

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY SECTOR UPDATE



USAID/OFDA staff met with regional locust experts in Georgia to survey locust threats in the region. Photo by Yeneneh Belayneh/USAID

Responding to Drought and Rebuilding Livelihoods in Ethiopia

Consecutive seasons of below-normal rainfall and the effects of the El Niño climatic event have resulted in deteriorating agricultural, food security, livestock, and nutrition conditions in northeastern and central Ethiopia. By August 2016, the Government of Ethiopia estimated 2.9 million people would require agriculture assistance in response to these climatic challenges.

In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA partners supported the rehabilitation of compromised livelihoods through emergency seed assistance in Ethiopia. With approximately \$11.3 million in FY 2016 assistance, USAID/OFDA partners Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and the International Potato Center led emergency seed distributions across cropping areas of Ethiopia prior to the October-to-January *meber* harvest season to protect farmers' livelihoods. In addition, USAID/OFDA supported the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to coordinate seed distribution activities and conduct seed evaluations to monitor the effectiveness of the response.

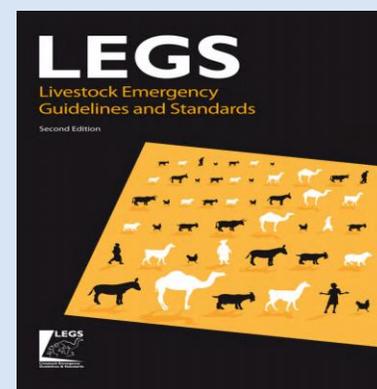
Safeguarding Livelihoods and Livestock

Natural and man-made disasters can disrupt and devastate livestock-reliant businesses and households. In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA supported the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) project—which outlines international norms for designing, implementing, and evaluating livestock interventions to help crisis-affected populations—by publishing the second edition of the LEGS handbook in Spanish. The LEGS handbook provides standards, key actions, and guidance for livestock interventions during emergencies. The second edition of the handbook was released in FY 2015 with USAID/OFDA assistance. The handbook also serves as a companion to the Sphere Project, which sets a universal minimum standard for humanitarian assistance. USAID/OFDA also supported LEGS to develop training materials in English, French, and Spanish, allowing affected populations to more easily access the project's guidelines and best practices.

Sector Overview

Natural disasters—such as drought, floods, and insect infestations—and conflict can have critical impacts on the food security and livelihoods of affected populations. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports agriculture and food security interventions that increase livelihood opportunities and address the immediate needs of disaster-affected populations unable to meet their basic food requirements. USAID/OFDA also works to strengthen local disaster response capacity and increase community resilience to shocks that could negatively affect agricultural activities and food security.

In the aftermath of disasters, USAID/OFDA supports agricultural infrastructure rehabilitation and economic recovery by providing agriculture-based livelihood assistance. USAID/OFDA-funded programs also target livestock and fisheries, support pest control initiatives, assist animal health endeavors, and supply agricultural inputs to vulnerable households. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$117.5 million to UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support agriculture and food security activities in 30 countries, as well as regional programs throughout Africa and South America.



In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA supported the translation of the LEGS handbook into Spanish to increase accessibility. Photo courtesy of LEGS

To further increase best-practice awareness, the LEGS project hosts training of trainers (TOT) courses to help agriculture practitioners from around the world build livestock intervention expertise. With USAID/OFDA support, LEGS offered its first cost-share TOT course in Bangkok, Thailand, in September 2016. Following this training, participants returned to their respective regions to begin training local communities on LEGS standards and guidelines.

Improving Seed Security Assessments and Knowledge Sharing

The provision of agricultural inputs, particularly seeds, is the prioritized intervention following disasters that negatively affect agriculture. USAID/OFDA has supported CRS globally since FY 2013 to evaluate current planting practices, alleviate recurring technical challenges, and improve the design and management of seed-based interventions. In particular, CRS encourages farmers to conduct rigorous analysis of seed-based interventions and disseminates the findings online for improved seed security response options, targeting farmers in emergency, chronic stress, and development contexts.

USAID/OFDA also supports CRS efforts to increase global capacity to conduct seed system security assessments and to ensure that the existing seed system database remains up-to-date through an online platform for information sharing and remote support to farmers working in disaster-prone areas. This USAID/OFDA-supported initiative aims to increase the number of seed security assessments conducted globally, particularly among smallholder farmers.

The CRS seed system platform can be found at <http://seedssystem.org> and the latest CRS instructional video on seed systems can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvqSaw49wnE>.

Protecting Livelihoods Through Armyworm Monitoring

Armyworms feed on a variety of staple crops in disaster-prone areas, including barley, maize, millet, rice, sorghum, sugarcane, *teff*, and wheat. If uncontrolled, they may threaten the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable populations. From FY 2012–FY 2015, USAID/OFDA supported the community-based armyworm monitoring, forecasting, and early warning (CBAMFEW) program in East Africa, which aimed to improve farmers' knowledge and capacity to identify, monitor, and report pest problems in rural Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. This program was put to use in Ethiopia in FY 2016, when CBAMFEW-trained farmer forecasters detected the presence of armyworm and alerted local communities and national authorities, triggering local response mechanisms.

Strengthening Regional Locust Prevention in the Caucasus and Central Asia

Locusts are a persistent threat to the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. Locusts in these areas could potentially infest more than 25 million hectares of cultivated and grazing land, affecting the food security and livelihoods of up to 20 million people in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, according to FAO. Since 2011, USAID/OFDA has supported FAO to conduct a multi-year prevention program in the Caucasus and Central Asia that provides training, material support, and technical assistance to strengthen national and regional locust surveillance, monitoring, and early warning systems while institutionalizing preventive intervention strategies.

In May 2016, FAO sponsored a meeting of locust experts from across the Caucasus to discuss the regional locust threat and conduct a joint locust survey throughout southern and southeastern Georgia along the Caucasus Mountains. The assessments will help local farmers and neighboring countries better understand and plan for the potential impact of locusts on crop production and livelihoods.

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USAID/OFDA information products are available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis>