



**Global Network
Against Food Crises**

Integrated
actions for
lasting solutions

Food Crises and COVID-19: Emerging evidence and implications

An analysis of acute food insecurity and agri-food systems
during COVID-19 pandemic

Technical note





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Technical note



This Technical Note has been prepared by the Technical Support Unit (TSU) of the Global Network Against Food Crises in close collaboration with the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation Programme (FIRST), the Food Security Information Network (FSIN) and the Global Support Unit of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC GSU).

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Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
ASNET	Agriculture Sector Network
ASSPIII	Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan
CAR	Central African Republic
CH	Cadre Harmonisé
CILSS	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CONASUR	Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation du Burkina Faso
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO-GIEWS	FAO Global Information and Early Warning System
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FIRST	Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme
FRAA	Regional Food and Agriculture Fund
FSIN	Food Security Information Network
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit – Somalia
FSWR	Food Security War Room
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
gFSC	Global Food Security Cluster
GNFC	Global Network Against Food Crises
GRFC	Global Report on Food Crises
HDP	Humanitarian Development Peace nexus
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IPC-GSU	IPC Global Support Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries

MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium enterprises
SADC	Southern African Developemnt Community
SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Program
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SOFI	State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World
TSU	GNFC Technical Support Unit
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations
WFP mVAM	WFP mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping



Key messages

-  COVID-19 places an additional burden on fragile political and social systems, compounding existing risks, including conflict, economic crises, natural disasters, climate extremes/variability, animal and plant diseases and pests serving as additional stresses on agri-food systems and exacerbating acute food insecurity.
-  Markets and food supply chains have largely stabilised, in part due to government support and action, after initial disruptions due to the effects of COVID-19 restrictions. However, structural deficiencies in countries with food crisis remain with related disruptions to agricultural production and other parts of the food supply chain.
-  Despite the gradual stabilization of food markets, reduced economic activity and associated reductions in employment, remittances, incomes and purchasing power, coupled with localized food price increases have exacerbated most pre-existing COVID-19 food insecurity related vulnerabilities.
-  The impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods and acute food insecurity are highly context-specific and affect population groups differently.
-  Governments' capacity to mobilize or reallocate resources to respond to COVID-19 will have serious implications for long-term development outcomes including the strengthening of agri-food systems. Better alignment between humanitarian and development interventions are key elements for programme effectiveness and to the efficient use of resources.
-  The pandemic is already prompting a longer-term re-think of the functioning of the agri-food systems including needed structural shifts, innovations and policy approaches.
-  The management of the crisis (health and economic), caused shifts in governance structures especially in fragile contexts, and pinpoints to the need for more effective and inclusive information flows.
-  A general worsening of acute food insecurity is being observed across several countries compared with the situation reported in 2019 as per the Global Report on Food Crises 2020.

Addressing the urgent issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic in food crisis contexts is crucial. However, it should not detract attention from a sustainable and inclusive transformation of food systems

Introduction

In 2019, around 135 million people were facing crisis or worse (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC]/*Cadre Harmonisé* [CH] Phase 3 and above) levels of acute food insecurity, requiring urgent assistance across 55 countries (Global Report on Food Crises [GRFC] 2020). In addition, around 183 million were classified in stressed (IPC/CH Phase 2) conditions across 47 countries, on the verge of slipping into acute hunger if hit with further shocks or stressors¹. Following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the global recession and disruptions to food supply chains are threatening livelihoods and food security, especially in countries already facing food crises and for the most vulnerable people working in informal sectors, including agriculture.

According to the recently published State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI), in 2019 nearly 690 million people were chronically food insecure. Preliminary projections suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic may further add between 83 and 132 million people to the total number of chronically undernourished in the world in 2020, depending on the economic growth scenario².

A number of policy measures were put in place both to contain the spread of the virus and to mitigate its negative economic and social effects. The current food security situation remains extremely volatile across various countries albeit with a wide diversity across contexts. Despite progress in food security monitoring, further efforts are necessary.

In this context, as a follow up to the campaign “Food crises and COVID-19”³, the Technical Support Unit⁴ of the Global Network Against Food Crises, in partnership with the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme (FIRST), Food Security Information Network (FSIN) and IPC Global Support Unit (IPC GSU), has developed this technical note to present the emerging evidence on the effects of COVID-19 on acute food insecurity, livelihoods and agri-food systems, as well as an analysis of the effects of policy measures and responses related to COVID-19 with a specific focus on countries with food crisis.

The note is mainly based on emerging evidence from country-level food security analyses including: latest IPC and CH, and Famine Early Warning Systems Network updates (FEWS NET) and FIRST Country Profiles. The following section, entitled “Emerging evidence on the effects of COVID-19 and related policy response on agri-food systems”, is based on an analysis of relevant policies and COVID-19 related urgent and essential restrictions from 15 FIRST country profiles between May and July 2020. The analysis is triangulated and complemented with emerging evidence from field monitoring systems and specific assessments of the potential impact of COVID-19 on food supply chains and rural livelihoods⁵, as well as available evidence and complementary sources from Global Network Against Food Crises partners⁶.

Based on the emerging evidence, the final section of the report presents some concluding remarks and related implications for decision-making, response and programming to inform addressing the short- and long-term challenges, in an attempt to prevent further food crises, and to effectively and sustainably respond to these crises.

¹ FSIN & GNFC. 2020. Global Report on Food Crises 2020. Rome. April. Available [here](#)

² FAO, et al. 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome. July. While the SOFI reports on chronic food insecurity, the GRFC is based mainly on acute food insecurity estimates which are the focus of this note.

³ More information available [here](#)

⁴ The Technical Support Unit of the Global Network, as the operational arm of the GN, is jointly staffed by FAO, WFP, and the gFSC with the functions of animating and coordinating the GN and attend countries, enhancing coordination mechanisms across the HDP nexus.

⁵ FAO COVID-19 assessments are ongoing in over 20 countries with food crisis which will be regularly updated.

⁶ Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) assessments, the latest updates from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), WFP mVAM near-real time food security monitoring, IPC/CH analyses.

Emerging evidence on effects of COVID-19 and related policy response on agri-food systems

The analysis is based on multiple analytical efforts. The first source of evidence is generated based on Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme, a partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Union (EU), from 15⁷ profile countries and territories facing food crisis that are part of the GRFC, and one profile for the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)⁸ focusing on agri-food systems and COVID-19 policy response analysis. The profiles are monitoring short-term policy measures put in place by governments and development/humanitarian partners to: (i) contain the virus; (ii) stabilize the functioning of agri-food systems; (iii) assess the actual and potential effects of policies on agri-food systems and vulnerable groups; and (iv) assess the potential longer-term implications for policies and investments so as to make agri-food systems more resilient in dealing with future crises of similar nature. Examples are used to illustrate some of the policy measures contained in the key messages. Other sources also include the latest IPC and CH analyses⁹, FAO monitoring systems on food supply chains and rural livelihoods¹⁰, as well as the World Food Programme's (WFP) mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) near-real time food security monitoring. Supporting evidence is also taken from FAO's 2020 country humanitarian response taking into account the effects of COVID-19¹¹.

KEY MESSAGE



COVID-19 places an additional burden on fragile political and social systems, compounding existing risks, including conflict, economic crises, natural disasters, climate extremes/variability, animal and plant diseases and pests serving as additional stresses on agri-food systems and exacerbating acute food insecurity.

Given existing vulnerabilities and crises, the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition can be devastating. Yet difficult to assess the precise effects as the situation continues to evolve. In 2019, food crises that were primarily driven by conflict and insecurity accounted globally for around 77 million people acutely food insecure, in addition to around 34 million people affected by extreme weather events, and 24 million by economic shocks¹². Additional shocks and stressors brought about by COVID-19 and related restrictive measures in already fragile contexts are inevitably resulting in further deterioration of livelihoods and depletion of assets and means of survival with severe consequences for food security.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the effects of extreme events threatening food availability in some areas (such as those plagued by pests and plant or animal diseases). The combination of the effects of conflict, economic shocks, recurrent drought and floods, spread of the desert locust, dependence on imports and existing political and social vulnerabilities are being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in many food crisis contexts (e.g. Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic

⁷ 15 profiles of countries and territories are included in the analysis, namely: Burkina Faso, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The profiles were prepared by FIRST Policy Officers, who are working in relevant government ministries as a tool to support policy assistance to their government counterparts under the supervision of FAO Representatives. The criteria of selection has been opportunistic (e.g. presence of FIRST policy officers).

⁸ The ECOWAS Member states are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. To be noted that not all ECOWAS member states countries are considered in food crisis as per the latest Global Report on Food Crises (2020).

⁹ IPC Global Platform: [here](#)

¹⁰ FAO COVID-19 assessments were conducted in 10 countries between June-August 2020. Evidence from preliminary results of country assessments is presented throughout the document. Related country analysis profiles are expected to be published on FAO Emergency Website in the coming weeks.

¹¹ The full list of FAO COVID-19 | 2020 humanitarian response is available [here](#)

¹² FSIN & GNAFC. Global Report on Food Crises 2020. Rome. April 2020.

of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar, the Niger, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia and Uganda among others). In East Africa and Yemen, desert locust infestations remain a high threat to livestock and crop production in agro/pastoral areas.¹³ In these areas, the combination of desert locust attacks, reduced food availability, conflict, limited access to livelihood activities and COVID-19 related economic shocks is likely to significantly increase the levels of acute food insecurity.



Box 1: The Sudan: the compounding effects of COVID-19 on food security

In 2019, The Sudan was among the ten worst food crises countries, mainly due to a worsening economic situation. The effects of persisting insecurity, increased and protracted displacement, economic decline, high inflation rates and food price spikes on food security, as well as weather extremes such as floods were exacerbated by the impacts of lockdown measures. In particular, food prices increased to record levels in early 2020 because of tight supplies following the below-average harvest in 2019/2020, the currency devaluation, as well as fuel shortages and reduced access to agricultural inputs negatively affecting the costs of production and transportation.¹⁴ The COVID-19 related restriction measures therefore reinforced the upward pressure on prices mainly through disruptions of the food supply routes, while households' purchasing power was further curtailed by reduced income-earning opportunities. **The 2020 IPC analysis, taking into account the effects of COVID-19, pointed to a significant deterioration with a 64 percent increase in the number of people food insecure in need of urgent assistance** across the country compared with the peak reached in 2019¹⁵ – from 5.9 million (or 13 percent of the population analysed) in June-August 2019.

In June-September 2020, around **9.6 million people** – or 21 percent of the population – **are facing crisis or worse** (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of food insecurity, **including 2.2 million in emergency** (IPC Phase 4). This is the **highest figure ever recorded in the history of IPC in The Sudan**. An additional **15.9 million are classified in stressed** (IPC Phase 2) and are considered at risk of slipping into higher levels of food insecurity if faced with any additional shocks.

COVID-19 and the measures to stop its spread has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, putting additional pressure on fragile socio-political systems and long-term stability efforts in countries and territories such as Burkina Faso, Haiti, Myanmar, the Niger, Palestine and Yemen. For example, in the Niger, the effects of COVID-19 restrictions have led to demonstrations and uprisings and similar protests have taken place in Burkina Faso which cases of COVID-19 has had been relatively low. In Haiti, while the socio-political climate remained stable between April and June, in July, due to the COVID-19 related movement restrictions, the situation deteriorated because of fuel scarcity, which further increased transportation costs and food prices.¹⁶ Given the worsening economic situation in the country, social unrest risks to further intensify in late 2020-early 2021.¹⁷ In Myanmar, there is a risk of focusing on immediate humanitarian support while losing sight of long-term policy objectives such as agricultural diversification, inclusion and conflict-sensitivity, resilience and decentralization. Furthermore, in many contexts, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are intensifying the depletion of natural resources, with increased deforestation and over-exploitation of natural resources as households adopt negative coping mechanisms. In Yemen, a worsening economic crunch and increasing fuel crisis is threatening lives and

¹³ FAO. 2020. Desert Locust Global Forecast – September-October 2020. In: Locust watch. [Online]. [Accessed on 7 September]. [here](#)

¹⁴ FAO-GIEWS. 2020. Sudan – Country brief. 22 April. [here](#)

¹⁵ Sudan IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (June-December 2020). July. [here](#)

¹⁶ FEWS NET. 2020. Haiti: Key messages update. July. [here](#)

¹⁷ Haiti IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (August 2020-June 2021). September. [here](#)

livelihoods of many through significantly higher prices of essential items, reduction in access to basic services such as water, sanitation and healthcare, and severely affected transport and logistics system impacting movement of people and goods including essential humanitarian items.

KEY MESSAGE



Markets and food supply chains have largely stabilised, in part due to government support and action, after initial disruptions due to the effects of COVID-19 restrictions. However, structural deficiencies in countries with food crisis remain with related disruptions to agricultural production and other parts of the food supply chain.

The analysis of the available country profiles (May-July) shows that relative market stabilization can be attributed to two main factors: (i) the progressive ease of restrictions; and (ii) conducive policies targeting the agri-food sector to facilitate its functioning.

1.a Restrictive measures were progressively eased over the past few months (May-July 2020)

Almost all countries examined experienced similar patterns regarding measures to contain the spread: stronger in the beginning and easing down gradually due to economic necessity, declining transmission rates in many countries and popular pressure. Initial measures that impacted the agri-food sector included physical distancing, movement restrictions, curfews, closing of some categories of markets (such as street and open markets) and limiting inter-regional (within country) and/or cross-border movement for both people and merchandise. One particular case to be highlighted is Sierra Leone, which, based on its experience with the Ebola virus disease, implemented only short-term total national lockdowns of three days at a time rather than imposing longer-term measures. More generally, in West Africa and the Sahel, at end of June, the ease of containment measures had overall improved access to incomes, agricultural inputs and labour, except in some areas of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Nigeria, the Niger and Senegal, which continued to face some difficulties.¹⁸

Curfews were usually one of the first restrictions to be eased in many countries, which meant more access and longer hours for food markets to stay open, more time for farmers and traders to bring their goods to markets and for the hospitality and retail sectors to serve customers. For instance, in Kenya and Uganda curfew hours have been reduced and restrictions of movements into certain areas have been eased.

Internal travel restrictions have been removed earlier than cross-border ones. In turn, restrictions on the movements of merchandise (including food) were removed earlier than those for travelers with some of the latter still in place (e.g. Liberia). Border controls (on merchandise movements) in some countries have weakened the effects of the ease on export restrictions and the smooth functioning of food markets. In Chad, the closure of land borders (still effective in August 2020) has made it difficult to: (i) trade livestock in markets of neighbouring countries; (ii) carry out transhumance in a context of an ongoing pastoral crisis linked to the fodder deficit; and (iii) obtain an adequate supply of agricultural, zootechnical and veterinary inputs as well as certain fruits, vegetables and tubers from Nigeria and Cameroon. This has had an overall negative impact on prices, terms of trade and pastoralists' purchasing power.

¹⁸ CILSS. 2020. Note d'information et de veille Impact de la crise du COVID-19 sur la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Sahel et en Afrique de l'Ouest. Issue no. 3. June.

The effects of border controls and restrictions caused disruptions in food exports. In almost all of the countries, curtailed access to imported agricultural inputs has hampered crop and livestock production. For example, in Uganda, the costs of dairy production increased due to difficulties in accessing inputs. At the same time, the low demand in the domestic market and (pre-COVID-19) import levy and other restrictions by neighbouring importers caused milk prices in Uganda to crash in the face of increasing costs.

1.b Policies targeting the agri-food sector were implemented to facilitate the adjustment and functioning of the sector within the overall framework of restrictions

In general, two broad categories can be identified of measures put in place by governments targeting the agri-food sector following the pandemic: **(i)** exceptions of food and agriculture (partial or total) from lockdowns and movement restrictions; and **(ii)** active measures to support all segments of the agri-food system including primary producers and final consumers.

(i) Governments made efforts to ensure sufficient food supply and the smooth functioning of food markets. Farmers, food traders and workers involved in the agri-food supply chain (transporters, processing factories or food outlet workers) are among those who are generally exempt from lockdowns and working/mobility restrictions (with some physical distancing directives). Such exemptions were prevalent in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, Kenya, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda, among others. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all border were closed at the end of March in an effort to contain the spread of the virus, except for imported food cargo shipments.¹⁹ Similarly, in South Sudan, border closures and the suspension of flights did not apply to food products.²⁰ In Honduras, food and agriculture sectors were exempted from restrictions and declared essential from the beginning. In Kenya, the Ministry of Trade is issuing special permission stickers to trucks carrying food stuffs and other essential goods so they can pass through police roadblocks. Humanitarian food supplies have been exempted from restrictions in many contexts to ensure timely responses, especially in already vulnerable and fragile settings (such as in Palestine and Liberia).

(ii) Governments are supporting local agricultural and food production through the provision of subsidies, the direct distribution of agricultural inputs, and the promotion of mechanization and home gardening, among other measures. This is the case in countries and territories such as Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palestine and Sierra Leone. For example, in Malawi the regular maize subsidy programme will complement many of the COVID-19 response actions, such as the strengthening of extension services. Côte d'Ivoire plans support to both exports (cash crops) and food production by ensuring the availability of inputs through subsidies and direct distribution. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, governments are supporting production through the distribution of assets and inputs ahead of the planting season. In Haiti, the Government encourages the planting of short-cycle crops such as maize, beans, vegetables, cassava or sorghum, and it procured the most vulnerable farmers with seeds and fertilizers in the southern areas to support the planting of 4 000 ha.²¹

Governments are providing financial support and facilitating access to credit for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the private sector, for example in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Uganda. In Pakistan, the Government launched an emergency fund for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to avoid disruptions in their functioning. In Sierra Leone, the Government provides guarantees on loans to SMEs and suspended interest payments. The Government of the Niger has entered into a partnership with the Professional Association of Banks and Financial Institutions to establish a line of credit for support to SMEs as well as larger enterprises. One

¹⁹ FAO-GIEWS. 2020. Democratic Republic of the Congo – Country brief. 12 May. [here](#)

²⁰ FAO-GIEWS. 2020. South Sudan – Country brief. 23 April. [here](#)

²¹ FAO-GIEWS. 2020. Haiti – Country brief. 5 June. [here](#)

third of the line of credit is guaranteed by the state.²² The effectiveness of such measures will need to be assessed.

In specific areas of countries with food crises, despite the special treatment of and active measures to support agri-food systems, farmers and other participants in the food supply chain have experienced or are still experiencing a number of constraints in terms of access to agricultural inputs, labour and markets. In the case of agricultural production, the effects of the restrictive measures caused by the pandemic varies in its intensity across contexts, with severe impacts on countries with fragilities and food crises as they are having a compounded effect on already existing structural problems. Critical determining factors are: the timing of cropping cycle relative to the timing of restrictions, the stringency of restrictions and the degree to which countries rely on other countries for labour, inputs, and/or the sale of crops. In Burkina Faso, for example, COVID-19 restriction measures had only a limited impact on the first cycle of agricultural production as at the time the measures were taken, plots were already either in preparation or already harvested. However, during the last production cycles (April), some regions have been more affected by limited access to agricultural inputs, particularly when these were already affected by high levels of acute food insecurity.²³ As observed in countries such as Burundi, the Central African Republic, Honduras, South Sudan and The Sudan, there are indications that COVID-19 related restrictions may have reduced agricultural production, due to limited access to agricultural inputs and labour. In Nigeria and Zimbabwe, field assessments²⁴ with inputs traders and agricultural extension workers respectively show unusual difficulties in accessing crop, livestock or fisheries inputs.

KEY MESSAGE



Despite the gradual stabilization of food markets, reduced economic activity and associated reductions in employment, remittances, incomes and purchasing power, coupled with localized food price increases have exacerbated most pre-existing COVID-19 food insecurity related vulnerabilities.

Declining economic activity due to COVID-19 restrictive measures has led to rising unemployment with consequent income loss and reduced purchasing power. Loss of employment has been reported in several countries. Short-term disruptions due to COVID-19 have pushed those in the informal economy out of work especially those in urban areas, thereby exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. In The Sudan, as the macro-economic crisis persists and households's purchasing power continues to reduce, the COVID-19 containment measures further limit access to incomes and employment, thereby limiting access to food for the most vulnerable populations.²⁵ In Uganda, this is particular true for the urban poor in cities like Kampala, Wakiso and Jinja. In Myanmar, job losses (including self-employed non-farm labour) attributed to the effects of the lockdown are estimated at 5.3 million people. In Colombia, the employed population during the second quarter of the year was 4.85 million lower than in 2019²⁶. In places like Palestine, rising unemployment and under-employment related to the pandemic has added to the existing situation of protracted conflict/insecurity and low economic growth trap. In Haiti, the informal economic activities resumed in the second half of 2020 to a certain degree, but still at lower levels compared with the situation prior to COVID-19.²⁷ In Afghanistan, urban households are facing particularly high unemployment, which continues to be a major driving force for economic vulnerability. In general, employment and household income are likely to lag behind the eventual resumption of overall economic

²² More information available [here](#)

²³ Système d'Alerte Précoce sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle. 2020. Evaluation de l'impact de la pandémie de la COVID-19 sur l'Agriculture et la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle – preliminary results.

²⁴ FAO preliminary results of COVID-19 Impact assessments in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. August 2020.

²⁵ Sudan IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (June-December 2020). July. [here](#)

²⁶ World Bank. 2020. Total labour force in Colombia was reported at 26,787,864 in 2019. [here](#)

²⁷ Haiti IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (August 2020-June 2021). September. [here](#)

growth. Therefore, forecasts of economic growth resumption does not automatically mean improvements in livelihoods especially for those households which had to sell assets to survive even under temporary restrictions.

A reduction in demand for perishable food items (such as meat and eggs, fruits and vegetables) due to their relatively higher cost (as compared to staples) has been observed mainly in urban areas. In some cases, reduced demand due to lower income has pushed prices lower while movement restrictions and reduced supply in urban areas tended to push prices higher. In some cases, the two effects tended to counter-balance each other keeping the prices of such items stable or led to decreasing prices.

In Kenya, the loss of jobs and incomes forces households to spend available resources on most basic staples as opposed to those with higher protein and vitamin content. Where supply shortages dominated (e.g. Palestine during the first part of the lockdown) the prices of fruits, vegetables and eggs increased initially but substantially decreased afterwards as lockdowns eased. With increasing supply, demand often decreased due to reductions in income. In some countries (e.g. Myanmar, Colombia and Guatemala) sharp reductions in tourism have had a cumulative negative effects on demand: through the reduced incomes of those involved in the tourism sector and directly due to reduced food consumption from tourists.

The impact of decreased demand and lower sales has had an impact throughout the food supply chain (food preparation, transport and distribution sectors). For example, the pandemic has resulted in significant economic hardship among small, medium and micro enterprises in Sierra Leone, which make up approximately 98 percent of all businesses, 84 percent of employment and contribute about 70 percent to national gross domestic product (GDP), and these firms have found it difficult to remain in business due to a reduction in revenues²⁸. In Uganda, a high level of post-harvest losses has been observed for perishable food items (fruits, vegetables, milk, meat) due to the collapse in demand resulting from the loss of incomes.

In the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and similarly for Yemen²⁹, interviews with local traders revealed a significant decrease in the number of customers as well as the quantities of items purchased. In addition, high transportation costs are reported as a major issue for farmers to sell their produce, as the impact of COVID-19 containment measures overlap pre-existing trade disruptions due to conflict and insecurity³⁰. In Afghanistan, a significant number of traders reported restrictions in procuring fresh agricultural produce and difficulties to transport to local markets due to increased transportation costs and road closures linked to COVID-19 containment measures in a context of recurrent disruptions of livelihoods and trade due to the long-standing conflict and insurgency.³¹ In The Sudan, already affected by a protracted conflict, farmers experienced issues in marketing products due to additional transport disruption³².

The effects of the pandemic have influenced internal and external migration in several countries. In Chad, the disruption of passenger transport and the ban on entering and leaving N'Djamena has resulted in a shortage of agricultural labour during the current agricultural season. In Burkina Faso, the ban on entering and leaving Ouagadougou has impacted peri-urban agricultural activities as many farmers live in the city and did not have access to their farms beyond the urban boundaries. This situation has worsened in the context of COVID-19 as the number of returnees, who faced reduced employment opportunities

²⁸ International Trade Centre (2020). SME Competitiveness Outlook 2020: COVID-19: The Great Lockdown and its Impact on Small Business. ITC, Geneva 2020. [here](#)

²⁹ FAO. 2020. COVID-19 Impact Assessment, Yemen - Food Trader Survey. July. [here](#)

³⁰ Democratic Republic of the Congo IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute Food Insecurity Situation Snapshot (July 2020-June 2021): preliminary results. September. [here](#)

³¹ Afghanistan IPC Technical Working Group, Acute food insecurity analysis (April-November 2020), published in May 2020. [here](#)

³² FAO. Result COVID-19 Impact Assessment Sudan – KII extension interviews. July 2020.

abroad, increased significantly during March and April, and has further saturated an already stressed urban labour market.³³ Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the unemployment rate remained almost unchanged compared to 2018 levels³⁴. As of May 2020, a quarter of the labor force is unemployed, and the situation is expected to worsen should COVID-19 lockdown measures continue particularly in larger cities³⁵.

The economic crisis has forced workers to return to rural areas even without prospects for employment and impacted the flow of remittances. The reduction in incomes and remittances due to the global recession is negatively affecting rural populations in countries like Somalia, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Myanmar. In Afghanistan unusually high movements of populations from urban to rural areas were also observed during the COVID-19 pandemic³⁶. In Somalia, external remittance flows to Somalia are expected to decline by 30 to 50 percent. Overall, the poor urban households and IDPs in Somalia are therefore likely to face a reduction in incomes by 20 to 30 percent.³⁷ In Haiti, remittances, which are estimated to represent around 34 percent of GDP, are also reported to have decreased by 9 percent in volume.³⁸ As a result, and in addition to the pre-existing macro-economic challenges and the disruption of businesses due to containment measures, around 82 percent are estimated to have faced a reduction in incomes compared with the pre-COVID-19 situation.³⁹ In Myanmar, international remittance income has dropped by 50 percent and domestic remittances by 30 percent while the numbers for Colombia and Guatemala were 33 and 17 percent lower, respectively, compared with 2019. In Yemen, reduced employment activities in the Gulf States has led to an unprecedented decline in the flow of remittances by as much as 80 percent between January and April this year. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the pandemic containment measures have decreased cross-border income-earning opportunities in a context already characterized by high levels of poverty. Migrants from Southern African countries who have returned to their home countries have added to the size of the households but not to the resources.⁴⁰

Food price increases have been reported in several countries particularly at the local level and in the initial phase of the pandemic. For instance, in Afghanistan, as the country relies on the import of wheat and wheat flour from Pakistan and Kazakhstan, measures aimed at the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic in these countries temporarily restricted the movement of goods across the border which, combined with panic-buying, put an upward pressure on prices. Wheat prices in Kabul increased by one-third between February and the second week of May while wheat flour prices increased by 16 percent. The most dramatic price increases were recorded in March⁴¹. In the Central African Republic, during the first months of 2020, prices of staple foods were well above their levels a year before as insecurity continues to cause disruptions in supply and trade. In April, with the implementation of COVID-19 containment measures, prices surged in most markets due to the slowdown of both local and international transports, up to 80 percent higher than a year before for imported products⁴². In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, staple foods prices increased steeply between December 2019 and February 2020, mostly due to a low supply and high demand following reduced harvests. Further price rises were registered between March and April, as commodity trade flows were delayed and impaired due to border controls and limitations on people's movements, in the framework of measures put in place by

³³ Afghanistan IPC Technical Working Group, Acute food insecurity analysis (April-November 2020), published in May 2020. [here](#)

³⁴ World Bank. 2020. The unemployment rate in Afghanistan in 2019 was at 11.18 percent from 11.057 in 2018. [here](#)

³⁵ Afghanistan IPC Technical Working Group, Acute food insecurity analysis (April-November 2020), published in May 2020. [here](#)

³⁶ Afghanistan IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (April-November 2020). May. [here](#)

³⁷ FSNAU-FEWS NET. 2020. Quarterly Brief on the 2020 Jiaal Impact and Gu Season (January-September 2020). May. [here](#)

³⁸ FEWS NET. 2020. Haiti: Food Security Outlook. June. [here](#)

³⁹ Haiti IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (August 2020-June 2021). September. [here](#)

⁴⁰ SADC. Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa. July 2020.

⁴¹ GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System, 2020. Afghanistan Country Brief. May. [here](#)

⁴² GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System, 2020. Central African Republic Country Brief. June. [here](#)

the Government to contain the spread of COVID-19⁴³. In Somalia, despite declining prices in early 2020 as the newly harvested Deyr crops increased supply, maize and sorghum prices increased by 15-35 percent in several southern markets in April, as seasonal patterns were compounded by trade disruptions due to floods and by panic buying in response to the COVID-19 emergency⁴⁴. In The Sudan, almost all respondents (95 percent) indicated an increase of prices of daily essential food at local markets compared with the pre-COVID-19 situation⁴⁵, while the increased staple food prices deplete the purchasing power of the population. In Ethiopia, COVID-19 containment measures have contributed to higher than average prices for staple foods. Cattle keepers that rely on markets for a significant part of their income and consumption will be negatively affected by prices while their income is expected to decline as livestock body conditions are likely to be compromised following rainfall deficits and prolonged dry periods⁴⁶.



Box 2: Solving the food price puzzle

There is a mix of reporting regarding the changes in food prices due to the effects of the pandemic and the measures taken to contain its spread. *Reported price changes may be different even for the same country. The reasons for such apparent contradictions can be summarized as follows:*

Timing of measurement, coverage and baseline:

- At the producer level, inability to move the products to more distant markets, constrains them to sell to local markets especially if there is no storage capacity (for staples such as grains) or if the products are perishable. This causes a (sometimes) sharp reduction of prices in local markets in rural areas especially at the initial stages of restriction measures.
- In the urban markets as a result the reduced availability of food items as restrictions set in, couples with panic buying by households with savings or cash resources, put further upward pressures on prices.
- As restrictions ease, availability in “consumer markets” increase and prices tend to fall and stabilise. However, at the same time the impact of the economic crisis sets in and consumer demand declines, especially for higher priced items (fruits, vegetables, meat, etc.) pushing prices towards lower levels.
- The baseline is important i.e. whether the basis for comparison is the period immediately preceding the crisis (e.g. February) or the year before (in order to remove any seasonality factors).
- In a context of segmented markets (due to transport restrictions or chronic transport difficulties) prices may move differently and “stabilise” at different levels for the same products. Prices in different markets may also be different due to local lockdowns placed by governments in areas with high viral load.

⁴³ GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System, 2020. Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Brief. May. [here](#)

⁴⁴ GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System, 2020. Somalia Country Brief. May. [here](#)

⁴⁵ FAO. Result COVID-10 Impact Assessment Sudan – KII extension interviews. July.

⁴⁶ IPC Ethiopia Technical Working Group. Forthcoming. Preliminary results: Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (July 2020-June 2021).

External factors: In many countries affected by food crises, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the effects of other extreme events (desert locusts, animal diseases, extreme weather events, conflict, economic crunch) which have an effect on food prices and are difficult to distinguish from the effects of restrictions. Another example is the devaluation of the currency as a result of the collapse in exports and export revenues or pre-existing balance of payments difficulties. Devaluations are often associated with domestic inflation especially for products traded in international markets (such as imported foods) while they are slower to pass on to non-tradeable items. In the face of transactions costs, locally traded food may exhibit different price patterns that similar imported items (usually consumed in urban areas).

KEY MESSAGE



The impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods and acute food insecurity are highly context-specific and affect population groups differently.

Overall, existing vulnerabilities have been exacerbated as availability of and access to basic services, employment opportunities (e.g. casual agricultural labour, or small businesses), safety nets, remittances, and resources to protect or rebuild livelihoods appear to be more strained than ever before.

Emerging evidence shows that in many low- and middle-income countries, where informal employment represents 90 and 67 percent, of total employment, respectively, a combination of working poverty and low coverage of the population by any form of social protection exacerbates the negative welfare impact of lockdowns⁴⁷.

COVID-19 has exacerbated vulnerabilities differently depending on the location of population groups (i.e. urban, peri-urban, rural, etc.). The secondary effects of COVID-19 measures and restrictions in the form of lockdowns, curfews, closures of businesses and markets, and reduced business operating hours, have destroyed jobs, crippled incomes and devastated economies, thus accelerated unemployment and the loss of income, resulting in a collapse of livelihoods particularly in urban areas. More specifically, food security analysis that have taken into account the effects of COVID-19, have observed that vulnerable households in urban and peri-urban areas, who are more dependent on labour markets may be particularly affected due to reduced availability of employment opportunities, consequent decline in purchasing power and high food prices (Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Haiti, Somalia and The Sudan)⁴⁸. In Haiti, one urban area (Cit -Soleil) has 50 percent of its population facing crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above)⁴⁹ levels of food insecurity. In countries such as C te d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi and Uganda, the urban poor in densely populated cities have been especially affected by the recession triggered by the effects of the COVID-19 and essential containment measures, more than people living in rural areas⁵⁰. In Zimbabwe, the COVID-19 lockdown has affected most urban households with a potential increase in food insecurity particularly for those depending on petty trade, vending, casual labour, skilled trade and small-scale businesses, as they are more likely to be exposed to the most significant impacts as a result of trading restrictions during the lockdown period⁵¹. In The Sudan, poor households living in urban and semi-urban centres

⁴⁷ WFP. 2020. Economic and food security implications of the COVID-19 outbreak, an update focusing on the domestic fallout of local lockdowns. July.

⁴⁸ For latest IPC analysis for the countries mentioned, please refer to the IPC Global Platform at [here](#)

⁴⁹ Haiti IPC Technical Working Group. IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis current (August 2020-June 2021).

⁵⁰ FIRST country profiles review.

⁵¹ SADC. 2020. Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa. July. [here](#)

are among the most affected of the 9.6 million people who faced crisis or worse conditions from June to September 2020.⁵²

In East Africa, urban populations are highly vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the 35 million people, or 58 percent of the urban populations living in informal settlements. According to WFP assessments conducted in the East Africa region, only a small proportion of urban populations have stable incomes, with the majority relying on informal sector employment. This has increased the vulnerability of urban livelihood to the effects of the pandemic given existing underlying high working poverty rate, youth unemployment, low savings, lack of alternative livelihoods and low social safety net coverage. For instance, based on the findings from a May-June urban assessment in the urban areas of Uganda, nearly all households reported experiencing a negative impact of COVID-19 and government restriction measures on their main source of livelihood, with the majority of them classifying the negative impact as major⁵³.

Box 3: Monitoring urban vulnerabilities⁵⁴



In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in Kinshasa, near real-time monitoring data shows that an additional 1.87 million people reported the adoption of food-related coping mechanisms (e.g. relying on less preferred food, borrowing food, reducing the number of meals per day) in August 2020 compared with the start of the lockdown in April. Livelihood coping, such as spending savings or reducing non-food expenditures, also deteriorated during this period, with 500 000 more households using crisis or emergency livelihood coping strategies (e.g. selling house or land, selling productive assets) in August compared to April. As lockdown measures gradually eased, 900 000 less households are reporting challenges to access markets and grocery stores (August 2020) compared with the beginning of the lockdown (April 2020).

In major urban areas of Nigeria, including Lagos and Abuja, near real-time monitoring data shows an increase in the number of people with insufficient food consumption in July-August compared to June. In Lagos, an additional 1.7 million people reported poor or borderline food consumption patterns in July and an additional 200 000 households reported increased use of food coping strategies in August. In Abuja, an additional 80 000 people reported insufficient food consumption as well as 300 000 more people using food-related coping strategies in August. Following the gradual easing of lockdown measures, as of September, 500 000 less households are reporting challenges accessing markets in Lagos than in June and 100 000 less households in Abuja. This resulted in 350 000 less people reporting insufficient food intake and 340 000 less people reporting using food coping strategies to access food in Lagos, as well as in over one million less people reporting the use of food-related coping strategies in Lagos.⁵⁵

⁵² Sudan IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (June-December 2020). July. [here](#)

⁵³ WFP/UNHABITAT. 2020. [here](#)

⁵⁴ WFP mVAM near-real time food security monitoring. 2020. August.

⁵⁵ WFP. 2020. Hunger Map LIVE: Hunger and COVID-19 Weekly Snapshot. 11 September. [here](#)

In rural areas, evidence presented in the sections above show that agriculture-based livelihoods were also faced with the indirect effects of COVID-19 particularly experiencing challenges in terms of access to inputs and labour as well as disruption of agricultural markets. Pastoral communities have been affected by the disruption of traditional migration to access grazing areas of nomadic herders/transhumance (e.g. Sahel and West Africa), limited access to markets to sell livestock products and decreasing purchasing power also due to the lack of access to feed and health services for livestock resulting in the deterioration of body conditions (see box below). In Southern African countries, the effects of COVID-19 lockdown has contributed massively to already pervasive poverty. The effects of essential and urgent restrictive measures have triggered increased hunger in rural areas, where many poor households rely on remittances, tourism and school feeding programmes, though the urban poor have also been severely affected as they rely entirely on markets for their food.⁵⁶ For instance, in Eswatini, around 14 percent of the urban population and 37 percent of the rural population will likely face crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of food insecurity during the lean season from October 2020 to March 2021, as both groups face decreased income-generating opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁷

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) also appear to be disproportionately affected, particularly mainly due to movement restrictions, limited market access and labour opportunities, as well as rising food prices coupled with low purchasing power (e.g. Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen)⁵⁸. In addition, it is noted that, in countries such as Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, all population groups are already vulnerable due to years of conflict, including IDPs, returnees and residents. COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation across all population groups, but even more so for IDPs and returnees⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ SADC. 2020. Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa. July. [here](#)

⁵⁷ Eswatini IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (June 2020-March 2021). August. [here](#)

⁵⁸ Global Network Technical Support Unit. 2020. Food security update from IPC/CH analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. Internal document. July.

⁵⁹ WFP mVAM near real-time food security monitoring. 2020. Hunger map. [here](#)



Box 4: Pastoral Communities and COVID-19

The negative effects of movement restrictions and border closures on animal production and transhumance were reported in almost all countries with food crisis and may have persisted even after restrictions were eased. Pastoral communities, for whom livestock is the most important asset and source of income⁶⁰, have been particularly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, due to livestock restriction movements, limited access to inputs, reduced access to animal health services and the inability to sell their production. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the return of livestock assets was reduced and there was a depletion of assets (i.e. death of animals, thinning, etc.) as households resorted to negative coping mechanism (i.e. selling of stock, the premature slaughter of animals, etc.). Transhumance patterns of pastoral communities in search of grazing lands were reported to have been disrupted by COVID-19 related restrictions for instance in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Somalia and The Sudan. In Burkina Faso and in the Niger, the pastoral situation remained of concern in July, despite improved vegetation conditions and favourable rainfall across West Africa and the Sahel. Border closures may be affecting transhumance in several areas of the sub-region, leading to animal concentration and increasing pressure on natural resources, such as in Chad, the Niger and Nigeria⁶¹. In The Sudan, transhumance and nomadic migration was further affected by COVID-19 related restrictions on movement, causing animal concentration in certain areas, and resulting in deteriorated livestock body conditions and the depletion of natural resources⁶².

In Somalia, pastoral households already affected by the desert locust on pasture and migration expenses as well as reduced purchasing power due to rising food prices had to face further constraints on livelihoods due to the COVID-19 pandemic⁶³. In West Africa and the Sahel, the effects of movement restrictions and border closures led to the disruption of the marketing of animals and reduced prices in countries such as Chad, Nigeria and Uganda. In Nigeria⁶⁴, livestock productivity is reported to be declining dramatically with an estimated 40 percent since access to fodder, supplementary feeds, minerals, critical veterinary supplies and technical services were restricted. Subsequently, emergency destocking, including the loss of core breeding females, there is a growing risk to pastoralists' productive assets. Moreover, in an effort to keep animals alive in periods of fodder insufficiency forces pastoralists to cross crop fields which could lead to increased conflict between farmers and herders. Reduced access to markets to sell livestock production resulted in negative terms of trade for pastoralists thereby affecting their purchasing power and ability to cover other needs, such as related to health and education. In East Africa, the limitation of The Hajj season to a tiny fraction (1 000 pilgrims were allowed this year compared with 2.5 million last year) led to a major decline in livestock exports, which prevented a large proportion of pastoralists from selling their animals. This income loss has lowered their capacity to invest in livestock health later in the year and their purchasing power during Ramadan and Eid.

⁶⁰ For the latest data on the effects of COVID-19 on pastoralism see: Action contre la Faim. "Pastoral Monitoring – COVID-19". 21 May 2020; [here](#)

⁶¹ CILSS. 2020. Note d'information et de veille: Impact de la crise du COVID-19 sur la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Sahel et en Afrique de l'Ouest. Issue no. 4. July. [here](#)

⁶² Sudan IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (June-December 2020). July. [here](#)

⁶³ FSNAU-FEWS NET. 2020. Quarterly Brief on the 2020 Jiaal Impact and Gu Season (January-September 2020). May. [here](#)

⁶⁴ Interview with Assistant FAO Representative in Nigeria.



Box 5: Displacement figures are on the rise

Displacement figures are on the rise, with more than 11 million people newly displaced last year⁶⁵. The COVID-19 situation has not curbed this trend, and in International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) field operation are observing worrying tendencies. For instance, violent attacks in the Sahel's hotspots rose by 37 percent between mid-March and mid-April 2020⁶⁶, and the number of IDPs in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger increased by 370 000 people (33 percent) in March alone⁶⁷. In northeastern Nigeria, host community and displaced households in hard-to-reach areas are more affected by COVID-19's impact on food security due to extremely restricted livelihoods and a complete breakdown of basic services and markets.⁶⁸ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, around 1.4 million IDPs have been registered in 2020. They face particularly hard conditions in terms of food security as they have limited access to land plots.⁶⁹ In Cox Bazar refugees camp, episodes of social tensions between host community and refugees due to misinformation and stigmatisation are raising where the two communities live in proximity. The indirect impacts of COVID-19 combined with pre-existing vulnerabilities, resulted in reduced trade activities with hosting communities. Increased prices particularly of fisheries and livestock inputs, coupled with decreased demand (weekly wages decreased by 47 percent), negatively impacted food access of host communities and disrupted their business. Further, to cope with COVID-19 related restrictions, most vulnerable farmers sold their productive assets with potential negative consequences on future food availability and access⁷⁰.

Evidence shows that in several countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected women more than men in several ways.⁷¹ For example, in both Sierra Leone and Liberia frontline healthcare workers are predominantly female. Lockdowns and demand reductions affect small-scale entrepreneurs in the food preparation and distribution sectors (such as processing and packaging), many of whom are women. In Liberia, 90 percent of employed women are working in insecure, more precarious, lower-paid, part-time and informal employment, with little or no income security and social protection. A UN Women study found that in Sierra Leone there was a reported increase in the incidents of rape of minors and domestic violence during the three-day lockdown period. A shift of focus in healthcare systems to COVID-19 patients has resulted in reduced services to maternal and sexual and reproductive health.

⁶⁵ UNHCR. 2020. Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2019. [here](#)

⁶⁶ ACLED. 2020. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); see also the report of the Center for Strategic and International Studies on irregular armed groups stepping up operations during COVID; [here](#)

⁶⁷ UNHCR/IOM discussion paper on COVID-19 and mixed population movements: emerging dynamics, risks and opportunities.

⁶⁸ CILSS-Cadre Harmonisé. Results of the updated analysis of Current Period (June to August) in Adamawa, Borno, Kano and Yobe – Nigeria. July 2020; [here](#)

⁶⁹ Democratic Republic of the Congo IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute Food Insecurity Situation Snapshot (July 2020-June 2021): preliminary results. September. [here](#)

⁷⁰ Joint Monitoring Framework COVID-19 technical working group. Cox Bazar. 2020. This is the result of field level consolidation of data from 15 Partners (including FAO, IOM, UNHCR, Unicef and WFP) belonging to the 3 sectors (Nutrition, Food Security and Wash) that ran and consolidated 5 needs assessment.

⁷¹ FIRST country profiles review.





Box 6: Differentiated gendered impact of COVID-19

Past experiences faced by countries in other epidemic outbreaks revealed that women and girls are disproportionately affected, both by the disease burden and by government responses to it⁷². Women are more vulnerable to COVID-19 because they are the majority of healthcare workers⁷³ and the vast majority of unpaid care givers⁷⁴, spending on average 2.5 times more time in non-remunerated care work than men. Moreover, their food security is severely hampered by containment measures (no market access, fetching water, firewood, reduced informal jobs, selling in the market, street vendors) and the adoption of coping strategies at household level, such as reduction in the quantity and/or quality of food in a household, as they are frequently adopted by women in favour of men and children⁷⁵. As women represent a great share in the informal economies in most countries and most informal jobs have vanished due to containment measures. Nearly 15 percent of women compared to 25 percent of men are affiliated to social security, disproportionately affecting those who live in poverty⁷⁶. Finally, men's dominance in decision-making positions, from national governments and humanitarian actors, to local communities and households, means that they will have a greater say, than women, in decisions on COVID-19 responses. Increase drop-out rates of schooled girls and gender-based violence are two additional elements that affect women disproportionately.

KEY MESSAGE



Governments' capacity to mobilize or reallocate resources to respond to COVID-19 will have serious implications for long-term development outcomes including the strengthening of agri-food systems. Better alignment between humanitarian and development interventions are key elements for programme effectiveness and to the efficient use of resources.

The financing of governments' COVID-19 response actions has derived from three sources: deficit financing/internal borrowing; loans and grants from international financial institutions and other bilateral resource partners (in kind, cash or moratoria in servicing debt); and redirection of national but also donor resources from planned long-term investments to face the crisis. Disentangling the sources of financing is not always a trivial task due to the fungibility of resources and the fact that outside sources of funding often include general budget support.

Actions that governments have taken to support their financing needs and gaps are illustrated in the example of Sierra Leone: obtaining additional emergency support from the International Monetary Fund to increase the current Extended Credit Facility Programme; seeking debt relief from creditors to prevent a debt crisis; accessing resources from the World Bank Group and other development partners to supplement public budgets to implement emergency programs; and seeking additional grant financing, technical assistance and in-kind support.

⁷² UNDP. 2020. The economic impacts of COVID-19 and gender inequality. Recommendations for policymakers. briefing note.

⁷³ [here](#)

⁷⁴ [here](#)

⁷⁵ WFP. 2020. Gender and COVID-19. [here](#)

⁷⁶ United Nations. 2020. Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women. April. [here](#)

In the Niger, a national budget increase has been approved to respond to COVID-19, while in Kenya the Government has significantly reduced the development budget to support COVID-19 response activities with risks for economic growth in the future. Budget shifts and similar actions have been taken in Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi and Uganda.

Regarding resource partner support in Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and the Niger, roundtables for resources mobilization have been organized gathering pledges by development partners. Donors have contributed additional resources and the rechannelled existing ones. In Chad, the World Bank's financial contribution has been reallocated from the original project on enhancing climate resilience and sustainable agricultural productivity, while the EU's support was rechannelled from earmarked resources for an ongoing budget support programme.

Many countries in Africa will be using revenues from debt service relief as decided in the last G20 meeting that agreed to suspend debt repayment for one year for 76 low-income countries, including 40 African countries. In Sierra Leone, monetary policy actions included the reduction of the monetary policy rate from 16.5 percent to 15 percent, as of March 19, 2020 and the extension of the reserve requirement maintenance period from 14 to 28 days to ease tight liquidity.

Growth prospects in countries will determine the ability to sustain funding for humanitarian and development interventions from domestic resources. However, growth forecasts (when available) point to a sharp decline relative to pre-COVID-19 forecasts (e.g. Burkina Faso, Myanmar and Uganda). The situation will be exacerbated by a projected reduction of funding for development both from domestic resources and international resource partners.

Short-term disruptions due to COVID-19 are expected to have longer lasting negative effects on almost all countries, particularly in food crisis contexts. Smallholder farmers and pastoralists, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and other formal or informal participants in the agri-food system (small market traders and workers) are vulnerable even in cases of temporary disruptions due to lack of access to assets, savings or credit or organized social protection programmes. COVID-19 related shocks may force these vulnerable groups to rely on coping mechanisms with potential long-lasting negative effects, such as the sale of productive assets or diminished investments in human capital, natural resource depletion or conflict. Stabilization of market functioning has taken place at a "lower" level of activity as the effects of disruptions were balanced out by the effects of reduced income on demand for food.

Governments and development/humanitarian partners have been providing support to the livelihoods of vulnerable groups in almost all countries surveyed. However, such support has not been sufficient to compensate for the effects of the recession. A number of schemes have been set up such as expansion of social protection programmes, nutrition support, employment benefits, financial and credit support. In Malawi, payment of Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) benefits, include top-ups to existing SCTP beneficiaries in rural areas, and a new urban cash transfer programme in highly affected urban centres, which will currently cover three months. In Myanmar, more than 420 000 women and elderly will receive additional cash support to help them and their families during COVID-19. Chad implemented a food assistance component within the Government's Emergency Food Response Plan to meet the food needs of the vulnerable populations covering all 23 provinces. In the Niger, food assistance took the form of subsidized prices and direct food distribution including foods targeted to children to prevent malnutrition. In Liberia, the Ministry of Health and its partners have expanded their infant and young child feeding and complementary feeding programmes. Uganda implemented a food and basic assets distribution programme targeting vulnerable and urban poor of which many are female-headed households with school-aged children (in Kampala and Wakiso District).

The traditional divide between humanitarian and development interventions is more apparent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of protracted political and humanitarian crises, increasing needs and vulnerability, the discussions around more coherent and complementary humanitarian, development and peace efforts are all the more imperative. Strengthening Humanitarian Development Peace (HDP) nexus approaches can allow for a response that more systematically balances life-saving assistance with medium- and longer-term actions to reduce risks and vulnerabilities over time and that strengthen social cohesion and more peaceful societies.

Strengthening resilience in particular, with a focus on protecting livelihoods as an immediate emergency response, would prevent vulnerable food system participants from destitution and should decrease humanitarian need over time. In the Niger, the Prime Minister is leading a high-level committee on the implementation of the HDP nexus, and it would be opportune for humanitarian and development partners to align their interventions within this framework. In Palestine, HDP nexus approaches are similarly crucial, considering the limited space and low priority given to livelihoods in Palestine's COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan. Constraints in the delivery of urgent humanitarian interventions have, in turn, impacted upon vulnerable groups' livelihoods – including Bedouins and marginal farmers and fishers. This has led to increased vulnerability and a further increased reliance on food aid and other humanitarian assistance. In the medium and longer term, in a context such as that in Palestine, complementary humanitarian and development actions will be critical to reducing humanitarian need over time, whereby immediate humanitarian assistance is complemented by longer term support and resilience building measures.

KEY MESSAGE

The pandemic is already prompting a longer-term re-think of the functioning of the agri-food systems including needed structural shifts, innovations and policy approaches.



Increasing food stocks has become a priority on national policy debates with countries (re)building national reserves to smooth supply disruptions in countries such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, the Niger, Sierra Leone and Uganda. In Côte d'Ivoire, the pandemic has brought to the fore the need to invest in the establishment of a strategic food reserve. The Ministry of Agriculture, with the technical and financial support of ECOWAS, launched a study (June 2020) aimed at developing a national food security storage strategy. As a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the difficulties to access markets and in order to prevent price collapses at the producer level, governments in countries such as Liberia are currently assessing the purchase of excess production of staples to build stock levels.

Increasing food self-sufficiency is re-emerging as a priority especially in countries with high food imports facing export restrictions or border-related disruptions due to COVID-19. At the same time, there are efforts towards more regional trade and economic cooperation as well as production and export diversification, particularly in countries that are dependent on pro-cyclical export revenues (oil, mineral resources or tourism) or cash crops, such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Myanmar. There is ongoing debate in Kenya on the country's excessive dependence on imports because of supply chain uncertainties. The country is exploring its potential for expansion of production for a number of commodities including beans, eggs, maize, onions and sugar. There seems to be a consensus that more needs to be done to make the country more self-sufficient through the promotion of kitchen gardens, increased investments in smallholder and urban and peri-urban agriculture, small/backyard livestock systems and small-pond fishing. In Myanmar, the pandemic could lead to a return to

more rice-centric policies to ensure domestic rice availability after years of efforts to diversify agricultural production. Ensuring rice availability is also on the agenda of the Government of Burkina Faso, with a commitment to locally produce 1 million tonnes of rice by 2021.

The decision of the Heads of State on 21 March 2018 to create an African Continental Free Trade area appears more timely than ever, making it possible to boost currently low levels of intra-regional and sub-regional trade. The President of the Republic of the Niger has argued for the COVID-19 pandemic as an additional reason to accelerate the implementation of the African Free Trade Area.

Biosafety is a major issue that is being discussed in countries such as Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda, and ECOWAS commission. Uganda's Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries is reviewing and formulating a new Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan and investment plan. Issues related to food safety, processing, total quality management, traceability, and food safety legislation are given due consideration as sector priority and appropriately resourced. In Côte d'Ivoire and Chad, recurrent zoonoses (i.e. Ebola virus disease, avian influenza and COVID-19) shocks have led to a call for adoption of an effective food safety policy and the allocation of substantial resources.

The private sector is playing a more prominent role in the response and is seen as a partner for governments (e.g. in Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya and Malawi). Initiatives such as Safe Hands Kenya have brought together private sector actors to promote community-based handwashing and education drives to manage and prevent the spread of the virus in Kenya's densely populated areas, particularly in urban slums. The National COVID-19 Nutrition and Healthy Diets Guidelines initiative targets the establishment of 1 million kitchen gardens both in the rural and urban areas, for which the private sector has donated over 250 000 kitchen garden starter kits.

Shorter supply chains are in fashion due to perceived (but yet unproven) shortcomings of organized supply chains and forms of food retail (such as supermarkets) have been less resilient. The pandemic is seen as an opportunity to boost smallholder farming and local production, increase engagement of MSMEs in agri-food systems and encourage shorter supply chains in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, the Niger and Sierra Leone. In Côte d'Ivoire, by observing the behaviour of consumers during the pandemic, short supply chains are considered to be more appropriate. They delivered fresh products and seemed more resilient to external shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly raised awareness in many countries, including the Niger, of the vulnerabilities of food systems, especially for long, cross-border supply chains. In Liberia, there is a push from the Ministry of Agriculture and its partners to support the (local) development of agribusiness SMEs and strengthen their links with smallholder farmers. The Government of Liberia is also working in close collaboration with small-scale farmers and producers to promote private-public partnerships for the main cash crops (rice, cassava, tree crops).

E-commerce, e-agriculture and broader technology can take a more prominent role in shaping agri-food systems and the market in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Kenya and Pakistan. In Kenya, the Government plans to encourage e-commerce in the context of COVID-19 while maintaining safety and hygiene standards. Kenya has pioneered a cashless system through platforms like M-PESA, which has been the basis for online marketplaces, and benefited from high network connectivity (85 percent of those with internet service have 3G network). This is expected also to cover agricultural products. In Pakistan, linking the agricultural production related industry to transport, markets and consumers through the enhanced use of digital technology and e-commerce can contribute to significantly strengthen the supply chain, to create jobs, give access to more women to markets, connect far-flung communities to markets and improve lives.

“Green” and “blue” economies are being discussed and could gain momentum in the future as the crisis subsides while some issues such as nutrition, climate change, biodiversity, natural resource management, and environmental degradation having fallen to the back burner of national dialogues during the crisis.

KEY MESSAGE



The management of the crisis (health and economic), caused shifts in governance structures especially in fragile contexts, and pinpoints to the need for more effective and inclusive information flows.

Governments in many of the surveyed countries put in place various committees and bodies to manage the crisis and coordinate the large number of diverse technical and financial partners. Well-coordinated governance structures have been critical for a quick and efficient response to the crisis in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Niger, Pakistan, Palestine and Sierra Leone. In the Niger, the Government and its partners are pursuing discussions through the various reactivated humanitarian clusters (Food Security, Nutrition, Health, and water sanitation and hygiene) and also in technical and high-level dialogue committees. However, often private sector and civil society organizations are not fully involved in coordination mechanisms, such as in Sierra Leone, and the proliferation of partners can result in multiple, uncoordinated initiatives, using a project approach rather than a more coordinated and integrated long-term development approach.

Countries with food crisis already face multiple shocks and vulnerabilities, with COVID-19 exacerbating the situation; the response requires coordination. In Kenya, which is simultaneously experiencing multiple shocks (i.e. locust upsurge, floods and COVID-19) to food security and nutrition, a Food Security War Room (FSWR) has been constituted at the Ministry of Agriculture to address all emerging issues related to food and nutrition security. FSWR includes non-governmental organizations, development partners, farmers' organizations, traders and the private sector, represented by the Agriculture Sector Network. While governments in other countries are coordinating with different stakeholders to mobilize resources to support overall national economic and humanitarian response planning, specific financial requests for support to food security, agriculture and nutrition are not always prominent.

Some countries have delegated decisions on programme design and implementation to local governments and others have consolidated the policy response under centralized governance structures. Governments, including for instance Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar, the Niger, Pakistan and Uganda have centralized the response to COVID-19 with limited involvement from decentralized and sub-national level structures or lack of coordination between central and sub-national levels. Some disagreements between central and sub-national governments have been reported regarding the sequencing of the policy implementation (lockdown versus economic implications). On the other hand in countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and Liberia some of the COVID-19 preparedness, response and easing of restrictions, has been decentralized. No assessments of what has worked better is currently available.

In many countries there are serious deficiencies in information flows needed for effective policy making: (i) between central and decentralized locations; (ii) functionality and coherence of Food Security and Nutrition information systems in countries with food crisis contexts; and (iii) information and appropriate dissemination regarding food markets and prices. In some food crises contexts, food security monitoring systems are being considerably stepped up to respond to decision-makers needs. Progress is however patchy and there is a need to further strengthen the frequency of analyses, enhance

their predictive functions while seeking to understand new vulnerabilities. This appears to be a priority across countries. This will also imply enhanced coordination between humanitarian and development actors to better address information gaps in existing data collection systems, identify data and analysis standards and better integrate and harmonize analytical systems.

Lack of real-time data on vulnerable groups and programme performance (monitoring and evaluation) have led to confusion and compromised programme effectiveness. For instance, cash transfers in Sindh province in Pakistan are mainly based on people reaching out to the Government through a helpline, an approach that often leaves the poorest behind. Positive experiences include effective targeting mechanisms, including social registries under Pakistan’s Federal Social Protection Programme and Malawi’s National Social Support Programme. The latter is building on the systems established through the rural cash transfer program in order to expand targeting to urban areas under a new urban cash transfer programme. Both programmes are leverage digital innovation to improve outreach. The challenge for social registries is to take into account the “new poor” who were above minimum income thresholds pre-COVID-19 (informal sector workers, tourism sector etc.).



Box 7: COVID-19 and Regional Coordination and Action: the case of ECOWAS*

The Ministers in charge of Agriculture and Food during their videoconference on 31 March 2020 on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition in West Africa agreed to set up a regional task force to support and oversee and, as the case may be, coordinate the implementation of a number of programmes of regional nature. These programmes include securing the functioning of cross-border food supply chains including the free movement of food across borders; the mobilization of internal and external resources with a view to strengthening the intervention capacity of the Regional Food Security Reserve to reach an additional 100 000 tonnes by the end of 2021; the mobilization of internal and external resources to prevent and control transboundary animal and plant diseases, and pests through the effective implementation of the regional mechanisms adopted by the Member States.

ECOWAS will also support countries through the following: grouped negotiations for supply contracts between the region and countries supplying equipment and agricultural inputs; intra-regional trade in local agricultural products from surplus production basins to deficit areas both within countries and between ECOWAS Member States; humanitarian assistance to Member States under the regional humanitarian assistance mechanism with the support of technical and financial partners.

In terms of financing the Ministers decided to operationalize the Regional Food and Agriculture Fund (FRAA) and to replenish it with a minimum of USD 2 million per year as has already been agreed and mobilise funding for the FRAA from resource partners.

ECOWAS also pledged to advocate to the creditors of ECOWAS Member States for the relief or even abolition of the external debt service of countries and the allocation of the resources released to finance priority expenditures including those of the agricultural sector as a whole.

() Not all ECOWAS countries are part of the GRFC.*

COVID-19 effects on acute food insecurity

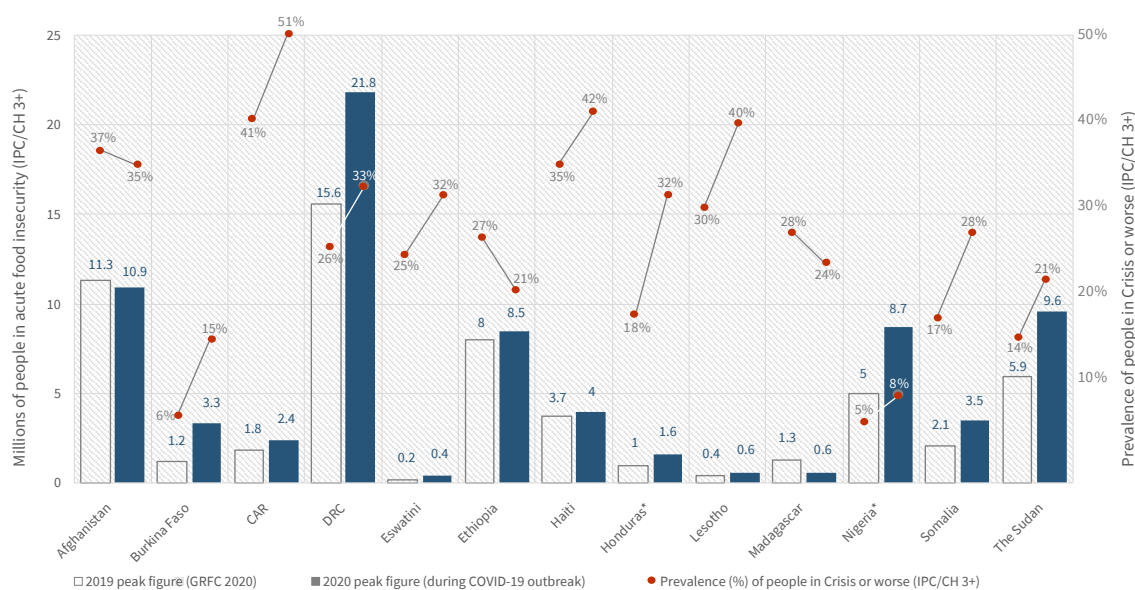
Acute food insecurity remains alarmingly high according to the latest IPC/CH analyses released between April and August in all countries analysed.⁷⁷ With the exception of Afghanistan and Madagascar, where potential negative effects of COVID-19 have been compensated for by increased food availability compared with last year, all other countries are registering an increase in the number of acutely food-insecure people. However, in Ethiopia, while the number of people in crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) increased between 2019 and 2020, the prevalence has decreased (from 27 to 21 percent of the population analysed). The main reason being that the 2020 analysis was covering a wider population and geographical area compared with 2019.

KEY MESSAGE

A general worsening of acute food insecurity is being observed across several countries compared with the situation reported in 2019 as per the Global Report on Food Crises 2020.



Figure 1: Highest number of people (millions) in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above), 2019 vs. 2020 during COVID-19.⁷⁸



Honduras: 13 departments*

Northern Nigeria: 16 states and Federal Capital Territory*

The chart shows the 2019 (GRFC 2020) and the 2020 peak numbers of acute food insecurity after the start of Covid 19 pandemic as well as the prevalence of acute food insecurity for all countries with available food security analysis⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ This section has benefited from the preliminary findings of the forthcoming Mid-Year Update of the Global Report on Food Crises 2020.

⁷⁸ Some comparability challenges in term of geographical coverage exist for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Madagascar and The Sudan meaning that the latest analysis cannot be directly compared with the 2019 peak numbers because of significantly different population analysed between the two analyses.

⁷⁹ Thirteen countries have produced recent IPC/CH Acute food insecurity analyses taking into account the impact of COVID-19. The thirteen countries are: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Haiti, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, northern Nigeria (16 states and Federal Capital Territory), Somalia, and The Sudan. New IPC analyses and updates have also been produced for Mozambique (urban analysis of Maputo and Matola; and retrospective analysis for 7 rural districts), Burundi and Yemen southern areas. However, given the significant differences in geographical coverage and methodologies used with the 2019 GRFC peak numbers, these three countries were not included in this analysis.

While currently the Democratic Republic of the Congo represents the largest food crisis in absolute numbers, significant deteriorations of acute food insecurity are also reported in countries like Burkina Faso (almost 300 percent increase), northern Nigeria (73 percent increase), Somalia (67 percent increase) and The Sudan⁸⁰ (64 percent increase).

Regarding the prevalence of acute food insecurity among the population, four countries (Central African Republic, Honduras, Lesotho and Somalia) faced an increase of more than 10 percent increase in the share of people facing crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) between 2019 and 2020.

It is worth noting that Central African Republic accounts for more than 50 percent of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above), Haiti for more than 40 percent Lesotho around 40 percent and Eswatini and Honduras more than 30 percent.

Details on the acute food security situation for countries experiencing the largest increases, resulting from a combination of factors including COVID-19, are provided below.

In Burkina Faso, the number of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) almost tripled compared with the 2019 peak situation. In July-August 2020, around 3.3 million people – close to 15 percent of the population – were facing crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) food security conditions, of whom over half a million people in emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4) and over 11 000 in catastrophe (IPC/CH Phase 5). Conflict and insecurity persist in 2020, while the lockdown and movement restrictions significantly limited income-generating opportunities and affected households' purchasing power. It is also worth noting that the number of IDPs reached more than 1 million in August 2020, a 65 percent increase compared with January 2020⁸¹.

The Central African Republic experienced a significant deterioration of food security – notably in Bangui – with the food-insecure population in need of urgent assistance increasing by 30 percent countrywide since mid-2019, reaching more than half of the total population of the country in May-August 2020 (2.36 million people)⁸². The food security situation has deteriorated due to ongoing insecurity, large population displacement, extreme weather events and high food prices, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on markets and livelihoods.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo there are 21.8 million food-insecure people in urgent need of assistance (IPC Phase 3 or above), or 33 percent of the population analysed, including 5.7 million people in emergency (IPC Phase 4) between July and December 2020⁸³. It corresponds to a severe deterioration compared with the peak situation of acute food insecurity in 2019 when 26 percent of the population was in crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) in the country. Most of the food-insecure population is located in Ituri, Tanganyika, Kasai Central and Kasai provinces where conflict, insecurity and related displacement were already a major driver of food insecurity. Urban areas that were not analysed in 2019 also contributed to the increase in the number of acute food insecurity. The indirect impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and economic activities as well as pre-existing macro-economic challenges significantly reduced the purchasing power of vulnerable households in 2020, in particular in urban areas.

⁸⁰ The Sudan has limited comparability between 2019 and 2020 peak figures due to differences in population analysed.

⁸¹ CILSS-Cadre Harmonisé. 2020. Results of the updated analysis of Current Period (June to August) - Burkina Faso. July. Accessible [here](#); CONASUR. 2020. Enregistrement des personnes déplacées internes du Burkina Faso. Issue no. 8. August.

⁸² Central African Republic IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (Update May-August 2020 projection). May. Accessible [here](#)

⁸³ Democratic Republic of the Congo IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute Food Insecurity Situation Snapshot (July 2020-June 2021): preliminary results. September. [here](#). There are strong limitations to direct comparability between 2019/2020 analyses (e.g. number of people analysed – 59.8 million in 2019 vs 66.6 million in 2020; urban areas are included in the 2020 analysis).

Northern Nigeria⁸⁴, where almost 8.7 million people were facing crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) from June to August 2020, accounts for a **73 percent increase compared with the 2019 peak** figure. In the three northeastern states (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe), where humanitarian access remains limited, the estimated food-insecure population in need of urgent assistance increased by 45 percent since the 2019 peak to around 4.3 million during the lean season in June-August 2020. In the northwestern state of Kano, the population in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) increased more than three-fold since the 2019 peak situation to 1.5 million in June-August 2020⁸⁵. As attacks continued and millions of people remained displaced in northeastern Nigeria, additional disruptions in market and business functionality due to COVID-19 containment measures affected livelihoods and income-generating activities. The COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and insecurity, pre-existing economic shocks and floods are the main drivers of acute food insecurity in northern Nigeria in 2020.

Somalia, with 3.5 million people facing crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity between July and September 2020, accounts for an **increase of 67 percent countrywide compared with the 2019 peak**⁸⁶. The increase is mainly driven by the indirect impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods, by the erratic rainfall leading to floods and dry spells, as well as by the desert locust infestations in the first half of 2020. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the economy is likely to mostly affect the poor urban and IDPs households, as well as pastoralists in northern Somalia, notably through the decrease in remittances, by the decrease in demand for livestock and labour, as well as by the increasing prices of imported staples. Desert locust infestations remain a significant threat in northern and central pastoral areas, and in southern agropastoral areas⁸⁷. In addition, persistent insecurity and consequent displacement continued to affect food security.

The Sudan has faced a significant deterioration in food security, where the population in need of assistance increased by 64 percent countrywide⁸⁸ reaching around 9.6 million people in June-September 2020, or 21 percent of the total population, facing crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of food insecurity, including 2.2 million in emergency (IPC Phase 4). This represents the highest figure ever recorded in the history of IPC in The Sudan. The deterioration is mainly due to the economic crisis still prevailing in the country in 2020 and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, to the local conflict-induced population displacements, and to weather extremes such as floods and dry spells. In particular, the lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly decreased commodity movement, market function and cross-border trade, and compromised livelihoods, daily labour opportunities, reducing household purchasing power and food access of the vulnerable population. Moreover, desert locust infestations still represent a significant threat to food security.

In **Honduras**, around 1.6 million people – or 32 percent of the population analysed – faced crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) during the lean season between June and August 2020, including over 300 000 people in emergency (IPC Phase 4). In all departments, there was an increase in the population in crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) from 18 percent to 32 percent in all areas analysed with respect to the situation in November 2019. In addition to the reduced food stocks from the below-average harvest in 2019, food security was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the containment measures. In particular, vulnerable households were confronted to reduced livelihoods and incomes, including through loss of employment opportunities and the decrease in remittances.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ The Cadre Harmonisé analysis covers 16 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory.

⁸⁵ CILSS-Cadre Harmonisé. 2020. Results of the updated analysis of Current Period (June to August) in Adamawa, Borno, Kano and Yobe – Nigeria. July. Accessible [here](#)

⁸⁶ FSNAU-FEWS NET. 2020. Quarterly Brief on the 2020 Jial Impact and Gu Season (January-September 2020). May. Accessible [here](#)

⁸⁷ FEWS NET-FSNAU. 2020. Somalia – Food Security Outlook. June.

⁸⁸ Sudan IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (June-December 2020). July. Accessible [here](#)

⁸⁹ Honduras IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis – 13 departments (Update June-August 2020 projection). July. [here](#)

In **Lesotho**, more than 580 000 people are expected to face crisis or worse between October 2020 and March 2021, representing 40 percent of the population analysed, of whom 100 000 people in emergency (IPC Phase 4). Compared with the October 2019-March 2020 situation, the proportion of food-insecure people in need of urgent assistance among those analysed is expected to increase by 10 percent – from 30 percent, as per the 2019 peak. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – in particular through a reduction in remittances from South Africa – exacerbated already serious macro-economic and social challenges. Lower income opportunities are likely to aggravate the food security situation, already affected by extreme weather events (drought), a below-average 2020 harvest, limited food availability and high food prices.⁹⁰

Table 1: Numbers of acutely food insecure people by country 2019-2020

Countries	2019 highest number of food-insecure people (GRFC 2020)			2020 highest number of food-insecure people during COVID-19		
	Percentage of population analysed (%)	Number of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)	Prevalence of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)	Percentage of population analysed (%)	Number of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)	Prevalence of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)
Afghanistan	95%	11.3	37%	95%	10.9	35%
Burkina Faso	100%	1.2	6%	100%	3.3	15%
Central African Republic	91%	1.8	41%	95%	2.4	51%
Democratic Republic of the Congo*	69%	15.6	26%	74%	21.8	33%
Eswatini	67%	0.2	25%	97%	0.4	32%
Ethiopia*	26%	8.0	27%	36%	8.5	21%
Haiti	93%	3.7	35%	87%	4.0	42%
Honduras (13 departments)	53%	1.0	18%	52%	1.6	32%
Lesotho	63%	0.4	30%	73%	0.6	40%
Madagascar*	18%	1.3	28%	8%	0.6	24%
Nigeria (16 states and Federal Capital Territory)	51%	5.0	5%	52%	8.7	8%
Somalia	80%	2.1	17%	78%	3.5	28%
The Sudan*	98%	5.9	14%	100%	9.6	21%

Sources: GRFC 2020; the Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Sudan IPC Technical Working Groups; FSNAU-FEWS NET; and CILSS-Cadre Harmonisé.

*Given significant differences in the population analyzed, the 2019 and 2020 numbers of food insecure people are not directly comparable.

⁹⁰ Lesotho IPC Technical Working Group. 2020. Acute food insecurity analysis (July 2020-March 2021). August. [here](#)

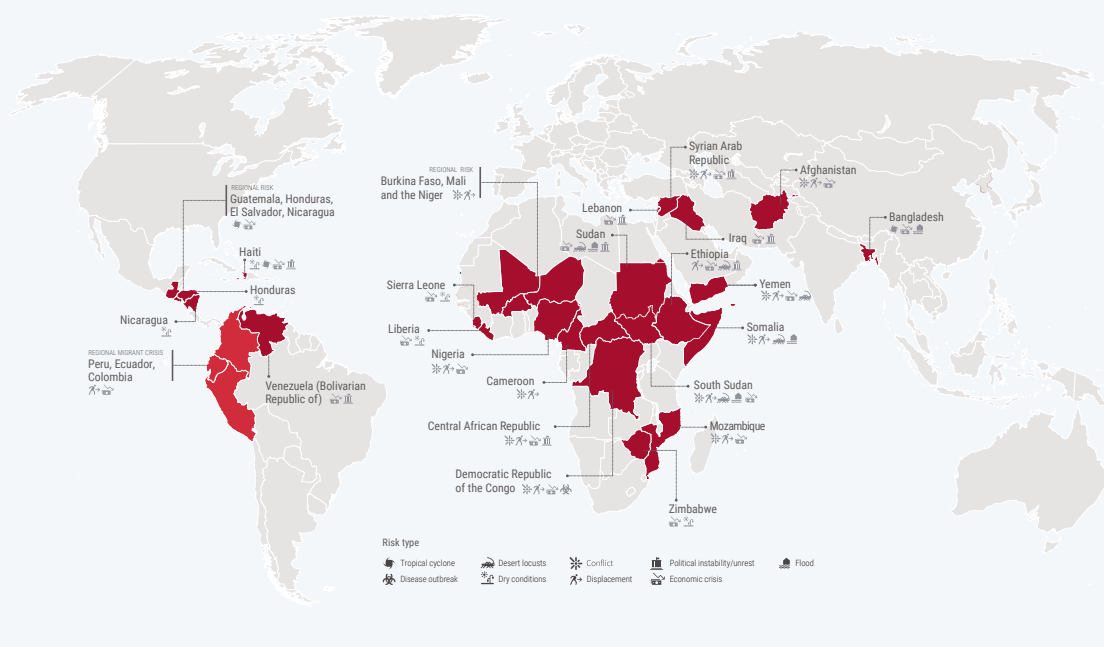


Box 8: Several countries remain at risk of acute food insecurity deterioration

In July 2020, FAO and WFP released the “Early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots”⁹¹, as part of a series of analytical products produced under the Global Network Against Food Crises. The analysis highlights that 27 countries are at risk of significant food security deterioration, and in particular acute hunger and associated malnutrition. Moreover, it takes into account major drivers of food insecurity, with a focus on the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a forward-looking perspective, outlining the likely evolution of impacts over a period of approximately six months during the second half of 2020, aiming to inform urgent action to safeguard the food security of the most vulnerable communities in these locations.

FAO-WFP early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots

July 2020



⁹¹ The report is available [here](#)



Concluding remarks on the way forward

On the basis of the emerging evidence, four broad remarks and related course of action can be drawn on the acute food security situation in countries with food crisis.

- **The compounding effects of COVID-19 on pre-existing vulnerabilities is causing a notable impact on the level of acute food insecurity of the most at risks populations particularly in localized hotspots. These negative effects may further escalate in the event of another lockdown or additional shocks. Therefore, the evolution of the food security situation needs to be continuously monitored and reviewed for an informed policy and programme response.**

The need to invest in enhanced monitoring systems and predictive analysis is becoming more pressing and calls for a common and coherent approach at all levels to enable decision-makers to make evidence-based decisions. Enhanced coordination is required among governments, and humanitarian and development actors to better address information gaps in existing data collection systems, identify data and analysis standards and better integrate and harmonize analytical systems. Critical priorities include more detailed risk monitoring, as well as near real-time and remote food security monitoring systems. More systematically linking of the analysis of evolving underlying risks and stressors to actions is necessary to rapidly mobilize and pre-empt COVID-19 impacts on food security and on the agri-food systems that provide the basis of the livelihoods of the most vulnerable in countries with food crisis.

- **Saving the livelihoods and ensuring food security and nutrition of vulnerable groups should be the priority of government and humanitarian/development partners through the scale-up of various forms of support.**

Preserving critical humanitarian food, livelihood and nutrition assistance to vulnerable groups and preserving and protecting agricultural livelihoods with a focus on limiting the negative impact of the pandemic and of other stressors should continue and expand, to ensure adequate food production in vulnerable rural areas. Investments to reinforce and scale-up social protection systems so that they also cover the “new poor” can ensure that vulnerable groups in both urban and rural settings will continue to have access to nutritious food, health and other essential services.

- **The pandemic is triggering a re-think of the role of agri-food systems and their functionality and resilience under stress as the majority of the vulnerable groups still rely on agriculture for their livelihoods.**

The focus on the short-term effects of the pandemic may detract attention from important challenges such as nutrition, climate change, biodiversity, natural resource and environmental sustainability among others. Transformative changes in the agri-food systems to make them more sustainable and resilient should consider the dynamic factors that shape the evolution of food systems (such as demographics and technology) and that the world is expected to provide food and improved nutrition to 10 billion people by 2050, and more than 11 billion by 2100. For agriculture alone, this means production, broadly speaking, must increase by at least 50 percent between 2013 and 2050. And it all has to happen in a sustainable manner. Addressing inequalities of access to resources, knowledge, assets, technology, and markets/value chains will be fundamental elements of a transformative process especially in crisis countries where such inequalities are accentuated. Addressing inequalities and discriminatory practices concerning particularly most marginalized and vulnerable groups will be fundamental for the transformative agenda to support the SDGs.

- **The challenges in responding to the pandemic have further stressed the need to re-organize the way crises are handled.**

While there has been a positive recognition that the response to the pandemic needs to go well beyond the immediate health implications – with national and international actions addressing the wide range of socio-economic impacts – this is still frequently being done within traditional sectoral ‘silos’ and with insufficient linkages between global, regional, national and sub-national efforts. The systemic weaknesses that the virus has exposed in societal, economic and political systems, and the resulting impacts on agri-food systems and food security, can only be effectively addressed by further efforts to ensure that actions are mutually reinforcing across all levels and by promoting HDP actions that are better coordinated and complementary – as emphasised by the Global Network Against Food Crises ‘3x3 approach’.

Overall, the evidence calls for a longer-term perspective and a ‘nexus approach’ that improves our understanding of the complex interaction between markets, governance, financing, people and societies and, in the case of food security, agricultural practices and systems. **Adopting such a ‘systems approach’ to food security should be accompanied by strengthened multi-agency collaboration and joined-up approaches to analysis, programming and monitoring that builds a greater recognition of the impacts of a diverse range of dimensions on agri-food systems.** The United Nations Secretary General’s call to focus on both lives and livelihoods, along with improved social protection systems for nutrition and increased investment in healthy, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems ahead of the Food Systems Summit in 2021 will be key to achieving this change and critical to meeting our shared commitment of ‘ending hunger’ in line with the 2030 Agenda.

