

ALERT**DROUGHTS****actalliance****El Salvador****San Salvador , 18 September 2018****SITUATION**

After a good start of the 2018 rainy season in April, a reduction in the quantity and distribution of rains has been observed and is likely to impact basic grains crops in Central America's Dry Corridor. Specific areas in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras have reported more than 25 days without rain, yields reduction and crop losses, particularly affecting subsistence farmers. Typically, there is little to no rainfall in August, which is called the *canícula* in Spanish. However, since the *canícula* arrived much earlier than usual this year, crops losses have been significantly higher in the affected areas due to the sustained drought conditions.

El Salvador's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) confirmed that the drought has affected approximately 57,000 hectares of land, of which around 22,000 hectares of cropland has been destroyed, resulting in the loss of 2.7 million quintals of corn and USD\$37 million in damages. The Salvadorian Chamber of Small and Medium Agricultural Producers (CAMPO) estimates that the corn crop losses to date are even higher at 4.1 million quintals and that they could surpass 6 million quintals if the drought continues since 2.3 million quintals are at risk. The drought has affected 77,322 agricultural families in El Salvador. The General Direction of Civil protection declared a red alert for 143 municipalities in the central and eastern parts of the country on 24 July 2018 to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected families.

According to the last COF (Climate outlook forecast for Central America), below average precipitation and an early end as well as irregular rains during the *Postrera (second sowing season) campaign* could affect the harvest of the basic grains, especially for subsistence farmers.

NEEDS

Food reserves are exhausted in the poorest households, especially in areas subject to repeated droughts. There are minimal sources of work and no access to wild food in rural areas during this period. Rising basic grain prices mean more households will face problems in meeting their food needs. There is a pressing necessity to provide immediate assistance to minimize food insecurity and to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are covered first.

STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) plans to deliver 412,775 farming packages for this growing season, with 388,563 (94.13 %) distributed so far. These packs mainly contain certified corn seed, which has been planted by small-scale farmers. MAG will import around 870,000 quintals of corn, a staple food in El Salvador, in September 2018 to offset the losses; however, local farmers contend that the imports will artificially deflate the price of corn in El Salvador, worsening their predicament.

To ensure that the humanitarian response is well coordinated and complementary, the ACT forum will take part in meetings with all relevant sector stakeholders such as Humanitarian Country Team, and local governments and establish an open line of communication with crisis affected persons and communities to ensure a humanitarian response based on participation and feedback.

ACT Alliance

The ACT Alliance Salvadorian Forum is coordinating actions with local actors such as the municipal commissions, in order to obtain official information regarding the performance of a Damage and Needs Analysis Assessment in the affected areas. ACT members in the country are participating in coordination meetings with government authorities, have conducted visits to affected zones, and has identified a gap in food security. ALFALIT and the Lutheran Synod will coordinate the response. The ACT forum is preparing a RRF proposal to provide un conditional cash to ensure that the drought affected persons' basic needs are met.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org)

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