



FAO requires
USD 3.5 million



to assist
24 000 people



336 000 people in need of
food security assistance*



10% of the total population
have insufficient food
consumption (World Food
Programme [WFP], May 2020)



92% cereal import
requirement (WFP, May 2020)



Over **10%** inflation in 2019 due
to conflict (African Development
Bank, January 2020)

*Source: Libya Humanitarian
Response Plan (HRP) 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- The ongoing civil war has led to a dire humanitarian situation and the destruction of the country's healthcare capacity and other basic infrastructure. Agricultural production is also limited due to the country's uncondusive climate, and disruptions in oil production and exports have led to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowing down sharply to 2.5 percent in 2019. Most land, air and sea crossing points were either limited or closed entirely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the country continues to rely heavily on imports to meet domestic food demand (90 percent of cereals are imported).
- The effects of urgent and essential COVID-19-related restrictions have further exacerbated the situation and increased the vulnerability of numerous households. As of 9 July 2020, Libya has 1 268 confirmed cases of COVID-19. After the first cases were detected in March 2020, the Government of Libya took steps to control its spread including further border closures, import restrictions and restrictions on the movement of food supplies, as well as the closure of schools, markets and some businesses.
- Many areas in the country are reporting availability problems for basic food items. The cost of essential food and goods in May 2020 was 23 percent above pre-COVID levels. In addition, access to food-related commodities such as cooking gas is currently limited and costly. This is due to high inflation, exchange rate fluctuations and liquidity problems. The import of goods has also been affected as a result of restrictions imposed by exporting countries, causing a reduction in food supply. These issues, coupled with an increase in unemployment, are reducing



the capacity of households to meet their basic food needs.

- Migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are among the most-affected population groups, mainly because their employment sources and opportunities have been severely reduced due to the essential health-related COVID-19 containment measures. Rural Libyan farmers in the southern region of the country as well as in Benghazi have also been heavily affected. Numerous Libyans who were considered food secure before the pandemic are now facing food shortages.
- A survey conducted in May 2020 by the International Committee of the Red Cross reported that

85 percent of those interviewed had no savings with which to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, while 52 percent said that their livelihoods had suffered because of COVID-19.

- A large proportion of households have already adopted negative coping mechanisms to address the lack of resources during the pandemic, such as relying on less expensive food, reducing the number or size of meals per day, withdrawing children from schools, or selling assets in order to buy food. A major concern during COVID-19 is that numerous displaced households have reduced their required health expenditures in order to cover their basic food needs.

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

As COVID-19 cases continue to increase over the coming months, government restrictions – particularly closures of business and trade routes – are likely to stay in place. The GDP growth rate is also expected to be negative in 2020 (World Bank, April 2020) due to a globally unstable oil market and the humanitarian situation in Libya. Some of the key likely impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next six months include:

- **Being an import-dependent country, adverse exchange rates and restrictions imposed by exporting countries to reduce food supply.** Over the next few months, food shortages across the country are highly likely as Libya usually imports most of its food items. This is further compounded by the ongoing conflict, as most of the arable land in and around the capital, as well in the southern region have been affected. Land transportation of goods has been hindered as those involved in this sector are forced to quarantine for two weeks after transporting goods to the country. Therefore, many merchants are choosing to import by sea or air, which is more costly. Such measures will also cause a reduction or delay in the supply of key food commodities and agricultural inputs for households that rely on agriculture.
- **Food prices to increase.** The combination of supply chain disruptions, ongoing conflict, and market restrictions are likely to lead to a further increase in food prices during the coming months. This comes against the backdrop of households who are likely to have their purchasing power decrease further which could result in increased stockpiling of goods, a vicious cycle which may further drive up prices.
- **Increased food insecurity linked to decreased food production.** Access to agricultural land has been restricted due to the ongoing conflict. In addition, seeds and tools for subsistence agriculture, engaging one-fifth of the population, will most likely be difficult to access or increasingly expensive over the coming months. Cereal crop production in 2020 is forecast to be about 5 percent less than in the previous year and about 12 percent below the five-year average.
- **IDPs, refugees and migrants are particularly vulnerable to the follow-on effects of the pandemic.** The combination of curfews and high food prices has resulted in most refugees and migrants in Libya being unable to find the daily work necessary to support themselves and meet their food needs. As food prices are likely to increase further, this group is particularly vulnerable due to their limited income opportunities and low purchasing power which will result in negative coping mechanisms.

- **The pandemic to exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities.** A survey conducted by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment found that the current COVID-19 containment measures have negatively affected women's livelihoods, especially for self-

employed women. There are also fears of increased violence due to pressures from curfews. Female-headed households and those that heavily rely on women's income are likely to face increased levels of food insecurity.

Anticipatory actions and response

Within the framework of the 2020 HRP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is improving the resilience of the most vulnerable households (IDPs, refugees, migrants and vulnerable host communities) by safeguarding their food security and agricultural livelihoods as well as by strengthening the capacities of government and national partners to coordinate and address future shocks. Specifically, FAO is (i) supporting the increase of agricultural production through the provision of agricultural input-kits and training; (ii) protecting animal health through the provision of veterinary services such as vaccination and treatment of livestock; and (iii) strengthening food security coordination by conducting food security assessments and surveys to inform cluster programming and response planning.

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the proposed actions have been identified to meet the urgent short-term needs of the most vulnerable food-insecure populations and protect their assets. It also represents FAO's contribution to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

1) Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most food-insecure populations

- FAO is providing agricultural livelihood kits to the most vulnerable households in Libya, prioritizing female-headed households. This support will be provided in areas that were heavily affected by COVID-19 containment measures and which have the potential to plant seeds during the next planting season.
- FAO is conducting training programmes to improve farmers' production capacities using "save and grow", climate-smart agriculture and conservation agriculture principles in order to ensure sustainability and availability of food for the coming season.
- Under the One Health approach, FAO continues to provide technical and material support (laboratory

equipment, disinfectant, and vaccinations) to the Ministry of Agriculture and its specialized centre to control the outbreak of transboundary and zoonotic diseases nationwide.

- The Ministry of Agriculture has requested FAO to support the national animal health centre with COVID-19 testing. FAO is working with partners in the Food Security Sector to allocate resources to provide relevant assistance in consultation with the World Health Organization.

2) Ensuring continuity of the food supply chain

- In collaboration with WFP, FAO will carry out an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the agriculture sector and food value chains in the country. The assessment will be carried out by applying methods that will not put the enumerators as well as respondents at risk of contracting the virus (including the use of WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping tool). Where there will be a need to meet key informants in-person, standard operating procedures (SOPs) such as limited group sizes and physical distancing measures will be applied.
- FAO is participating in an interagency study led by the United Nations Children's Fund, which focuses primarily on assessing the well-being of households, as well as their access to, and quality, of basic services over a six-month period.

3) Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of transmission

- FAO is applying SOPs while distributing inputs, to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 transmission risks. Where external labour will be required for field operations (land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting, etc.), farmers will also be informed of health and safety measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission.



Funding



FAO requires
USD 3.5 million

- **USD 1.5 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 2 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020

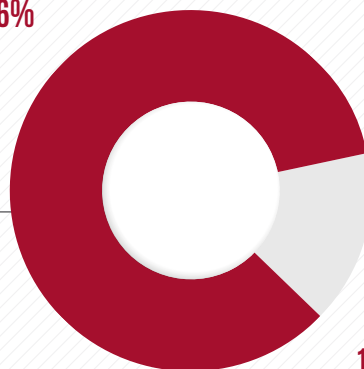


to assist
24 000 people

FUNDING GAP

USD 2.96 million

84.6%



15.4%

RECEIVED

USD 538 406

Resource partner
the Government of
Canada

Coordination and partnerships

As co-lead of the Food Security Sector with WFP, FAO plays an important role in food security coordination, as well as needs assessments and analyses, thus enabling timely decision-making. FAO is also part of the country task force on the United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19. Along with the United Nations Development Programme, FAO co-leads the Economic Response and Recovery Stream.

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

FAO. 2020. *Libya | Revised humanitarian response (June–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0196en>



Some rights reserved.
This work is available under a
CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence

Contact

FAO Representation in Libya
Tripoli, Libya
FAO-LY@fao.org

FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience
Rome, Italy
OER-Director@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
www.fao.org/emergencies