The issue

The COVID-19 crisis is having a particularly strong impact on the lives and livelihoods of rural producers, including many of the poorest people in forest areas worldwide. Restrictions on movement, social-distancing rules and shut-downs are affecting producers, processors, traders and transport companies in food and natural-resource supply chains. The loss of jobs and income is reducing people’s ability to buy food, reducing farmers’ pay, while urban-to-rural return migration is increasing the pressure on land and forest resources. Illegal logging and mining, land grabbing, and rural violence seem to be increasing with fewer government officials in the field.

Indigenous people are among the most vulnerable. Women also bear a particularly heavy burden as primary caregivers and producers, as well as victims of domestic violence. Remote communities and indigenous people are the last to know about threats and to receive support. Fortunately, many small-scale family farmers, indigenous people and producers, both women and men, are acting to find solutions through their own Forest and Farm Producer Organisations (FFPOs). FFPOs offer services and information to enhance their members’ capacity to maintain their businesses and livelihoods, shape better policies, and restore and sustain landscapes at scale. They also provide solidarity and social support systems, drawing on traditional knowledge and experience, and lead collective responses for recovery and rehabilitation.

The action

The initiative will build on the proven Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) and provide direct support to and build the capacity of FFPOs in response to specific requests for support. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) proposes:

1. Providing response-related financial incentives through national and regional apex1 FFPOs to support members, particularly women, in the rapid development of innovative solutions and marketing mechanisms, including market information on e-commerce platforms; facilitating access to farm inputs, markets, economic and financial services; assessing needs and developing support systems for vulnerable members; providing communication and translation services and facilitating access to knowledge on COVID-19-related advice, responses and production-related information.

2. Facilitating horizontal information sharing, communication and exchange, together with our implementing partners and the Secretariat of the United

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1 Apex organizations are defined as national umbrella and/or third-tier producer organizations

Related FAO policy notes on COVID-19

- The impacts of COVID-19 on the forest sector: How to respond?
- Addressing inequality in times of COVID-19
- COVID-19 and rural poverty
- COVID-19 and smallholder producers’ access to markets
- Social Protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas
Food System Transformation

Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty

Nations Decade of Family Farming and the FAO Family Farming Knowledge Platform, to provide (1) a structured channel to collect, process and analyse updated information from producer organizations and their territories; (2) set up networking and sharing mechanisms for FFPOs in different countries and languages to directly exchange experiences and responses; (3) webinars to share knowledge, good practices and successful FFPO responses and solutions, including from other countries (South–South Cooperation); and (4) community radios, communication and learning materials, podcasts and learning guides to reach a wide audience of family farmers and FFPO members.

Developing longer-term recovery plans, linking with governments and other stakeholders to coordinate and harmonize initiatives, including for social protection, both in terms of immediate and long-term response and recovery from the crisis, supported by FFF’s knowledge generation and monitoring and learning system.

Expected results

The ultimate result will be a reduction in the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis and enhanced overall livelihood security and resilience for millions of (rural and urban) households.

1. Increased income and food and nutrition security for rural and urban households, thanks to better access to markets, market information and financing, improved storage, investments in value addition and innovative business models. Food and nutrition security will be increased through diversified landscape production systems, access to inputs, seed storage, indigenous food and medicinal plants.

2. Enhanced livelihood security through support to women’s groups and female-headed households, increased access to savings and loans, improved communication channels and access to knowledge, guarantee funds and credit. Social protection and partnerships with government for social services will be enhanced.

3. Greater long-term resilience and adaptive capacity for FFPOs through recovery plans, networks and improved coordination and communication mechanisms for crisis response, including stronger links to local and national government strategies.

4. Improved coordination and communication mechanisms for crisis response, with stronger links to government strategies, at both local and national level.

Partnerships

United Nations Decade for Family Farming; the AgriCord alliance; the International Institute for Environment and Development; the International Union for the Conservation of Nature; FFPOs and apex producer organizations; Forests, Farmers and Agriculture: Sustainable Together (FFAST) an alliance for action with major partners from the Netherlands, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Rabobank, SIDA, Tropenbos and Hivos; national governments; the financial and private sector.

Programme links

The programme will link with the United Nations Decade of Family Farming, REDD+ (Reduction of deforestation and forest degradation); the European Union–FAO Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programme; the Rural Poverty Reduction Programme; Rural Institutions, Services and Empowerment in FAO’s Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division, the Landscape Restoration Mechanism and the Office of South–South and Triangular Cooperation.

Country focus

Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and Zambia
Latin America and the Caribbean: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Nicaragua
Asia and the Pacific: Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Viet Nam

A further 50 countries will be reached through support to six large federations of national producer organizations.

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