
AGRICULTURE SECTOR REPORT

IMPACT OF GAZA CRISIS

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Overview

Gaza's agriculture sector was severely affected by Operation Cast Lead (27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009). Twentythree days of airstrikes and largescale incursions resulted in USD 180 million in direct damages to the sector. With a projected 6month indirect impact of over USD 88 million, the **estimated losses to the agriculture community as a result of the Operation totals USD 268 million**. The recent attacks on the Gaza Strip came at a time when the sector was struggling to cope with an eighteen month blockade on imports and exports that continues to cause acute productivity losses and reduce the population's access to affordable fresh foods.

With over one third of the land in Gaza prime for agriculture use and an abundant sea for fishing, agriculture plays a vital role in generating economic activity and growth. This is particularly important given the failure of other economic sectors (including industry) to function, owing to the closure of Gaza's commercial crossings since June 2007. Agriculture is a traditional shockabsorber for communities when other social safety nets fail to operate; therefore it plays a critical role in protecting and promoting livelihoods, especially in rural areas. With roughly two thirds of the population deemed food insecure¹, agriculture, including home gardens and smallscale animal production, provides a more affordable option to fresh foods that are not traditionally offered in the food aid packages presently being distributed by humanitarian organizations. Agriculture has the capacity to absorb a significant percentage of the work force, of which forty percent in the Gaza Strip are currently unemployed², owing to the flexibility of agriculture's informal labour demand, offering casual employment to family members when other work is not available.

During the military operation, sector stakeholders responded swiftly to the crisis by executing a multi agency rapid needs assessment, proposing USD 29 million in immediate relief to the sector via the Flash Appeal for Gaza, developing an early recovery strategy in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Palestinian Authority (PA), prioritizing interventions, advocating for the sector and monitoring agricultural goods availability in Gaza. In light of the damage assessment results, the funds requested in the Flash Appeal cover only a minor portion of the needs, leaving a **shortfall of USD 150 million**. The sector has the capacity to recover from the crisis provided the right conditions are in place. These include: a) an opening of the commercial crossings to allow for free movement of goods and a resumption of trade activities that have been suspended since June 2007; b) providing access to the Buffer Zone to restart agriculture activities, including recovery and rehabilitation of agriculture assets, in this area; c) reliable and affordable sources of power necessary for agricultural operations to commence; and d) an influx of cash to help spur marketing activities. Progress in the political situation via fruitful peace negotiations and a permanent end to hostilities in the Gaza Strip will help pave the way for realizing positive socio-economic change for the people of Gaza.

This report provides an overview of the sector's response to the Gaza crisis, including damage absorbed by the sector, Flash Appeal projects, priority inputs and interventions for recovery efforts, and efforts for a sector-wide early recovery plan. The annexes contain supplementary information related to the Gaza crisis, namely: a) an advocacy paper for the agricultural community; b) a list of scarce agricultural inputs in Gaza; c) the latest Geographic Information System (GIS) map of damages from UNOSAT; d) an analysis of 2008 interventions in the Gaza Strip; and e) a list of sector stakeholders.

¹FAO, WFP, UNRWA. Joint Rapid Food Security Assessment, May 2008.

²Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2006.

Agriculture Cluster Web Site:

The Agricultural Projects Information System (APIS) website provides a focal point for information related to the agricultural sector, while hosting a real-time database of agricultural interventions in WBGS to monitor needs and responses, and act as a resource tool to enhance coordination of the agricultural sector.
<http://www.apis.ps>