

Donors

Donors to WFP Mauritania CSP 2019 – 2023 include Andorra, Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Mauritania, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States. Additional support was provided by private donors, Gimbel Foundation, ARC Replica, UN Adaptation Funds, UN CERF, UN PBF, UN SDG, UNICEF, and UNHCR.