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Organización de las
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**Web Annex 1: State of Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific
Region, including Future Prospects and Emerging Issues -
Note on COVID-19**

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Introduction

1. COVID-19 has already had, and will continue to have, important effects on food security, nutrition, and agriculture. The global economic downturn will cut off many pathways out of poverty for both rural and urban dwellers by depriving them of their livelihoods. The increased poverty will reduce access to food for many, leading to negative impacts on the number of undernourished.² The job losses and reduced income will also impede dietary diversification, as nutritious foods like animal products and fruits and vegetables are more expensive than staple foods.

2. In addition to a global economic downturn, food supply chains have also been affected. There are many reports of malfunctioning food supply chains where food is left to rot or is burned due to movement restrictions. Supply chains are being disrupted not only by movement restrictions, but also by shifts in the source of consumer demand, e.g. away from restaurants/eating places and schools because of closures, towards markets and shops/supermarkets because more people are preparing food at home. Supply disruptions can occur all along the value chain, from input provision (most importantly labour, but also seed, animal feed, fertilizer and pesticides) to storage, processing and transport of food to retail markets. Disruptions may particularly affect supplies of fresh milk, fruits and vegetables, meat and fish because their production is often very labour-intensive and their shelf life is short, with potential adverse impacts on nutrition.

3. COVID-19 will be with us for some time to come. Overall, the impacts on food security and nutrition could be severe, especially in the absence of remedial policy measures. Policy options to mitigate its impact on food security, nutrition and agriculture include the following:

- Control the spread of the virus and implement physical distancing and appropriate health protocols to reduce fear and risks among all labourers, including those working in food supply chains.³
- Expand social protection, in the short term as part of countries' economic stimulus measures, to cover more people and provide more generous benefits to ensure food access for all, while also reducing the administrative burden needed to access the funds.⁴
- Governments should work together with the private sector to solve disruptions in food supply chains when they arise.⁵
- Avoid export restrictions in international trade to make sure supply chains continue to function, and assure ports are operating properly and allowing crew changes.⁶
- Build resilience into food systems to safeguard them against future economic and health shocks as part of stimulus measures to ensure food access.⁷

4. For more details on these issues, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has produced a large number of briefs (more than 50) covering a wide range of topics, including food supply chains, food trade and markets, smallholders, food insecurity, safe and sustainable food systems, protecting the most vulnerable, and statistical systems. These briefs are available at <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/resources/policy-briefs-test/en/>.

² Conti, V., Cafiero, C. & Sánchez, M.V. 2020. *Simulating rising undernourishment during the COVID-19 pandemic economic downturn*. Technical note. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8815en>

³ FAO. 2020. *Responding to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on food value chains through efficient logistics*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8466en>

⁴ FAO. 2020. *Social Protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8561en>

⁵ FAO. 2020. *Policy responses to keep input markets flowing in times of COVID-19*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8979en>

⁶ FAO. 2020. *Agri-food markets and trade in the time of COVID-19*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8446en>

⁷ FAO. 2020. *COVID-19 global economic recession: Avoiding hunger must be at the centre of the economic stimulus*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8800en>