



FAO requires
USD 5 million



to assist
18 300 people



14 578 people facing acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels*



70% of the population relies on agriculture for their food and income



The agriculture sector account for **28%** of the country's gross domestic product



1 285 confirmed COVID-19 cases and **23 deaths** (July 2020)



92% of the population works in the informal sector

*Source: Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS) *Cadre Harmonisé*, Benin – Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (June–August 2020 projection), April 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

Following the first confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in Benin, the Government put in place a series of urgent measures, including essential health-related movement restrictions in 15 communes in the southern part of the country, preventing anyone from traveling within and outside the area. Although the Government lifted most of the restrictions at the beginning of June, their socio-economic impacts were felt by the population as they exacerbated the prolonged border closure with Nigeria, affecting economic activities with growth projected to decrease by 3.2 percent in 2020. Reduced demand interrupted supply chains and affected economic activity, which may lead to increased job losses, underemployment and losses in revenues.

According to the Government's Plan to mitigate the effects and impacts of COVID-19 on the agriculture sector and food security and nutrition, the pandemic will generally lead to the deterioration of food security, mainly due to the following:

- The livelihoods and purchasing power of actors in the agricultural value chains are affected by higher prices for certain products, including agricultural inputs, as well as the drop in prices of exported products – about 69 percent of exporting companies strongly affected by the pandemic.
- Poor access to agricultural support, inputs, labour and raw materials as a result of the national and international essential measures put in place may lead to a drop in overall productivity.



Moreover, small trade and informal exchanges will experience decreased transactions and related incomes. According to the World Bank (April 2020), local agri-food supply chains are already experiencing disruptions, including reduced

access to inputs, services, transport and credit are significantly affecting the food security situation in importing countries such as Benin (importing rice [45.8 percent], fish [56 percent] and vegetables).

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

There remains a high risk that the pandemic may continue to spread over the next few months, potentially leading to the implementation of new health-related measures that impact socio-economic activities and agriculture. Moreover, the onset of the pandemic coincided with the preparation of the main agricultural season, the peak of the transhumance period for pastoralists and the provision of food assistance for vulnerable households during the lean season. As several markets were closed, access to tools and inputs has remained quite limited. Livestock movement patterns were disrupted, especially cross-border transhumance. The effects of recent urgent and essential government restrictions linked to mobility and trade may hinder economic and agricultural activities in the next few months, which are vital to crop growth, harvesting and marketing. More specifically, the main anticipated impacts may include the following:

- **Agricultural production to reduce, with limited access to food and income, leading to increased levels of food insecurity by the end of 2020.** This is particularly concerning considering that more than 70 percent of the population relies on farming as their main source of livelihood.
- **Prolonged restrictions on international trade to reduce income opportunities and lead to increased food prices.** As the lean season progresses, food prices are likely to increase according to seasonal variations. However, additional trade and movement restrictions may compound the situation, which is already heavily affected by the long-term closure of Nigeria's borders, Benin's main trading partner.
- **Further disruption to cross-border transhumance** may lead to additional livelihood losses for pastoralists and increasing populations' food insecurity.



In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported the Government in the elaboration of the response to the needs of affected populations. FAO's requirements are thus fully aligned with the Government's Plan to mitigate the effects and impacts of COVID-19 on the agriculture sector and food security and nutrition. 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 households and protect their assets. It also represents FAO's contribution to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19. More specifically, FAO's planned activities under two main components are the following:

1) Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most acute food-insecure populations

- Support urgent measures to boost smallholder's food production through agricultural input distributions. In the event of disruptions of external supply chains, FAO will work to enhance local-level, small-scale food processing capacities and

beneficiaries will receive agricultural production assistance, including vegetable seeds, fertilizers and small equipment.

- Protect the livelihoods of vulnerable households directly affected by the pandemic and ensure their access to safe and nutritious plant and animal feed. FAO will ensure availability of and a stabilized access to food for the most acutely food-insecure populations. Beneficiary households will receive livestock production support, including for poultry, rabbit and urban and peri-urban farming.
- Strengthen rural women empowerment with support through income-generation activities.

2) Ensuring continuity of the food supply chain

- Support vulnerable people (small-scale producers, and youth and women's groups) in order to safeguard their production activities and income through awareness raising workshops, and the provision of inputs and protective equipment.
- Organize risk communication campaigns for communities in border areas in order to promote community engagement activities through communication and discussion groups.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 5 million

to meet urgent needs arising
from the indirect effects of
COVID-19



to assist
18 300 people

Coordination and partnerships

FAO is working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and the Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development. The interventions are in line with the plans developed by the Government and the United Nations' agencies, and will be implemented in collaboration with professional agricultural organizations.



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Contact

FAO Representation in Benin
Cotonou, Benin
FAO-BJ@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



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