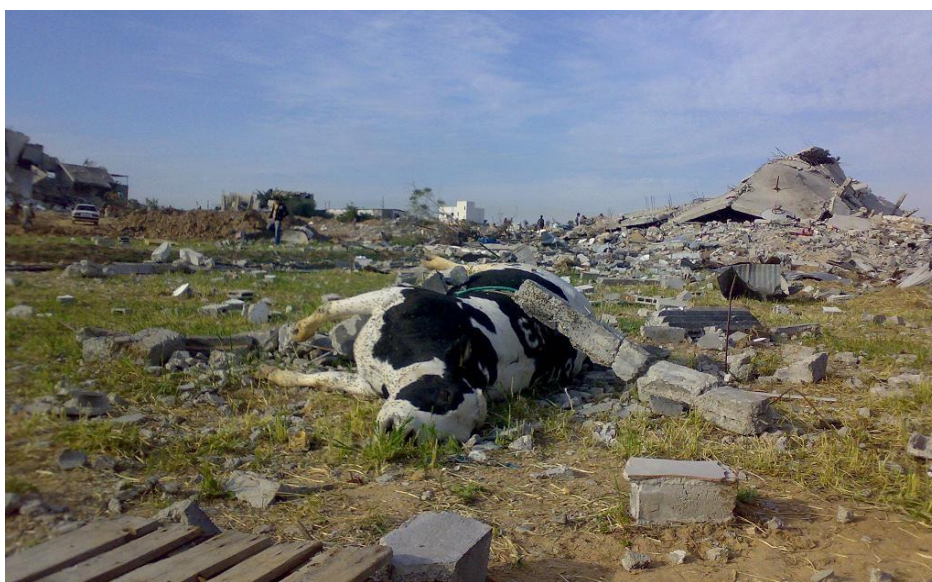




Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division

The humanitarian situation in Gaza and FAO's response

23 January 2009



Impacts of the conflict on agricultural buildings and livestock, northern Gaza

The recent conflict in the Gaza Strip has seen extensive damage inflicted on local infrastructure, with preliminary estimates placing the financial extent of the destruction at almost USD 1 billion. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other agencies believe that almost all of Gaza's 10 000 smallholder farms have suffered damage and many have been completely destroyed. This has had a severe impact on the livelihoods and food security of those residing in the Gaza Strip.

As the cost of fresh food rises, Gazans are facing an acute shortage of nutritious, locally-produced and affordable food, relying instead on emergency aid distributions. Animal protein is generally unavailable following damage to the sector and FAO is expecting to witness widespread wasting and micronutrient deficiencies. In addition, the farmers and fishers whose assets have been damaged face an irreversible loss of their livelihoods, placing the already weak Gazan economy at risk of collapse.

FAO is responding to the crisis by:

- leading the identification of sector-wide emergency and early recovery needs in the agriculture sector;
- preparing the early recovery plan jointly with its partners for donor funding and immediate implementation;
- coordinating the response of donors and other stakeholders; and
- co-chairing the Food and Nutrition Coordination Group with the World Food Programme in monitoring food security information/food aid in the Gaza Strip.

Short-term response

FAO is initiating immediate emergency interventions valued at USD 1.3 million to provide assistance to the most vulnerable farming families. Interventions include the distribution of input packages for plant production (including vegetables, orchards and date palms), livestock production, aquaculture and household food production/backyard cottage industries. Part of the strategy to assist the hardest hit families is through cash-for-work programmes. FAO will also focus on repairing damage to greenhouses, animal sheds and water resources, including irrigation networks and water wells.



Damaged greenhouses, Beit Lahia

Medium- to long-term response

In the post-conflict phase, FAO will continue to coordinate sectoral efforts to meet new demands. This will include assisting service providers and facilitating market mechanisms to ensure that locally produced food is available and affordable, including meat, eggs, dairy products, fruit and vegetables. Furthermore, FAO intends to restart projects stalled during the closure and conflict, which address the ongoing needs of fishers, small-scale livestock farmers and especially vulnerable groups such as female-headed households.



Destroyed vegetable nursery, Al Zeitoun

FAO shares the concern of the entire United Nations (UN) system about the severe humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and is fully engaged in the UN relief and early recovery framework. Within its own resources and with support from donor contributions, FAO is committed to delivering all necessary emergency assistance. The Organization will collaborate closely with UN partners, the Government and non-governmental organizations in providing immediate assistance to the vulnerable, conflict-affected population in the Gaza Strip.