

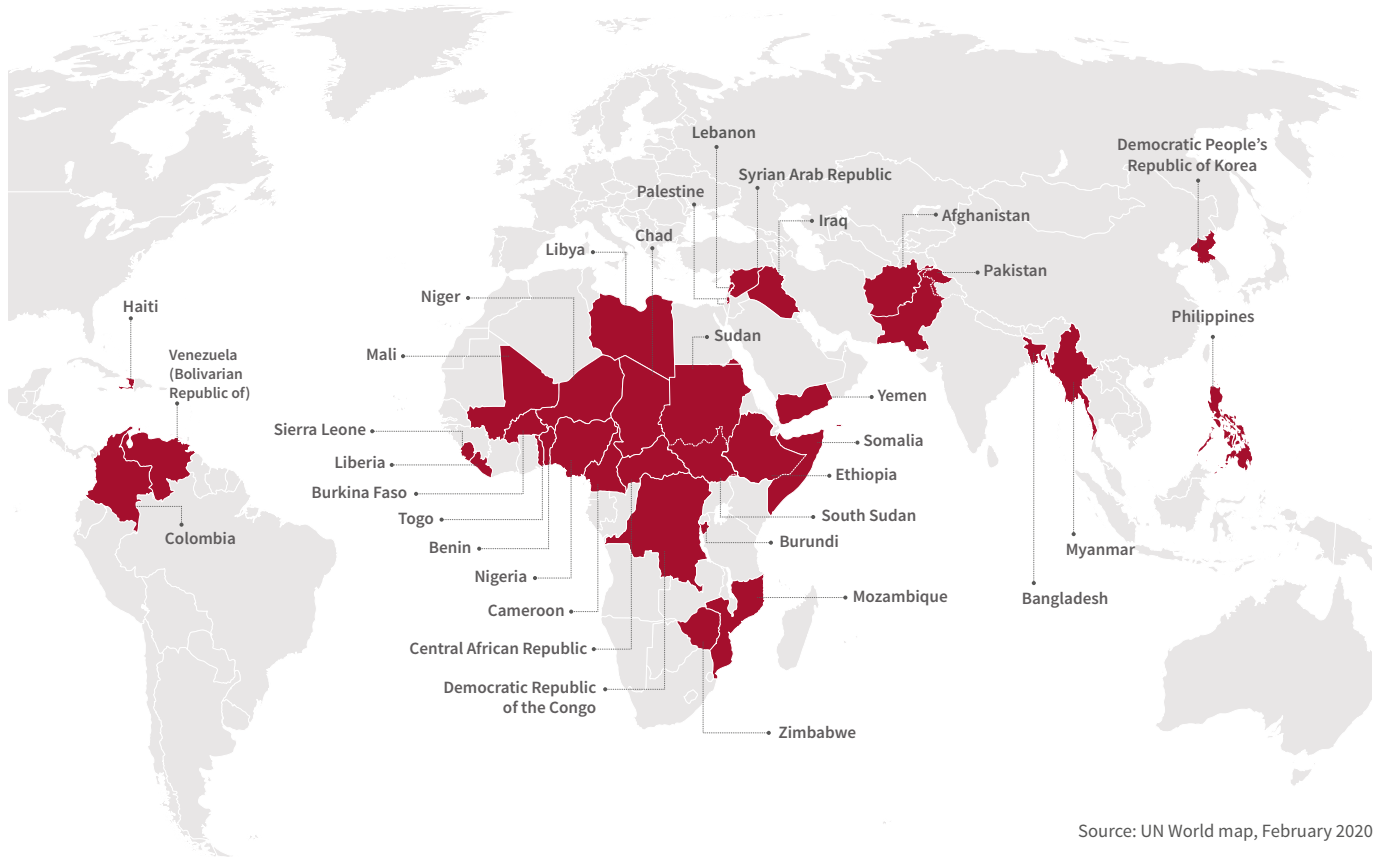


**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**

## **Addressing the impacts of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in food crises**

April–December 2020

**FAO's component of the Global Humanitarian  
Response Plan for COVID-19 (July update)**



Source: UN World map, February 2020



FAO requires  
**USD 428 million**

Protecting and rebuilding livelihoods cannot wait until a later date. It must be placed at the core of the COVID-19 response, today.

The world is standing on the precipice of the greatest food crisis in generations. Worldwide, people and their communities are reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which extend far beyond the direct health impacts.

Food systems have been disrupted, informal employment all but stopped for millions, markets have closed and remittances have dried up and the most vulnerable have found themselves struggling to access sufficient food. Increasingly, as smallholders are unable to access the critical inputs they need to continue producing, food availability is emerging as a major concern. In South Sudan, for example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO's) latest data indicates a drop of between 10 and 25 percent in the main season cereal production this year and an additional 1.6 million people are expected to be pushed into acute hunger.

Conflict, weather extremes and pre-existing economic turbulence continue to push more people into acute hunger, exacerbated by the reverberations of the pandemic. The worst-case scenario of famine is inching closer to reality for millions of girls, boys, women and men, especially for the 27 million people that were already experiencing emergency levels of acute hunger before the pandemic.

Women have been particularly hard hit. They make up a large majority of informal workers in food production, processing and sales, and overwhelmingly bear the burden of caring for family members and ensuring their health and nutrition. In some food crisis contexts, many families are de facto headed by women, as men have migrated in search of employment. These women rely on remittances that have almost completely stopped during the pandemic. They also face numerous protection risks, including greater exposure to gender-based violence.

The impacts on food systems vary depending on the timing of restrictions in relation to agricultural and transhumance calendars. In the last few months, vital opportunities have been missed as planting seasons passed or market closures have resulted in

significant food loss. Recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analyses point to a worrying deterioration. The Sudan has recorded its highest ever number of people experiencing crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity, at 9.6 million people between July and September 2020. In Somalia, the numbers in crisis or worse are expected to almost triple compared with pre-COVID-19 estimates, while in Burkina Faso, the effects of COVID-19 are expected to cause a deterioration from stressed to crisis phases of acute malnutrition in six provinces for April to July. However, we can avert further deterioration. **It is not too late to act to safeguard livelihoods**; rather, protecting livelihoods is the most cost-effective way to avert a rise in acute hunger, protect development gains and lay the foundations for recovery.

## FAO's response

Responding to these challenges requires urgent action at scale. Critical agricultural seasons, livestock movements for pasture and water, food harvesting, processing and storage – these are not activities that can be put on hold as we tackle the health impacts of the pandemic. Without support, increasing numbers of people will be forced to abandon their livelihoods and rely on much more costly food assistance to survive. Anticipatory action now is not just more cost effective than waiting to rebuild livelihoods and communities later, it is more humane and respectful of the dignity of the billions of people relying on some form of agriculture for their livelihoods. This is at the heart of FAO's response to the indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FAO's programme focuses on four key components to save lives and livelihoods threatened by the pandemic.

### Component 1: Rolling out data collection and analysis

Clear evidence of the pandemic's emerging effects is crucial to inform anticipatory actions, response and ultimately resilience building efforts. Using internal resources as a catalyst, FAO has already initiated the rolling out of a broader information and analysis system in food crisis contexts, focusing on remote data collection. This is being done in close collaboration with the Global Food Security Cluster and other key partners within the framework of the Global Network Against Food Crises. In particular, the partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) is key as it provides the means to complement the understanding of impacts on food production and supply (FAO) and people's access to food (WFP). These efforts comprise global, regional and country level data collection and analysis on a range of issues that impact food security. For example, in Iraq, FAO, the International Organization for Migration and the International Trade Center have

started a quarterly monitoring system that will track the impact of COVID-19 on the business sentiments of agricultural small- and medium-sized enterprises. In Palestine, FAO surveys a panel of key informants weekly, composed of small and marginal farmers, herders, fishers, traders and cooperatives, to understand the impacts of the virus on food production and systems. In Yemen, FAO is producing weekly COVID-19 food chain monitoring bulletins, while in Zimbabwe, efforts include enhancing seasonal crop production assessments and livestock disease surveillance.

These efforts contribute to and reinforce joint food security analysis under the IPC framework by providing direct and indirect evidence on food security which will also include the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. This will complement broader FAO global data collection efforts to fully understand the scope of the impact on food insecurity and to be able to guide interventions.

All these efforts will contribute to FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative and associated interactive data platform, which uses the most sophisticated tools available, including advanced geospatial modeling and analytics, to identify the key opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of rural populations, who constitute the vast majority of the world's poor.

### Component 2: Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most acutely food-insecure populations

One of the immediate priorities of humanitarian actors in a COVID-19 context is to ensure that ongoing deliveries of critical humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups are not hindered and are adapted to potential COVID-19 impacts. Critical interventions include:

- Cash and voucher assistance, particularly unconditional cash transfers, including in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Haiti, Philippines, Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), among others. In addition, FAO is continuing or expanding cash for work for land/forest rehabilitation (Cox's Bazar), restoration of irrigation, post-harvest storage facilities, fishponds (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Central African Republic), with protective equipment and physical distancing. In Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), FAO is using fresh food vouchers to support extremely vulnerable people including migrants in COVID-19 quarantine centres.
- Maintaining and scaling up provision of critical quality inputs for food production (seeds, feed, fertilizers, poultry), especially through seed voucher schemes, certified seed fairs and cash+, in a range of contexts, from Bangladesh to Iraq, Palestine to Burundi, and Yemen to Mozambique. In Somalia, FAO has used its successful mobile money programme to expand to e-vouchers for producers to access inputs from local vendors.
- Support to livestock rearing, recognizing that livestock owners and particularly nomadic pastoralists have been especially hard hit by the pandemic's indirect impacts. Activities thus include providing animal feed (e.g. in Haiti, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo and Yemen), and animal health services (Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan, Zimbabwe, etc.) to reduce the potential of a secondary zoonotic disease

outbreaks, and policy support to national authorities to facilitate transhumance.

- Other activities include continued support to fisheries-based livelihoods in countries ranging from Burundi and Nigeria to Yemen and the Philippines.
- Training in good agricultural practices continues to be rolled out, albeit using alternative modalities, such as through radio programmes aired in the project districts and communicated through SMS to beneficiaries in Somalia. In Iraq, FAO is piloting a farmer-to-farmer digital extension platform, harnessing technology to facilitate peer exchange to boost production.

### Component 3: Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations

In food crisis contexts, FAO will maintain and support the continuous functioning of local food markets, value chains and systems focusing on vulnerable smallholder farmers and food workers as well as areas which are critical to the food supply for vulnerable urban areas.

Activities include:

- Alternative income-generating opportunities, especially for women and youth and peri-urban/urban populations in a number of contexts including Burundi, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), and others.
- Reducing post-harvest losses through storage facilities (Haiti, Sierra Leone, Sudan), provision of storage bags (Zimbabwe), and, in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, constructing potato storage units for cooperative farms to store seed potatoes from the 2020 harvest.
- In a number of countries, including Burundi, Haiti and the Sudan, boosting local production and supply of animal feed and agricultural inputs (including seeds).
- Strengthening food processing, storage and marketing systems, focusing on youth and women, including in Burundi, the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Nigeria, Palestine and Togo.
- Supporting local producers' through organizing agribusiness cooperatives (Nigeria), providing transportation for farmers' groups, enabling better access to markets (Haiti), strengthening agricultural cooperatives to enhance farmers' negotiation power and access to mechanized facilities (Sierra Leone).



- Adopting digital technology to support producers and link them to markets, including consolidating and digitalize a suite of e-services for agriculture, including access to finance, inputs, product distribution and marketing, social services, and rural safety nets in Ethiopia; linking markets through digital technology including e-commerce options and other delivery mechanisms to help farmers market their produce despite the COVID-19 restrictions (the Philippines, Pakistan); and protecting and stimulate pro-poor private sector investments in the agri-food value chain, focusing on small and medium enterprises, as well as individual businesses within the food system (Palestine)
- Supporting supply-side improvements in marketing and wholesaling, consumer awareness on quality, safety and origin, and better linkages to markets in Palestine.
- shared through radio, SMS, Dimitra Clubs, farmers' associations, community animal health workers, and others.
- Developing key messages on food safety, hygiene and nutrition for actors along the food chain
- Providing personal protection equipment and training for government extension workers on mitigation measures.
- Seeking alternatives to reduce physical contact, such as developing a Nursery Information Centre web portal in Bangladesh to provide information on all nurseries to enable partners to select planting materials online and avoid physical interactions.
- Improving hygienic conditions in local food and agriculture markets and slaughter facilities.
- Training national laboratory personnel on COVID-19 testing and supporting governments in controlling the outbreak of transboundary and zoonotic diseases.

#### Component 4: Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission

FAO is already working with partners and all actors along the food supply chain to ensure that they follow appropriate measures to reduce exposure and prevent COVID-19 transmission. This includes large-scale risk communication and community engagement, together with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, national authorities and other partners. Within this component, FAO is:

- Raising local level awareness to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and disseminating key information on virus prevention and response, specific to ongoing agricultural activities/seasons and livestock transhumance. These are being

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