



FAO requires
USD 65 million



to assist
4.3 million people



8.5 million people facing acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels (in the six regions analyzed)*



200 000 ha of cropland damaged and over **356 000 tonnes** of cereal losses due to desert locust infestation



26.9% increase in food prices, the highest since 2012 (as of March 2020)

*Source: Ethiopia Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Technical Working Group, Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (February–June 2020 projection), November 2019

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

Ethiopia had already been confronting major vulnerabilities when COVID-19 emerged. The macroeconomic and development situation was strained and unemployment was high, particularly among young people searching for opportunities in an economy with high levels of informality. Furthermore, social unrest – triggered by longstanding issues that could now be aired in a more open civic and political environment – had led to conflict, the loss of lives and property, and the internal displacement of 1.7 million people.

The agriculture sector in particular is facing (i) a major desert locust invasion, (ii) erratic rainfall, and (iii) outbreaks of cholera, measles and yellow fever. A significant decline in purchasing power and food access had already been experienced in April–May due to the combined effects of increased food prices, the peak of the lean season in *Belg*-receiving areas, as well as reduced labour wages and income opportunities due to urgent and essential COVID-19 restrictions. The impacts of containment measures on food security in rural areas is expected to continue over the next months.

The food security and livelihoods of vulnerable communities have been significantly impacted by the desert locust upsurge and are also likely to be further affected by the pandemic. An assessment by the Government of Ethiopia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other technical partners found that



about 1 million people in Ethiopia have been affected by the desert locust invasion and require emergency food assistance. Furthermore, the pest has damaged about

200 000 ha of cropland and resulted in a cereal loss of over 356 000 tonnes. Up to 1.3 million ha of land has been affected in total.

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

Ethiopians residing in the most vulnerable areas may be facing a longer and more acute hunger season. Moreover, the pandemic could be expected to worsen malnutrition, with preventive physical distancing measures limiting access to health facilities and markets at a time of deteriorating food security. The main anticipated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are the following:

- **Poor availability of inputs to impact production and market access.** The large majority of rural Ethiopian producers are highly vulnerable to shocks and currently operating at very low levels of productivity. Suppression of the supply chain due to necessary health-related movement restrictions would have a significant impact on production and food security.
 - **Income earning opportunities to be disrupted.** Demand and supply shocks caused by the pandemic may disrupt food systems and threaten jobs. Labour in agriculture is becoming scarce, particularly affecting rural workers and the employment of internal seasonal migrants. Household incomes are likely to be affected negatively by reduced employment in rural areas.
 - **Food access to worsen.** COVID-19 will have a negative impact on the ability of people to access food, particularly in areas where communities are already facing deficits due to poor rains and displacement. An inadequate supply of food in markets will reduce households' dietary diversity.
- With food prices already unseasonably high, further increases would worsen the food security situation. Latest reports show that food price inflation had already reached 26.9 percent in March 2020, the highest level since 2012. Ethiopia's revised humanitarian response strategy estimates that 15 million people will require humanitarian assistance.
- **Pastoralism and livestock sector to suffer.** Livestock products represent an important source of food intake for agro/pastoralists, who largely reside in the lowlands, as well as exports and food sources for people in urban areas. The intensive production component of the livestock sector may suffer a great hit following COVID-19 related feed shortages. Trade restrictions due to the pandemic will jeopardize the food security and incomes of pastoralists, among others. If the current situation persists, an inability to access markets will reduce access to staple foods for household consumption, vital livestock feed, veterinary drugs etc., resulting in deteriorating animal health and increased livestock morbidity and mortality.

Anticipatory actions and response

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the following cross-cutting 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 as well as the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan and/or FAO's response to the desert locust upsurge.

1) Ensure the continuity of public and private services in agriculture and the rural economy

- **Efficient rural inputs distribution channels are maintained.** A rapid delivery system will be created in full compliance with the safety procedures set by the Ministry of Health (MoH). Training will be provided by small mobile regional and zonal teams when possible or through audiovisual and written materials. Communications equipment will be provided to address any limitations on movement.
- **Continuity of service provision to producers are ensured in a context of limited movement.** FAO will consolidate and digitalize a suite of e-services for agriculture, including access to finance, inputs, product distribution and marketing, social services, and rural safety nets.
- **Safety of workers as well as advisory staff involved in agriculture supply chains are ensured.** Guidance on good practices will be provided as well as access to personal protective equipment (PPE).

2) Protect the food security, nutrition and livelihoods of the rural population

- **Production of fast-cycle crops expanded.** Beneficiaries will include those involved in fruit and vegetable production and at-risk groups with limited access to resources, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth and women. Beneficiaries will receive livelihood kits comprising seeds, fertilizers and agricultural tools. Home gardening will offer livelihoods opportunities for internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and vulnerable host communities with limited access to land or other economic opportunities.
- **Production surpluses commercialized.** Depending on the evolution of the pandemic, the current sales channels of farm produce via cooperatives or individual collectors could be sped-up by initiating

new or strengthening existing marketing groups within *kebeles*.

- **Resilience of the livestock sector enhanced.** Treatment and vaccination campaigns and disease surveillance activities will be carried out. Further, livestock market interventions will potentially be implemented either through cash or grain subsidies to compensate for the loss of market access.
- **Demand for nutritious and healthy diets is increased.** The nutrition in agriculture approach for COVID-19 will focus on stabilizing the availability, access and demand of nutrient-dense foods by scaling up nutrition-sensitive agriculture training, social behaviour change activities, promotion of nutrition-sensitive technologies and social protection schemes.
- **Areas worst affected by COVID-19 and other natural hazards are assessed and prioritized.** Rapid food security assessments will be conducted with a focus on the impacts of COVID-19 and other natural hazards. Support will be provided to the analysis of food security through the IPC. Furthermore, livelihoods and food security interventions will be recommended including cash+.

3) Raise awareness and trigger attitudinal and behavioural changes within rural communities

- **Actors all along the agricultural value chains informed on good practices in response to the pandemic and ways to protect themselves and their community.** Measures to minimize the transmission of infection will be implemented including increasing the number of distribution sites and staggering distribution cycles to avoid large and frequent gatherings. Physical distancing measures will be strictly followed and handwashing facilities and PPE deployed.
- **General awareness of COVID-19 and risk mitigation measures raised significantly among the rural population.** A major rural communications initiative will be rapidly launched to raise awareness on COVID-19, its potentially devastating effects on farmers and their households, and the precautions that can be taken to avoid infection and community transmission. Messages will be disseminated to the public through various established channels. A rapid gender assessment will be conducted to address the specific needs of women and girls.



Funding



FAO requires
USD 65 million

- **USD 29 million** under the FAO regional desert locust appeal
- **USD 6 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 30 million** under the revised Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020

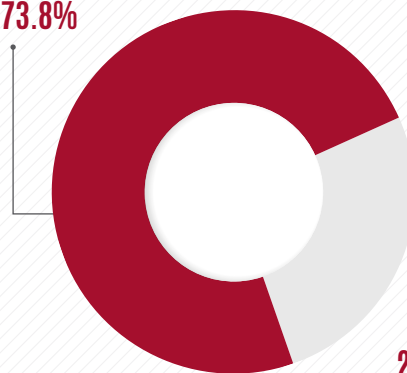


to assist
4.3 million people

FUNDING GAP

USD 48 million

73.8%



26.2%
RECEIVED

USD 17 million

Resource partners

the Governments of France, Germany, Norway and Sweden, the European Union, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Louis Dreyfus Foundation

Coordination and partnerships

- A National Steering Group co-chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) will bring together all other critical agriculture development and health-related agencies/entities at federal and regional levels, including MoH and the Federal Cooperatives Agency.
- FAO will work in close collaboration with technical experts from MoA, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

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