The issue

The COVID-19 outbreak demands new and rapid data and a shift in priorities. Real-time information helps to evaluate the impact of the outbreak on food security as it evolves. Food-security analysis requires the measurement of changes in people’s access to food and examines the underlying causes.

The Near East and North Africa (NENA) region identified as priority areas the food security data collection and analysis, the monitoring of impacts of COVID-19 on moderate and severe food insecurity and the use of the derived information to inform policies. Countries in the region require access to sound and reliable data to assess the status of food insecurity in the population as well as the impact of COVID-19 on food security, in order to build an appropriate macroeconomic response.

The action

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) measures the severity of food insecurity at the household or individual level. It produces estimates of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 2.1.2 on the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population. The FIES Survey Module used for SDG monitoring, can be adapted to respond to the urgent challenge of measuring and monitoring food insecurity in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, while preserving measurement rigour and reliability. By adapting the module, questions can capture the extent to which food insecurity experiences are linked to the COVID-19 crisis. The following priority areas of work are proposed:

- Advocacy for FIES with national statistical offices.
- Conduct FIES as part of nationally representative socio demographic surveys in selected countries of the Near East and North Africa.
- Analysis of the FIES module and production of analytical progress reports, which will help to identify the key determinants of food insecurity in the context of the pandemic.
- Capacity development in selected countries on the FIES concepts, data collection tools and methods of analysis.

Expected results

Data will be collected and analyzed to measure and monitor food insecurity based on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ (FAO) Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) with a particular focus on the evolving impact of COVID-19 at country level.

Budget

USD 500,000

Time frame

2021–2023

SDGs

Related FAO policy notes on COVID-19

- COVID-19 and the risk to food supply chains: How to respond?
- COVID-19 global economic recession: Avoiding hunger must be at the centre of the economic stimulus
- Mitigating risks to food systems during COVID-19: Reducing food loss and waste
- Simulating rising undernourishment during the COVID-19 pandemic economic downturn
Information products, including modelling of impacts of food security on Near East and North Africa priority policy areas, will be produced to meet the needs of policy makers in line with the Framework for Monitoring Food Security in the Arab World.

National food-security analysts will develop their capacity to collect and analyze data on food insecurity through remote technical assistance and training.

National policy makers will draw policy recommendations from the results of the rapid assessment in line with national and regional priorities in developing a strategic response to the COVID-19 crisis for immediate response, supporting recovery and building back better.

Programme links


Partnerships

The regional programme will tie in with FAO Voices of the Hungry project, spanning more than 140 countries, with funding from United Kingdom Department for International Development, the Government of Belgium and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It will support data-collection to inform FAO’s COVID-19 Response programmes, including Collective action for sustainable food systems and Zero Hunger. Its results will also ultimately feed into the analytics foreseen for the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, Measuring the SDGs and the Common Country Analyses performed by United Nations Country Teams.

Country focus

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

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