



A wall against hunger in the Sahel

Ecosystems restoration for resilient food systems in the Sahel

Context

The Sahel region is a complex and diverse context in which humanitarian, development, and peace agendas intersect. Aside from persistent food insecurity and chronic and acute malnutrition, the region faces widespread poverty, escalating conflict and displacement, an environment threatened by land degradation, limited and unequal access to basic services, poorly integrated markets, recurring episodes of drought and flooding, and erratic rainfall patterns.

Climate change is also a major aggravating factor, adding to the recurring environmental, social, economic, and political shocks and stressors. More than 1.8 million hectares are lost each year in the Sahel. Urgent action is needed to help manage and restore once fertile land.

In this context, most food systems are not resilient enough to meet the food and nutrition needs of a growing Sahelian population. At the same time, the region holds great potential for ecosystem restoration, including a wealth of untapped groundwater and renewable energy sources. The demographic dividends could be enormous if its young population could have access to the necessary resources and opportunities to thrive.

A wall against hunger: two initiatives with a common objective

Adopted by the African Union in 2007, the **Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative** brings together 11 African countries, as well as international organizations, research institutes, civil society and community organizations. Born of the political will of



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African countries to tackle desertification and develop the potential of arid and semi-arid zones for sustainable management of natural resources and the fight against poverty, the Great Green Wall is a vast mosaic of green, productive landscapes across members countries in North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

The Great Green Wall Initiative, through its Ten-Year Priority Investment Plan, has as objectives among others the recovery of 100 million hectares of degraded land, the sequestration of 250 megatons of carbon equivalent, the establishment of 3,000 Integrated Community Farms and the creation of 10 million sustainable productive jobs across the right-of-way.

Since 2018, WFP, in collaboration with governments and partners, has scaled up an integrated resilience programme in five countries of the Sahel region (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad): the approach is based on participatory watershed planning, triggering a variety of land rehabilitation activities and linking them to school meals, nutrition programmes, and support to smallholder farmers. In practice, this means bringing degraded land back to life, enabling access to food and healthy diets, getting children back to school and developing value chains to boost incomes and green jobs.

The GGW and WFP share a common objective: food security through sustainable land use. They are boosting the resilience and ensuring sustainable

livelihoods of individuals, agropastoral communities and systems in vulnerable and shock-prone areas across the Sahel, using an integrated approach to transform degraded land into productive ecosystems through restoration– the very foundation of food systems. In this vision, the WFP Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa and the GGW signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation and partnership in 2018.

Key achievements: The Great Green Wall

- To date, almost **20 million hectares of degraded land have been restored** in intervention zones across the **11 countries**.
- More than **20 million trees planted** in intervention zones.
- More than **350,000 green jobs generated** for people and communities.
- At least **USD 90 million generated** for people and communities.
- Over **350 Integrated Community Farms** have been established in the Great Green Wall row.
- A large **Green Youth Caravan** was organized to raise awareness among youth to limit the bleeding of valid arms of the Sahel.
- At least **10 million people trained** on sustainable land and water management.



WFP's contribution: the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme

Last year alone:

- More than **3 million people benefited** from the Integrated Resilience activities package, in 890 sites, comprising more than 2,800 villages across the 5 countries assisted.
- More than **1.8 million people** benefited from assets construction or rehabilitation.
- More than **530,000 children received a daily and nutritious school meal**.

Since the beginning of the scale-up in 2018:

- Nearly **220,000 ha of land were rehabilitated**, 2,160 ha of garden created, more than 2,000 ponds constructed, as well as 650 wells and 270 boreholes.
- A total of **575 Community-Based Participatory Planning (CB-PPs)** exercises were completed with communities and partners.

At outcome level, we see that:

- **Communities have an increased capacity to withstand seasonal shocks and stressors.** In 2022, Niger faced its worst food security crisis in a decade. While WFP's resilience intervention areas were among the hardest hit, 80% of WFP's intervention villages located in municipalities classified as extremely vulnerable by the government did not require humanitarian assistance.

- **Ecosystem restoration contributed significantly to natural regeneration.** A study conducted by USAID and NASA demonstrated the impact of WFP interventions on vegetation change, with an average increase in vegetation indicators of almost 50 percent.
- Communities reported an **improved access to land and water**, enabling them to increase and diversify crop and/or livestock production, and eat a healthier diet.
- The school feeding programme helped **improve children's overall health and nutrition**, enabling them to learn and perform better in school. School feeding also empowered girls by encouraging parents to give them the same opportunity to complete their education as boys.
- Households indicated that the assets created had reduced daily hardships - many of which are traditionally borne by women and girls - and reported **improved access to markets and basic services** such as water, sanitation, health and education.
- **Resilience activities facilitated gender dialogue, contributed to women's empowerment, provided opportunities for young people in their villages, and reduced distress migration.** A recent study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) found that the programme is reducing stereotypes, suspicion and mistrust and enabling stronger bonds and bridges within and between communities.



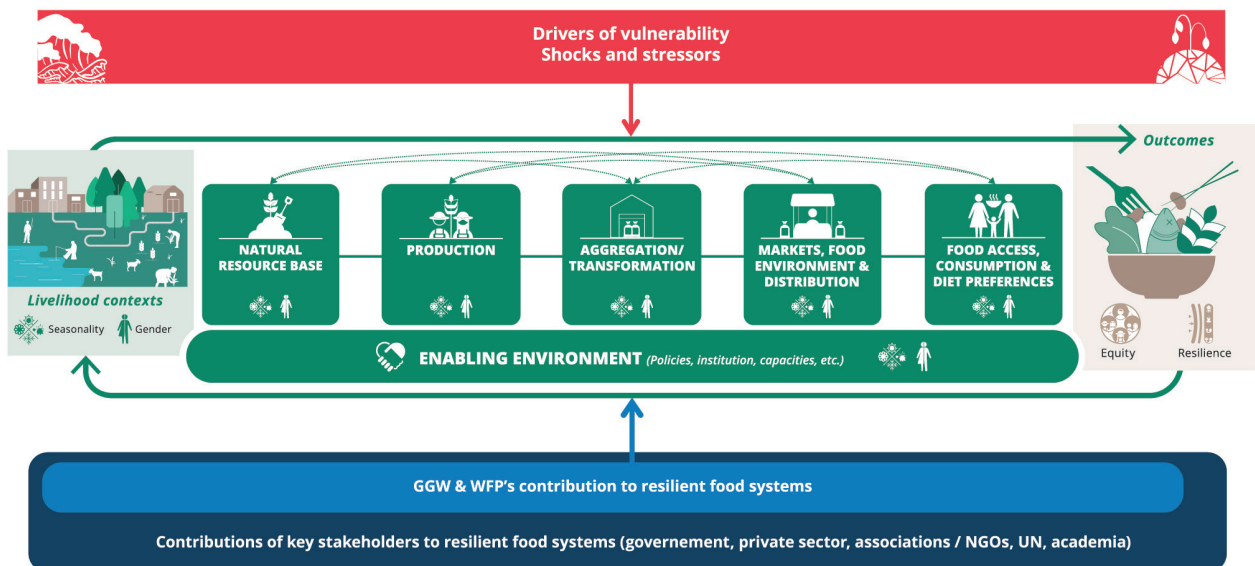


A mosaic of sustainable land use practices

The GGW and WFP share a common vision of vibrant and resilient food systems, envisaging a mosaic of green and productive landscapes across the Sahel. Their collaboration encompasses a holistic understanding of the sociological, anthropological, and eco-geographical dynamics within local communities and regions. This collaborative approach involves on-the-ground implementation of low-carbon initiatives that foster sustainable management, restoration, protection, and conservation of land resources, water, and forestry. Simultaneously, it incorporates a comprehensive range of activities aimed at generating income, improving access to vital infrastructure, enhancing healthcare and

education services, and ensuring reliable access to clean water, sanitation, and energy resources.

First evidence shows that the integrated resilience package, implemented by a coalition of partners and at scale, as well as aligned with national objectives and communities' needs, is likely to have farther reaching and more sustainable impacts on the resilience of people, communities and systems than scattered, standalone interventions focusing on a single shock or stressor. It provides a comprehensive model to strengthen all elements of food systems, including production, transformation and consumption, while safeguarding the sustainability of their environmental bases and building a new generation of innovators.



Find out more about
The Great Green
Wall Initiative



Find out more about
WFP's Integrated
Resilience Programme



Photos 1-4 & 6: WFP/Evelyn Fey
Photo 5: WFP/Asma Achahboun

