



# DISASTER RESPONSE

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## BACKGROUND

Mozambique is the third most vulnerable country in Africa to disaster risks (according to the UN's Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction). Frequent natural disasters disrupt livelihoods and food production of the most vulnerable people, undermining the fight against extreme poverty. During the last 35 years there were 75 declared disasters in Mozambique consisting of 13 drought events, 25 floods, 14 tropical cyclones and 23 epidemics (Instituto Nacional de Gestao de Calamidades, 2016). The regional El Niño-induced drought emergency of 2015-2016 was the worst in 35 years.

According to the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition's (SETSAN) November 2016 report, an estimated 2.1 million Mozambicans had limited or uncertain access to food, and needed assistance prior to the March-April 2017 harvest. This figure represents an increase of 700,000 persons over 2016 and illustrates the vulnerability of the Mozambican people. The depletion of family assets (food stocks, seed stock, livestock and family savings) as a result of the 2016 drought left many households destitute and dependent on food and other assistance provided by the Government of Mozambique (GRM) and assistance provided by development partners such as USAID.

Approximately 80 percent of the Mozambican population relies on rain-fed agriculture for their subsistence, which is sensitive to extreme climatic events as well as pests. The recent introduction of new pests such as the fall armyworm is now creating additional food security concerns through the country. The **fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*), FAW**, is an insect pest that feeds on more than 100 crop species, causing damage to economically important cultivated crops such as maize, rice, sorghum, various legumes as well as vegetable crops, pasture grasses and cotton. It is native to tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, with the adult moth able to move over 100 km per night. Highly prolific, it can produce up to 12 generations per year. It lays its eggs on plants, from which larvae hatch and begin feeding. High infestations can lead to severe and significant crop damage and yield loss.

## KEY CHALLENGES

The GRM lacks sufficient funding within its own budget or from donors to effectively mitigate or effectively respond to natural disasters and insect pest infestations. Often there are delays in issuing a disaster declaration, and poor coordination between the GRM and humanitarian partners further delays response efforts. The inability of the GRM to systematically collect sound data regarding numbers of victims, their locations and nutrition status before, during and after a natural disaster makes it difficult to develop an appropriate response that targets the right people.

Due to the fact that the FAW is new to the sub-saharan Africa, little information exists on FAW biology, behavior and impact in Africa. There is a lack of experience within the Mozambican agriculture sector in recognizing and treating FAW infestations. Additionally, the availability of FAW pesticides commercially sold on the local market requires that they be registered, which is a slow and incremental process.

## DROUGHT RESPONSE

The United States Government (USG) made a significant contribution to the 2016/2014 donor funded drought response effort in Mozambique. USAID Food for Peace (FFP) and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), as well as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) contributed a total of \$45,866,814 to this cause.

- **FFP** contributed \$28,441,295 in mostly in-kind commodities,
- **OFDA** contributed \$10,996,221 and
- **PEPFAR** contributed an additional \$6,429,298

To mitigate the effects of the 2016 drought, USAID distributed food (beans and sorghum) and provided livelihood, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support to hundreds of thousands of people in the most heavily affected areas. In addition to the provision of emergency assistance during droughts or other natural disasters, USAID has been implementing a Feed the Future program for the past several years. The goal of the Feed the Future program is to improve and diversify the livelihoods of Mozambicans with an emphasis on smallholder farmers, leading to better food security and socioeconomic stability. In terms of increasing disaster resilient agricultural productivity, USAID activities focus on developing improved seeds and a functioning seed market, farmer to market linkages, and the expansion of orange fleshed sweet potato cultivation and consumption. To improve the enabling environment for agriculture as a livelihood, USAID supports value chain development and agricultural and agribusiness policy reform. Drought tolerant crop varieties and climate smart management practices are currently included in USAID programs.

## MITIGATING THE FALL ARMYWORM EFFECT

FAW was first detected in Central and Western Africa in early 2016 (Sao Tome and Principe, Nigeria, Benin and Togo) and spread to an additional 18 countries, including Mozambique, by early 2017. FAW's presence in Africa is expected to spread further and is irreversible. Large-scale eradication efforts are neither appropriate nor feasible.

After it was first detected in Mozambique in January 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture (MASA) has reported FAW presence in the provinces of Gaza, Maputo, Manica, Zambezia, Tete and Niassa and has proposed a three phase, \$1.6 million mitigation plan. The plan includes FAW monitoring, conducting biological and ecological studies, an education campaign targeted at smallholder farmers and production of educational materials, and purchase and distribution of chemical pesticides.

USAID is currently working cooperatively with scientists from Southern African countries and Brazil to devise a FAW mitigation plan that can be applied throughout the region. Plans to include trainings and educational material on FAW prevention within USAID agricultural activities are underway.