



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

SOUTHERN AFRICA FLOODING

15 February 2011

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cyclone Bingiza hit northeastern Madagascar on 14 February** with wind speeds of up to 200 km/h and possibly affecting 300 000 people. A further 930 000 people living in coastal areas less than 5 m above sea level may also be affected by storm surge. This could have a significant impact on food security, agriculture and livelihoods. FAO and its partners are planning a multisector rapid emergency impact assessment that will be launched as soon as areas are accessible.
- **Seven provinces in Mozambique** have been hit by floods. Over 20 000 ha of agricultural land have been affected, with complete loss of crops. A Red Alert continues to be active as all important river basins are above alert levels.
- **An estimated 34 to 60 percent** of the 2011/12 summer crops in **Lesotho** have been damaged by heavy rains. The Lesotho Disaster Management Authority estimates that 250 000 people (50 000 households) will require humanitarian assistance.
- **FAO is closely monitoring the situation and working with governments in the affected countries** to assess damage and ensure an immediate response to protect agricultural production, support recovery and minimize any negative impact on food security.

FLOODS SITUATION OVERVIEW

Angola

- Nothing to report.

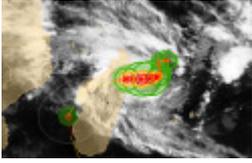
Botswana and Namibia

- Over 1 000 residents were evacuated in Namibia's Caprivi province at the end of January in anticipation of near-record water levels in the Zambezi River for this time of year. The flooding resulted from heavy rains upstream.
- If rains continue over the next two weeks, there will be a high risk of flooding and subsequent damage to crops.
- **FAO has been alerted** that support may be requested through the Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee Office (RIASCO), especially for high-risk areas with large vulnerable populations along the Caprivi Strip and Okavango River. Such technical surge support could involve food security, livelihoods, response and early recovery for the affected people.

Lesotho:

- Numerous livestock deaths have been recorded countrywide. In Mokhotlong district, northeastern Lesotho, 30 242 sheep, 5 097 goats, 204 cattle and 6 donkeys have been reported killed by heavy rain and hailstorms. Lumpy skin disease, anaplasmosis and blue tongue are also reportedly rising.
- All summer crops (maize, sorghum, beans and potatoes) have been negatively affected. Between 34 and 60 percent of crops have been damaged or lost. In some areas, heavy rains in December prevented the harvesting of the 2010 wheat and led to income losses.
- Crop and livestock losses are diminishing households' capacity to meet their food and income needs.
- Livestock morbidity and mortality will have an immediate and long-term impact on food security. In the short term, lost sales opportunities mean loss of income, while in both the immediate and longer terms, poor milk production and lack of slaughter animals will affect income.
- The full impact of the rains on the summer yield will only become evident in June 2011, when the crops are harvested. However, a sharp spike in food insecurity will begin to emerge in March, when farmers harvest green maize. Thus, people will rely on bought-in food or food aid much sooner than would be normal.
- Many rural households rely on income from providing casual labour for better-off farmers. The destruction of fields and crops means these opportunities will be much reduced, worsening the situation of vulnerable households.
- Under normal circumstances, Lesotho is estimated to lose an average of 40 million m³ of topsoil. With the heavy rains already experienced and more forecast, soil loss has been and will be enormous. This means that in future seasons there will be less arable land, compounding an already precarious food security situation, where the majority can produce only enough to meet their needs for three to four months.
- **FAO actions:** working with the decentralized offices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, FAO has initiated a system of updating information on the agricultural situation as a result of the floods. This will facilitate an effective response based on good information.

Madagascar:



- Cyclone Bingiza (see satellite photo from 14 February) hit northeastern Madagascar on 14 February, with wind speeds of up to 200 km/h. An estimated 300 000 people are likely to have been affected and a further 930 000 living in coastal areas less than 5 m above sea level could be hit by storm surge. The Cyclone is likely to have had a significant impact on food security, agriculture and livelihoods. A first multisector impact assessment is planned as soon as there is access to the affected areas.

- Heavy rainfall in the first week of February affected most of the country, particularly southern and southwestern regions. To-date, storms and floods have caused 15 deaths and injured 7 people. An estimated 1 625 houses have been damaged and around 2 000 people displaced. Most of the displaced have already rebuilt or repaired their houses. Government and partners are providing assistance in affected areas. According to field reports, the agriculture sector has been moderately affected.
- **FAO actions:** co-chairing the Food Security Cluster, which is planning a multisector, multiagency rapid emergency impact assessment; implementing an ECHO-funded project to reduce the risk to food security of flooding and cyclones (a regional project also involving activities in Malawi and Mozambique) – project sites are in areas affected by Cyclone Bingiza.

Malawi

- Rainfall has intensified over the past week in some areas of the Southern Region, but not causing flood threats.
- **FAO actions:** co-chairing the Food Security Cluster with the Ministry of Agriculture; preparing and planning emergency food security and agriculture assessments in areas in which they are needed; supporting flood contingency planning.

Mozambique

- Rapid assessments results show 20 175 ha of agricultural land affected, with complete crop loss.
- The Ministry of Agriculture is carrying out a countrywide crop assessment with FAO assistance to evaluate the actual crop situation, including damage caused by the natural disasters. Affected crops include maize, rice, legumes and horticultural produce.
- A total of 19 444 people have been affected in Gaza province alone.
- **FAO actions:** assisting the Ministry of Agriculture in its countrywide crop assessment; co-leading the Food Security Cluster, which is preparing fundraising activities for food security interventions in affected areas; preparing a TCP project to assist flood-affected areas; providing technical advice on agriculture to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the National Disaster Management Institute; and the HCT is liaising with CERF on a request for funds.

South Africa

- A Government assessment will be conducted in all provinces to reassess and verify existing data received from the National Disaster Management Centre from the 33 municipalities that were declared disaster areas, as well as from other affected villages and towns. This will form the basis for a more detailed recovery and reconstruction assessment.
- **FAO actions:** Following informal communication with the Government, the Resident Coordinator for South Africa convened a meeting with RIASCO to determine the potential availability of technical expertise surge capacity. FAO's Regional Emergency Office for Southern Africa attended and will provide emergency support through the FAO Representation and RIASCO as needed.

Zambia and Zimbabwe

- Zambia has experienced a dry spell over the last two weeks. As yet there is no comprehensive information on the impact of the excessive rainfall in January. The Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Committee is carrying out an assessment of the flood situation in North-Western, Western and Southern provinces to collect information on the effects of reported rising water levels in some river systems.
- Widespread rains in Zimbabwe in January have positively affected most crop production, leading to a significant improvement in the crop situation. The early crop is cob filling and some is being harvested as green mealies. There are reports of waterlogging and leaching of soil nutrients, particularly in areas with sandy soils. Grazing conditions continue to improve in quality and quantity.
- Three of the major dams (Manyame, Bhiri-Manyame and Osborne) are close to maximum capacity and could spill at any time, which could lead to a sudden rise in water levels downstream. Authorities have issued warnings to vulnerable communities in these areas.
- The Department of Civil Protection (DCP) reported flooding in Mana Pools, Mashonaland West province. There have also been reports that there are water overflows in the Zambezi River due to the opening of flood gates, which has affected people living in low-lying areas. Fifty-eight households have been displaced and require food (maize meal) and non-food items (tents, blankets, soap, water purification tablets, emergency lighting).
- The most damage recorded by the DCP and some NGOs was to property, with over 50 schools affected countrywide.
- The results of the First Round National Crop and Livestock Assessment will provide details of any impact of the floods on agriculture. The assessment was completed at the end of January 2011.
- **FAO actions:** leading the Agriculture Cluster, which meets monthly and provides a platform for information sharing and dissemination. Updates from the Meteorological Services Department and DCP are shared with participants.



FAO REGIONAL EMERGENCY OFFICE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

CURRENT ACTIONS

- **The FAO Regional Emergency Office for Southern Africa (REOSA) is** supporting all ongoing preparedness activities and will provide technical and coordination surge support in the case of a major humanitarian disaster. Standard operating procedures have been developed with support from FAO headquarters and country-level offices to better coordinate the FAO response to the floods in Southern Africa. As part of this, functional teams at the headquarters, regional and country levels have been identified and procedures established. REOSA has been identified as the overall manager, linking with headquarters and country-level Emergency Rehabilitation and Coordination Units. Action plans are being developed and will be regularly updated.
- **FAO is working with WFP and UNOCHA** within the Floods Analysis Working Group to assess the impact of the floods, particularly in relation to agriculture, livelihoods and food security. The first meeting was held on 11 February.
- **FAO, WFP and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network** are highlighting flood impacts in the regular regional food security matrix, to be included with the UNOCHA weekly Humanitarian Update on the Southern Africa Floods.
- **FAO is freeing up resources** to provide surge capacity and technical inputs for rapid assessments and emergency response, if needed.

FAO'S POTENTIAL ROLE IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

- **Innovative emergency, recovery and rehabilitation responses:** FAO will seek to not only support the recovery of agricultural production through seed distributions, but also to identify, document and promote more innovative responses to disasters, such as reducing their impact by using short-cycle seed varieties before or after the main disaster period, helping reduce losses, or repairing damaged fields and irrigation canals.
- **Advocacy:** In Southern Africa, FAO is advocating for the incorporation of disaster risk management principles within agricultural and food security policies. In Lesotho, advocacy is needed to promote conservation and better land use practices to prevent excessive erosion.
- **Animal health:** Through technical advice and resources, FAO can support governments and partners in responding to animal disease outbreaks related to flooding.

REGIONAL INTERAGENCY ACTIVITIES

- **The RIASCO Flood Analysis Working Group** is monitoring the progress of rainfall and flooding and analysing their impacts. The first meeting was held on 11 February.
- **A RIASCO Food Security Working Group** meeting was held on 10 February to review gaps in food security preparedness across agencies in the region.
- **A regional emergency appeal** is being discussed should the situation deteriorate.

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