



FAO requires
USD 47.14 million



to assist
3.2 million people



9.6 million facing acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels, 65% increase compared with the same period last year*



1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)



Increase in annual inflation to **111.23%** in May 2020, the highest since December 1996

*Source: The Sudan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Technical Working Group, Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (June–December 2020), July 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

About 9.3 million people in the Sudan were already in need of humanitarian assistance prior to COVID-19. Since the economic shock of South Sudan’s secession in 2011, the Sudanese economy has been in a downward spiral suffering from structural trade and fiscal deficits, mass poverty, high inflation, high levels of inequality, untargeted fuel subsidies, limited public expenditures on basic services and low fiscal effort that relied on regressive indirect taxes. The country has since struggled to stabilize its economy and offset the loss of foreign exchange earnings, with the gross domestic product halving from USD 66.4 billion in 2011 to USD 33.6 billion by 2019. This slowdown in economic growth coupled with increased fuel prices and double digit inflation triggered violent protests in recent years. Political instability; conflict in the states of Blue Nile, Darfur and Southern Kordofan; poor basic infrastructure; and the reliance of much of the population on subsistence agriculture, kept close to half of the population at or below the poverty line.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated and compounded the already fragile situation, which in addition to the economic crisis, conflict, displacement and a lack of basic services, is exacerbated by climate-induced disasters such as floods and drought and food chain crises (desert locust and other plant and animal pests and diseases). According to the newly released IPC analysis, an estimated 9.6 million people are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of acute food insecurity, between June and September 2020, and in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. This figure is the highest on record since the introduction of the IPC analysis in the country.

Coupled with limited income opportunities, high food and commodity prices are further deteriorating the purchasing power of the population. Prices are expected to remain high during the lean season, which will have a further detrimental impact on the purchasing power and food security of households until the next harvest season in November/December 2020. According to the World Food Programme, the cost of the local food basket eached SDG 59.8 in April 2020, an increase of 146 percent compared to the same period last year. With an average local food basket occupying at least 75 percent of household income, increasingly more people have been unable to meet their basic needs.

Since the emergence of COVID-19, the annual inflation rate in the Sudan has climbed to its highest level in almost 25 years. Domestic trade disruptions due to essential health-related containment



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measures, including restrictions on gatherings, limited movement of people between and within states and late opening and early closure of markets, have created unstable food markets and resulted in the sudden increase in the prices of basic goods in major urban centres across the country. An analysis conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicates that prices of commodities reached record highs in May and are continuing to rise. Prices of grains, for instance, were at exceptionally high levels in May, about three times above the already high values a year ago. This was mainly triggered by weak currency coupled with fuel shortages and high prices of agricultural inputs, further inflating production and transportation costs brought about by movement restrictions. If the situation does not stabilize, fears of shortages of food and other commodities including agricultural inputs could spread among the population.

COVID-19 related containment measures have also impacted international trade for the Sudan. The export of livestock to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries in particular has been negatively affected by movement

restrictions in those countries. Additionally, exports of vegetables, fruits and cash crops have been significantly limited and disrupted during the first half of 2020 due to the extremely high costs of long transit, air and sea freights. This has led to large amounts of vegetables and fruit accumulating in areas of production, affecting the income of vegetable and fruit producers particularly in the Northern Riverine livelihood zone of Northern Sudan and the Flood Retreat livelihood zone of Eastern Sudan, for whom the sale of such products to exporters is a major source of income.

Overall, the most vulnerable sections of the population whose income and livelihoods depend mainly on informal economic activities and daily labour wages have been most affected, to the extent that the majority are struggling to provide meals for their families due to their diminished purchasing power. IDPs, refugees, migrants, returnees, petty traders/small business owners, smallholder farmers, and pastoralists are particularly vulnerable.

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

As of March 2020, the Government has introduced an array of necessary prevention and containment measures to curtail the spread of the virus including curfews, transport restrictions (with the exception of humanitarian goods), border closures and the suspension of schools and public gatherings. Although necessary, such measures are already having an adverse impact on the food security and livelihoods of the most vulnerable households. This is especially worrying, as many parts of the country will be relying on seasonal rains to start planting key cereal crops, such as millet and sorghum, with the harvest expected in November/December 2020. Movement restrictions could impact farmers' access to markets for critical inputs and pastoralists' access to water and traditional grazing areas. Poor households within pastoral areas are likely to continue to face difficulties in meeting their minimum food needs due to very high staple food prices, reduced access to labour, lower than normal terms of trade and seasonally low access to animal products during the lean season.

The ever-rising prices of commodities coupled with the loss of income will substantially increase urban poverty and may force many to return to the poor rural areas they left in search of a better life. Additionally, limited access to agricultural inputs and a shortage of labour will most likely affect 2020 cereal production.

Lastly, the predicted above average rainfall for the June–September period, albeit positive for crop production, could induce flooding and provide conducive conditions for desert locust breeding, whose infestation and spread is expected to escalate contributing to reduced food production in 2020. This will further threaten the food security and livelihoods of an already vulnerable population.

FAO is adapting its humanitarian and resilience programming to ensure the continued delivery of assistance where there are already high levels of need, while meeting new needs emerging from the effects of COVID-19. This includes, but is not limited to, improving data collection and analysis to inform decision-making; and providing smallholder farmers and pastoralists with key inputs, along with animal health support to enable them to continue to produce food for their households and communities and generate income.

Access to bank loans and other credit services is constrained for the majority of small-scale farmers in the Region of Darfur who do not own a legal document that proves farmers' tenure security. As part of FAO's pre-COVID-19 response, an initiative to formally register the customary tenure rights of farmers in 20 localities and five return sites across Darfur was launched in partnership with the Darfur Land Commission and State Ministries of Production and Economic Resources. Agricultural land registration processes require intensive community awareness, mobility by state-based land registration signatories, and verification bodies at locality level. COVID-19 has impacted the mobility of land registration officers and delayed registration processes that would have increased farmers' access to credit services and resilience to COVID-19 induced shocks. Scaled-up community awareness through local radio stations has increased the demand for formal agricultural land registration.

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

- Enhance access to agricultural inputs and services (crop, livestock, training, etc.) in order to maintain production. FAO will provide agricultural inputs (seeds, tools and extension services) to the most affected farming households and livestock

inputs and services (vaccination, restocking, supplementary feeding, and promotion of community-based animal health workers) to agro/pastoralists. It will also provide training and tool kits and raise awareness on environmental protection and conservation for increased food production and continuity of critical food supply chains.

2) Ensuring continuity of the food supply chain

- Coordinate with the private sector and leading food companies to develop and establish joint strategies in response to the pandemic.
- Reduce postharvest losses by upscaling post-harvest technologies such as small stores at farm or household levels, as well as promoting new technologies for milling and processing.
- Enhance local level transformation capacity in collaboration with the private sector.
- Develop local feed and farm input supply modalities such as the rehabilitation of pastures and establishment of community seed multiplication systems.
- Organize farmers into producer organizations and cooperatives and support them throughout the formal registration process; train cooperative members in relevant technical areas and administrative issues; support linkages with microfinance, inputs and service suppliers and market outlets; and provide established women's groups with start-up kits for food processing.

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

- Carry out local level dedicated awareness raising to reduce the risk of virus transmission in distribution points, markets, etc.
- Implement revised modalities for agricultural extension and protocols for compliance with hygiene and safety measures during planting, harvesting and selling.
- Support the implementation of sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the downstream value chain, i.e. in animal slaughterhouses, trade points and during the transportation of food.

Precautions will be taken to minimize the spread of COVID-19 during the implementation of all activities. Specifically, information will be shared with beneficiaries and implementing partner staff on COVID-19; the importance of physical distancing will be explained; and special attention will be given to high-risk beneficiaries (older adults or people with an increased susceptibility to COVID-19). When this is not

possible, FAO will ensure that preventive measures are taken, for instance, distribution sites will be clearly marked and flexibility will be required to allow high-risk individuals to send alternate collectors on their behalf. Otherwise, adequate space will be allocated for the elderly, pregnant and lactating women, and people with disabilities in order to prioritize distribution and minimize exposure.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 47.14 million

- **USD 11.64 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 35.5 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020



to assist
3.2 million people

FUNDING GAP

USD 34.94 million

74.1%



25.9%

RECEIVED

USD 12.2 million

Resource partners

the Government of the United States of America, the African Development Bank, the Central Emergency Response Fund, the European Union and the Sudan Humanitarian Fund

Coordination and partnerships

Planned activities will be implemented within the framework of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan and the Sudan Chapter of the Global COVID-19 Response Plan in partnership and collaboration with actors and partners of the Food Security and Livelihoods Sector. Implementing partners will be selected from the Sector depending on their capacity and the states in which they operate.

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