



AGRICULTURE

ECONOMIC SECURITY





INTRODUCTION

Millions of people worldwide depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. But when conflict erupts, crops and infrastructure are destroyed, farmers cannot get the seed, fertilizer and equipment they need, and production grinds to a halt. Food becomes scarce, and communities suffer.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) works to protect people's lives and livelihoods by ensuring that they can continue to grow crops, even in times of trouble. We provide them with high-quality farming supplies and equipment as well as the technical assistance and information that they need to bolster their resilience and develop their livelihoods in a lasting way.

ICRC AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

To make sure that people can grow the crops they need, we undertake a number of activities in the agriculture sector, including:

- distributing seed and farming tools, either directly or through vouchers or seed fairs
- setting up programmes to produce seed and improve its quality
- building or repairing irrigation systems
- promoting the use of agricultural machinery
- working with agriculture ministries to strengthen their capacities.

Expanding farmers' skill sets and knowledge is also key to helping them grow more and better food. This includes raising awareness about farming methods and training farmers in modern agricultural techniques, such as zero tillage or hydroponics.

We frequently work with communities to aid local initiatives by providing cash to pay for supplies and manpower, for example to prepare land for planting or repair essential farming infrastructure (including irrigation canals and pipes).



PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

People's survival can depend on local farming, and that's where we come in. We make sure that people are able to grow crops and generate an income during a crisis, and in its aftermath, which preserves their dignity, strengthens their resilience to future shocks and reduces their dependence on external assistance. And it means that systems for growing crops are preserved even in times of hardship, helping communities to recover more quickly after the crisis has passed.

We help people get essential farming supplies, such as high-quality seed and fertilizers, when they are in short supply or prohibitively expensive. We also help repair existing irrigation systems or introduce more effective solutions, such as drip irrigation. Innovative methods such as rooftop gardening and hydroponics can enable people to continue growing crops for themselves and their animals when their access to land is limited owing to conflict.



SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

If State ministries and research institutes collapse during a conflict, the country's entire agriculture sector may be hurt, and recovery seriously delayed once the conflict is over. Keeping essential services up and running – such as phytosanitary surveillance (ensuring that crops are free of disease and pests), irrigation and the production and distribution of good quality seed and fertilizers – is crucial to containing the damage that conflict can inflict.

We support the public and private sectors during crises to ensure that these important activities continue. For instance, we help repair or rebuild research centres and facilities for producing seed and large-scale irrigation schemes, and we may provide vehicles to replenish destroyed fleets. We also help with developing better seed varieties – for example, ones more resistant to disease. And we train extension workers – employees of agricultural institutions who interact with farmers, gathering statistics and providing technical training – in pest control and give them the protective gear they need to do their work safely.



FARMING IN DETENTION

As part of our broader efforts to ensure that people in places of detention are treated humanely, we work with detaining authorities to set up farming activities. Farms in low-security detention centres can provide detainees with more and better food, improving their daily diet. Growing crops has the added benefit of improving detainees' overall well-being as they stay active and learn new skills.

These crops – which may be grown inside or outside prison walls – include staples, such as cassava, maize or beans, to increase the amount of food available, and vegetables, to boost detainees' micronutrient intake. Detainees might also grow crops such as rice, bananas or sweet potatoes, either to eat or to sell. We support farming in detention centres by providing supplies, technical advice and training in farming methods.





J. Candon/ICRC

WHAT IS ECONOMIC SECURITY?




Economic security is the ability of individuals, households and communities to cover their essential needs and unavoidable expenses in a sustainable way. When assessing economic security, we consider people's physical requirements, the environment and cultural norms.

Essential needs include food, basic shelter, clothing and hygiene. Any expenses related to these needs are considered unavoidable, as are taxes and the costs of health care, education and the assets people need to support themselves and their families.

The ICRC's Economic Security (EcoSec) teams work to bring victims of armed conflict and other violence rapid and flexible assistance in order to meet their essential needs and unavoidable expenses in ways that are sustainable and respect their dignity.

As part of our mandate, the ICRC helps not just civilians but people deprived of their liberty too, so we also do economic security work for detainees.

We help people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything we can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. We also seek to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.

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 twitter.com/icrc
 instagram.com/icrc

International Committee of the Red Cross
19, avenue de la Paix
1202 Geneva, Switzerland
T +41 22 734 60 01
shop.icrc.org
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