

PRESS RELEASE



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Tajikistan's hidden crisis – the EU extends a helping hand

Dushanbe, 25 June 2012 – Responding to what has been a slow onset and largely a hidden crisis, the European Commission allocating €2 million to help people in need in Tajikistan cope with the effects of the harsh winter.

Due to the exceptionally bad weather conditions over the last year, rural communities have lost a significant part of their crops, animals have died due to lack of fodder and pasture, the level of indebtedness has increased, and many families now find themselves struggling to feed themselves and their animals. In many rural areas, there was no money to buy seeds for the planting season. Stocks of food and savings have been largely exhausted. The main functioning coping mechanism is temporary migration, notably to Russia and Kazakhstan.

While national and local authorities have been responding to the crisis, the scale of the needs is such that particularly in remote and disaster prone areas, capacities are overwhelmed and needs cannot be met. The situation in many areas has become very serious and immediate external support has been warranted to prevent a further deterioration of the situation.

The €2 million will be used to assist people who have exhausted their food supplies and who have lost their animals and crops. Assistance will focus on ensuring food security for the most vulnerable families over a limited period in order to help bridge the gap until the next harvest. The needs of the most affected and vulnerable population will be addressed through interventions that have immediate effect, such as cash or food transfers. Some 50,000 people will benefit from this aid package, particularly among the poor and affected people living in remote mountainous areas and people with no access to land.

The Commission will channel the funding through its humanitarian partners in Tajikistan.

Background

Despite good economic growth within the last decade, Tajikistan remains the poorest country in Central Asia. Chronic poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards remain very

high, particularly in remote areas. The country is characterized by a high reliance on imported food, mainly due to the limited availability of arable land (only 7%).

Since mid-2011, Tajikistan has been affected by a series of climatic shocks which have had a serious impact on food security and livelihoods among the most vulnerable members of the population. These shocks include a very poor harvest due to drought in 2011 followed by an extremely long and harsh winter which lasted into April 2012. The result has been loss of crops and livestock. At the same time, there have been sharp price increases in food, fodder and fuel. This has meant increased hardship and food insecurity for poor communities.

ECHO has been present in Tajikistan since 1992 when it funded relief operations for the victims of the civil war which caused a major humanitarian crisis. Since 1992, ECHO has provided almost €250 million for various interventions in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries of Central Asia, of which over €175 million for Tajikistan.

In early 2012, ECHO launched the 7th cycle of DIPECHO, ECHO's disaster risk reduction programme, to help improve the resilience of this disaster-prone country.

For more information:

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm