



FAO requires
USD 113.4 million



to assist
6.5 million people



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



1.6 million internally
displaced persons, in addition to
more than 2.2 million refugees in
neighbouring countries



90% of people depend on
agriculture and livestock for their
livelihoods

*Source: South Sudan IPC Technical
Working Group, Acute Food Insecurity
Analysis (May–July 2020 projection),
February 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

Despite a period of relative stability since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018, more than 6.5 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity at crisis levels or worse across the country (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC], January 2020). This is due to the cumulative effects of years of conflict and asset depletion, low crop production, climatic and economic shocks, limited access to basic services and the resultant increase in vulnerability and reduction in resilience. Almost 4 million people remain displaced, both internally and as refugees in neighbouring countries. This situation is exacerbated by COVID-19, as well as the surging and re-surging desert locust outbreak in the Horn of Africa, all of which are threatening the already fragile food security and nutrition situation in South Sudan.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has recently completed a COVID-19 impact survey across all ten states. Vulnerable households, traders, key informants, and humanitarian and resource partner organizations were interviewed, uncovering a number of significant impacts of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods, including the following:

- Food availability has visibly been disrupted, particularly supplies of imported fresh food, by transport restrictions. This is anticipated to decline further during the July–September period due to limited cross-border movement. Particularly negative impacts are observed in the cross-border areas of Aweil, Nazara and Yei, further threatening peace and stability in these areas.
- Significant price increases (as much as 75 percent higher than normal in four months) and limits in access to transportation due to conflict and COVID-19 related movement restrictions are affecting households' access to food. Whilst food prices had already been increasing, the situation has undoubtedly been exacerbated.
- Urgent and essential health-related strict restrictions on movement are also reducing access to animal health and vaccination facilities while increasing tension and the risk of conflict. Consequently, South Sudan's already vulnerable livestock sector, which was significantly affected by flooding in 2019, will likely be further impacted. Households that rely on fishing as a major source of livelihood are also reporting a



significant decline in income.

- South Sudan imports considerable quantities of cereals and other foods from neighbouring countries, particularly the Sudan and Uganda. COVID-19 related border closures and prevention

and control measures have led to the disruption of commercial supply chains, severely slowing commercial traffic and limiting road and river entry points into the country. Humanitarian supply chains are also being affected by these same slowdowns.

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

Food insecurity levels are high and with the advent of COVID-19, the situation can only worsen as various factors that drive food insecurity are exacerbated.

- **Economic slowdown to occur.** The World Bank predicts that the pandemic may push sub-Saharan Africa into its first recession in 25 years. For oil producing countries like South Sudan, the compounding impact of drastically reduced income could be devastating, with the 2020 outlook of an 8.2 percent gross domestic product growth rate already dented by the pandemic. Plummeting oil prices will impact government revenue, affecting its ability to meet import obligations and public service salary payments that are already in arrears.
- **Livelihoods of vulnerable households to be further threatened.** With the ongoing closure of non-essential businesses, the income and savings of trading households will continue to reduce, decreasing their purchasing power and access to food. Consequently, they will be forced to shift to less expensive and nutritious foods. Further, labour opportunities for the urban poor are already declining and will likely continue to do so. The buying power of these vulnerable populations will also continue to be compromised by the likely further devaluation of the South Sudanese pound in the face of declining global demand for oil. The worst hit will be the urban poor and rural low-income earners who are both market-dependent. Moreover, pastoralists and fisher folk may continue to struggle to access traditional grazing areas or waterways, further leading to a decline in animal body conditions and income.
- **Political and inter-communal tensions to worsen.** Although fighting between key R-ARCSS signatories has largely subsided, progress on the implementation of the agreement has been limited due to a lack of political consensus and resource constraints. The economic impact of COVID-19 and the global oil price crash will not only impact funds for service delivery, but also for the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Further, localized violence is increasing and will likely lead to a depletion of household food stock, displacement, loss of livelihoods and massive disruption in crop production, particularly as the main planting season is set to start soon. Intercommunal and other localized violence in the absence of state governors will exacerbate expected delays to humanitarian response operations.
- **Prevailing gender inequalities to be exacerbated.** About 73 percent of women, girls and youth across South Sudan work in the informal sector to generate income (International Labour Organization, March 2020). Women generate income predominantly through selling produce in cross-border markets, petty trade and in the services sector — industries that are hardest hit by COVID-19 prevention and control measures. Consequently, female-headed households and those that heavily rely on women's incomes are likely to face increased levels of food insecurity.

Anticipatory actions and response

A joint FAO/IFAD/WFP rapid assessment to understand the magnitude of the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture and food security is ongoing. The results will enable decision makers to anticipate and design responses that address these risks, and protect development gains. The bi-annual Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) survey, led by FAO, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP, is running from June–July 2020 and has been updated to capture the multisectoral impact of COVID-19 in South Sudan. The three agencies are exploring innovative mobile-phone based technologies to collect survey data without contravening established government measures. This will include using technologies such as Mvam, GeoPoll, as well as beneficiary lists as sampling frames. Thereafter, a virtual IPC analysis will be conducted in August 2020.

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) Stabilize incomes and access to food

Emergency livelihoods response: FAO will enhance its emergency response programme to support emerging food-insecure people affected by COVID-19, and particularly those not currently covered by humanitarian interventions. Livelihood support will be delivered through cash transfers (cash for seeds and tools) or emergency livelihood kit distribution (fast-maturing seeds, fishing kits and farming tools). FAO will also provide cash+ packages, including unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) and various inputs or trainings. Cash+ will be bundled with information and basic technologies geared towards displaced, returning or relocating vulnerable households, particularly those headed by women and youth; and host communities in severe acute food insecurity.

Urban livelihoods: FAO will implement urban and peri-urban interventions supporting livelihood diversification and home-based food production to ensure fresh food availability and generate income. The cash+ modality will be adopted to deliver UCTs and conditional cash transfers (for procurement of

small stock animals) with seeds and tools. Women fruit and vegetable traders will also be provided with cash in order to restock, cushioning them from the loss of income and increased wholesale prices from traders.

Livestock interventions: FAO will work with existing networks of community animal health workers (CAHWs) to undertake COVID-19 awareness building campaigns – starting with areas likely to be most affected. FAO will also ensure continuity in the delivery of emergency livestock treatment and vaccination services, particularly in view of the impact of the 2019 floods. Vulnerable households will receive vaccinated poultry and small ruminants. Training on animal health and husbandry will also be conducted, and the health of the animals provided will be monitored.

Natural resource management: FAO will implement activities to maintain equitable access to natural resources within the context of COVID-19. Support will be provided to preserve existing peace structures and assist partners in addressing and managing competition over natural resources and increasing energy sufficiency and forest conservation. This will involve integrating COVID-19 risk communication into technical messages produced and disseminated by FAO. Additionally, COVID-19 awareness campaigns will be conducted to sensitize communities about the virus and related safety measures. The campaigns will contribute towards dispelling fears of contracting the disease from migratory pastoralists and should therefore minimize disruptions to livestock migration routes.

Awareness-building campaigns: FAO is producing and disseminating technical messages and training through radio and phone channels, and extended communication campaigns. Disseminated messages will include those that raise awareness on COVID-19 prevention measures, and build knowledge and awareness on best agricultural practices. This activity is in line with the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan.

2) Reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain

Liaising with national authorities: FAO will liaise with the Ministry of Agriculture and the High-level Taskforce

on COVID-19 Pandemic to ensure that farmers are able to access their fields and the movement of inputs is not impeded. Further, FAO will advocate for agrodealers and similar shops to remain open, taking into account COVID-19 regulations on distancing and disinfection. Support will be requested from the Ministry to develop public service announcements to be aired on local radios, raising awareness on safety measures particularly relevant to farmers.

Protection of traders and agropastoralists along the food supply chain: FAO will integrate a campaign on COVID-19 awareness and prevention into interventions targeted at livestock traders and agropastoralists. These groups also happen to be hard-to-reach clients for health sector key players like the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.

Risk mitigation of COVID-19 transmission along the supply chain: In accordance with measures

implemented by the Government of South Sudan, certain establishments, e.g. markets, food shops and slaughter slabs, have remained open to ensure people have access to essential food supplies. Such places are often crowded however and therefore present an increased risk of exposure to the virus. FAO is thus committed to supporting disinfectant spraying operations in the key places/hotspots where people procure food and providing vegetable and fruit markets with access to water.

3) Prepare for the post-COVID-19 recovery phase

FAO is working on a strategy to upscale resilience and livelihoods activities that will lay the foundations for households' and communities' long-term recovery and development. The exact geographical focus and specific activities will be based on the outcomes of the in-depth analysis, which is currently being undertaken by FAO, IFAD and WFP on the effects of COVID-19 on food security and livelihoods.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 113.4 million

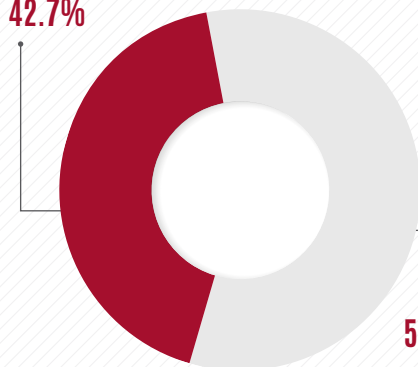
- **USD 43.4 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 70 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020



to assist
6.5 million people

FUNDING GAP

USD 48.4 million
42.7%



USD 65 million

Resource partners

the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, and the Central Emergency Response Fund

Coordination and partnerships

- Interventions will be undertaken in close coordination with national authorities and WHO.
- The existing network of local extension workers, CAHWs, producers' groups and others will be engaged to pass on messaging related to preventing the spread of the virus.
- FAO will work with partners and all actors along the food supply chain.

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

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