



## 2012 Sahel Food & Nutrition Crisis: ECHO's response at a glance

### Scope of the crisis

- The 2012 Sahel food & nutrition crisis meant food insecurity for approx. 18.7 million people and severe acute malnutrition for 1 million children across 9 countries of West Africa.

### A focus on saving lives through care for severe acute malnutrition and food assistance

- The European Commission (ECHO & DEVCO) provided €337 million in humanitarian assistance, more than a third of the overall aid effort.

- This funding, along with the combined efforts of UN agencies, governments and NGOs has helped:

- 6.8 million people through food assistance, including 3.4 million people who received livelihoods support in the form of cash transfers, paid work or paid training.

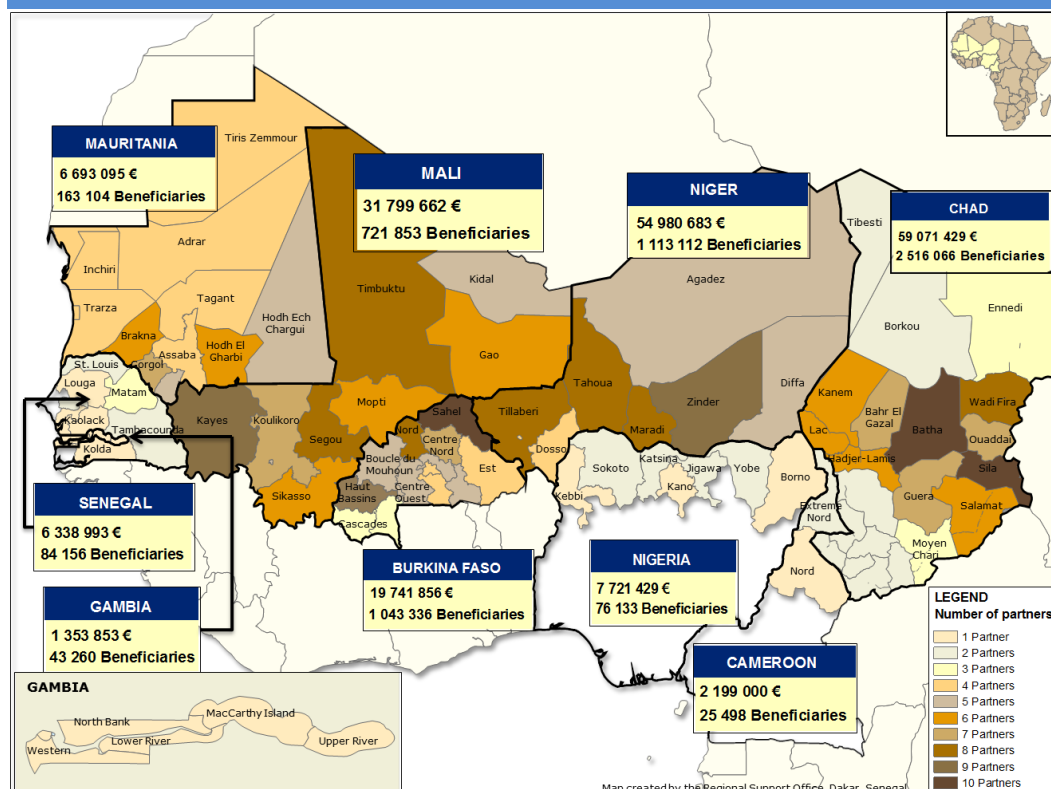
- 3.6 million people through nutrition programmes, mainly children and breastfeeding mothers, including 850,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

### Building resilience

The European Commission was instrumental in the launch of AGIR-Sahel, a global alliance with a 'Zero Hunger' goal by 2032.

20% of ECHO funds for the Sahel crisis went to resilience strengthening forms of aid.

### ECHO contributions, numbers of beneficiaries & partners



### A crisis in the making - poor harvests, high prices & conflict against a backdrop of extreme poverty

As early as October 2011 poor rains combined with high food prices and a significant drop in migrants' remittances from Libya, Côte d'Ivoire and Europe signaled the start of a severe food and nutrition crisis across the Sahel. In December 2011, the Food Crisis Prevention Network estimated a cereal deficit of 2.6 million tons for the Sahel. Production was 25% lower compared to 2010 and 2% below the five year average.

By December 2011, the five most affected countries - Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad<sup>1</sup> - had declared a crisis and called for humanitarian assistance. Apart from Niger who had previously prepared a food crisis response plan, it was the first time for

<sup>1</sup> Niger: October 2011; Mauritania & Mali: November 2011; Burkina Faso & Chad: December 2011; Senegal only declared a crisis in May 2012 following the election of a new president.

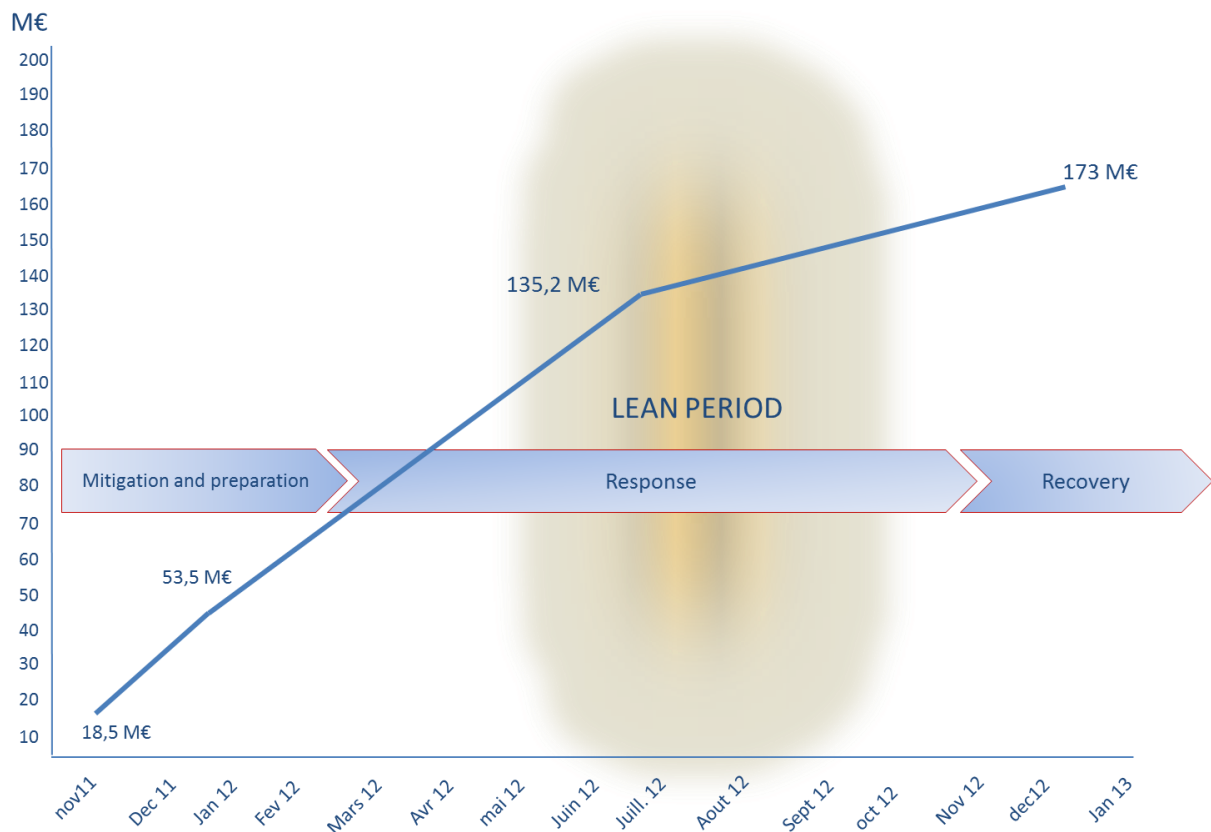
the other governments. The estimation of needs was a relatively complex process involving governments of the region, INGOs, the UN and the Permanent Interstate Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

By early March, it was estimated that 7.8 million people were in need of emergency food assistance and 1.03 million children under five would suffer from severe acute malnutrition. In May, the figure of food insecure was revised upwards to 17 million people, 8.1 million of whom were facing severe food insecurity.

To make matters worse Mali became the scene of political turmoil. What started with a Tuareg uprising against Malian government forces in January 2012 and a subsequent military coup in March, degenerated into a profound crisis. This severely hampered humanitarian aid to people in the north of the country, disrupted supply lines, and led tens of thousands of Malians to flee to neighbouring countries and to the south where they found refuge in already food insecure host communities.

### ECHO funding - quick, substantial & complementary

Together with its partners, ECHO contributed to the early recognition of the 2012 food and nutrition crisis and to formulating an adequate response. In total, ECHO mobilized €173 million for the food and nutrition crisis, in addition to €58 million to address needs arising from the Mali conflict. This was the highest ever envelope allocated to humanitarian aid in the Sahel by ECHO, more than three times the amount in 2011 and twice the amount mobilized during the last nutrition crisis in 2010.



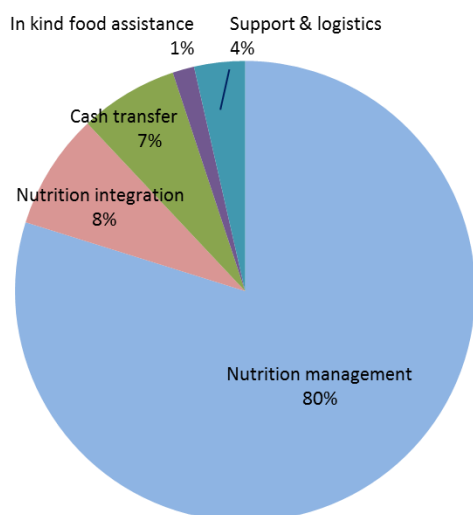
Early detection of food deficits by ECHO and some of its partners enabled a swift mobilization of funds, despite the initial failing of some early warning systems. These funds were essential to ensure appropriate supply lines, especially to landlocked countries such as Chad and Niger where these take months to organise. By February 2012, ECHO had already made €95 million available to partners so that they could mobilize resources and start operations prior to the lean season.

The European Commission's development aid department DEVCO mobilized another €164.5 million for Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and for regional projects. More than €20 million of DEVCO funds were used for immediate food assistance with the majority earmarked to support the recovery phase in 2013 and beyond, among others for livelihoods support and the replenishment of food stocks.

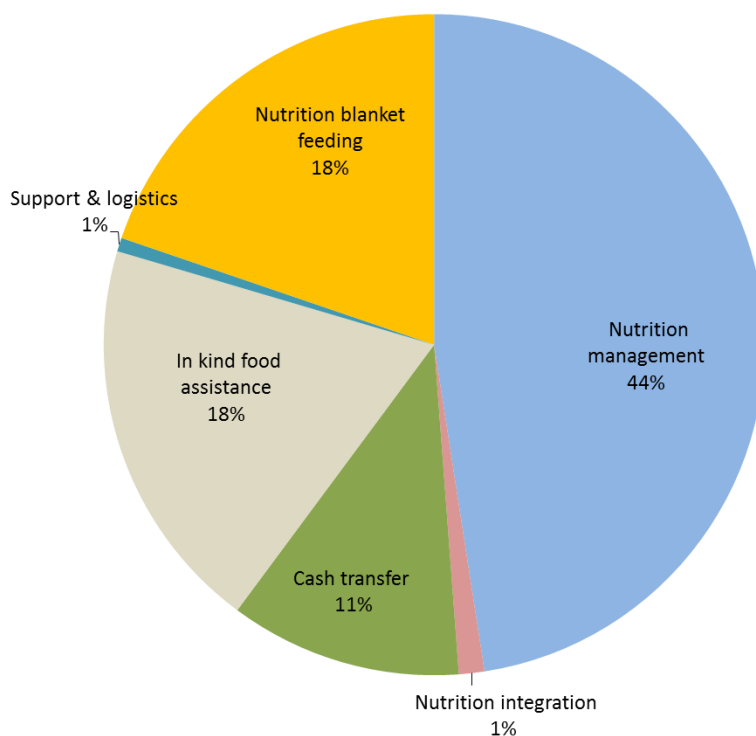
### Priority sectors - nutrition care, cash transfers & response to conflict

In West Africa, an estimated 300,000 children continue to die each year of causes linked to malnutrition (*Lancet, 2008*) with countries of the Sahel recording some of the highest child mortality rates in the world. Since 2007, ECHO therefore developed a regional Sahel strategy which has focused on the prevention and treatment of malnutrition. In addition to a considerable scale up of nutrition care directly funded by ECHO – from 250,000 severely malnourished children in 2010 to 460,000 in 2012 - the strategy has encouraged the prevention of acute malnutrition through targeted blanket feeding with nutrition supplements, food assistance and health care.

**2011 Sahel funding**  
56,2 Million Euros



**2012 Sahel funding**  
173 Million Euros



More than one-third of ECHO funded food assistance in 2012 consisted of cash or voucher distribution mechanisms. If we exclude Chad where the capacity to implement such mechanisms is low, the ratio of cash and vouchers versus in-kind food assistance was 2 to 1. Compared to 'traditional' food distributions, cash and vouchers allow for a more targeted and dignified response, give beneficiaries more flexibility and support local economies rather than disrupt them by importing food. Overall, one-fifth of ECHO funded assistance in 2012 could be considered resilience strengthening, i.e. it aimed at preventing the poorest and most at risk of crisis impact from being severely affected. This type of funding also included support for improved early warning data, better targetting of the poorest, community care and training.

A specificity of ECHO funding in 2012 was the support to projects at regional level in order to enhance the consistency and coherence of the response. Even if a scale up of aid efforts without compromising on quality remains challenging, the aid provided by ECHO and its partners is widely acknowledged to have helped avert a large-scale disaster in 2012. Another particularity of ECHO's Sahel strategy is the increasing collaboration with governments to ensure a sustainability of achievements.

Finally, the conflict in Mali required substantial funding for emergency assistance of a different nature: to address the most basic needs in terms of shelter, health, water, food and nutrition as well as protection of the more than 350,000 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger and internally displaced in the south of the country.

## **ECHO partners – unprecedented scale-up of aid effort**

In the interest of coherence and quality, ECHO funded more 'regional' projects in 2012 enabling UN agencies such as UNICEF, WFP and OCHA to conduct operations across the region and according to needs. Save the Children also received support to carry out and promote Household Economy Analysis (HEA) within the region in order to identify the poorest households, better understand their needs and the risks they face. This analysis has shattered the myth that boosting local food production is THE answer to food insecurity in the Sahel. It appears that the most impoverished and indebted families have less and less access to farmland and are increasingly reliant on casual work and markets where prices of staple foods are often beyond their reach.

ECHO has funded numerous partners in 2012. INGOs received a smaller share of ECHO funds compared to 2011 (35% in 2012 compared to 73% in 2011) but the absolute amount disbursed was superior (€50 million in 2012 compared to €33 million in 2011). UN agencies received a large share of the funds due to the need to organize the region-wide supply and distribution of therapeutic and supplementary foods (UNICEF), blanket feeding and food assistance (WFP), and the assistance to Malian refugees.

Supporting INGOs who have proven to successfully manage nutrition and health projects remains a crucial avenue for ECHO. They are often at the forefront of innovation. ECHO has funded pilot projects which have demonstrated the benefits of family planning; of providing free health care for under fives and pregnant and breastfeeding women; and of combining cash transfers with the distribution of fortified foods in order to prevent malnutrition.

Overall, ECHO financed a wide range of partners in 2012, aiming for maximum impact and quality while promoting analysis to help pre-empt future crises.

## Lessons learnt for 2013

People in the Sahel are facing a triple crisis: an ongoing food and nutrition crisis; an erosion of their resilience due to recurrent stresses and chronic food insecurity; and region-wide ramifications of the Mali conflict.

ECHO is concerned that optimism following good rains and harvests in 2012 may eclipse the critical situation still facing many people in the Sahel this year. In spite of last year's significant aid effort, funds and capacities did not stretch to include livelihoods support for the poorest. 10.8 million people remain food insecure in the Sahel and 1.4 million children are at risk of dying from severe acute malnutrition if left untreated. Niger and Burkina Faso aside, governments are late drawing up crisis response plans, and the mobilization of funds also seems to be lagging behind compared to last year.

In an effort to stop the endless cycle of crises in the Sahel, the European Commission (EC) has been instrumental in forging the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR-Sahel) launched on 6 December 2012 in Ouagadougou. The initiative brings together West-African governments and organizations, the donor community, development and humanitarian stakeholders around a 'Zero Hunger' goal within the next 20 years.

With its focus on humanitarian aid which is resilient strengthening, ECHO intends to save as many lives as possible by shifting from crisis management to risk management and by sharing its lessons learnt for a more effective development aid. Experience shows that better targeting of the poorest and understanding of what makes them vulnerable to malnutrition and hunger are key to more effective long-term investments and development strategies. A narrow focus on increased agricultural production will not prevent a rapidly growing class of poor Sahelians from falling prey to malnutrition or hunger. It is equally important to ensure basic services such as health and nutrition care. And ultimately, the creation of safety social nets for the ultra poor is indispensable.



This girl in northern Burkina Faso lost two of her siblings from disease and malnutrition. Her mother says that the free health and nutrition care that now exist will prevent her from losing any more children. © EC/ECHO/Anouk Delafortrie