



FAO requires
USD 30 million



to assist
109 110 people



9.3 million people

face acute food insecurity
at crisis or worse levels*
The Government of the Bolivarian
Republic of Venezuela does not endorse
these results.



agricultural exports could
decrease by **15-20%** by the
end of 2020 due to the effects of
COVID-19 restrictions and fuel
shortages



2019/20 food production will
only cover **10-15%** of the
country's food needs



The Government set maximum
prices on 27 basic food items,
but the country's accumulated
inflation rate for the first
five months of 2020 reached
295.9%



The cost of households' food
baskets increased by **51.2%**
in one month (April 2020)



53 800 Venezuelan migrants
have returned to the country
since the beginning of the
pandemic

*Source: Global Report on Food
Crises 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- As a result of the ongoing political and economic crisis in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), more than 5 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2014, of whom about 897 000 have applied for asylum globally, and by the end of 2020 an estimated 6.5 million will have left the country.
- The country's capacity to import has deteriorated due to the continued depreciation of the local currency and the dwindling level of foreign exchange reserves, following the decline in oil revenues and the imposition of international sanctions. After seven years of economic crisis, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) is facing increased difficulties – fuel shortages have become so severe that farmers encounter difficulties in using their machineries to prepare land, plant, reach their workplace and markets and engage in agricultural activities, and for transportation, with cereal production expected to decline this year. In addition, logistical constraints linked to the effects of the pandemic are expected to adversely affect food access among urban and peri-urban communities. The Government has thus launched production plans and financial assistance to boost agricultural production, especially of cereals, and strengthen the public food distribution system.
- The urgent and essential restrictions put in place by the Government in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected logistics and agricultural activities across the country. The plummeting prices of oil amid the COVID-19 outbreak have



reduced export earnings, worsening the country's capacity to import. The combined effects of fuel shortages and containment measures has disrupted food production and local food supply chains.

- Thousands of Venezuelan migrants returned to the country, following limited job opportunities due to the effects of essential COVID-19 related containment measures in neighbouring countries. Most returnees may struggle with finding employment thereby exacerbating existing vulnerabilities in the country, triggering increased levels of food insecurity.
- Taking into account the significant amount of wheat and flour imported by the country (2.6 million tonnes in 2019), the prolonged closure of borders linked to COVID-19 restrictions will limit the availability of

these items. Furthermore, the decline in households' purchasing power (due to substantial depreciation of the national currency), loss of sources of income and increased food prices are negatively affecting access to food among the most vulnerable households.

- Although school feeding programmes remained operational, essential measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 such as the closure of schools has affected children's access to not only education but also school meals, an important source of food and nutrition. Following previous multiple interruptions to the education system due to the political crisis, the prolonged closure of schools will negatively affect both learning and children's nutrition.

Likely evolution of the impacts of COVID-19 on food security

A continued increase in COVID-19 cases is likely as a result of inconsistent adherence to the measures in place, as well as to limited access to hygiene linked to water shortages. The projected effects of COVID-19 will mostly affect people who have lost their livelihoods and productive assets, and would have to depend on national safety protection nets for food and health services. Necessary health-related movement restrictions, coupled with supply chain disruptions, households' weak access to food and agricultural inputs as well as limited availability of labour force for land preparation could affect the main cropping season (June–September 2020) and sowing of the secondary maize season beginning in October. Specific anticipated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and related containment measures in the coming months are the following:

- **Food security to deteriorate further.** The impact of COVID-19 related containment measures is likely to lead to continued deterioration of the food security situation over the coming months, as households' purchasing power continues to fall, and imported food items are increasingly expensive. Rising numbers of returnees from neighbouring countries could also contribute to increased food insecurity given their high levels of vulnerability. This could increase food needs, putting a strain on already limited resources, thus increasing the number of people in need of food assistance.
- **Agriculture sector to further be affected.** High input prices, movement restrictions and difficulties in accessing markets, in addition to existing vulnerabilities, could significantly affect the agriculture sector over the coming months. Cereal production in 2020 is expected to be well below pre-crisis levels (2010–2014), when the country's overall output for maize production was an average of 3.4 million tonnes compared with 2018/19 which was about 830 000 tonnes. Productivity, however, could slightly increase due to favourable weather conditions and government support.
- **Economic- and logistics-related issues to affect production.** Feed and fodder production (for poultry and livestock) is likely to be severely impacted by power cuts, distribution issues and increased fuel prices. This could also limit the availability of cereals and pulses (beans and lentils) and other local staples. Moreover, national seed production of maize is insufficient and is not adequately supplemented by imported seeds, which could lead to shortages. The country's capacity to import has deteriorated due to the continued depreciation of the local currency and the dwindling level of foreign exchange reserves, a result of structural economic factors, as well as the decline in oil revenues and the imposition of international sanctions.

Anticipatory actions and response

- Under its emergency and resilience programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is providing technical assistance and agricultural inputs to vulnerable households to help them diversify their production and strengthen their resilience, as well as to enhance capacities to establish sustainable production systems and climate risk management schemes.
- In a context where fuel shortages and COVID-19-related lockdown have further affected the agriculture sector, FAO and its partners work to strengthen agricultural activities in order to boost local food production thereby contributing to the improved food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable groups.
- FAO is ensuring continuity of critical actions to safeguard livelihoods and protect the food supply chain to mitigate the effects of the pandemic for the most vulnerable populations, including in rural, urban and peri-urban areas.
- FAO is increasing its efforts to strengthen the resilience of agricultural communities by supporting a total of 108 372 beneficiaries to address challenges related to the ongoing economic crisis and COVID-19, and mitigate their impact on livelihoods and food security.

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the proposed immediate actions have been identified to meet the urgent short-term needs of the most vulnerable food-insecure populations and protect their assets. It also represents FAO's contribution to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

1) Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most food-insecure populations

FAO, in collaboration with relevant partners, will provide unconditional cash transfers and fresh food vouchers/ baskets (locally produced fruits and vegetables) to migrants in quarantine centres for COVID-19 as well as to vulnerable rural families affected by the economic crisis and the effects of COVID-19 in the border regions with Colombia (Apure, Táchira and Zulia), and in Falcon, Lara and Miranda states.

FAO will also support the local procurement of fresh food from smallholders for distribution in the form of fresh food baskets in the framework of ongoing school-feeding programme.

2) Ensuring continuity of the food supply chain

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves and restrictions are lifted, FAO will adapt its response to include the use of seed voucher schemes, certified seed fairs and cash+ (cash plus in-kind distributions) to support livelihood diversification and home-based food production (e.g. backyard gardens and small livestock production) and to ensure the availability of fresh food and incomes. This will be implemented in Falcon, Lara, Merida and Portuguesa states. FAO will also promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture with emphasis on strengthening local capacities in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies in Lara, Merida and Portuguesa states.

3) Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of transmission

FAO has adjusted its programmes to the context, focusing on remote support where possible and ensuring adherence to World Health Organization and national guidelines in terms of health and safety measures during planting and harvesting season activities. In addition, the following activities will be implemented:

- Raise awareness at local level to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission; risk communication activities will be implemented through radio broadcast and printed materials.
- Carry out community engagement activities by community and association leaders and by farmers with experience in training and social mobilization.
- Disseminate key information on COVID-19 prevention and response measures in partnership with the UN Country Team and other local partners.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 30 million

- **USD 2 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 28 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020

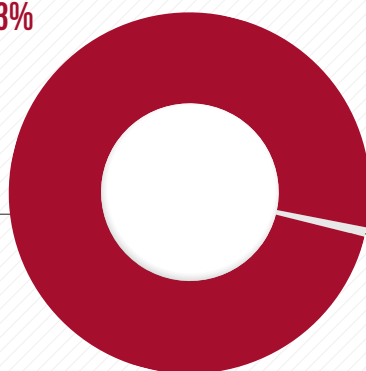


to assist
109 110 people

FUNDING GAP

USD 29.8 million

99.3%



0.7%

RECEIVED

USD 200 000

Resource partners

the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Coordination and partnerships

- FAO, in close collaboration with the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster, contributes to enhanced cooperation and partnerships to maximize the impact of interventions.
- FAO's resilience and emergency programme focuses on strengthening national and local capacities in collaboration with the Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- At local level, FAO works with NGOs and other civil society organizations, such as farmer's associations and local authorities, as key partners to provide rapid assistance to the most vulnerable populations.
- In order to address people's vulnerabilities and the high number of returnees by ensuring their access to healthy food during quarantine, FAO works closely with other key stakeholders including the International Organization for Migration, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme.

Contact

FAO Representation in Venezuela
(Bolivarian Republic of)

Caracas, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
FAO-VE@fao.org

FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience

Rome, Italy
OER-Director@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
www.fao.org/emergencies

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

FAO. 2020. *Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0195en>



Some rights reserved.
This work is available under a
CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence