The impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and FAO’s response

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Outline

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2. COVID country impact assessments on food systems: Key Findings
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4. FAO actions to support countries COVID responses
5. FAO Umbrella programme to support countries COVID recovery
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COVID pandemic impacts: Widespread, deep, continuing

**COVID-19 human toll in Asia and the Pacific:**

- 4.5 million infections
- 103,000 deaths (end of August)

**Economic downturn:** Staggering global losses

![IMF projected real GDP growth 2020 (June 2020 Economic World Outlook)]

- World: -4.9%
- Emerging markets and developing countries: -3%
- Advanced countries: -8%

Cumulative global GDP loss 2020-2021 about 12.5 trillion dollars
COVID pandemic impacts: Widespread, deep, continuing

**Food insecurity and malnutrition**

According to FAO latest food insecurity report (SOFI, 2020):
- COVID-19 added 83 - 132 million people to the undernourished in the world in 2020
- An additional 6.7 million children suffer acute malnutrition
COVID country impact assessments on food systems: Key Findings

### Food demand and supply disruptions

- Formal and informal Job losses, business closures, movement and transport restrictions resulted in demand drop in some products and supply disruptions
- Rumours and misperceptions about virus spread (affect demand and supply)
- Impacts higher for perishable products, animal and fish products, and imported products
- Staples and cereals less affected (high initial reserves)
- Labour shortages, input and credit service restrictions hampered field activities
COVID country impact assessments on food systems: Key Findings

Rural economy and food security impacts

- Reverse migration from urban to rural and across borders created challenges for sending and receiving countries.
- Women and youth disproportionately affected (higher presence in informal activities)
- Higher impacts for small island countries dependent on tourism, remittances, food imports
- Increased deforestation, animal trafficking and illegal mining
COVID response options for rebuilding food systems

Rebuilding resilient food supply chains

- Promote short value chains; smart farming and digital market platforms; modernize digital-enabled extension
- Adopt digital technologies for market monitoring, supply chain tracking, value chain traceability

Strengthening Food safety and preventing human-animal disease risks

- Delink wildlife from agriculture and livestock; monitor encroachment; track illegal trade
- Redesign fresh urban food markets with robust traceability and disease tracking and hygiene management
COVID response options for rebuilding food systems

Strengthen trade, Intra-regional trade, enhance trade facilitation

- Deepen intra-regional trade coordination, standards harmonization, trade and market information sharing (e.g., ASEAN; preferential trade agreements)
- Trade facilitation through digital data agreements, paperless trade; harmonize food quality standards.

Leverage digital innovations require critical enabling conditions

- Expand ICT infrastructure connectivity to rural areas (private-public partnerships)
- Enhance government capacity to regulate, set data standards, interoperability of data systems
COVID response options for rebuilding food systems

Expand social protection (SP) to rural vulnerable groups: smallholders, women, youth, returned migrants

Link social protection schemes to agricultural production, rural work programs

Insert returned migrants to rural economy (loans, training, Social protection)

Provide fiscal/financial incentives and training, digital literacy targeting smallholders, agripreneurs, women and youth
Recognizing member countries quick and bold interventions to mitigate the impacts of COVID on food supply, FAO provided both technical and financial support from the start of the pandemic:

- Set up a RAP COVID RAPID task force AND Supported over 20 country COVID rapid impact assessments on food situation
- Mobilized own financial resources (TCP funds; USD 5.7 M)
- Redirected trust fund projects (USD 20 M) and raised new funds (USD 20 M) to support country COVID response priorities
- FAO partnered with WFP, IFAD, and WB for COVID impact/response and contributed to UN Socio-economic impact assessments
- FAO and partners are contributing to UN-led MPTF for COVID recovery initiatives
FAO Umbrella program to support countries COVID recovery

- **FAO Umbrella Programme on COVID recovery**
  - Improve data for decision-making
  - Social protection and poverty reduction
  - Trade and food safety
  - Smallholder resilience for recovery
  - Prevent next zoonotic pandemic
  - Food systems transformation
  - Global humanitarian response plan

- **FAO is realigning its work agenda to post-COVID environment**
  - FAO is redirecting technical and financial resources to support countries COVID priorities
  - FAO is readjusting its structure to meet the post-COVID/UN agenda programming
  - FAO is committed to broadening partnerships (including private actors) to fulfil its role in COVID recovery and beyond
Suggested actions by APRC

- Share knowledge and experiences achieved on COVID response and recovery in countries
- Provide guidance on FAO’s Comprehensive Plan for COVID response and recovery at global level
- Provide guidance on FAO’s regional priorities and continued engagement for COVID response and recovery at regional level;
- Suggest areas for regional collaboration across countries, including intra-regional trade, food security, youth employment, innovations, etc.
Thank you
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