



FAO requires
USD 75.8 million



to assist
2.5 million people



13.6 million people
facing acute food insecurity at
crisis or worse levels*



75% of the population relies on
agriculture for their livelihoods



As of 1 June 2020, the number of
positive COVID-19 cases increased
by **450%** in one month



Prices are likely to increase by
over **14%**

*Source: The Democratic Republic
of the Congo Integrated Food Security
Phase Classification (IPC) Technical
Working Group, Acute Food Insecurity
Analysis (January–May 2020 projection),
August 2019



Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been facing chronic challenges linked to poverty, food insecurity, lack of access to basic services, armed conflict and insecurity, epidemics (cholera, Ebola virus disease [EVD], measles and malaria) and population displacement.
- Following the first reported case of COVID-19 in the country (March 2020), the Government declared a state of emergency and several urgent and essential measures were put in place, such as the closure of borders, the partial lockdown of Kinshasa with movement restrictions, and the closure of all schools. These restrictive measures were necessary but have affected a country that was already fragile, further exacerbating peoples' vulnerabilities.
- Given the Democratic Republic of the Congo's significant reliance on imports (e.g. of cereals), the closure of borders, movement restrictions, and disruptions in local and global supply chains, have resulted in the increase of prices, and reduced availability of and access to food and non-food items. This has also caused households to be unable to generate income especially within the agriculture sector and has reduced their purchasing power, thereby increasing the adoption of negative coping mechanisms (e.g. the consumption of seeds, selling productive assets, etc.).
- Physical access to markets has been challenging in most parts of the country, with over 60 percent of roads damaged and/or blocked, directly affecting the transportation and marketing of agricultural products. Market restrictions have also affected farmers' access to crop, livestock and fishing inputs. Moreover, the health-related restrictions have affected casual workers' ability to access agricultural fields, with an estimated 40 percent of the poorest populations dependent on casual labour to generate income.
- Movement and border restrictions have impacted the transhumance patterns of pastoralists. In the eastern part of the country, transhumance is already affected by the escalation of conflict and a recent increase in EVD cases.
- Across the country, vulnerable households are at high risk of further deterioration of their food security. Over 520 000 refugees and about 5 million internally displaced persons with already limited resources are clearly at risk and in need of urgent assistance. Based on the latest IPC analysis, the most at-risk provinces are Ituri, Kasai, Central Kasai, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika.

Likely evolution of the impacts of COVID-19 on food security

With the spread of COVID-19 to 14 provinces, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the pandemic is expected to affect 14.6 million people in the country with 7 900 potential deaths in the next 12 months (April 2020). With the upcoming harvest of the second season in parts of the country, COVID-19-related measures (market closure, movement restrictions, etc.) have contributed to the disruption of cross-border trade and are likely to limit farmers' ability to conduct post-harvest activities, such as storage of production, processing and accessing markets. As a result, the income and purchasing power of millions of farmers will likely drop significantly. More specifically, the main anticipated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are the following:

- **Farmers to face challenges in production activities.** In northern and central parts of the country, the June–December period coincides with the harvest of the second season (July–August) and most of the main agricultural season A (September–December). In southern unimodal areas, from June to December 2020, agricultural activities are expected to focus on the completion of maize harvesting (June) as well as land preparation for the next maize planting season (November). Reduced access to inputs due to disruptions in logistics and markets coupled with the lack of labour capacity following movement restrictions are likely to continue to affect production activities if health-related restrictions continue. Limited employment opportunities will also further reduce vulnerable households' purchasing power and access to food. This will in turn increase the adoption of negative coping mechanisms with a higher risk of malnutrition and loss of livelihoods.
- **Movement restrictions to negatively impact livestock production and sale.** Transport restrictions are reducing the supply of livestock and livestock products to markets, especially in areas that depend on imports to sustain production or rely on meat and dairy imports for consumption, e.g. province of Kinshasa that relies on the eastern provinces for supply of meat and dairy production. These are also likely to impact the supply of feed, hindering the ability of transhumant herders to feed their animals.
- **Border closures to impact food availability and informal labour.** The closing of land, air and river borders with neighbouring countries, combined with the restriction of intra- and inter-provincial movements will contribute to a further decrease in the availability of food in markets, reducing income generating opportunities and ultimately impacting households' food security. Furthermore, people who make their living through informal cross-border trade will no longer be able to carry out their activities and will be extremely vulnerable, especially households near the borders with Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.
- **Continued insecurity and EVD in Equateur to hamper response to COVID-19.** The COVID-19 outbreak, which affects the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu and Ituri, along with existing epidemics, have compounded the situation in a context already weakened by militia activities and armed attacks. Furthermore, on 1 June 2020, the Government declared its 11th EVD outbreak in Equateur province. In these areas, humanitarian actors are currently experiencing financial and operational challenges to respond to the complex situation. Uncertainty around the future socio-economic impacts of the pandemic combined with movement restrictions, soaring unemployment, limited access to food and the loss of already fragile livelihoods may exacerbate vulnerabilities, fueling further violence and conflict.

Anticipatory actions and response

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is implementing anticipatory actions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable households in line with the Government's plan (*Programme multisectoriel d'urgence d'atténuation des impacts de la covid-19*) and the United Nations plan for immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. This will allow subsistence and small-scale farmers and producers, mostly women and youth, to improve and diversify their daily diet, create alternative sources of income, and contribute to supplying the markets of Kinshasa with local fresh products in anticipation of intra- and inter-provincial trade disruptions. Furthermore, rice producers in the Pool Malebo (former Stanley Pool) area of Kinshasa are assisted through the strengthening of their processing and storage capacities to help reduce potential post-harvest losses.

Ongoing interventions include:

- Providing vegetable seeds, agricultural tools and cash to vulnerable households living in urban or peri-urban areas of Kinshasa, in order to ensure availability of local and fresh produce in local markets and access to food.
- Providing storage and processing equipment and bags to rice producer cooperatives in Pool Malebo to ensure harvest conservation.
- Distributing hygiene kits and raising awareness on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through Dimitra clubs in close collaboration with WHO, as well as through community radio networks which are usually also used to provide both technical and peacekeeping messages in conflict zones.

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the proposed actions have been identified to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on food security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also represents FAO's contribution to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19. The priority is to support the efforts of public health actors to contain the spread of the disease. At the same time,

FAO will adopt a proactive strategy to anticipate the indirect effects of COVID-19, in order to protect vulnerable people's livelihoods and ensure their access to food, especially for those living in food crisis. Indeed, the closure of regional and national borders combined with necessary health-related movement restrictions will disrupt food value chains, which could trigger a 20-percent increase in prices. Therefore, supporting agricultural producers is crucial to increase availability of and access to food thus contributing to preventing the deterioration of the food security situation in the country.

FAO aims to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19 based on four strategic priorities:

1) Reduce the spread of the disease through information and awareness raising on preventive measures

- sensitize and disseminate information/messages on prevention;
- produce hygiene kits and other equipment locally.

2) Collect and analyse data for programming and decision making

- analyse the impact of COVID-19 on food security, livelihoods and food value chains;
- reinforce coordination among Food Security Cluster partners.

3) Strengthen the availability of and access to food products

- improve availability of and access to healthy and diversified food;
- increase and diversify local agricultural production;
- strengthen social safety nets for vulnerable households.

4) Support the development of local food value chains

- establish sustainable access to agricultural inputs;
- support producers' small-scale commercial activities;
- support producers' processing and conservation activities.



Funding



FAO requires
USD 75.8 million

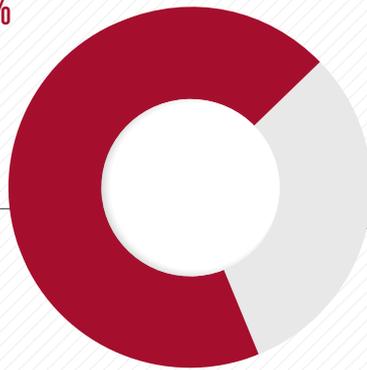
- **USD 20.8 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 55 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020



to assist
2.5 million people

FUNDING GAP
USD 52.3 million

69%



31%

RECEIVED

USD 23.5 million

Resource partners
the Governments of Germany and Sweden, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities

Coordination and partnerships

FAO's Response Plan will be implemented in close collaboration with the Government as well as with Food Security Cluster partners. The existing strategic partnerships between FAO, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, WHO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will be further strengthened to provide integrated assistance to vulnerable populations. Information and awareness messages will be in line with WHO to reach as many people as possible, especially in rural areas.

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