

Is Food Insecurity Imminent?

The rainy season failed to live up to its name, creating more challenges for an already difficult dry season. Though this year may be complicated, it is not without possibilities for our resourceful volunteers. Turn this unfortunate circumstance into new project opportunities tailored to the problems your community may face. There are many ways to help your community—and yourself—make it through the year as unscathed as possible.

The Burkina Faso government is helping to ameliorate the problem of food availability by encouraging the production of corn—particularly “Bondofa,” a short-cycle, dry-season corn—in certain regions. They are also buying cereal stock from surplus areas with the intent to sell the cereals at low prices when Burkinabe need it most. Unfortunately, some farmers are tempted into the high prices offered by middlemen who intend on making big profits at the expense of poor families.

So what can you, the volunteer, do? Help your community ensure that food is readily available, affordable, and reaching those who need it most. Work with agricultural associations in your area to buy cereal stock now—such as corn, millet, or sorghum—while they are available and cheaper, and store them in cereal banks to sell to the community later at a social price, or *prix social*. The profits will be lower, but so will the prices, and you will know the food is going straight to those who need it the most in the community.

Take the time to educate members of your community on ways to enrich the foods they already have, such as adding everybody’s favorite super plant, moringa, to meals. Promote the mixing of cereals to increase nutritional value, and encourage them to alternate meals rather than eating *tô* all the time.

Encourage variety in diet when certain foods are difficult to come by. If some of the normal options are scarce, try focusing on the leaves of black-eyed peas or hibiscus. They can be grown in the dry season and are a fast option—ready to eat in two weeks. Yellow corn may also be a good crop to suggest if they have access to a well or other water source.

Immune systems will be weakened by the shortage of food, so it is especially important to stress proper hygiene and sanitation practices over the next year. Funding is available through the Water and Sanitation SPA grant for approved projects, so be on the lookout for opportunities in your area. Projects may include any of the following ideas: latrines, water tower repair, water conservation, school pumps, gutters for water collection, hand-washing stations, murals, soap making, cleaning CSPS, or building a well.