

# Morocco: Drought Assessment Report Brief

January 2023

This brief is based on [Morocco: Drought Assessment Report](#), written by Ayham Taha in December 2022.

Morocco's drought periods have increased in frequency and intensity over the past two decades, mainly due to global climate change and water shortage in the country. This has caused increasingly severe challenges to the economy, agriculture, and food security, which affects rural and urban households differently. Particularly for farmers who depend on agriculture and livestock, the recurring drought is damaging their livelihood and pushing them to migrate to urban areas in search of jobs. The drought seasons are more challenging for women, who are often responsible for fetching household water, and burden women with additional household responsibilities as men migrate to urban areas.

Rainfall is often the single biggest factor in determining Moroccan economic growth rates and this year, the cereals harvest was two-thirds smaller than in 2021 and milk output down by 30%.

To understand the current risk and needs around food security, agriculture, livestock, water availability, and management situations, CARE Morocco conducted a drought assessment from a gender lens in the provinces of El-Hajeb, Beni Mellal, and Marrakech in October 2022. The data was collected from 30 respondents (9 women) through key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with farmers, agro-business owners, livestock herders, veterinarians, extension service providers, and members of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).

## Key Findings

- **Drought and increase in food prices are the two top crises** both men and women prioritize. 93% of respondents (26% women) reported these two impacts as the most significant crises in their communities. Respondents also listed COVID-19 and social/political unrest among the most important crises they face.
- **Income and livelihood losses are the biggest challenges.** Due to drought, farmers' ability to rely on agriculture as a source of income is declining. Male community members in rural areas who used to consider agriculture as their primary source of income decided to migrate to urban areas in search of temporary or permanent jobs.
- **Women are the most affected during the drought season.** The drought and water shortage combined with men migrating to urban areas affects women's role in the household. Women are primarily responsible for fetching water, and drought makes access to water challenging. Additionally, with men migrating to urban areas, women are taking on more responsibilities in addition to their existing daily tasks, which puts them in very overwhelming circumstances.

“There is still a difference between women and men; for example traveling, a man can travel, but women are not; this has a relation to responsibilities; a woman is responsible for livestock, taking care of the house and children, then she can do something if she has a free time.” Female Community Survey Respondent, Marrakech.

“I’m not even sure I will sow wheat this year because the rainfall has been so late.” – Zakaria Khatabi, North of Rabat

- **Agricultural practices are affected and are shifting.**
  - Due to drought and costs of energy and agricultural inputs, **farmers are giving up their cultivation.** Key informants also report that the most affected areas are where agricultural livelihoods are rainfed. Farmers and livestock herders residing in the mountains are facing significant reduction of income due to economic challenges and increased prices.
  - Farmers have progressively stopped using local seeds/seedlings/crops, aiming for a higher yield using foreign inputs that showed low resilience to Moroccan climate and weather.
  - The overall agricultural and livelihood challenges are affecting food security; both women and men respondents prioritized food and nutrition as the second most significant impact, next to livelihoods. Food prices increased with a 15% food inflation rate in June 2022 compared to the same month in 2021.
  - Expenses of veterinary services have increased due to costs of inputs and fuel; this pushed herders to reduce the frequency of veterinary checks.
  - Livestock-related market systems, such as meat, dairy, animal feed, etc., are among the most affected market systems by drought. This affects women, who are the primary actors in the livestock value chain through dairy production, fodder/feed provision, cleaning, and sometimes field grazing.
- **Water consumption is reduced due to high irrigation expense and water scarcity often pushes farmers to pump more ground water.**
  - People are using less water even though they know that means their harvests will be smaller. In the current market, they cannot cover the cost of irrigation even if they are able to sell their crops later. The high production cost and limited purchasing power are directly reducing the amount of food farmers can produce.
  - In some cases, water scarcity forces farmers to pump more groundwater to irrigate their crops. It is unclear what implications this will have for climate change implications and longer-term sustainable solutions and adaptation. On some occasions, pumping water through renewable energy using solar panels allows farmers to pump beyond their actual needs and exhaust the groundwater significantly.

## Recommendations

- **Prioritize recovery for income-generating activity and employment.** Ensure recovery efforts are gender responsive and target the most affected households, farmers, and herders through market linkage, access to capital, skill development, etc. and support agro-business entrepreneurs, especially those with innovative ideas developed by the local community, including youth.
- **Promote women and community engagement.** Engage women and community members in decision-making and interventions to address drought, water shortages, and other economic and social challenges, especially regarding preparedness and resilience building. Interventions should be customized to address the needs of the different communities and gender and age groups.
- **Identify and address the gendered impact deliberately by mainstreaming gender in all interventions.** The drought affects women's access to health, food, education, and other services significantly; thus, it is crucial to put women's and girls' voices and participation central to any intervention.
- **Provide awareness-raising and capacity-building sessions to the local communities, farmers, and women** on water management methods and techniques, smart-climate agriculture and food production, and access to early warning systems and information from official sources.
- **Expand agricultural extension services** and engage key actors to strategically support productivity and agricultural practices.
- **Strengthen coordination** between various development, humanitarian actors, and government institutions.