



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

South Sudan

Response Plan

April 2020–March 2021

Mitigating the effects of COVID-19 to protect
food security and livelihoods



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Executive summary

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which first emerged in December 2019 and has rapidly spread across the world, was declared a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020, and global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. Days later, the first cases were confirmed in East Africa, with new cases continuing to rise daily. In response, governments throughout the region have moved swiftly to adopt precautionary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, including the closure of international borders, movement restrictions, curfews and lockdowns. This has had far-reaching implications – not only affecting food trade, food supply chains and markets across Eastern Africa, but also people’s lives, livelihoods, food security and nutrition.

Previous crises, such as the Ebola virus disease (EVD) in West Africa in 2014, indicate the direct impact movement restrictions and disease containment efforts have on food availability, access, utilization and violence – particularly gender-based violence (GBV). The importance of maintaining and upscaling food security interventions for the most vulnerable populations, alongside the health sector’s efforts to avert disease spread, is therefore undeniable. The COVID-19 outbreak in South Sudan threatens to paralyze an already fragile food system and negatively impact more than 6.5 million people in South Sudan who remain vulnerable. At the same time, the core national capacities for prevention, preparedness and response for public health events is limited, and the healthcare system has been weakened by years of conflict, poor governance and low investments.

While health needs are an urgent and primary concern, livelihoods and food security-related impacts must not be neglected. Similarly, slow-downs or reductions in the delivery of humanitarian assistance could be catastrophic. It is therefore critical to rapidly mobilize and pre-empt COVID-19 impacts on food security and livelihoods in South Sudan. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is thus pursuing a two-pronged approach: (i) maintaining and securing existing critical humanitarian operations, while ensuring (ii) anticipatory actions are in place to safeguard livelihoods and protect the critical food supply chain as a means to mitigate the secondary effects of the pandemic.

Based on its proven technical and operational capacity in South Sudan, FAO is seeking USD 46 million to maintain the provision of critical assistance where there are already high levels of need, while meeting immediate needs emerging from the effects of COVID-19 and in preparation of the recovery phase.

More specifically, FAO in South Sudan will draw on its wide network of field offices, innovative measures to implement large-scale food security and livelihood programmes in accordance with guidelines set by the government to mitigate the spread of the virus, and above all the desire to ‘stay and deliver’.

Interventions will fall under the following priority areas:

- **Enhance agriculture and food security information systems** to capture and monitor the potential impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture, food security and livelihoods, as well as early warning. The proposed budget is **USD 2.5 million**.
- **Stabilize incomes and facilitate access to food** in anticipation of a predicted cereal deficit of 482 000 tonnes. The proposed budget is **USD 18.3 million**.
- **Mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain**, in close coordination with national authorities and WHO. The proposed budget is **USD 24.9 million**.
- **Prepare for the post-COVID-19 recovery phase** to protect, recover and enhance the population's productive assets in order to help reduce the effects of the pandemic on food security and agriculture-based livelihoods.

Crisis overview

In East Africa, COVID-19 cases are rising amid high levels of food insecurity, malnutrition, conflict, macroeconomic deterioration, climatic shocks and stressors, and outbreaks of animal and plant pests and diseases including the most recent desert locust surge. Global, regional and domestic responses to COVID-19 have negatively affected foreign trade in countries with chronic and large food deficits, affecting some of the world's most food-insecure populations. Already, the indirect impacts of institutional responses – border closures, quarantine, market closures and gathering bans – are driving down economic and trade activity, while food commodity prices are on the rise.

According to the *2020 Global Report on Food Crises* (April 2020), the six East African countries in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region account for 27.5 million people in food-crisis situations. The current situation is expected to deteriorate further in the face of reductions in household income to purchase food and essential non-food commodities and limited coping capacities.

Based on trends in countries affected by EVD, the greatest impact on food security and livelihoods in South Sudan will likely come indirectly through institutional responses (those mentioned previously) and community, household and individual social aversion responses. Government regulations to contain the spread of COVID-19 in South Sudan were first introduced on 13 March 2020 and have progressively expanded. Unlike with EVD, COVID-19 presents greater risks of direct impact on the population of South Sudan. The higher expected morbidity than is seen globally, coupled with overall excess mortality, will likely lead to more severe and widespread losses of labour and income at community and household levels as time and cash will be spent caring for the sick and the unfortunate events of losing family members. COVID-19 will particularly affect the large number of women in South Sudan who engage in cross-border trade and informal livelihood activities.

Further, the COVID-19 outbreak comes at a critical time as it coincides with the lean season and start of the main planting season. Any disruptions in the agricultural input supply chain and preparations for planting at this time will likely affect the outcome of the 2020 cropping season.

COVID-19 implications in South Sudan

After a decades-long armed conflict, the Republic of South Sudan became the world's newest nation and Africa's fifty-fifth country on 9 July 2011. Renewed conflict in December 2013 and July 2016 has undermined the development gains achieved since independence and worsened the humanitarian situation. Despite a period of relative stability since September 2018, more than 6.5 million people remain in severe acute food insecurity across South Sudan due to the cumulative effects of years of conflict, chronic vulnerabilities and weak essential services, among other factors (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC], January 2020). More than 2.2 million people in South Sudan remain displaced as refugees in neighbouring countries. Another 1.7 million people are displaced internally. This situation is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the surging and re-surfing desert locust outbreak in the Horn of Africa, all of which are threatening the already fragile food security and nutrition situation in the country.



Economy, markets and supply chains

Even before the oil price collapse, the World Bank had predicted that the pandemic would push sub-Saharan Africa into its first recession in 25 years. However, for oil-producing countries like South Sudan, the compounding impact of drastically reduced incomes could be devastating. Growth in the oil and mining sectors in South Sudan was estimated at 10.7 percent and exports of oil were projected to increase by 23 percent, bolstered by a 27 percent increase in daily production from an estimated 133 295 barrels per day (bpd) during financial year (FY) 2018/19 to 169 000 bpd during FY 2019/20 (World Bank, 2020). However, these overall gains now seem unlikely due to the effects of COVID-19.

The Government of South Sudan relies on oil revenue for 98 percent of its annual operating budget. It based its 2019/20 budget on an oil price of USD 55 per barrel – but April saw the international spot price for oil crash, with May futures for West Texas Intermediate (WTI – the United States of America benchmark oil price) closing at USD -37.63 on 20 April. The plummeting oil prices will impact government revenue, affecting its ability to meet import obligations and public service salary payments that are already in arrears.

The oil price crash will likely also translate to heavy losses in export earnings, which will serve to widen the trade deficit of over SSP 2 billion, translating into a sizeable current account deficit. The World Bank projected the current account deficit to be about 1.8 percent of the gross domestic product in FY 2020, from 6.4 percent in FY 2019. The expected decline in oil exports, however, will exacerbate the increasing demand for imports, which will force the country to further deplete the already diminished foreign exchange reserves.

Besides the impact of the oil price crash, the greatest economic impact of COVID-19 is likely to come from the disruption to commercial supply chains and the consequent loss of income-earning opportunities and staple food price increases. South Sudan imports considerable quantities of cereals, especially sorghum, maize and other foods, from Sudan, Uganda and other East African countries. Domestic chronic cereal deficits are typically met through a combination of extensive imports and humanitarian food assistance. The flow of commercial goods from Sudan appears to be the most disrupted, or even stopped completely, while flows from Uganda continue. Truck shortages, limits on transport staff for border crossings, quarantine measures, work stoppages over issues of pay, personal protective equipment (PPE) and other COVID-19 concerns, and screening measures are all working to severely slow commercial traffic and limit road and river entry points into South Sudan. Humanitarian supply chains are also affected by these same slowdowns, reducing the speed with which humanitarian food and livelihood assistance enters the country for distribution and pre-positioning prior to the beginning of the rainy season.

While no borders are formally closed to humanitarian cargo, these disruptions may create serious issues once heavy rains begin in earnest in June, closing off large areas of the country. Within South Sudan, the Western Corridor trade route is at greatest risk of market disruption and the spread of COVID-19. Running northwest through South Sudan, this road route includes numerous key markets (Aweil, Juba, Kuajok, etc.) and a cluster of other large Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal markets.

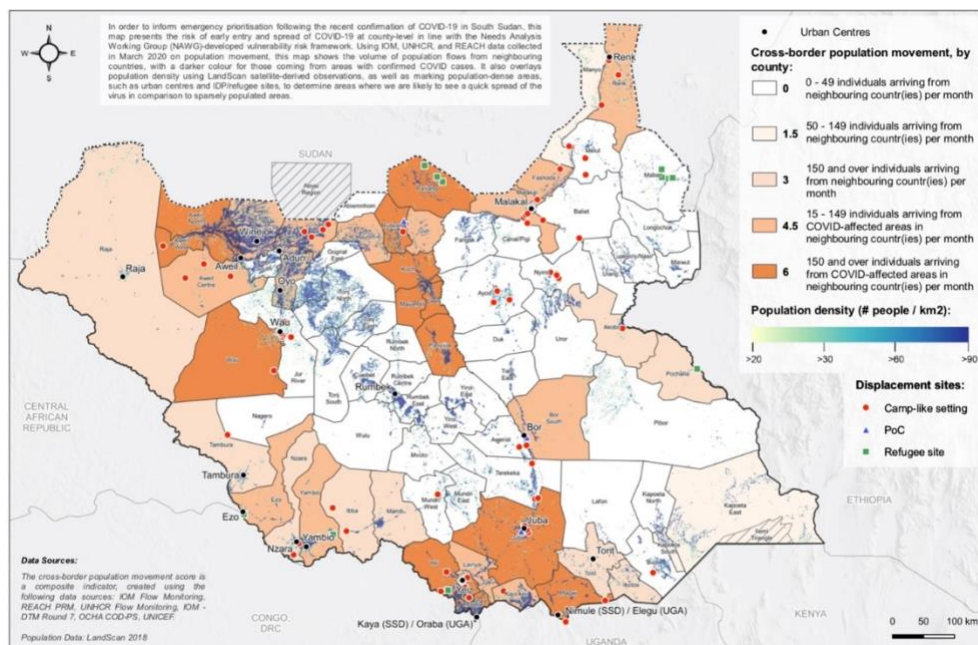
The populations utilizing these markets, and a wider constellation of markets, pushing deeper into rural areas around the main Western Corridor, are heavily reliant on them to meet basic needs. The Western Corridor may also function as a primary pathway of local transmission through the rainy season if drastic measures are not taken to stop the outbreak. It is the only functional trans-country road route and sees a high degree of movement most of the year. The progression of COVID-19 into other urban centres outside of Juba would most likely occur on this route, though river traffic along the White Nile also presents a risk. Unity State that has land crossings with the Sudan and its entire eastern state border along the White Nile is also at risk.

Lengthy and porous borders compound the challenge of managing risks associated with human mobility and outbreaks; South Sudan has long land borders with the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and the Sudan. Preventive measures aimed at reducing these risks may devastate local economies, particularly for the regular purchase of staple foods, urban casual labour markets and rural agricultural labour markets.

Rural and urban food production and livelihoods

The COVID-19 outbreak and related restrictions are likely to further delay the recovery of South Sudan's agricultural production system. Annually required inputs like seeds may remain available through the informal sector in many areas, though returnees will likely also need less frequently acquired items, like tools for reconstruction and heavy land clearance. The effect on agriculture in Greater Upper Nile will likely be less consequential, as the region becomes physically isolated in the rainy season, and to some extent insulated from local transmission, and agriculture remains severely depressed in the aftermath of historically exceptional flooding. Nevertheless, farmers along the northern borders, specifically in Melut and Renk, require inputs from the Sudan, and are therefore at great risk of transmission from the Sudan. The current planting season will face new challenges as the outbreak evolves. Fears of the virus, border closures and other public health measures may limit access to commercial agricultural inputs. Additionally, it may become difficult or impossible to assemble the collective labour required for larger fields, which can bring together multiple households or entire communities for joint production.

Map 1. South Sudan: cross-border movement and risk of entry of COVID-19, April 2020



Map conforms to United Nations map for South Sudan, October 2011.

The interaction of COVID-19, public health measures and social responses to the outbreak may work to curtail yields in several key areas of the region, particularly those most exposed to traffic and main markets on the Western Corridor.

The COVID-19 outbreak may furthermore intersect with the desert locust outbreak, through increased bureaucratic impediments for humanitarian efforts in monitoring and response, the slowdown of regional and national supply chains, and the suppression of local labour markets subject to physical distancing measures and movement restrictions. The unchecked progression of the locusts could see large reductions in agricultural yields and in available pasture through the end of 2020.



The shocks caused by COVID-19 to local markets in South Sudan have further highlighted the vulnerability of urban populations, who rely on these markets for their food security. Consequently, an estimated 1.125 million people in South Sudan, representing 70 percent of the urban poor who are not being supported by any humanitarian assistance programmes, are likely to be in severe acute food insecurity during the lean season of May to July 2020. Additionally, an estimated 313 000 rural people that are highly dependent on markets for food and income are likely to become severely food insecure during the same period. The IPC analysis conducted in January 2020 estimated that between May and July, an additional 134 000 people in rural areas are likely to be severely food insecure when compared to August 2019. In total, an estimated 1.572 million people are expected to be in severe acute food insecurity between May and July 2020 due to the combined effects of COVID-19, the persistent macroeconomic crisis and other seasonal factors that contribute to food insecurity.

Political conflict and intercommunal violence

The signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia was widely extolled and commended as a significant development signalling the dawn of peace. The ceasefire has held in most parts of the country, with an overall reduction in political violence between signatories.

Although progress is being made to resolve the political conflict, localized inter- and intra-communal violence continues to be perpetrated by various community groups. The escalation in intercommunal violence in some parts of the country over the past few months is likely to be aggravated by the pandemic. In particular, infection rates and a securitized response within an environment of low trust in public institutions is the likely cause of increases in violence, as seen in observations from the EVD outbreak.

An increase in localized violence will likely lead to a depletion of household food stock, displacement, loss of livelihoods and massive disruption in crop production, especially as the main planting season is set to start within the next month. Furthermore, intercommunal and other localized violence will exacerbate the expected delays to humanitarian response as a result of the pandemic. WHO may struggle to contain the COVID-19 outbreak and humanitarians may be unable to reach populations in need if insecurity prevents them from reaching affected areas.

Prevailing gender inequalities

The COVID-19 outbreak in South Sudan will likely exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities. Approximately 73 percent of women, girls and youth in South Sudan work in the informal sector to generate income (International Labour Organization, March 2020). Women generate income predominantly through the marketing of produce in cross-border markets, petty trade and in the service industry. Restrictive COVID-19 measures are therefore likely to particularly impact women and women-headed households. This exacerbates a situation in which women are generally already affected by prevailing traditional gender norms and practices, such as early and forced marriage, and other gender-based challenges, such as denied mobility, limited access to productive resources, burdens of unpaid reproductive care work, and high illiteracy levels. Furthermore, the pandemic may deepen the vulnerability of women to GBV, especially domestic violence, because of lockdown measures and heightened market prices. Some women may resort to negative coping strategies to meet their basic needs. Unfortunately, existing analysis on gender-disaggregated data, to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on gender and food security, remains limited.

Strategic response

FAO's strategic response in South Sudan is aligned to FAO's global strategy in addressing the impact of COVID-19, contributing to the overarching outcome of maintaining the provision of critical assistance where there are already high levels of food insecurity, while meeting needs emerging from the effects of shocks and crises.



FAO's COVID-19 response plan for South Sudan

Missing the planting seasons would have ramifications for food security and incomes for the entire year and beyond, delaying communities' recovery from repeated crises. FAO's priority in South Sudan remains to ensure the continuity of essential agricultural operations and safeguard the delivery of critical food security and livelihood assistance, while mitigating the pandemic's impact on vulnerable people.

Through this strategic response plan, the Organization proposes four priority areas:

1. enhance agriculture and food security information systems to monitor the impact of COVID-19;
2. stabilize incomes and access to food;
3. reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain; and
4. prepare for the post-COVID-19 recovery phase.

Priority area 1. Enhance agriculture and food security information systems to monitor COVID-19 impacts on livelihoods and food security as well as early warning

	Beneficiaries National and international community including decision-makers		Proposed budget USD 2.5 million
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The complexity of the crisis and the context-specific nature of its impact calls for coordinated monitoring and assessment, and common analysis of risks and potential implications of COVID-19 for food security in food crisis, as well as guidance and support to identify the most appropriate approach to achieve the aforementioned. As there is still considerable uncertainty, in terms of both initial impacts and the range of potential scenarios that may unfold, accurate and continuous analysis is required to determine the likely impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition for informed decision-making. It is imperative that FAO, together with other food security stakeholders, enhance the existing food security information systems to support COVID-19 risk analysis, surveillance and early warning.

FAO, in close collaboration with key partners such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is working to strengthen the country’s food security information system by making it COVID-19 sensitive and creating a common set of contextualized indicators to be used to monitor the food security situation in the face of the pandemic.

Mindful of existing movement restrictions, FAO in South Sudan plans to complement existing food security monitoring initiatives by setting up mobile phone surveillance systems in collaboration with partners such as WFP, which established the mVAM system. Furthermore, FAO will work with the IPC Global Support Unit to introduce the IPC Virtual Analysis methodology in South Sudan so as to facilitate the analysis and documentation of the impacts of COVID-19 on food security, nutrition, agriculture and livelihoods, as well as vital supply chains. The data and analysis from these information systems would enrich the existing knowledge base of the impacts of the pandemic and would ensure that responses are tailored to mitigate impacts on agriculture-based livelihoods and the critical food supply chain among others.

Rapid assessments on the impacts of COVID-19

FAO, in close collaboration with WFP and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has conducted an initial rapid assessment to understand the magnitude of the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture and food security and to inform decision-makers to enable them to anticipate, mitigate and design responses (interventions) that will address the identified risks, and protect development gains. The analysis report will serve as a preliminary discussion document for decision-makers about the impact of the pandemic as currently perceived. The assessment focused on the impact on macro-economic indicators; trade and markets; agricultural production; food supply chains; the effects of restrictions on food insecurity; and the vulnerability and resilience of women and men. This information will help reduce uncertainty among producers, consumers and traders and will support them in making informed decisions in order to minimize the impacts of COVID-19.

Table 1. Enhance agriculture and food security information systems to monitor COVID-19 impacts on livelihoods and food security as well as early warning

Outcome		COVID-19 context-specific agriculture, food security and nutrition information management improved for informed decision-making and early warning in South Sudan
Output 1.1		Agriculture, food security and nutrition early warning information systems strengthened and made COVID-19 sensitive
Activities	1.1.1	Monitor main markets across the country using standardized tools and publish the data on the CLIMIS portal which tracks price trends
	1.1.2	Monitor weather conditions across the country through the existing network of rain gauges and complement this with data from FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) and other climate databases, to produce decadal weather updates for South Sudan
	1.1.3	Monitor pasture, livestock, migration and marketing trends, including cross-border inflows, in order to understand the contribution of livestock to incomes and food security
	1.1.4	Monitor agricultural performances of crops and their pests and diseases (desert locust, fall armyworm, etc.) and their impact on food security
Output 1.2		Evidenced-based analysis and consensus building for informed decision-making strengthened
Activities	1.2.1	Conduct IPC analysis through the 'Virtual ISS platform' to inform on the national food insecurity situation in the face of additional risk factors such as COVID-19
	1.2.2	Conduct research and fast-tracked surveys to inform the analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture and food security
	1.2.3	Conduct technical e-trainings to build capacity of existing enumerators to participate in the monitoring of COVID-19 impacts on food security
	1.2.4	Participate in technical forums created to monitor, collect and analyse data, and report on the impact of COVID-19, particularly those related to agriculture and food security

Priority area 2. Protect food security and agriculture-based livelihoods of the most vulnerable households and stabilize incomes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic



The emergence of COVID-19 in South Sudan is exerting additional pressure to an already fragile situation, with 6.5 million people – more than half of South Sudan’s population – expected to face severe acute food insecurity at the height of the annual hunger season (May to July 2020), even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The announcement of the first cases in South Sudan coincides with the onset of the lean season, when seasonal price increases occur in normal years.

Crop production estimates for South Sudan for the 2020 consumption year indicate that a cereal deficit of 482 000 tonnes is expected. This deficit is generally covered by imports from neighbouring countries. However, this year, if COVID-19 related border closures and neighbouring countries’ restrictions are applied to cereal exports it will likely result in cereal shortages in South Sudan. It is therefore critical to enhance food production in order to ensure continued food availability within South Sudan. As previously mentioned, the pandemic has also further highlighted the vulnerability of urban populations, who depend on markets for their food security.

Emergency Livelihoods Response

One of the immediate priorities of FAO in South Sudan within the COVID-19 context will be to bolster its emergency response programme as a means to support new emerging food-insecure people, due to the pandemic, who currently are not covered by humanitarian interventions. The target group will specifically be households that are highly dependent on markets for food, agricultural production inputs (seeds, tools, water harvesting and other agricultural equipment), and those that depend on agricultural value chain income sources that are expected to be heavily impacted by COVID-19 or related restrictions. For agricultural production, targeted households will include people with access to land and labour for production. Those without land in an urban set-up but can access space for vertical gardens will also be considered. Food-insecure households in protection of civilians (PoC) sites will also be supported to access food and where possible grow their own vegetables. In rural locations, interventions will target the most vulnerable households with access to land and labour for cultivation or keeping small ruminants and poultry.

Target groups will mainly be internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and host communities who are considered to be in severe acute food insecurity, with a special focus on woman or child-headed households.

FAO will furthermore ensure that ongoing deliveries of critical humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups are not hindered and is adapted to potential COVID-19 impacts. It is imperative to preserve and protect the agricultural livelihoods and food security of vulnerable populations by adapting programming and adopting a flexible mode of operational delivery. Thus, FAO will work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) at both national and state levels to define pathways to minimize interruptions in the agricultural supply and market chains to maintain and sustain agricultural production.

Based on local market analysis and the agricultural season calendar, FAO will focus on the delivery of livelihood support through cash transfers (cash for seeds and tools) or emergency livelihood kit distribution (quick-maturing vegetable seeds, life-saving fishing kits, and tools). FAO will furthermore provide Cash+ packages, including unconditional cash transfers and various inputs or capacity development trainings. Cash+ will include information and basic technologies for kitchen gardening. This will enable rural poor vulnerable food-insecure and market-dependent households; displaced, returning, or relocating households; and host communities to address their immediate food and basic needs, and minimize the need to resort to negative coping strategies that can further exacerbate their social and economic vulnerabilities.

Urban livelihoods

According to FAO's market price monitoring portal, prices of food commodities are already spiking, e.g. as of March 2020, the price of maize flour in Juba has already increased by 33 percent compared to the same period last year and by 75 percent compared to the three-year average. If COVID-19 related business closure is affected on a massive scale, trading households will experience a reduction in income and savings in the upcoming weeks that is likely to be followed by a reduction in food supply and demand due to reduced purchasing power. Shifts to less expensive and less nutritious foods are likely to be observed as households try to make the most of their income and savings. To further mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition, FAO will implement urban and peri-urban interventions supporting livelihood diversification and home-based food production to ensure fresh food availability and secure incomes through Cash+. The programme will include both unconditional and conditional cash transfers.

Livestock interventions

Pastoralism raises several potential concerns in relation to COVID-19. If the evolution of the outbreak prompts interstate or intrastate movement restrictions, especially on large groups, then the upcoming return to rainy season cattle campsites close to settlements may be complicated and such directives would likely be ignored. The next two to three months will see a reconfiguration of most of South Sudan's cattle camps as the seasons transition, and this may present transmission risks if the virus spreads to market towns within major agropastoralist or pastoralist areas. Cattle camps, with problematic clean water access and sanitation situations already, may present conducive environments for transmission. While these camps were in more remote locations during the peak of the dry season, they are now set to move much closer to populated centres. In areas affected by high levels of communal violence, cattle camps are likely to be even larger than normal and potentially already much closer to population centres for security purposes. There are also several transnational pastoralist groups that move in and out of South Sudan, through areas of Abyei, Western Bahr-el-Ghazal, Western Equatoria and Upper Nile states.

FAO will work with existing networks of community animal health workers (CAHWs) to help ensure that livestock traders and agropastoralists as key players along the food supply chain – who travel long distances to sell or raise their animals or due to conflict-related displacement – are not at risk of COVID-19 transmission through the adoption of appropriate measures and practices. The intervention will focus on areas likely to be more affected by COVID-19; locations that are usually almost inaccessible during the rainy season will likely be less affected.

Furthermore, FAO will ensure continuity in the delivery of existing emergency livestock services, especially in view of the significant loss of livestock, particularly in Jonglei and parts of Unity, caused by widespread flooding in 2019. Pastures were flooded and animals died of starvation. Moreover, the flooding created was conducive to outbreaks of priority diseases. Animal health services will be extended and upscaled to certain locations where services could not be delivered in the last quarter due to violent conflict. These areas face heightened COVID-19 vulnerability.

Finally, to support returning or relocating IDPs and host communities, FAO proposes to implement a restocking intervention for displaced households. The animals will be dewormed and vaccinated. FAO will also distribute vaccinated poultry to beneficiaries. The beneficiaries (one member per household) will be trained in the basics of animal husbandry and health. The households will be followed up with to monitor the health of the animals. Small ruminants are preferred for this intervention as they multiply quickly, providing rapid access to income (and food), and do not expose households to violence-related cattle raiding.

Awareness campaigns

Within the context of COVID-19, FAO is in the process of developing innovative ways of communicating to ensure continued strengthening of communities' agricultural production capacities. This will be achieved by producing and disseminating technical messages via radio and phone channels (public service announcements [PSAs], text messages, etc.); solar-powered radios with pre-recorded sim cards with trainings; or extended communication campaigns (developing posters, banners, leaflets and materials in local languages). Developed messages will include information to raise awareness about COVID-19 preventive measures, as well as building knowledge and awareness on best agricultural practices. This activity is in line with the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan.

Furthermore, FAO will continue to support existing educational programmes in order to help provide radio education while schools are closed. FAO will begin radio programming in for example Rumbek, adding/adapting a COVID-19 element to help cattle keepers linked to pastoral livelihoods education field schools (PLEFS) deal with the disease and potential economic fallout. Finally, and in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), FAO is exploring the possibility of expanding educational radio shows to other areas of the country, not currently covered by the in-person field schools.

Natural resources management



In South Sudan, up to 95 percent of the population depend on natural resources for farming, fishing, herding and fuel collection as well as production to meet their food and income needs. The COVID-19 pandemic and its response will likely impact the natural resources sector in several ways affecting food security, livelihoods, energy sufficiency, environmental sustainability, water access, peace and the ability to deal with natural disasters. The following summarizes the main issues to consider: (i) disputes and conflicts compounded by additional competition over natural resources; (ii) diminished livelihoods and safety nets due to restrictions to traditional migration patterns of pastoralist communities; and (iii) increased deforestation, disputes and gendered risks of accessing cooking fuel. Thus, natural resources management activities aim to maintain equitable access to natural resources within the context of COVID-19 by supporting existing peace structures and partners to address and manage competition over natural resources and increase energy sufficiency and forest conservation.

Table 2. Protect food security and agriculture-based livelihoods of the most vulnerable households and stabilize incomes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Outcome		Community food production and income generation safeguarded
Output 2.1		Access to food of 50 000 severely food-insecure and displaced households in urban and peri-urban areas protected
Activities	2.1.1	Disburse Cash+ consisting of cash transfers and inputs (vegetable seeds, gardening tools and trainings on gardening, nutrition and food safety); the programme will target vulnerable households who rely on food supplies from markets to engage in backyard kitchen gardening, as well as small ruminant rearing
	2.1.2	Disburse Cash+ consisting of cash transfers for productive assets (small-scale livestock including ruminants and poultry)
	2.1.3	Support fisheries groups in producing and preserving on a larger scale in the peak fishing season (June to August) to avail fish in the markets in the lean months
	2.1.4	Support market responses through cash transfers to stabilize supply chains, ensure continued market functionality, minimize price hikes by traders and encourage farmers to participate in the markets by financing demand
Output 2.2		Livestock assets protected ensuring availability and access to food for acute food-insecure populations
Activities	2.2.1	Train 1 000 CAHWs on COVID-19 preventive measures and animal health and provide them with PPE
	2.2.2	Train 300 livestock traders and other key stakeholders on the basics of COVID-19 transmission and mitigation actions
	2.2.3	Vaccinate 3 million livestock against priority animal diseases
	2.2.4	Deworm and treat 100 000 livestock against priority animal diseases
	2.2.5	Carry out assessments on water and pasture availability and, if appropriate, restore/establish livestock-based livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups (including IDPs returning home or relocating from their areas of displacement) through restocking with small ruminants and poultry
	2.2.6	Upscale radio programming for pastoralist populations through PLEFS to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 restrictions
Outcome		Equitable access to natural resources within the context of COVID-19 maintained
Output 2.3		Existing peace structures and partners supported in addressing and managing competition over natural resources
Activities	2.3.1	Support regional and local peace structures to both enhance communication and dialogue platforms and assess COVID-19 related implications on the competition for natural resources
	2.3.2	Establish a support facility to address the material needs required to address competition over natural resources (cash for work, seeds, tools, <i>haffirs</i>)

	2.3.3	Actively engage with development partners to mainstream implications for natural resources competition in overall COVID-19 responses through meetings and communication
Output 2.4		Energy sufficiency and forest conservation increased
Activities	2.4.1	Provide cash incentives to households growing woodlots i.e. monthly transfers based on the number of trees planted and managed; priority will be placed on locally-available fast-growing species for sustainable energy production and enhanced soil and water management
	2.4.2	Conduct radio shows on sustainable forest management and fuel collection and production
	2.4.3	Distribute <i>zama-zama</i> stoves and implement cash-for-work schemes for construction of fuel-efficient stoves, especially targeting households using traditional open fire cooking
	2.4.4	Conduct training on improved charcoal production and alternative energy sources
	2.4.5	Propagate tree seedlings for agroforestry and use in established community woodlots

Priority area 3. Reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain

	<p>Beneficiaries 20 000 households along the supply chain, serving at least ten communities</p>		<p>Proposed budget USD 24.9 million</p>
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During the COVID-19 lockdown, many humanitarian players will most likely be resorting to cash as the most feasible means to support vulnerable communities. This increased access to cash by communities is likely to put a strain on the supply of goods and services. Concurrent interventions to increase the capacity of the market to respond to this increase in demand are therefore required.

In addition to market price monitoring, FAO will collaborate with the Cash Working Group Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) teams to monitor changes in demand and supply of goods and services in some key markets to identify needs and obstacles in supply, and inform potential intervention actions for market support. There will be a need to mitigate local prices through the aforementioned measures to minimize the potential for a demand to push prices up.

In close coordination with national authorities and WHO, and remaining consistent with the United Nations system messaging, FAO will raise the awareness of actors along the food supply chain on health regulations, including rights, roles and

responsibilities of workers. FAO will use the existing network of local extension workers, CAHWs, producers' groups and others to pass on messaging related to preventing the spread of the virus. In addition, FAO will work with partners and all actors along the food supply chain to ensure that they follow appropriate measures to reduce exposure and prevent COVID-19 transmission.

Liaising with national authorities

To ensure minimal impact on the food supply chain, FAO will liaise with MAFS and the High-level Taskforce on COVID-19 to facilitate both the cross-border and internal movement of seeds, tools and inputs. Furthermore, FAO will work with agrodealers and similar establishments to safely provide agricultural services, taking into account COVID-19 regulations on distancing and disinfection. FAO will further request support from MAFS to develop PSAs to be aired on local radios, encouraging farmers to continue their activities, as well as raising awareness on relevant safety measures.

Protecting livestock traders and agropastoralists along the food supply chain

Agropastoralists happen to be hard-to-reach clients for health sector key players like WHO, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF because they travel long distances in search of pasture, water and security for their livestock. Therefore, there is opportunity to pay particular attention to integrating campaigns on COVID-19 awareness and prevention among livestock traders and agropastoralists into the livestock component of the response. They will also be targeted with awareness campaigns so as to educate them on how to protect themselves and others against the virus.

Mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the supply chain

As per Government of South Sudan regulations, certain establishments (e.g. markets, slaughter slabs, food shops) remain open to ensure people have access to essential food supplies. However, such places are often crowded and therefore risk and exposure to COVID-19 may increase. It is thus important to ensure that these places are continuously disinfected. FAO is committed to support spraying operations in key places/hotspots where people procure food, including markets and slaughter slabs in main towns. This intervention is aligned with the Ministry of Environment's Emergency Preparedness for Prevention of COVID-19 strategy.

Table 3. Reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain

Outcome		Ability of households and communities to resist and adapt to COVID-19 related shocks and to protect, recover and enhance their productive assets strengthened
Output 3.1		Capacity of markets to respond to the increase in demand for goods and services of 950 000 people in urban and peri-urban areas improved
Activities	3.1.1	Conduct analyses on market capacity and market responsiveness to demand and supply
	3.1.2	Address market supply constraints on a cost-sharing basis to strengthen supply chains, as well as market linkages through cash to ensure increased diversity, quantity and quality of supplies in the market
	3.1.3	Provide support to improved stocking and re-stocking capacities of suppliers, agrodealers and traders including women specifically involved in the trade of agricultural produce and other petty trades like small restaurants
	3.1.4	Develop skills in business and financial management, especially for disadvantaged groups and actors to take advantage of market opportunities
Outcome		Health risks in markets reduced
Output 3.2		Knowledge and awareness on ways to minimize transmission of COVID-19 improved and disseminated in markets
Activities	3.2.1	Raise awareness of sellers and consumers on the implications of not adhering to safety rules and regulations and promote good practices (in markets and through radio programming)
	3.2.2	Set up/support market protection committees (members will spray markets and ensure safety rules and regulations are adhered to)
	3.2.3	Support the spraying of markets and the provision of protective gear
Outcome		Risk of COVID-19 transmission along the supply chain reduced
Output 3.3		Access to disinfectants enhanced to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain
Activities	3.3.1	Provide PPE to market vendors, and mobile hand washing facilities for every meeting
	3.3.2	Reduce participants to no more than ten when delivering technical assistance/training meetings
	3.3.3	Mainstream COVID-19 awareness with technical messages
	3.3.4	Raise awareness on GBV and other potential protection risks within the target population

Outcome		Construction of water, marketing, and value chain infrastructure continued
Output 3.4		Capacity to construct water, marketing and value chain infrastructure strengthened
Activities	3.4.1	Streamline construction and supervision of ongoing works through FAO field offices; monitoring visits to construction sites would be conducted by the field offices to ensure that COVID-19 rules and regulations are followed and health, hygiene, and environmental standards are enforced
	3.4.2	Increase site monitoring by community leaders and implementing partners
	3.4.3	Provide onsite accommodation for local labourers and contractors to minimize movement and potential for transmission
	3.4.4	Support amendment of the defects liability period

Priority area 4. Prepare for the post-COVID-19 recovery phase

The previous sections set out activities that aim to strengthen the ability of households and communities to resist and adapt to COVID-19 shocks and to protect, recover and enhance their productive assets to help reduce the effects of the pandemic on their food security. Simultaneously, FAO is working to upscale its resilience activities that will lay the foundations for households' and communities' long-term recovery and development.

The COVID-19 outbreak and the public health responses to it are likely to further delay the recovery of the Greenbelt by at least another year. In addition, scenario planning inclusive of mass returns from Uganda are failing to occur due to fears of the virus, extensive border closures and the increased cost of smuggling, as well as a lack of access to commercial agricultural inputs. Annually required agricultural inputs like seeds may remain available in many areas, though returnees will likely also need less frequently acquired items, like tools for reconstruction and heavy land clearance.

The greatest COVID-19 impact on agriculture will likely be in Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal, where cereals production has remained largely steady throughout the crisis period. The current planting season – unlike much of Greater Equatoria, most of Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal only has one planting season – will face new challenges as the outbreak evolves. Similar to Greater Equatoria, fears of the virus, border closures and other public health measures may limit access to commercial agricultural inputs. Additionally, it may become difficult or impossible to assemble the collective labour required for larger fields. These are primarily planting and growing season concerns, as it is not clear if the outbreak and the public health response will continue on into the harvest period in late 2020 and early 2021.

The interaction of COVID-19, public health measures, and social responses to the outbreak may work to curtail yields in several key areas of the region, particularly those most exposed to traffic and main markets on the Western Corridor. However, unlike in areas of Greater Equatoria and Greater Upper Nile, where agriculture remains severely depressed in the aftermath of historically exceptional flooding, the ripple effects of COVID-19 in Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal is a threat to existing cereal production capacity. The potential for such capacity to not return or expand is particularly threatened.

The exact geographical focus and specific activities of the post-COVID-19 recovery phase will be based on the outcomes of the in-depth analysis as indicated in priority area 1, on the effects of COVID-19 on food security and livelihoods. Nevertheless, the following focus areas will be included.

- **COVID-19 monitoring and impact assessment.** FAO's post-COVID-19 recovery phase intervention will require a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the impact in order to identify hard hit areas as far as food and livelihood security are concerned.
- **Strategic plan for recovery.** FAO and partners will continue to develop strategic plans based on information collected through regular monitoring of the various sectors. This would inform policy guidance on agricultural policy issues, especially those related to markets and trade.
- **Improving access to inputs, services and information.** Where production was constrained by limited access to inputs, services and information due to COVID-19, the recovery phase will consider strengthening these areas.
- **Managing post-harvest losses** by scaling up the provision of appropriate technologies for post-harvest handling and processing in support to farmers, production and enterprise groups.
- **Enhancing market access** by improving infrastructure development in order to enhance market access through the provision and improvement of selected physical infrastructure and access to water, hygiene and sanitation facilities. This will encompass locally produced food commodities, such as meat, honey and grain, among others.
- **Small-scale processing and conservation of fruits, vegetables, milk, fish and meat products.**
- **Enhancing equitable access to water and pasture for farmers and herders** by, *inter alia*, constructing multi-purpose water infrastructure for agricultural production (urban and peri-urban), as well as improving community hygiene and sanitation.
- **Supporting regional and local peace structures** in determining and addressing the effects of population movement on natural resources competition.

- **Strengthening and promoting agricultural and pastoral groups/ associations.**
- **Promoting diversified production** through intercropping high-value tree crops, such as teak, cocoa, and vanilla, with food crops. Furthermore, ensuring better access to seeds through capacity building, local seed production and recollection.
- **Supporting the expansion of tree nurseries** by kick-starting a project in the pipeline to plant 100 million trees in South Sudan.

Saving livelihoods saves lives

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