

# ROSA Watch

**Rosa Watch** is a monthly bulletin that aims to bring you up-to-date useful information about food security, and do so rapidly and directly.

Each issue has:

- 1) a main subject with a common database of reference documents available from the **ROSA online library**
- 2) a selection of new documents put online and regularly updated by a watch on subjects dealt with by the network.

**In this issue:**

- **ROSA Document Database:**  
On the subject of **the access to agricultural inputs**
- **ROSA News -**  
September 2009

Would you like to tell us about some news or a recently published article, or just make a comment? Contact the team of moderators ([animation@reseau-rosa.eu](mailto:animation@reseau-rosa.eu)). All contributions are welcome!

## THIS MONTH'S EDITORIAL

**This month's bulletin provides additional information to ROSA Focus N° 17 (July 2009)**

The theme of the Month's Highlight for July was the access to agricultural inputs. We are taking a further look at the subject to suggest some documents that will add to the debate.

There has been a new wave of actions to improve access to inputs following the food crisis in 2008, which highlighted the structural weaknesses in support for agriculture. The attraction of such mechanisms was proved by the fact that the EU wanted agricultural inputs supply scheme to be funded by the Food Facility.

The documents we have chosen are a reminder of the importance of undertaking careful preliminary studies before setting up this type of project. For example, the eight case studies in the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) document on emergency relief show that if no analyses are done to ascertain the inputs farmers expect and the causes of crises, local economies can suffer. In the same vein, Claire Chastre and Simon Levine show that food security interventions in the Great Lakes region failed to meet their goal because they settled for preconceived responses.

In order to gain better understanding of the issues of access to inputs, and particularly seeds, CIAT and its partners have drawn up a series of Practice Briefs that offer a range of good practice and experiences in the field of seed aid. CIAT's website gives more details about seed aid and provides analyses and assessments.

This month, ROSA Focus has additional material with UNICEF and ODI country reports (Mali, Senegal, Ghana and Equatorial Guinea) on social protection of children in West and Central Africa.

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## ONLINE LIBRARY

### Improving access to agricultural inputs

#### *ROSA Focus - This Month's Highlight N°17 - Improving access to agricultural inputs in response to the rise in food prices (July 2009)*

Faced with soaring food prices, many national and international initiatives have been launched. Among the measures that are often recommended, supplying agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilisers, or subsidising them, are considered to be a priority.

This Month's Highlight asks about the effectiveness of these interventions, their advantages and limits. To what extent do they contribute to stimulating agricultural production and improving food security in the short and long term? Are they appropriate for supporting the process of recovering from the crisis, and in what conditions? What are the limits and opportunities of this approach? The aim is to add to the debate and enrich the discussion, based on experience acquired over the last fifteen years, and also to improve the effectiveness of these interventions and guarantee their sustainability.

In French: [Améliorer l'accès aux intrants agricoles en réponse à la hausse des prix agricoles](#)

In English: [Improving access to agricultural inputs in response to the rise in food prices](#)

#### *Addressing seed security in disaster response. Linking relief with development - CIAT International Center for Tropical Agriculture (2004)*

This volume contains eight case studies undertaken to evaluate various forms of emergency seed aid. The objectives were to understand if and how vulnerable farmers are being helped by the kinds of assistance they receive. The work was undertaken over a two-year period, in seven countries in Africa.

Emergency seed system assistance was delivered in six out of the eight cases in response to what was characterized as an acute stress. That is, acute seed insecurity was presumed to have been brought on by distinct, short-duration events. However, more in-depth analysis, in all six cases,

showed the problems to be of a more chronic, systemic nature (declining productivity, water-related stress, civil unrest, misplaced policies). The result of an acute response in a more chronically stressed context means that the problem is not alleviated and that seed system assistance is then needed again and again. This may even have negative impact on the vulnerable population.

The overview report gives the major features and results of the case studies in order to improve practices in seed aid. It is available in English and French. The full report (only available in English) brings case studies abstracts that provide context and intervention-specific findings.

In French: [L'aide humanitaire d'urgence et la sécurité semencière](#)

In English: [Addressing seed security in disaster response](#)

#### *Missing the point: an analysis of food security interventions in the Great Lakes - Levine, Chastre et al. - ODI (2004)*

This paper is concerned with food security in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Based on seven case studies (including two cases of seeds distribution) in three countries (Uganda, Burundi and DRC), it concludes that many, if not most, food security interventions there have failed to address the needs of people affected by crises.

The same stereotyped interventions are being used in nearly all circumstances, largely because these responses are not based on an understanding of the real needs of people, and insufficient attempts have been made to find out what those needs might be. Many responses were based on questionable and untested assumptions, were plagued by logical inconsistencies, and provided poor value for money.

The paper calls on humanitarian agencies to acknowledge that there is a problem, and to increase their commitment to confronting it. Although many of the recommendations have been made before, this study aims to add urgency to agency and donor attempts to improve food security responses. Although the study is based on evidence from the Great Lakes, some of the results are also relevant to other places (for instance southern Africa or the Horn of Africa).

In English: [Missing the point. An analysis of food security interventions in the Great Lakes](#)

### ***Seed Aid for Seed Security - Practice Briefs for Practitioners - CIAT (2006)***

Seed aid practice is very complex. CIAT working with Care Norway and the CRS produced these Practice Briefs to answer questions of practitioners and highlight innovative practices. Briefs 3 to 7 summarise the major questions of seed security (*Agrobiodiversity and seed relief; Using seed to give farmers access to seed of new varieties; Understanding seed systems used by small farmers; Assessing seed system security*). Briefs 8 to 10 deal with more technical aspects of evaluation and decision making.

These practice briefs are illustrated with examples from African projects.

In French: [Aide semencière pour une sécurité semencière. Fiches pratiques](#)

In English: [Seed aid for seed security. Practice Briefs](#)

### ***Useful link***

#### ***- CIAT Website - Seeds Systems Under Stress***

The International Center for tropical Agriculture (CIAT), in partnership with relief and developmental agencies, facilitates the Seed Systems Under Stress Programme, which concentrates on:

- Helping to shape emergency relief, particularly in terms of seed aid and germplasm restoration approaches;
- Analysing the effects of different types of disaster (war, drought, flood, or crop plague) on the functioning of seed systems;
- Evaluating operations to further refine practices of seed system maintenance and strengthening in the context of both short-term (acute) and longer-term (chronic) stress;
- Working with policy makers to institutionalise "best practices";

The web site provides documents for practitioners and more in-depth papers on seed security.

## **ROSA NEWS**

### ***Social Protection and children in West and Central Africa***

The UNICEF West and Central African regional office has undertaken a major study on social protection and children in the region, to get a better understanding of the status of social protection systems and the opportunities and challenges to strengthen social protection for the poorest and most vulnerable children. The study, carried out together with ODI and African researchers, has resulted in a series of thematic reports published in March 2009 (see [ROSA Watch n°5](#)) and five country reports. Four of them have been recently published; the report focusing on Congo is still to be issued.

These papers provide an overview of poverty, vulnerability and risk in each country and discuss the extent to which social protection systems and instruments are addressing child-specific experiences of poverty and vulnerability.

#### ***Social protection to tackle child poverty in Senegal - UNICEF/ODI (September 2009)***

Senegal has made significant progress in poverty reduction, with the proportion of its people living in poverty falling from 68% in 1994 to 50% in 2005. There has been economic growth, although below the 7% required to achieve the targets of the country's second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2006–2010, and this shortfall challenges the country's prospects of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Senegal has improved its human development indicators, although national figures hide disparities across gender, regions and income levels, indicating the need for policy and programmes to close these gaps.

The full report is available in French and a briefing paper in French and English.

In French: [La protection sociale des enfants au Sénégal](#)

In English: [Social protection to tackle child poverty in Senegal](#)

#### ***Social protection to tackle child poverty in Mali - UNICEF/ODI (September 2009)***

Mali has improved its social and economic policy performance during the past decade. Despite

various adverse shocks, such as exposure to drought, sound macroeconomic management has produced real GDP growth averaging a sturdy 5% per annum from 1994 to 2006. Yet poverty remains widespread and, despite the government's efforts to increase access to basic services, human development indicators remain low.

The full report is available in French and a briefing paper in English.

In French: [La protection sociale des enfants au Mali](#)

In English: [Social protection to tackle child poverty in Mali](#)

***Social protection and children: Opportunities and challenges in Ghana - UNICEF/ODI (September 2009)***

Over the past decade Ghana has made impressive progress in stimulating economic growth, reducing poverty and improving governance. Indeed, international assessments of the country frequently herald it as a 'shining example' of development in the African continent. The real GDP growth rate has been high for the past decade, exceeding 6% a year in 2006-2008, although there is some caution given the country's vulnerability to fluctuating international commodity prices (especially gold and agricultural and forestry exports, including cocoa). Moreover, there is a broader concern that economic growth has been prioritized at the expense of social service provision and quality and tackling social exclusion. In 2005/06, one quarter of the population still lives below the poverty line and 18.5% of Ghanaians live in extreme poverty, with inadequate resources even to meet their basic food subsistence needs.

Full report and briefing paper are available in English.

In English: [Social protection and children: opportunities and challenges in Ghana](#)

***Social protection to tackle child poverty in Equatorial Guinea - UNICEF/ODI (September 2009)***

Equatorial Guinea has experienced unprecedented economic transformation in a very short period of time. As a result of oil revenues, the country's rapid economic growth is unparalleled almost anywhere in the world.

However, while the country has flourished economically it is dangerously over-dependent on this single non-renewable commodity and has very poor social indicators with an estimated poverty rate of 76.8% in 2006, one of the highest in Africa. The country also has the largest gap between its gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and its human development index ranking (HDI). Agricultural productivity has declined, and the country suffers from weak governance and institutions.

The full report is available in Spanish and a briefing paper in English and Spanish.

In English: [Social protection to tackle child poverty in Equatorial Guinea](#)

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**New documents online**

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***The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets 2009. High food prices and the food crisis - FAO (2009)***

This FAO report begins with a detailed examination of the nature of world price rises and their effect locally. Poor urban consumers have suffered from the rise in price of their food, part of which is imported.

Paradoxically, producers from developing countries have not been able to use the high prices as an opportunity to invest in means of production and increase productivity because the price increases have not filtered down to them. Moreover, small farmers have had only limited access to inexpensive agricultural inputs, and their means of production, like their access to available institutions and infrastructures, have remained limited. Furthermore, some of the policies adopted (such as price control and reduced customs tariffs) have not encouraged them to invest. Consumers must be protected against high food prices, but producers must also be encouraged to invest in production, increase productivity and produce supply to meet the demand.

This report provides an accessible insight into debates on agricultural markets economics and policies. The food security issues that depend on these policies are fundamental.

In French: [La situation des marchés agricoles en 2009](#)

In English: [The state of agricultural commodity markets 2009](#)

***Update on the food situation in the Sahel.  
Special Issue, 8 years of data - Afrique Verte  
(August 2009)***

Afrique Verte and its partners have recorded market cereal prices since June 2001, making the August 2009 issue of the “Update of the food situation in the Sahel” the 100<sup>th</sup> in the series. Afrique Verte provides an analysis of cereal price trends over the last 8 years. It is interesting to note that the fluctuations are fairly different from the international market trends.

With the exception of local and imported rice, cereal prices remained stable between 2001 and 2009. However, fluctuations were large between these two periods. The highest peak was at the end of 2005, and the 2008 food crisis had a less marked effect on prices. Moreover, the price drop during 2009 was very slight, if not inexistent in most markets.

In French: [Point sur la situation alimentaire au Sahel. 8 ans de relevés](#)

***Crop and food security assessment mission to Madagascar - FAO/WFP (August 2009)***

The evaluation mainly focused on the food situation and perspectives in the south of the island. It was based on household surveys in several different regions of the country in June following the natural disasters (cyclones, drought) and political events at the beginning of the year.

Nationwide, the 2008-2009 growing season had good rainfall in the main rice-growing areas of the country, particularly the centre, north and west. Although the political situation means that last year's government interventions are not being continued, good off-season rice production is expected.

The total need for cereals is expected to exceed the total amount of cereal available, but imports should cover the deficit. According to SAP (Early warning system) estimates, the inhabitants of 44 local boroughs in the south are already in a situation of extreme vulnerability. As well as food aid targeted at the most vulnerable groups, targeted seed distribution is also recommended, so that, right from September 2009, affected households can begin the new growing season in better conditions.

In French: [Mission d'évaluation de la sécurité alimentaire à Madagascar](#)

In English: [Crop and food security assessment mission to Madagascar. Overview](#)

*This bulletin was written by the GRET team in charge of animating ROSA (Operational Food Security Network). It is an initiative of AIDCO E6 (thematic support for food security, rural development and environment) in collaboration with AIDCO G4 (Training and Knowledge Management). The viewpoints expressed do not in any case represent the official European Commission viewpoint.*