



Economic and Social Council Special Meeting

SAVING LIVES: ADDRESSING THE URGENT FOOD SECURITY NEEDS OF HAITI

16 June 2023, United Nations Headquarters

Concept Note

The situation in Haiti is rapidly deteriorating on a daily basis. As the newly released 2023 [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) highlights, almost half of the Haitian population is going hungry and urgent action is required.

This year, in Haiti, 5.2 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection, out of them, 4.9 million, almost half of the population, are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, and severe acute malnutrition is as high as 5 per cent in some areas of Port-au-Prince. Food insecurity is of great concern in Haiti. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis published in March 2023, a record level 4.9 million people in Haiti—approximately half the country’s population—currently face acute hunger (IPC+3) up from 4.7 million in September 2022, including 1.8 million people in the Emergency phase (IPC4).

In food crises, children are always the most vulnerable and can face malnutrition without enough to eat and the right nutritional balance. Malnutrition can cause stunting, impede mental and physical development, increase the risk of contracting deadly diseases, and ultimately cause preventable death. Severe wasting has skyrocketed in the country by 30 percent compared to 2022, with more than 115,602 children affected by severe wasting in 2023. According to the recent National Smart Survey, conducted in January 2023, prevalence of global acute malnutrition children is estimated 5.1%; with some urban communes in Port- Au Prince showing very high prevalence of up to 20%. The lack of access to nutritious food, clean water, health services and care is driving the increase in wasting among children.

The ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti (AHAGH) has been following closely the complex and multi-faceted crisis in the country. The AHAGH informal working group on food security has examined the issue of food insecurity, which is anchored in deep-rooted structural problems and exacerbated by the ongoing high-levels of violence and insecurity perpetrated by armed gangs and further threatened by climate-related events. Haiti is heavily dependent on food imports, making it vulnerable to external shocks.

The country's economic growth remains firmly below the population growth, as the Haitian agriculture has been declining since the 1980s. Despite its agricultural potential, the country no longer produces enough to feed the entire population. Haiti now imports nearly half of its food and 83% of rice consumed in the country.

The Haitian food systems is facing huge challenges and the deregulation of agricultural markets has dismantled an indigenous system of agricultural and livestock production. In the 1980s and 1990s, the economic adjustments have been accompanied by drastic market liberalization,

including agricultural markets, eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers to imports and exports as well as subsidies and support to food production.

In addition to this unfavorable structural context, there is the repetition of severe natural shocks (earthquake in 2010 and 2021, hurricanes including Matthew in 2016, floods, droughts in 2018 and 2019 linked to El Nino episode) whose impacts affect GDP nationwide. Haiti is one of the most exposed countries to natural disasters worldwide.

Food insecurity has been worsening since 2018, reflecting the sustained economic downturn, natural disasters and below-average agricultural production, compounded by surging gang violence.¹ More importantly the spreading of gang violence restricts the access to food and water.² Gangs control more than 80% of Port-au-Prince and are now more active in Artibonite department, the food basket of Haiti, limiting goods and people movements.

There are important initiatives carried out by the United Nations entities, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme and the International Fund on Agricultural Development, as well as non-governmental organizations, that are addressing the immediate emergency food needs while also helping to build resilient and productive food systems.

With the Humanitarian Response Plan, launched on 13 April 2023, it would be important to advocate for greater emphasis on the urgency for both emergency food assistance and emergency livelihoods assistance to build resilience for food security, especially for the most vulnerable, in Haiti. The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan sets out Haiti's humanitarian needs with a funding requirement of USD 719.9 million. This is the largest appeal since the devastating 2010 earthquake – and more than double the amount requested in 2022 – underscoring the scale, severity and urgency of the country's humanitarian crisis.

The newly signed Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development for Haiti for the period 2023-2027 between the UN and Haiti would be instrumental in addressing the root causes of the challenges facing the country and promoting sustainable development.

Building on the work of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, the Economic and Social Council will convene a Special Meeting to focus on the issue of food security in Haiti to help create more productive and resilient food system in the country. The Council will bring together Member States, observers and UN partners with representatives from civil society, the private sector and international financial institutions to mobilize action and resources in support of food security in the country. The Special Meeting will build on the briefing on the humanitarian situation in Haiti on 24 April 2023, which underscored the urgency of the situation in Haiti.

The ECOSOC Special Meeting will be organized as a three-hour meeting in person at the United Nations Headquarters on 16 June 2023. The programme will feature keynote addresses and a roundtable discussion with Member States, observers, UN system entities and civil society organizations. The outcome of the meeting will be an informal summary by the ECOSOC President, highlighting key messages and recommendations from the discussions.

¹ [FAO GIEWS Country Brief on Haiti](#)

² Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI)

Guidance Questions

Participants may wish to consider the following guiding questions in their interventions:

- What are the most urgent food security needs of Haiti?
- How can the implementation of the humanitarian response plan be linked with long-term action on food security?
- What role can emergency livelihood assistance play in promoting food security in Haiti?
- What are some good practices and transformative initiatives with regards to sustainable and resilient food systems that can be shared with Haiti, given the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the country?
- What are some innovative ways to build the capacity of institutions to cope with shocks related to extreme weather events and disasters in the context of food security?
- How can women’s contribution to agricultural development in Haiti be enhanced?
- What concrete steps can different stakeholders, including the private sector, take to support Haitian efforts towards food security? How can they engage and empower local communities and civil society organizations?
- How can the United Nations system work with Governments, international financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society to sustainably address malnutrition in children in Haiti with multisectoral actions?
- How can additional funding be urgently mobilized to fund the implementation of the Humanitarian Response Plan, especially with the rainy and hurricane season fast approaching?

ECOSOC Special Meeting

Saving Lives: Addressing the Urgent Food Security Needs of Haiti

16 June 2023

DRAFT PROGRAMME

10:00 - 10:40	Opening Keynote Addresses
10:40- 12:55	Roundtable on <i>“Building Food Systems Resilience”</i> Interventions by Member States, Observers, UN system, IGOs and Civil Society
12:55 - 13:00	Closing