



# Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

## Context

Cyclone Ditwah has triggered one of the most severe climate shocks Sri Lanka has faced in decades, compounding vulnerabilities already heightened by years of economic crisis and instability. The cyclone affected all 25 districts, claiming hundreds of lives and disrupting the livelihoods of more than 2.2 million people.<sup>1</sup> More than 1 110 000 cyclone-affected people urgently require food security, agricultural and nutrition assistance.<sup>1</sup> Even before the cyclone, prolonged economic pressures had left many households food-insecure and reliant on negative coping strategies. Pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and young children are now facing increased risks of malnutrition.

Agriculture, Sri Lanka's largest rural livelihood sector and a cornerstone of national food security, has been severely affected. At the onset of the *Maha* 2025/26 season, more than 620 136 hectares of paddy fields had been planted.<sup>2</sup> Floods inundated 106 293 hectares of paddy fields, affecting 145 230 farming households.<sup>2</sup> Vegetables, maize and other field crops also sustained widespread damage, bringing the total impacted area to over 129 496 hectares, and affecting 227 323 farming households nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

Standing water, debris, silt deposition and damaged irrigation systems are delaying replanting, while shortages of seeds, fertilizers and access to machinery are constraining recovery during a narrowly time-bound planting window. Moreover, approximately 200 roads and ten bridges have been destroyed, restricting market access and disrupting transport from Nuwara Eliya, a key production zone. In some affected areas, vegetable prices have increased by 30–200 percent.<sup>1</sup>

In parallel, livestock and fisheries losses are compounding the crisis. More than 37 404 cattle and buffaloes, 15 911 goats and sheep, and 475 000 poultry have been lost.<sup>2</sup> The fisheries and aquaculture sectors have recorded devastating losses estimated at LKR 20.4–21.4 billion (USD 66–69 million).<sup>2</sup>

In this context, protecting and restoring the livelihoods of affected farming, livestock-keeping and fishing communities to enable them to feed themselves and their families is a frontline humanitarian response. Immediate support during the ongoing *Maha* season is critical to prevent missed planting, irreversible production losses and reliance on food aid.



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## Sri Lanka Cyclone Ditwah Urgent call for assistance



FAO requires  
**USD 16.5 million**



To assist  
**256 012 households**  
(**1 028 000 people**)



Period  
**December 2025–**  
**December 2026**



Targeted provinces

- **Central Province** – Kandy, Matale and Nuwara Eliya;
- **Eastern Province** – Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee;
- **North Central Province** – Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa;
- **Northwestern Province** – Kurunegala and Puttalam;
- **Northern Province** – Mullaitivu;
- **Uva Province** – Badulla; and
- **Western Province** – Gampaha.

## FAO's response

### Objective

To support national response efforts, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) seeks to enable the rapid restoration of livelihoods and food security for the most vulnerable farming, livestock-keeping and fishing households, while facilitating early recovery of the agrifood sector.

### Planned interventions

FAO's priority interventions across agriculture, livestock and fisheries and aquaculture are time-critical and require immediate implementation to prevent cyclone-affected households from resorting to negative coping strategies, including the depletion of productive assets. The interventions and corresponding funding requirements are outlined in Table 1.

### Coordination

FAO works closely with the Government of Sri Lanka, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Land and Irrigation and the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources. FAO co-leads the Food Security and Livelihoods Sector alongside the World Food Programme and coordinates closely with the United Nations Country Team to align its response with the Sri Lanka Humanitarian Priorities Plan – Cyclone Ditwah.<sup>2</sup>

Protecting and restoring the livelihoods of affected farming, livestock-keeping and fishing communities to enable them to feed themselves and their families is a frontline humanitarian response.

## Situation analysis



More than **2.2 million** people affected, including **1 110 000 people** in urgent need of food security, agricultural and nutrition assistance



**129 496 hectares** of agricultural land impacted



More than **37 404** large ruminants, **15 911** small ruminants and **475 000** poultry lost<sup>2</sup>



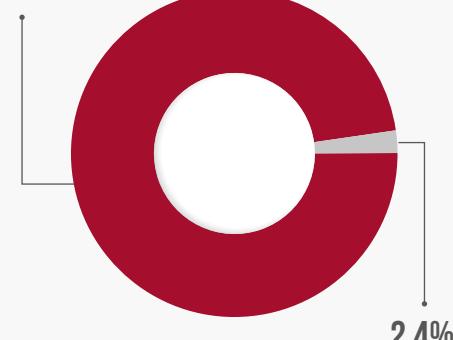
More than **USD 66 million** in fisheries and aquaculture losses<sup>2</sup>

## Funding

### FUNDING GAP

**USD 16.1 million**

**97.6%**



FUNDING AS OF 2 JANUARY 2026

**USD 400 000**

### Resource partner

Norway through FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Resilience Activities





Table 1. Scope and funding requirements of FAO's response

FAO priorities	Type of assistance	Number of beneficiary households	Total cost (USD)
Enabling farming households to protect their livelihoods and resume agricultural production	Provide smallholder farming households with immediate access to fertilizers (urea, triple superphosphate and muriate of potash) and seeds, among other essential agricultural production inputs, to restore production of paddy, maize, vegetables and other key crops.	177 000	7 500 000
Enabling livestock-keeping households to safeguard productive assets	Provide livestock-keeping households with immediate access to animal health services, including vaccines and veterinary kits, and support the restocking of poultry to protect productive assets.	40 000	2 500 000
Restoring fisheries and aquaculture livelihoods	Provide fishing and aquaculture-dependent households with immediate support to repair or replace damaged assets (e.g. boats and fishing gear), enabling the resumption of fisheries and aquaculture production.	15 000	3 500 000
Providing cash-based assistance to vulnerable households	Provide the most vulnerable cyclone-affected households with cash-based assistance, including cash+ and cash for work, to meet immediate needs, support livelihood restoration and enable debris clearance and rehabilitation where markets are functioning.	24 000	3 000 000
<b>Total</b>		<b>256 000</b>	<b>16 500 000</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). 2025. *Sri Lanka Humanitarian Priorities Plan – Cyclone Ditwah*. Colombo. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sri-lanka-sri-lanka-humanitarian-priorities-plan-cyclone-ditwa>

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary damage and loss estimates were obtained from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Livestock and Animal Health, and the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture through bilateral communications with FAO.

## Contact

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