

Executive Brief: **Haiti**

Comprehensive Food security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) – 2007/2008

Overview

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. The country fell from 146th in 2002 to 154th of 177 countries on the UNDP's 2006 Human Development Index. About 76 percent of Haitians live below the poverty line of US\$2 per day and 56 percent live on less than US\$1 per day.

The limited national food production capacity, the dependency on food imports, the lack of basic social services, vulnerability to natural disasters, the socio-political instability, violence and insecurity in poor urban areas and widespread poverty contribute to food insecurity, by restricting the availability of food and hampering households' access to food.

WFP together with the Government of Haiti (Coordination Nationale de la Sécurité Alimentaire, CNSA) conducted a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), in collaboration with FEWS NET and other partners in late 2007 to provide information on the incidence of food insecurity in rural Haiti and on its causes and nature¹.

How was the study done? The study is based on literature review, secondary data analysis and an analysis at the household level. The data collection took place in October and November 2007. Over 3,000 households were interviewed in rural areas.

Who are the most food insecure households in rural Haiti? How many are they?

Food insecurity is significant and widespread in Haiti. In October 2007, 25 percent of rural households or 1.29 million people were food insecure (consuming less than 1,900 Kcal per person per day), including about 6 percent (305 thousand people) severely food insecure (less than 1,600 Kcal per person per day)². Two thirds of the rural households said they ate lower quantity than a year ago at the same period. About 95 percent of rural households had reduced the quantity of food during the month before the survey. The significant increase of food prices since October 2006 was the main shock experienced by households in the recent months and their primary coping strategy is the reduction of the quantity of food they consume.

The following population groups are affected by food insecurity:

- About 34 percent of small farmers who live only from their agricultural activities,
- About 34 percent of wage earners engaged in agricultural activities are food insecure,
- About 32 percent whose main source of income is the sale of charcoal or transfers from other households are food insecure.
- Households combining agricultural activities and trade of non -agricultural or pastoral goods are less exposed to food insecurity, with 15% food insecure households. Recipients of overseas' remittances and fisher folk have the best food security.
- People living with HIV and their households experience hunger more often than the rest of the population, especially urban women and girls³.

The nutritional situation is worrying as well. Chronic malnutrition is widespread among the most vulnerable with stunting affecting 24 percent of children under five. Acute malnutrition affects 9 percent of children under five.

Where are the food insecure households in rural Haiti?

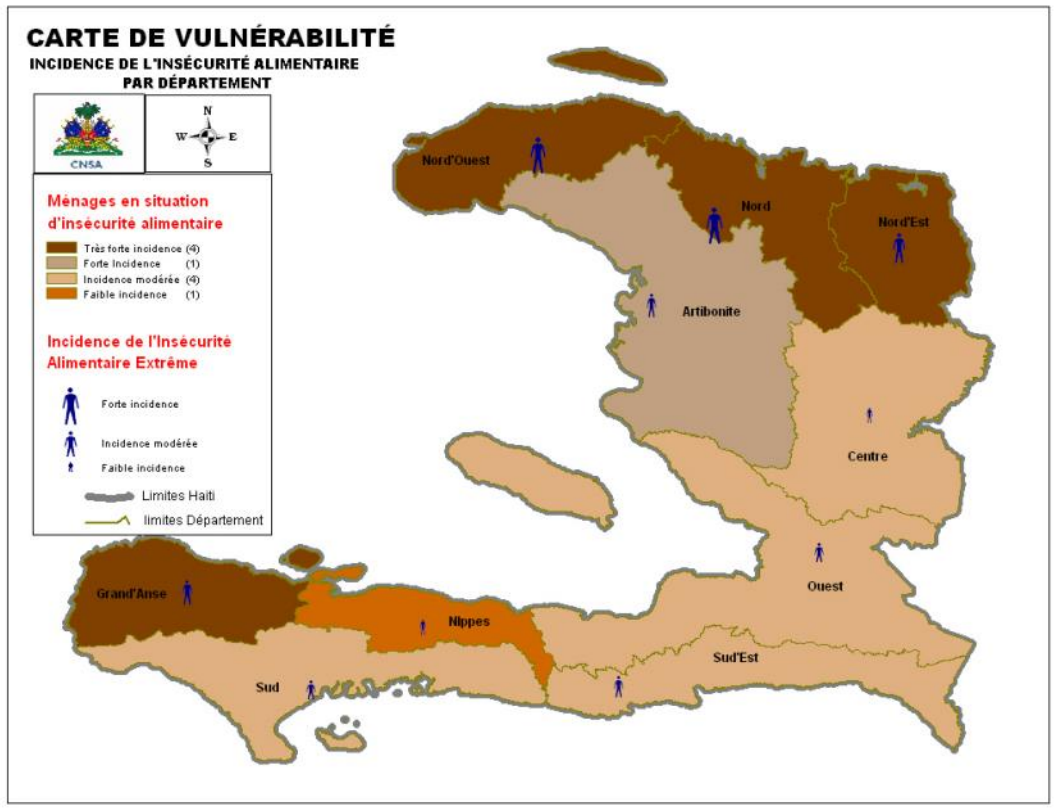
The highest prevalence of food insecurity was observed in the north of the country, with a bout 42 percent of food insecure households in the North-West, 38 percent in the North and 35 in the North-East regions, as well as in the south west of the country, with 31 percent of food insecure households in the Grande-Anse region.

In terms of livelihood zones, food insecurity is higher in dry agro -pastoral zones and in dry mountain agriculture areas.

¹ After the CFSVA, other studies were conducted in Haiti in 2008 following the sharp increase of food prices and the cyclones that hit the country. The findings of these other studies are not included in the present brief, but are accessible via WFP Country Office (contact below).

² The Food Consumption Score based on food diversity and food frequency is used as a proxy indicator of food insecurity.

³ Prevalence of HIV among 15-49 population is 2.2 percent, the highest in the hemisphere. Source: *Enquête sur la mortalité, la morbidité et l'utilisation des services (EMMUS-IV)*, 2005-2006.



What are the causes of food insecurity in rural Haiti?

Food availability: National agricultural production covers only 47 percent of the national food needs.

Food access: About 68 percent of food items consumed by rural households are bought on the market. Despite that many rural households are farmers, most of them do not produce enough to cover their needs.

Access to food is thus determined by households' income. Food expenditure represents about 59 percent of households' spending.

About 75 percent of rural households have farming activities. However, the cash income generated accounts only for 26 percent of their total cash income. The rest of their income comes from other activities such as livestock rearing (poultry and goats), transfers from other households and remittances, non-agricultural wage labour. The sale of charcoal is the main source of income for 9 percent of the rural population. About 20 percent of households live only from their agricultural activities, representing 90 percent of their income. This group of households has the lowest income.

Agriculture activities are geared towards food production and are done on a small scale. Land plots are generally small and households have little equipment. The farming activities are heavily dependent on climatic conditions, and often affected by crop diseases.

The Haitian rural population is young and suffers from lack of employment opportunities, poor access to social and health services and lack of education. Women are more affected by unemployment; especially women from the poorest households are most often economically inactive. The literacy rate is 56 percent and only 51 percent among women. The literacy rate of the youngest generation (15-19 years) is three times higher than that of their parents' generation and gender disparities disappear, except in certain regions.

Response recommendations

Recommended food assistance interventions

Food assistance interventions in rural areas should primarily target:

- Population groups who are vulnerable or chronically food insecure such as subsistence farmers; households who mostly purchase their food and have a limited purchasing power such as agricultural workers, charcoal sellers;
- The types of food assistance depend on the circumstances and the type of crisis occurring: food for assets, to address unemployment and at the same time strengthen the asset base for long term development; food for training, to join the long term effort to redirect the population towards better income generating activities.

However, supplementary feeding may be needed when malnutrition becomes critical. In severe and acute situations general distributions are opportune.

- Food insecure households with a member living with HIV, with a special attention to urban women and girls should be considered for special assistance, combined with treatment ;
- School-children through school feeding programmes, accompanied with actions to increase school attendance of the poorest households.

Other recommended food security related interventions

A number of interventions are recommended to improve livelihoods, including:

- Provision of inputs (improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides);
- Sensitization to improve agricultural practices (e.g. promotion of cost-effective cultures, terracing, etc.);
- Improvement of rural infrastructure with labour intensive programmes (irrigation systems and rural roads in particular);
- Considering the limited level of agricultural productive resources, training and employment programmes should be envisaged to develop non-agricultural income generating activities for the young generation.
- Micro-credit activities to support food insecure and vulnerable women to start small businesses.
- Local food purchase by WFP and other food aid agencies in areas with surplus production like Artibonite.

For more information, please contact:

Myrta Kaulard, WFP Country Director: myrta.kaulard@wfp.org

Romain Sirois, WFP Deputy Country Director: romain.sirois@wfp.org

Anne-Claire Mouilliez, WFP VAM officer: anne-claire.mouilliez@wfp.org

Jean Carrel Norceide, WFP VAM officer: jeancarel.norceide@wfp.org