



FAO requires USD 45 million



to assist 2.3 million people



10.3 million people facing acute food insecurity at crisis and worse levels*



31 836 confirmed cases of COVID-19, as of 1 July



10-20% increase in prices of basic food commodities, compared with same time last year



10% increase in wheat prices between March and May 2020

*Source: Afghanistan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Technical Working Group, Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (April–November 2020), May 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

Afghanistan is among the most severe food crises countries worldwide. It was reported as the third worst food crisis in the 2020 edition of the Global Report on Food Crises. Further exacerbating the food insecurity situation is the rapid spread of COVID-19 since April, with a reported test-positivity-rate (positive tests as a percentage of total tests) of more than 44 percent. A recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, together with a survey conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), indicate the status of the impact of COVID-19-related movement restrictions on food security and the agricultural sector.

IPC analysis confirms major COVID-19 impact. Compared with the previous analysis for the period of August–October 2019, the latest IPC report (May 2020) indicates that the total number of people projected to be in emergency phase has increased from 2.4 to 3.3 million, representing an increase of nearly 1 million. The provinces of Badakhshan and Daykundi along with Herat and Kandahar city centres have been particularly hard-hit and are classified as being in an emergency state of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4). Loss of income due to movement restrictions has resulted in the rise in urban food insecurity, especially among daily wage earners, small businesses and populations dependent on remittances.

The FAO/MAIL survey shows limited harvesting impact, but significant processing impact. The analysis indicates that despite the substantial logistical disruptions due to COVID-19, challenges to harvesting of wheat, fruits and vegetables have been so far limited. However, more than 50 percent of millers and processing units relating to cereals (50 percent), fruits (57 percent), vegetables (70 percent), and dairy (97 percent) were reported to be highly impacted and operating at reduced capacity or closed.

Serious livestock sector impacts. Poultry and livestock farmers across all provinces reported significant challenges in managing their poultry and livestock-based livelihoods citing reasons that relate to structural deficits now exacerbated by COVID-19, including lack of access to day-old chicks/pullets, feed, inputs and resources, markets and veterinary services. The nomadic Kuchis have also been severely impacted due to restrictions of access to pasture, lack of adequate fodder/feed and increased prices of the same, coupled with diminished access to assured veterinary services. Close to one-third of the surveyed Kuchis reported that their transhumance was



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either blocked or limited resulting in some localized tensions. More than one-third of the surveyed Kuchis reported adoption of/intent to adopt negative coping mechanisms to save their livestock.

Major marketing challenges. More than one-third of farmers reported challenges in selling produce (dairy, fruits, vegetables, honey) due to market closures. A significant number of small-scale, provincial and national traders also reported restrictions in procuring fresh agricultural produce and difficulties in transporting produce to local markets due to increased transportation costs and road closures linked to very urgent and essential health-related movement restrictions and containment measures. Across all provinces, just over half of markets were reported as functioning as usual. Around 40 percent of wholesale vegetable markets appeared to have been affected adversely, while just about half of the total street vendors were functioning as usual.

Food exports seriously affected. More than one-third of large traders reported disruptions in exporting agricultural products due to border blockages, coupled with government regulations and reduced volume/demand at the export destinations. A number of challenges ranging from limited transportation facilities to slower processing of export permits and requisite certifications coupled with lack of storage and transportation facilities were reported. The lack of storage facilities means that fresh produce cannot be conserved for export.

Price increases limit access to food. The great majority of traders reported increased prices for wheat, fresh food and transportation compared with 2019, while almost all the livestock traders across all provinces reported an increase in price of sheep/goat (by 25 percent) and cattle (by 26 percent) as compared with the same time last year.

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

It is expected that the spread of the pandemic will further intensify in Afghanistan and may reach its peak in July–August. This is based on the already high number of cases and critical underreporting due to limited testing. Therefore, the existing restrictions and lockdown are not expected to be lifted in the coming months. While most international borders opened on 22 June for exports from Afghanistan, the situation may remain volatile with reduced scale of operations due to disinfection/certification and export-related procedures. Negative impacts on agricultural livelihoods and food security are expected as the pandemic's peak coincides with a critical time in the seasonal calendar. The COVID-19 pandemic is highly likely to hit displaced populations the hardest, who in general show lower scores on food security indicators compared with any other population category in Afghanistan. More specifically, the main anticipated effects linked to the COVID-19 pandemic are the following:

- **Food security to deteriorate further, especially in urban areas.** Urgent and essential COVID-19 containment measures may negatively affect food security outcomes in urban areas. However, IPC projections expect that the food security situation will improve in rural areas following the harvest, and that consequently food availability will increase, and prices may decrease.
- **Export restrictions to critically affect farmers.** Following the spring/summer harvest, the usual time for export of fruits and vegetables started in May and the critical time for cereal exports in June/July. If the restriction of exports continues and the lack of adequate food storage remains, it will lead to severe losses for export-dependent commodities and high food wastage particularly of fresh agricultural produce.
- **Lack of access to certified/quality seeds and inputs to affect planting.** The reported lack of access to certified/quality seeds coupled with the non-affordability of quality fertilizers in local markets is a major concern for food security, considering that the planting of winter wheat, rainfed wheat, barley, and potato starts in September. Should farmers not be able to adequately plant and care for their main winter crops, this will likely to lead to a cycle of cascading impacts such as declining production, reduced agricultural labour opportunities and increasing food prices, eventually leading to a deterioration

of food security and household-level coping capacities.

- **Vulnerability of nomadic herders and livestock is increased.** There is a high risk that Nomadic Kuchi

herders will not be able to safely move their herds to their winter pastures in September, and will not have adequate access to veterinary inputs and animal feed/fresh fodder, due to conflict, movement restrictions and market closures.

Anticipatory actions and response

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

Scale up support for the cultivation of summer and winter crops:

- Scale up support to smallholder farmers for the winter wheat planting season through timely provision of certified wheat seeds, including varieties resistant to most wheat rusts, and quality fertilizers coupled with technical training.
- Support fresh food production including through the provision of nutrition-sensitive kitchen gardening kits and training to safeguard the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable farmers, focusing on female- and elderly-headed households.

Control locusts, wheat rust and other plant diseases:

- Provide technical support to the Plant Protection and Quarantine Department, MAIL on monitoring and control of locusts, wheat rust and other plant diseases.

Scale up support to poultry and livestock production:

- Provide backyard poultry production kits and training to enhance the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable farmers, focusing on female- and elderly-headed households.
- Provide livestock protection packages comprising concentrate animal feed, quality fodder seeds, deworming medicine and technical training.
- Provide technical support to the Animal Health Directorate, MAIL on monitoring and control of parasites for small and large ruminants, combined with training on herd and fodder management and anticipatory targeted clinical veterinary services.

Protect the livelihoods of vulnerable Kuchi households:

- Support national authorities with adopting policies and specific measures to ensure the Kuchis are able to safely move their flock to grazing areas.
- Provide training on sustainable and climate-resilient livestock and pasture management.
- Support the rehabilitation of eroded pastures.

Improve the purchasing power of the most vulnerable rural households affected by essential COVID-19 containment measures:

- Provide unconditional cash transfers and/or implement cash-for-work activities, while adhering to COVID-19 safe practices.
- Increase cash+ programming through agricultural input vouchers and trade fairs, while adhering to COVID-19 safe practices.
- Enhance and/or initiate social safety nets and social protection programming in the agriculture sector.

2) Ensuring continuity of the food supply chain

- Strengthen the understanding and evidence base on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and the agriculture sector, through collaborations with MAIL and development partners.
- Assist national authorities in designing and implementing policy measures to ensure: (i) continuation of agricultural activities and unrestricted movement of food items, (ii) establishment of green corridors, (iii) key external trade routes remain open, and (iv) access to finance for food processors.
- Develop contingency plans for COVID-19 safe, uninterrupted functioning of agricultural markets, timely sowing of autumn/winter crops and timely transhumance to summer/winter pastures by Kuchis.
- Support transport, storage and processing of fresh foods, including summer vegetables, fruits and animal products, to access national and international markets, avoid food waste and income losses.

- Enhance local capacities for conservation, storage, drying, and processing of grains, fresh fruits and vegetables including adapting local traditions and adopting new techniques of food processing and cold storage, zero-energy storage and warehouses as well as innovations in structural designs and processing technologies.
 - Provide small storage silos and micro/small-scale processing equipment to female-headed households and smallholder farmers for processing vegetables.
- 3) Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of transmission**
- Formulate guidelines and training on COVID-19 safety practices to adopt while undertaking farming and livestock herding-related activities, as well as for various food and agricultural markets; and distribute COVID-19 safety materials like personal protective equipment, hygiene kits and disinfectants.
 - Strengthen risk communication and community engagement for the adoption of COVID-19 safety practices at household level, during agricultural/ other livelihood activities and when in public spaces/ markets.
 - Review international guidelines and protocols for food disinfection; and assist national authorities in enacting compliance with food safety regulations to limit restriction of food exports imposed by importing countries, linked to the containment of COVID-19 risk transmission.
 - Strengthen capacities of animal health services and natural resource managers to detect and prepare for appropriate response to COVID-19, in collaboration with the public health, agriculture, forestry and wildlife sectors through the One Health approach.
 - Develop and disseminate guidelines for safe handling of animals suspected or confirmed with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infection.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 45 million

- **USD 17.8 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 27.2 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020

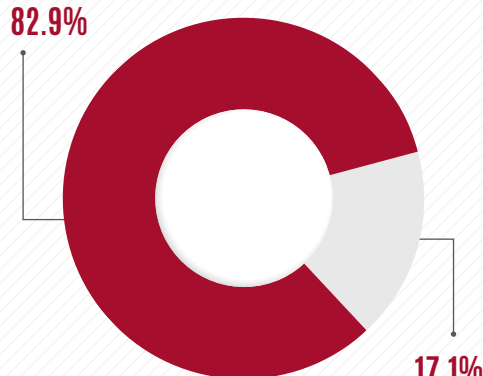


to assist
2.3 million people

FUNDING GAP

USD 37.3 million

82.9%



17.1%
RECEIVED
USD 7.7 million

Resource partners

Afghanistan
Humanitarian Fund,
the Central Emergency
Response Fund and
the Governments of
Denmark, France,
Germany, Republic of
Korea, Sweden and
the United States of
America

Coordination and partnerships

- FAO co-leads the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
- FAO has been the core partner in the designing of the World Bank and Ministry of Finance led Early Warning Early Finance Early Action since its inception in Afghanistan

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