



FAO requires USD 99 million



to assist 6 million people



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



16 million Yemenis estimated to be ultimately infected with COVID-19 (United Nations [UN])



8% increase in the cost of the minimum food basket in June 2020, compared with the pre-COVID-19 period of February 2020



51% of households use negative coping mechanisms

*Source: Global Report on Food Crises 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- Over half of Yemen's population is facing severe hunger and malnutrition rates are soaring. For over five years, armed conflict has been the main driver of food insecurity. The country's collapsing economy, import restrictions and ongoing insecurity are driving food prices up, proving devastating for a population that heavily relies on imports for its staple foods.
A hotspot Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis in 29 of the 45 most food-insecure districts (according to the December 2018 IPC) was issued in July 2019. The results of the hotspot analysis indicated that 1.2 million people in the 29 analysed districts were experiencing acute food insecurity at crisis and worse levels (IPC Phase 3+) between July and September 2019.
Even before COVID-19, agriculture, Yemen's main economic sector, has been crippled by the compounding effects of displacements; disease outbreaks (including cholera, which infected over 1 million people between 2017 and 2019); and natural hazards (including widespread flooding since mid-April affecting over 150 000 people).
The presence of plant pests, such as fall armyworm and desert locusts, are further endangering agricultural livelihoods. The current desert locust crisis is estimated by the World Bank to induce USD 222 million worth of damages and losses for the 2020 agricultural season. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is already supporting relevant authorities (including the Desert Locust Monitoring and Controlling Center, and the Plant Protection Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture) to implement a number of urgent measures to support surveillance and control operations in the desert locust breeding areas.
Additionally, FAO is providing immediate livelihoods support to affected small primary producers (including farmers, livestock owners and beekeepers), agricultural labourers, tenant farmers and sharecroppers through cash-for-work programmes.
On 10 April 2020, Yemen confirmed its first case of COVID-19. Since then, the number of cases has been rapidly increasing in various governorates. Urgent and essential containment measures have included the imposing of a partial overnight curfew in major cities, closing of workplaces and schools, international travel controls, increased screening and quarantine at ports and internal movement restrictions.
In a country already facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, the spread of COVID-19 could have dire consequences not only on the already overwhelmed health system, but also on food security and agricultural livelihoods. Access to the most vulnerable beneficiaries, which was already difficult prior to



© FAO

the COVID-19 pandemic, is proving to be a serious challenge in 2020.

- Vulnerable households' assets are at near collapse and their coping mechanisms have almost been exhausted, leading to negative and extreme behaviours like selling land, productive assets and livestock, which greatly compromise food security at the household level. Acute malnutrition also remains a serious concern for some households in the worst-affected areas.
 - Casual labour opportunities have continued to decrease and household income levels are now falling to lower levels since the restrictions came into force. Although imported and locally produced food commodities are available in all markets –
- and all points of entry (sea and land ports) remain open – food is increasingly becoming inaccessible for vulnerable households, as prices soar. Overall, average retail wheat flour prices are expected to range between YER 272 and YER 350 (around USD 1.1 and USD 1.4) per kg in Aden, Al Hudaydah and Sana'a.
 - Remittance flows from migrant Yemeni workers are one of the most important sources of income for the country – amounting to an estimated USD 3.8 billion in 2019. The impacts of COVID-19 are causing a sudden drop in the remittance flow to Yemen, reducing the availability of hard currency in the country and further weakening the exchange rate. This will further reduce the income of 80 percent of the population who already rely on humanitarian aid.

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

With the rapid spread of COVID-19 and challenges for containment efforts, coupled with the impact of multiple other crises (including conflict, climate hazards and the desert locust outbreak), a further deterioration of the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable populations is foreseen before the end of the year. There are also concerns that the crisis could provide a guise for parties to the conflict to impose new measures of control on humanitarian action, making it harder to access remote project sites, as well as for vulnerable, marginalized populations who may face access-restrictions while fleeing crisis-affected areas. Based on market monitoring, COVID-19 monitoring and early warning systems, the following interrelated impacts on food security and agriculture are expected:

- **Local food production to decline** due to challenges in accessing farming inputs (including seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and fuel for irrigation); limited access to farmlands and fishing sites; and labour shortages (due to travel restrictions, increased cost of transport, curfew and risk of getting infected with the virus).
- **Market disruptions likely to occur** are likely to occur as physical access to markets to purchase food and non-food commodities become increasingly limited. This will potentially put significant stress on rural households whose livelihoods highly depend on access to a functional market. While market closures will likely be instated periodically, a prolonged total lockdown is not expected given the country context and the need for people to move to access food. However, markets may become fully dysfunctional due to supply chain disruptions and increased food and commodity prices (which are expected to continue increasing through to at least September 2020).
- **Livelihood sources to decrease** due to interrupted in-country economic activity (for example in the transport industry, small- and micro-enterprises, rising unemployment, and declining wages because of sluggish economic activity) with significant impact on the seasonal labour force and the households dependent on agriculture labour income. This is being further exacerbated due to restricted mobility.
- **Remittances into the country to further reduce**, especially if the economic downturn in the Gulf countries constrains employment opportunities for Yemeni migrant workers, affecting households that depend on foreign transfers. In the event the fall in remittances more than offset the gains in the trade balance, Yemen's external position could weaken. This would add to a continued depreciation of the Yemeni Rial, progressively leading to an increased cost of imports and foreign currency shortages, further reducing import capacity.
- **Social protection and safety net programmes to reduce/be cut** because of diminishing fiscal revenues or redirection of funds to support

- COVID-19 response and the healthcare system, etc.
- **Acute malnutrition rates to potentially increase** as a result of continuous adoption of negative coping mechanisms to meet basic food needs.
- **Income and purchasing power to decrease overall**

due to loss of jobs and work opportunities; decreased productivity because of sickness particularly if productive individuals within households succumb to COVID-19; and increased expenditures on health, reducing affordability for food.

Anticipatory actions and response

FAO will increase its efforts to **boost agricultural production** through the distribution of agricultural and fishery kits, and the provision of livestock support (restocking, feed, vaccination and treatment); **provide complementary assistance** through cash+ activities, season-specific cash programmes, and cash for work to rehabilitate water infrastructure and irrigation systems; and **enhance livelihood resilience** through the provision of drip irrigation kits, and support to agricultural micro-enterprises, value chains, and farmer field schools.

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.

Strengthening existing food security and agriculture monitoring, assessment and coordination mechanisms for evidence-based programming in the context of COVID-19:

- Continue to scale up data collection, analysis and sharing to identify possible risks and supply shocks in advance, as well as to provide early warning information for response planning.
- Continue to produce a weekly COVID-19 food chain monitoring bulletin, based on information from key informants, market monitoring and relevant data collected by other UN agencies.
- Undertake quarterly COVID-19 assessments in Yemen as part of the FAO global effort to understand the effect of the crisis on food chains.
- An ongoing IPC analysis will set an important benchmark that will provide important information to humanitarian actors in the country.
- Ensure coordination of critical humanitarian food and livelihood assistance to vulnerable groups is maintained and adapted to potential COVID-19 impacts, where applicable, through increased support to the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC).

- Strengthen Inter-cluster coordination to boost resilient livelihoods, through increased impact, recovery and sustainable development.

Supporting continued functioning of local food markets and value chains by scaling up communication and awareness on COVID-19 prevention measures:

- Increase support to the Ministry of Agriculture and irrigation, the Ministry of planning, and the Ministry of Fish Wealth to improve hygienic conditions in local food and agriculture markets.
- Develop and conduct joint communication and awareness-raising campaigns with the Ministries, to promote COVID-19 prevention measures.

Supporting livelihood diversification and home-based food production to increase local food availability and income opportunities:

- Farming households will receive cash+ assistance consisting of unconditional cash assistance for three months and fast-growing vegetable packages for backyard gardening.
- Livestock herders will be supported with cash+ consisting of unconditional cash assistance for three months and animal feed to preserve their livestock assets.

Stabilizing access to food for the most vulnerable households who are affected by COVID-19, or those who are at high risk, by boosting incomes and purchasing power:

- Provide unconditional cash transfers to protect development gains and support incomes of vulnerable farmers and pastoralists already targeted by other FAO emergency and resilience programmes.
- Assist fishing communities with unconditional cash assistance for three months.
- Support access to food for acutely food-insecure populations, particularly internally displaced, destitute and unemployed people, through unconditional cash assistance.



© FAO

Funding



FAO requires
USD 99 million

- **USD 30 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 69 million** under the revised Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020

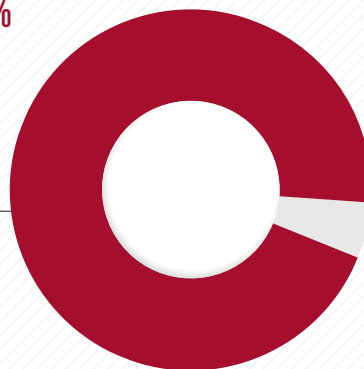


to assist
6 million people

FUNDING GAP

USD 94.1 million

95%



5%

RECEIVED

USD 4.9 million

Resource partners

the Government of Japan and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Coordination and partnerships

FAO co-leads FSAC with the World Food Programme (WFP). Furthermore, FAO works closely with other UN agencies on a number of joint programmes, including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and WFP. FAO also leads the Global Network against Food Crisis initiative in Yemen.

Contact

FAO Representation in Yemen
Sana'a, Yemen
FAO-YE@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



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

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

FAO. 2020. *Yemen | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0200en>