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FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme for Europe and Central Asia

The economic crisis affects food supply chains in Europe and Central Asia – FAO is calling for joint action to scale up our food and agriculture response to address immediate and longer-term effects

Food supply chain operators seriously affected – The COVID-19 pandemic has induced an economic slowdown across Europe and Central Asia, which has directly affected the financial situation of food supply chain operators. There have been major issues with the availability and affordability of inputs, as well as with transportation, storage, market access and constrained cash flows.

Local food production to be emphasized – The pandemic has underscored the importance of improving efficiency of local food production, boosting the resilience of smallholders and family farms and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources to ensure food security for all.

Innovative measures required – The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the need to identify alternative local, intraregional and global markets, prevent food losses and waste, increase food safety capacity and deliver digital tools to foster information and knowledge exchange in rural areas.

Rural areas require particular support – The COVID-19 crisis has put significant pressure on already strained rural areas, where most food-insecure and poor people reside. It has exacerbated the many vulnerabilities of rural women engaged in family farm and off-farm employment, as lockdown measures have limited their mobility and increased demand for unpaid care work.

Financial and in-kind resources needed – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that an immediate USD 30 million is required to safeguard and strengthen the resilience of the food sector in response to the economic crisis in the region.

The COVID-19 crisis is threatening the region's achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- The COVID-19 pandemic and likely subsequent economic recession require an emphasis on improving the access of vulnerable groups to finance and productive assets, decent rural employment opportunities and social protection measures.
- Food operators have been affected by increased attention on food safety controls, with implications for export opportunities.
- The loss of jobs and income among seasonal labourers has fueled greater requirements for food assistance in vulnerable rural populations.
- The risk of food loss and waste has increased, including due to restrictions on transport and mobility.
- The crisis has emphasized the importance of strengthening local food production, effective (alternative) markets and the sustainable use of local natural resources to ensure food security for all.

International Organization for Migration data forecast a 20 percent fall in regional remittances



There has been more than a 20 percent surge in the price of potatoes and flour in countries in Central Asia



FAO has developed a comprehensive and holistic [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme](#) designed to proactively and sustainably address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. In line with the United Nations approach to “build to transform” and in pursuit of the SDGs, it aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term **resilience of food systems and livelihoods**.

FAO's Response and Recovery Programme for Europe and Central Asia has been developed to address the urgent support requirements in the region's agrifood sector and to increase its resilience to medium-term effects in the most affected countries¹. The programme will evolve based on the latest available evidence on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in the sector. The programme consists of **ten proposed actions**, developed under the umbrella of FAO's global COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme's key priority areas, which take a multisectoral, programmatic approach. The programme's design is fully aligned with countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs, the joint UN response and FAO's regional priorities as addressed by the three Regional Initiatives: *Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction*, *Improving agrifood trade and market integration* and *Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate*.



Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty

- Enhancing local food production by tackling land abandonment and improving farm structure.
- Promoting integrated community development with a focus on social protection and migration.
- Addressing gender inequalities to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in rural areas.



Food systems transformation

- Strengthening local agrifood value chains by improving food systems for better food security and nutrition.
- Accelerating responsible investment for resilient and sustainable food systems, with a focus on agrifood enterprises and value chains.



Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery

- Improving the resilience of smallholders for COVID-19 recovery by decreasing their dependency on farm inputs and increasing incomes.



Trade and food safety standards

- Promoting regional trade and better compliance with food safety standards by improving food safety regulations, standards, official controls and trade facilitation, including through digital solutions.
- Enhancing national and regional market intelligence, as well as market and policy monitoring.



Preventing the next zoonotic pandemic

- Preventing pandemics of animal origin through a comprehensive One Health approach to assess and identify the potential risks of zoonotic epidemics and to formulate preventive measures, including capacity development assistance.



Data for decision-making

- Delivering rapid, repeated food-risk assessments by monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on the food security situation.

¹ The Programme's target countries are reviewed continuously, based on ongoing monitoring and assessment, multi-stakeholder consultations and the evolution of COVID-19 implications for the region.

Partnering with FAO

As a specialized agency of the United Nations, FAO offers partners unique opportunities to promote their values, increase their impact and achieve development and humanitarian goals.

FAO's global **COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and the Regional Response Programme for Europe and Central Asia** leverage the Organization's convening power to lead international efforts through a flexible multilateral approach, supporting tailor-made partnerships and matching donors with those most in need of assistance. FAO welcomes a broad range of partnerships, both new and renewed, with FAO Members, other governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and cooperatives.

We call upon organizations or governments interested in working together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and create a better future for all to contact us at REU-RPL@fao.org.

**“Our ability to act,
in our shared best
interest and for
greater collective
impact, has never
been more
important.”**

QU Dongyu
FAO Director-General



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