



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

RESILIENCE  
PROMISING PRACTICES

PROTRACTED CRISES  
AND CONFLICTS

## Agricultural skills training to address the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey

Enhancing livelihood resilience and social cohesion between refugees and host communities

### → Context

More than 5 million Syrians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries as a result of the Syrian crisis. Despite the support provided by host governments and humanitarian actors, refugees in the region are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees globally. Over 3.3 million Syrians have fled across the border into Turkey, placing a significant burden on the host communities; however, Syrian refugees have very limited access to formal and full livelihood and employment opportunities. Most of them make a living by offering their services as seasonal agricultural workers and are paid lower wages. This poses risks to both host and refugee communities and can lead to instability and social tension.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) partnered with the private sector and carried out agricultural skills trainings to enhance livelihood opportunities for both Syrian refugees and host communities.

### → Challenges

FAO's action is designed to **enhance rural livelihoods** through increased access to the local labour market, and also to establish private sector partnerships to fill labour gaps. As such, this intervention is addressing challenges related to **social cohesion** between Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities and the shortage of skilled agricultural labour, particularly during harvest and other key moments in the annual cycle.



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### Key facts

**Geographic coverage** → Adana, Gaziantep, Isparta, Mersin and Sanliurfa (five provinces in southern and southeastern Turkey)

**Key implementing partners** → Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL)

**Resource partners** → The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

**Beneficiaries** → 900 people, selected among Syrian refugees and local host communities (an estimated 7:3 ratio) and trained on different agricultural topics from March to December 2017

**Gender** → Given that the agriculture sector engages more women than any other sector, the project was designed to promote women's involvement (45 percent of total project beneficiaries) and to provide them with opportunities to gain skills and find jobs.

### How does the agricultural skills training scheme increase the livelihood resilience of refugees and host communities?



Building on an assessment showing a shortage of agricultural skills in southern and southeastern Turkey, trainings have been delivered to Syrian refugees and host communities. These trainings have focused on livestock care and herd management; cultivation and harvesting of apple, grape, olive, pistachio and cotton crops; harvesting and post-harvest processes for pepper, citrus and pomegranate crops; greenhouse vegetable production; and irrigation management, farm management and food hygiene.



This strengthens food security and builds the resilience of refugees and host communities by diversifying livelihoods and enhancing job opportunities in the food, agriculture and livestock sectors, which have ample scope for employment. The trainings also foster good relations and reinforce social cohesion between the two communities, thereby contributing to social stability in the region.

## → Methodological approach

- **Identifying the gaps:** Following agricultural labour market assessments and scoping missions, **relevant training topics were selected** to cover the labour market gaps in the five targeted provinces in southern and southeastern Turkey. Next, **FAO identified desired skill sets among the private sector** to complement the training topics. This was done in such a way as to avoid potential competition with host communities over employment opportunities. Finally, **beneficiaries were selected among both Syrian refugees and host communities** at a 7:3 ratio, with the goal of enhancing social cohesion. The selection process adhered to FAO's selection criteria (age, vulnerability, willingness to engage in the agriculture sector and/or past experiences, low income, etc.).
- **Reinforcing technical capacities of implementing partners:** To maximize efficiency, the technical capacities of implementing partners were reinforced at provincial level and regularly monitored. Before each training module, FAO staff conducted **training of trainers (TOTs)**. The subjects were the following: (i) Curriculum development process, (ii) Principles of adult learning, (iii) Effective presentation skills. (iv) Evaluation of trainings (v) Cultural differences and communication with refugees, and (vi) Best practices and lessons learned in the training of refugees.
- **Establishing partnerships with private sector** companies through the organization of vocational trainings and job fairs:
  - Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities attended mixed classrooms during the one-month **theoretical trainings** where Arabic-speaking interpreters facilitated the comprehension of the topics taught in Turkish. These were followed by two-month **on-the-job trainings** enabled the beneficiaries to put the theory into practice.
  - **Job fairs** were organized with private companies in order to match project beneficiaries with job opportunities in the food, agriculture and livestock sectors. During the job fairs, a seminar for company owners provided information on the rights and regulations of hiring Syrian refugees.

## → Impacts

Although further evidence will be needed for this promising practice to become a good practice, the following impacts can already be identified:

- **Adequate training to fill labour demand:** Most of the project beneficiaries, upon completing the trainings, will have the capacities required by potential employees to fill the labour demand. FAO has tailored its activities based on the needs assessment of the agricultural labour market in the project's targeted provinces.
- **Income increase:** Household incomes will increase, giving families the possibility to return to a dignified, productive livelihood.
- **Reinforcement of social cohesion:** At community level, social cohesion will be strengthened by directing the programming at both host communities and refugees, and by providing venues for joint learning and productivity. This will help prevent conflicts and reinforce the peaceful integration of Syrian refugees in the country. A positive impact can already be seen from the on-the-job trainings, which have allowed Turkish company owners to familiarize themselves with Syrian workers. This has helped reduce negative prejudices about cultural differences.



## → Sustainability

Given the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, it is likely that Syrians who have sought refuge in Turkey will remain in the country in the coming years. This assumption is in line with the revised planning figures for the new Turkey Regional Refugee Resilience Plan for 2018-2019, which places a **stronger emphasis on the transition from humanitarian response to a sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic integration approach**.

As such, FAO is playing a key role in advocating for this approach and for including livelihood strategies, particularly for the agriculture sector, which has excellent potential to accommodate the new labour force.

Through this practice, sustainability is ensured by:

- **Providing target beneficiaries with lifelong vocational skills** that will increase their access to the labour markets;
- **Targeting agriculture sectors that are in need of qualified labour force** which will result in productivity increases, creating additional long-term employment opportunities; and
- **Developing the capacity of implementing partners** to deliver technical trainings at provincial level, such as the Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL), the Chambers of Agriculture and Industries and local non-profit agriculture and livestock producer associations. This close collaboration during project implementation will ensure the sustainability of project outcomes, and enable government and private sector partners to more adequately serve their constituents through participatory programme and project design, enhancing coverage through increased efficiency.

## → Replicability and upscaling

Successful implementation of the project's first phase will enable FAO to:

- **Expand implementation of the agricultural livelihood programme** in 2018 to other provinces, reaching more Syrian refugees in need of decent work opportunities, thanks to the support of other implementing partners. In particular, FAO is planning to (i) deliver vocational training in high in-demand technical occupations in 11 provinces in Turkey; (ii) foster income-generating activities for women in the production and marketing of agrifood and handicraft products; and (iii) develop greenhouse practices in rural areas to create more income generation and job opportunities for Syrians and host communities.
- **Increase workers' employability** by organizing seminars to inform interested employers about work permit requirements and procedures. Information sessions will be delivered by the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management and relevant departments of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.
- **Reinforce social protection** by contributing to the current European Union-funded Emergency Social Security Net (ESSN), a social assistance scheme targeting vulnerable refugees in Turkey, implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). This will be done by strengthening government counterparts' capacities to reach Syrians in rural areas.

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is a comprehensive and coherent approach that combines the joint efforts of the development and humanitarian communities, bound by a commitment to build and sustain the conditions for peace, security and respect for human rights.

Upscaling this practice to other provinces will provide more opportunities to more Syrian refugee in Turkey.

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I come from Aleppo, Syria, where there is a war. I escaped to Turkey with my family. In Syria, I worked as a harvest operator in the agriculture sector, and now I continue working in agriculture. I only knew one type of apple back in Syria, but here I learned other types through the trainings. The trainings taught us about cutting and cultivation techniques, as well as pest management in apples. We will continue to harvest apples. Our level of knowledge has increased here.

We are not thinking about returning to Syria now. We want to stay here.

**Muhammed Haciahmed, Isparta**  
Project beneficiary, Syrian

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This is the season to harvest grapes. We have been harvesting grapes for a very long time, but we didn't know that we were doing it incorrectly. Thanks to this project, we learned some valuable lessons in harvesting. We were also trained in pepper harvesting, olive cultivation, irrigation, and harvesting and fertilization techniques. We learned how peppers are prepared, processed and cleaned and how to select good peppers from bad ones. We would like to continue these trainings so that everyone can learn how to harvest more efficiently.

**Sabri Aslan, Islahiye, Gaziantep**  
Project beneficiary, Turkish

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## → More information

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**Turkey Farming: Pilot project equips Syrians to find jobs (video)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxMS7a2ECjY>

**Syrian refugees acquire agricultural job skills and work opportunities in Turkey (story)**

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/stories/stories-detail/en/c/1071924/>

## On resilience good practices:

- [KORE@fao.org](mailto:KORE@fao.org)
- [www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/en/)

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