



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Colombia

Revised humanitarian response
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
May–December 2020



-  **2.4 million people** require food and nutrition assistance*
-  **1.8 million** vulnerable Venezuelan migrants/refugees and over 500 000 Colombian returnees
-  **1 in 3** Venezuelans in Colombia in debt, mainly to buy food
-  **1 000** COVID-19 cases reported per day (June 2020) in 31 departments, five districts
-  **10-15%** price increase of bananas, beef, cereals, chicken, eggs, grain and oil

*Source: Colombia Humanitarian Response Plan 2020



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Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- The most vulnerable and food-insecure populations in Colombia mainly live in rural areas, including women, indigenous peoples, afro-descendant communities, youth and refugees/migrants from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), due to the challenges they face linked to prolonged armed conflict and environmental degradation.
- As the COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly spreading across Colombia strict but essential health-related containment measures – e.g. total lockdown, closing of borders and schools, shutdown of economic activities – have been implemented since the end of March. A spike in confirmed cases, particularly in some of the main urban areas, at the end of April forced the Government to reinstate restrictions in the most affected cities.
- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and related containment measures have generally impacted the food supply chain. While crop production has not been significantly affected by the containment measures, the livestock sector has been more affected. Overall, the challenges linked to marketing coupled with the slowdown of economic activities have reduced food access in the country.
- During a rapid needs assessment carried out by the Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (April 2020), Venezuelan households indicated food as their most immediate need in the context of COVID-19 (95 percent), housing (53 percent), employment (45 percent) and healthcare (26 percent). In addition, over half reported to having difficulties with complying with quarantine measures, mainly due to the need to generate income to cover basic needs (43 percent) or access food (36 percent).
- Once urgent and essential COVID-19 preventive measures were put in place, the number of migrant households that reported income generation dropped by 78 percent and only 15 percent of households reported consuming three meals a day, compared with 56 percent prior to the pandemic. As most Venezuelan migrants in Colombia depend on informal work, thousands of them have had to return to Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) due to loss of income linked to essential COVID-19-related restrictions on movement.
- Colombia's cross-border restrictions with Brazil and Peru due to the COVID-19 situation, which is particularly severe in the department of Amazonas, have impacted logistics and supply of food and agricultural inputs, affecting food production and marketing in the area.
- In a survey involving 1 400 producers, organizations and traders carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations ([FAO], April 2020) in 20 departments, 87 percent of small-scale producers reported to have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions, due to the increase in the prices of agricultural inputs, with critical cases in Boyacá, Córdoba and Tolima. A decrease in crop production is also expected in certain regions due to drought and crop pests. Furthermore, the transportation of produce has been affected, in the country, with 92 percent of retailers reporting to have been impacted.

- The increase of food prices (avocado, eggs, onion, peas, rice, etc.) and households' reduced purchasing power has limited their access to food, which may lead to increased malnutrition. A decrease in the number of customers and quantity bought has been reported by more than half of the food traders interviewed by FAO in July while unusual requests to buy on credit have increased dramatically. As a result, the capacity of food market actors to operate is severely compromised and could lead to the shutdown of markets in the three coming months. According to the National Association of Farmers, rural producers have limited access to agricultural inputs, as well as protection and biosecurity elements to comply with the protocols, which in

turn generates greater difficulties in marketing their products. An increase in prices of animal feed was recorded by FAO. Given the impossibility of buying key inputs, the most vulnerable families are choosing to consume their animals or sell them at a very low price to cover basic needs. This has translated into the loss of households' productive assets.

- The livelihoods of artisanal fishers in the Pacific coast region have been affected due to a decrease in the demand for fish due to the closure of commercial establishments, travel restrictions (transporting fish to markets) and lack of income to purchase fuel for transport.
- Extreme weather events have exacerbated the situation of the most vulnerable communities during the pandemic, leading to the loss of crops and animals, as well as affecting production cycles. Floods in Barbacoas (Nariño) in April, affected 1 450 families, and in the coastal area of San Juan (Chocó) in May, the agricultural livelihoods of around 560 people were totally or partially destroyed. In addition, in the department of La Guajira, COVID-19 broke out during severe drought that has lasted two years, triggering increased levels of malnutrition and food insecurity.

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

The effects of the pandemic on food supply and demand are likely to continue over the coming months. The harvest period of main staple crop covers the period from June to September and agricultural activities are likely to be hindered by the effects of the essential pandemic containment measures, especially due to labour shortages. Given that the peak of the pandemic is expected to be in August 2020, movement restrictions are likely to remain in place in the country's most affected areas, which may lead to increased levels of food insecurity among the most vulnerable households. Households relying on the informal economy for their livelihoods are particularly vulnerable, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), Venezuelan migrants and Colombian returnees, due to disruptions in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The main anticipated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are the following:

- **Labour shortages to affect harvest of staple and cash crops.** The harvest period of the main staple crops (maize, rice, sorghum and wheat) spans from June to September; however, reduced availability of labour due to the effects of movement restrictions on the mobility of seasonal workers may cause significant crop losses thereby affecting farmers' income, food prices and food security. In particular, this may affect coffee harvests starting in September, which represent a key source of livelihoods for many Colombian households. The

effects of labour shortages combined with increased input prices may adversely affect planting for the secondary season (maize and rice), also starting in September.

- **Economic conditions linked to the effects of the pandemic and related measures might trigger the migration of rural populations, therefore impacting food production.** Expected negative impacts on the livestock sector are mainly linked to the increased cost of animal feed, difficulties

in transportation, and reduced demand for meat (beef, chicken and pork). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural and livestock production activities could trigger the migration of rural populations to cities due to the lack of income-generating opportunities, loss of crops and few possibilities to reinvest in crop production.

- **The food security of IDPs, Venezuelan migrants/ refugees and Colombian returnees further at risk.** Many of the IDPs, migrants, refugees and returnees in Colombia live in precarious, overcrowded conditions and with limited access to water and food. In the context of COVID-19, the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable households are expected to further deteriorate, mainly due to reduced income-generating opportunities, especially in the informal labour market.
- **Delivery of humanitarian assistance to face increased challenges.** Restrictions on transports have limited and may continue to limit the delivery of humanitarian assistance, which may lead to increased needs. The situation in certain rural areas of Chocó and Norte de Santander remains of particular concern due to the continued increase

in the number of people displaced and confined by illegal armed groups. Vulnerable people also include street sellers and other informal workers who have lost their source of income – most Venezuelan migrants in Colombia are within this group and will increasingly have to rely on humanitarian assistance to access food.

- **Extreme climate events expected after the second half of 2020.** Below-average rainfall is expected in June–July in parts of the Caribbean and Andean regions, including southern areas of the Pacific region. In addition, above-average rainfall was expected from July in the eastern part of the country. Furthermore, rainfall will be more pronounced in August in the central and southern Andean, as well as in Pacific regions, while it will persist in parts of the Colombian Orinoco and Amazon regions. The situation in the department of La Guajira is also at risk, which is home to 8.9 percent of the migrant population from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and where nearly 52 000 Wayúu indigenous families face the effects of COVID-19 in addition to challenges related to food insecurity and a prolonged drought that will continue in the second half of 2020.

Anticipatory actions and response

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the proposed 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

- Distribute agricultural inputs to ensure production for 3-6 months.
- Support rapid, diversified and sustainable food production.
- Support animal health and protect essential livestock assets.
- Implement cash+ and income-generating activities.
- Scale up social protection activities.

2) Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations

- Carry out food supply analyses national and departmental levels.
- Strengthen capacities in the use of information and communication technologies to bridge the gap between food supply and demand.
- Enhance market linkages in vulnerable areas.
- Provide post-harvest support (storage and processing) to reduce losses.
- Support farmers/women producer groups.

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

- Raise awareness at local level to reduce the risk of virus transmission (e.g. through radio broadcast).
- Develop guidelines and protocols for compliance with hygiene/safety measures during various activities, such as planting, harvesting, selling etc.

- Strengthen capacities in biosafety and biosecurity measures at community and institutional levels, prioritizing indigenous people and those of African heritage.
- Develop prevention and contingency plans against COVID-19 at community level in priority rural areas prioritizing indigenous people and those of African heritage.
- Provide biosecurity kits to families.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 27.1 million

- **USD 16.6 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 4.5 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020
- **USD 6 million** under the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for 2020



to assist
184 000 people

FUNDING GAP
USD 26.1 million

96.3%

RECEIVED
USD 948 621

3.7%

Resource partners
the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and FAO's own resources

Coordination and partnerships

FAO works closely with the following:

- World Food Programme, United Nations Children's Fund
- First Lady's Office, High Counseling for Children, Special Unit for Victims, Territorial Renovation Agency, Rural Development Agency
- National Manager for COVID-19 and the Presidential Adviser for the Regions
- Ministry of Agriculture
- National Risk Management Unit
- Foreign Ministry
- Local authorities
- Food Security and Nutrition Cluster
- Inter-Agency Mixed Migration Flows Group
- Local coordination teams
- Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization

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RECOMMENDED CITATION:

FAO. 2020. Colombia | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0414en>