

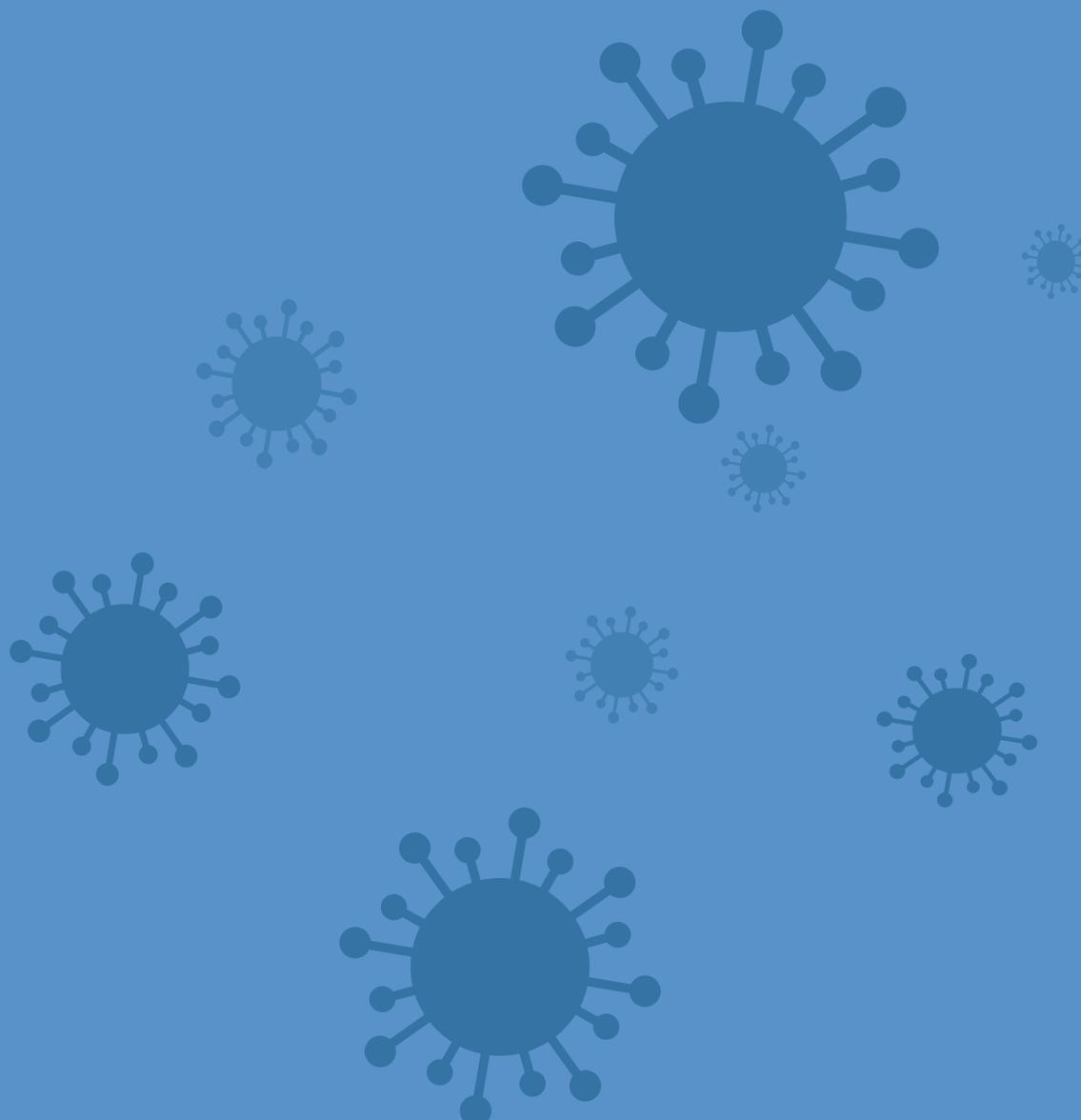


Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



# National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Nigeria

Effects, policy responses and long-term implications





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This country profile covers responses and effects up to September 2020

## INTRODUCTION

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The COVID-19 pandemic has put significant pressure on health systems all around the world. The drastic measures established to contain its spread are creating serious impediments to economic activity (including agrifood systems) and, consequently, to livelihoods and food security and nutrition.

The COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates both how health and food systems are linked to one another, and how local food systems are linked to global systems. High rates of urbanization and the globalization of trade and travel have contributed to the spread of the virus across countries. Lockdowns and movement restrictions within countries and across borders have disrupted national and local food and agricultural output and input markets and have caused sharp reductions in overall economic activity globally. In poorer countries, disruptions have further exacerbated the fragility of systems (including agrifood systems) and livelihoods.

The Global Report on Food Crises 2020 found that 135 million people in 55 countries and territories are facing acute food insecurity at “crisis” level or higher – a situation that requires urgent action. The report further concluded that over 183 million people were experiencing a “stressed” level of acute food insecurity and bore a high risk of sliding into a “crisis” level if confronted by with additional shocks (FSIN, 2020). The situation is particularly worrisome in light of the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the situation evolves, the question arises as to how, or whether, food, health and financial and economic systems could become better prepared to prevent similar outbreaks from escalating into a full-blown economic and social crisis.

This report is part of a series of country profiles that describe: (i) policy measures enacted by governments to contain the spread of the virus; (ii) policies and measures to stabilize the functioning of agri-food systems; (iii) potential effects of policies on agri-food systems and vulnerable groups. Finally, the profiles also assess longer-term options for agri-food system policies and investments so as to make them more resilient.

## **POLICY MEASURES TO CONTAIN COVID-19**

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### **What major measures have been taken to contain the spread of the virus? How are they evolving?**

#### **Lockdown at home**

On 30 March, the Federal Republic of Nigeria imposed Phase 1 of a lockdown in Abuja, Ogun and Lagos state for two weeks. On 22 April, the federal government extended the lockdown for another two weeks nationwide. On 27 April, President Buhari extended the lockdown in Lagos, Ogun, Federal Capital Territory by one week, which marked the commencement of Phase 2. On 18 May, the government extended Phase 2 nationwide until 20 July after which it was extended again to 6 August. On 7 August, the president authorized the extension (Phase 3) of a nationwide gradual eased lockdown for four weeks. This led to the relaxation of human movement and night-time curfew across the country. On 3 September, the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 (PTF COVID-19) announced Nigeria's continuation of the eased restrictions for four weeks. The PTF COVID-19 announced the extension of Phase 3 for an additional four weeks, effective from 20 October and this measure is still in effect.

#### **Night-time curfew**

On 27 April, the federal government declared a nationwide overnight curfew from 20.00 until 06.00 hours. Following a review, on 1 June, the government extended the curfew for another two weeks, however reducing its duration from 22.00 until 04.00 hours. On 3 September, the government adjusted the curfew hours to last from midnight until 04.00 hours.

#### **Travel bans**

On 18 March, the federal government restricted entry into the country for travellers from 13 high risk countries. On 21 March, the government closed two of its main international airports and the Nigerian Railway Corporation suspended all passenger services. On 26 March, all air and land borders were closed and on 20 April, the remaining international airports were shut down. On 5 May, the ban on all flights in and out of Nigeria was extended by four weeks. On 26 July, the federal government re-opened 14 airports to full domestic operations. Since 5 September, both domestic and international flights have been fully operational nationwide.

#### **Ban on domestic interstate travel**

As part of the national lockdown effort, on 23 April, the governors of all 36 Nigerian states announced a ban on interstate movement for two weeks, later extending this measure to 7 May. Only people providing essential services, such as the movement of agricultural produce, petroleum products and certain manufactured goods, were permitted to cross state borders. In September, all limitations to land travels were lifted. With the resumption of domestic and international airport operations, the local hospitality sector has gradually resumed its capacity to cater to the needs of domestic and foreign travellers. All interstate travel bans have been phased out starting from 6 August.

#### **Closure of land borders**

On 26 March, Nigeria's land borders were closed for a period of four weeks to enable the country to put in place policies, processes and infrastructure to cope with suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases at home, without risking more imported cases. Only cargo vessels that had been

at sea for longer than 14 days were allowed to dock in the ports, once the crew had been tested and confirmed as COVID-19-free by the Port Health Authorities.

### Closure of schools

On 20 March, the federal government announced that all tertiary educational institutions and secondary and primary schools would be closed. Secondary schools were reopened on 4 August.

### Restrictions in the operation of food market outlets and open-air markets

The federal government ordered the immediate closure of restaurants, bars, public recreational parks and shops in markets and neighbourhood centres starting on 24 March. Exemptions were granted to shops selling food items, medicines and other essential commodities. During the first phase of restrictions, individuals were only allowed to leave their homes to purchase essential goods on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 10.00 and 02.00 hours. With the relaxation of movements in May, market access in Abuja was increased to Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays between 10.00 and 16.00 hours until the market restrictions in Abuja were totally removed in July. In September, all limitations to market access across the country were lifted and markets were allowed to open and operate all day.

### Bans on public gatherings

In March, the government ordered an immediate suspension of gatherings in churches and mosques and at social events. In June, the government banned gatherings of more than 20 people outside of a workplace and restricted social gatherings to fewer than 50 people. Attendance at religious services was limited to one-third of the seating capacity of the auditorium to enable physical distancing

## **AGRIFOOD POLICY MEASURES TO RESPOND TO THE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS**

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### **What major policy measures are in place or anticipated that target the food system directly?**

#### **Establishment of a task team on the movements of agrifood actors, inputs and produce**

In April, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development inaugurated a joint technical task team on the emergency response to COVID-19. The task team facilitated the free and unhindered movement of farmers, food, livestock and agricultural inputs across Nigeria during the lockdown to avoid food scarcity and ensure a minimal impact of COVID-19 on the farming season. The establishment of the task team was prompted by reports received by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development citing the problems faced by transporters of food, livestock and agricultural inputs due to the enforcement of restriction orders. The exemption for food and agriculture-related activities was not very effective because obtaining the necessary permits often proved difficult as offices were closed or had restricted working hours and limited personnel available to process requests.

#### **Measures related to the provision of farm inputs and subsidies for 2020 planting season**

- On 13 May, the National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC) provided 81 000 tonnes of certified seeds to farmers (Ewepu, 2020) to ensure the continuity of agricultural activities during the lockdown period and ensure that farmers would have enough seeds for the 2020 planting season. The distributed seeds included 30 000 tonnes of rice, 4 000 tonnes of maize

hybrid, 3 000 tonnes of sorghum, 4 000 tonnes of soybean, 1 500 tonnes of cowpea, 550 tonnes of millet, 6 000 tonnes of groundnut, 2 500 tonnes of wheat, and 40 000 tonnes of sesame (Falaju, 2020). It is noteworthy that NASC was able to deliver the seeds on time for the planting season, which began in June.

- Intrastate movement permits for seed conveyance were approved throughout the period of the lockdown.
- The price of fertilizer was reduced from USD 15 to USD 13 per bag.
- The government provided USD 41.2 million to the Maize Farmers Association of Nigeria (a cooperative) for the 2020/2021 planting season. The money was used to distribute fertilizers, seeds and agrochemicals to about 40 000 association members.
- The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) disbursed USD 1.1 billion in non-interest loans to farmers nationwide through its Anchor Borrower's Programme (ABP) and Targeted Credit Facility (TCF) to support households and small and medium enterprises (SME) affected by COVID-19. The CBN specified that the funds would be used to fund the value chains of nine commodities, including rice, maize, livestock, fish, oil palm, cowpea, poultry, yam and cassava (Chiejina and Nweze, 2020). The facility was designed to have a maximum tenor of three years with, at least, six months moratorium and an exit date of 31 December 2024 (CBN, 2020).

### Approval of intervention fund to control transboundary pests

The government approved a USD 34.2 million fund for the control of transboundary pests, such as quelea birds, locusts and grasshoppers, in an effort to safeguard food security in 12 northern states: Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, Yobe and Borno. This initiative was important due to reports of desert locust outbreaks in East Africa and the Middle East, with the possibility of spill over into West Africa including Nigeria during the 2020 planting season. While not specific to the COVID-19 context, implementation was fast tracked to mitigate the impact of the pests on crop production that could potentially affect yield in 2020.

### What measures are in place or anticipated that aim to mitigate the effects of the crisis on vulnerable groups?

#### Social protection measures

##### Nigeria Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP)

Developed by the Economic Sustainability Committee (ESC), the NESP was established by the President on 30 March. Chaired by the vice president, the NESP is a 12-month, USD 5.9 billion 'transition' plan between the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and its successor, which is yet to be designed. This transition plan is needed because the ERGP ended in 2020. The NESP seeks to strengthen economic stimulation by ensuring liquidity, preventing business collapse, and staving off the worst impacts of a potential recession. It aims to support job preservation and creation through labour-intensive programmes in key areas like housing, roads, agriculture and infrastructure maintenance. The NESP focuses on providing protection to vulnerable groups, including women and people with disabilities. One of the key interventions is the Mass Agricultural Programme (MAP) with an estimated budget of USD 1.65 billion. The MAP aims to ensure the cultivation of between 20 000 and 100 000 hectares on smallholder farms and abandoned state farm settlements and agricultural projects, as well as to support offtake and

agroprocessing through low-interest credit (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020). The programme funds the same value chains as those supported by the ABP. The programme support smallholder farmers – either directly or through out grower schemes – with services and inputs, including land-clearing, ploughing, seeds, saplings, fertilizers, pesticides, extension services, storage to mitigate postharvest losses and equipment. Farmers will also be linked to low-interest input financing (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020).

### **Provision of food aid**

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, over five million Nigerians needed food assistance in 16 northern states, including Abuja, the federal capital. By the end of June, the number was projected to reach over seven million people (PwC, 2020). Meanwhile, the number of people in need of urgent assistance in north-east Nigeria has risen from 7.9 million at the beginning of 2020 to 10.6 million due to COVID-19 and other factors, such as insurgency attacks and armed banditry (OCHA, 2020).

### **Distribution of grain**

The National Strategic Grains Reserve distributed 30,876.3 tonnes of grain to 3 795 500 poor and vulnerable households to cushion the effects of the lockdown. The process used SIM card registration to select beneficiaries whose monthly mobile phone recharge was less than a dollar as well as identifying urban poor dwellers with an account balance of USD 13 or less through the use of Bank Verification Number (BVN). The first grain distributions were released in April to Lagos and Ogun states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and subsequent batches were distributed to other states until September (Radio Nigeria, 2020), when the measure was phased out.

Kano state was considered the epicentre for COVID-19 in Northern Nigeria as of May, with 761 confirmed cases and 35 deaths. The federal government delivered 5 318 tonnes of assorted foodstuffs to poor and vulnerable people and those living with disabilities in Kano state (FMIC, 2020). A statement from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development indicated that the food relief comprised ten trucks of rice, 2 438 tonnes of maize, 1 380 tonnes of millet and 900 tonnes of sorghum, sufficient to feed 300 000 households. The ten trucks of rice were provided by the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS); the maize, millet and sorghum were drawn from the country's strategic food reserves as authorized by President Muhammadu Buhari. The federal government also ordered the release of about 70 000 tonnes of grains (millet, maize, sorghum, etc.) from strategic reserves to all states nationwide, except the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos, Ogun and Kano.

### **Provision of school meals**

Between 14 May and 6 July, the federal government conducted a modified version of the National Home-grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) to deliver one-time packages of dry food rations, valued at USD 12, using a door-to-door voucher distribution system to households of pupils enrolled in the NHGSFP in the FCT, Lagos and Ogun states. The school meals were later extended to all states currently participating in the NHGSFP. The beneficiary breakdown reveals that 29 609, 37 589 and 60 391 households were reached in the FCT, Lagos and Ogun state respectively during the lockdown period. The meals included one pack of rice (5 kg), one pack of beans (5 kg), vegetable oil (500 ml), palm oil (750 ml), salt (500 mg), eggs (15 pcs) and tomato paste (140 gm). As of 2018, more than nine million primary school pupils were benefitting from the NHGSFP in 26 states (Onwuzoo, 2020). The total number of school-age children in Nigeria was

31 886 242 as of November 2019 (UNICEF, 2020), meaning that 28 percent of school children receive food rations through the programme.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Nigeria Food and Nutrition Response Plan for COVID-19**

In May 2020, the Federal Ministry of Health, in collaboration with nutrition stakeholders such as the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Food Drug and Administration Control (NAFDAC), State Ministries of Health, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank and development partners, developed a COVID-19 Response Plan on Food and Nutrition. The objective of the plan is to ensure the integration of nutrition into Nigeria's overall COVID-19 Response Plan, recognizing its importance in supporting immune function. The strategic priorities of the nutrition and food security plan include:

- developing a multi-sectoral approach to nutrition in COVID-19 responses;
- protecting food and nutrition security and local food systems;
- providing inputs (seeds, credits, etc.) to households, as well as cash-based interventions for homestead gardening/livestock farming;
- supporting continued food assistance and social protection, including school feeding programmes;
- unblocking logistical bottlenecks to ensure the free flow of agricultural inputs, such as seedlings and fertilizers, and of produce from the farm to markets;
- incentivizing the private sector to increase food processing;
- reducing postharvest losses and waste;
- providing guidance around actions for safe and resilient markets and food supply chains and short term emergency responses; and
- promoting home gardens in rural and urban areas for the production of fresh fruits and vegetables including biofortified foods (FMH, 2020).

### **Cash transfers**

On 1 April, the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development began to provide cash transfers to families registered in the National Social Register of Poor and Vulnerable Households. The federal government announced that each family on the register would receive monthly cash payments of USD 52 for four months. By 6 May, a total of 729 847 beneficiaries in 24 states had received payments from the COVID-19 cash transfer intervention (Premium Times, 2020). The payment of cash transfers was phased out in July.

### **Utility bill support**

On 10 April, the federal government announced its intention to cover two months of electricity bills for all Nigerians in recognition of the challenging effects of the coronavirus on the daily lives of citizens (Business a.m., 2020). The scheme was phased out on 31 August and a new increase in electricity tariff took effect, with the result that the consumption of electricity for more than 12 hours a day costs between 80 and 100 percent more than previously (BBC, 2020a).

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<sup>1</sup> According to calculations by lead author.

### **Public works programme for vulnerable youth**

The president approved the expansion of an employment programme for 774 000 young Nigerians to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 on the economy. The young people will be engaged in a special public works programme, with labour including drainage digging and clearance, irrigation canal clearance, rural feeder road maintenance, among others. A pilot scheme was approved in eight states, including Adamawa, Borno, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Jigawa, Katsina and Kwara, and implemented by the National Directorate of Employment from February to April. A previous scheme targeted 40 000 youth. On 6 April, the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, announced the extension of the programme to all 36 states and the FCT from October to December.

### **Changes to petrol prices**

On 18 March, the federal government announced a reduction in the price of petrol from USD 0.38 per litre to USD 0.33 per litre for a period of two weeks, ending on 31 March, thereafter extending the reduction for an additional month. With the resumption of economic activities globally, demand for crude oil products increased, leading the government to increase the pump price of petrol to USD 0.40 per litre on 2 September.

## **Fiscal and monetary policy measures**

### **Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill 2020**

On 24 March, the House of Representatives passed the Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill 2020, which was approved in April. The bill seeks to provide a 50 percent tax rebate for employers and business owners who agree not to make staff cuts in 2020. The implementation of the bill is expected to prevent job losses in the formal sector; it contains no provisions for informal workers.

### **Loan repayment moratorium**

In a national broadcast on 29 March, President Muhammadu Buhari granted a three-month repayment moratorium for all government-funded loans. The moratorium covered TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni loans issued by the Bank of Industry, the Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export Import Bank with immediate effect.

### **Exchange rate devaluation and shift in exchange rate regime**

On 23 March, the Central Bank of Nigeria announced to adopt the official exchange rate of N 360 per dollar for international money transfer operators rate to banks. On the same day, the CBN announced the introduction of a single exchange rate regime at N 380 per dollar. Before the devaluation of the naira, the exchange rate had reached N 570 per dollar (Adesina, 2020). This policy move aimed to ensure stability and availability of foreign exchange to enable imports of essential equipment and tools, including for agriculture and related purposes.

### **Reduction of interest rate and support to financial institutions**

The CBN reduced interest rates on its facilities through participating financial institutions from 9 percent to 5 percent per annum for a year. The CBN also introduced a USD 263.2 million credit intervention scheme to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses, especially those in the health sector, with an interest rate of 5 percent per annum until 1 March 2021, when it will revert back to 9 percent (IFPRI, 2020). The CBN resumed the sale of dollars to SMEs for essential imports.

A USD 9.5 billion stimulus package in the form of loans was injected into the banking system by the Federal Government to provide immediate cash to pay bills, provide working capital for inventories, minimize supply chain disruptions, acquire necessary infrastructure to work remotely

and bridge the gap between the demand and supply of funds to support the real sector (i.e. manufacturing, agriculture, service industry etc.).

### **How is the government funding COVID-19 related measures?**

The PTF COVID-19 leveraged resources from development partners and the private sector to support implementation of several activities, receiving significant technical and material input. Through the Private Sector Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID), the PTF stimulated an unprecedented commitment of resources to public health, while also mobilizing significant and sustained resources from donors, bilateral and multilateral partners, including the United Nations system.

In the early days of the crisis, the PTF developed a budget totalling USD 220 776 682 to finance Nigeria's response to the pandemic. The funds were expected to come from three key sources: the federal budget (USD 44 482 202), a special government account/levy for COVID-19 (USD 85 521 768), and donations from development partners and the private sector (USD 90 772 712). The funds expected from donors were to support the expansion of healthcare infrastructure.

Development partners and the private sector donated more than expected, although their funds did not go to the PTF but was mostly spent by them directly, working with the relevant ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). These funds were not only spent on healthcare infrastructure as anticipated, but also on other key interventions such as economic assistance. By 30 June, 76.5 percent (USD 99 474 370) of the federal government's contribution to the budget (USD 130 003 970) had been released to the PTF from the Treasury (PTF COVID-19, 2020). In addition, as of July, the One UN COVID-19 response basket fund, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had mobilized USD 63.8 million, including USD 54.6 million from the European Union (EU), USD 2.2 million from UN agencies, USD 4 million from the private sector (USD 3.8 million from Dangote and USD 0.2 million from AP Maersk), USD 0.4 million from the Government of Switzerland, USD 1 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USD 400 000 from the MacArthur Foundation and USD 1 050 000 from the Government of Norway (UNDP Nigeria, 2020a).

### **Establishment of the COVID-19 Crisis Intervention Fund**

In April, the National Assembly approved the establishment of a USD 1.3 billion COVID-19 Crisis Intervention Fund for the implementation of the Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill 2020. The funds have been earmarked for upgrading health facilities nationwide and to finance a national Special Public Works Programme, as well as any other interventions that may be called for in future.

An analysis of the above funding sources shows that one-third of the funds needed will have to be sourced from outside the government.

## What initiatives have been taken by the humanitarian and development community to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on food security, nutrition, agriculture and water and sanitation?

### UN agencies

#### FAO

FAO launched a livestock restocking campaign in the northeast region in 2020 as part of a comprehensive initiative funded by the European Union Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), which is jointly implemented by FAO, the UN Women and the World Food Programme (WFP). The intervention assists beneficiaries to re-establish their productive asset base by replenishing lost livestock. Through this initiative, FAO is supporting 2 500 women with goat kits, 1 500 women with poultry kits and 1 400 youths with bulls. The beneficiaries, selected from Bama, Dikwa, Gwoza, Jere, Kaga, Konduga and Mafa local government areas (LGAs) in Borno state (northeast Nigeria), are also being trained on rural livestock management (FAO, 2020a). It is important to note that the various food security actions under this programme align with NESP's MAP initiative, which is designed to enhance food systems impacted by COVID-19 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020).

#### UNDP

To restore livelihoods and build community resilience, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched an unconditional cash transfer project in partnership with the Kano State Government and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs (FMHDS). Nine thousand six hundred individuals benefited from the cash-for-work programme, while 2 500 SME received cash grants for their businesses and start-ups to support business continuity (UNDP Nigeria, 2020b). The project, largely funded by the Government of Japan and the European Union with a total cost of USD 7.7 million, is implemented under the Nigeria One UN COVID-19 response to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on urban poor communities in the Kano metropolis, particularly Kano Municipal, comprising Fagge, Dala, Gwale, Tarauni, and Nasarawa LGAs (UNDP Nigeria, 2020b).

#### IFAD

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has launched the multi-donor COVID-19 Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) (WBCSD, 2020), which is financed by IFAD and other development partners. The RPSF seeks to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods through activities focused on securing access to inputs, markets, financial services and digital information. The RPSF is providing agricultural stimulus and resilience packages to vulnerable smallholders in Northern Nigeria to support production activities during the 2020 farming season. Packages are delivered through farmers' organizations and include tailored inputs and products, such as climate resilient, high-yielding, short duration and high nutrition seeds. Women and youth are prioritized to allow them to recover and build a better future after the crisis.

#### WFP

The WFP provided beneficiaries in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states in northeast Nigeria with in-kind food assistance and cash-based transfers. WFP food assistance reached 732 336 people in May. Of these, 441 003 received in-kind food assistance. In terms of cash-based transfers, WFP helped 267 798 beneficiaries through electronic vouchers and 23 535 through mobile money. WFP complemented food assistance with malnutrition prevention and treatment activities,

servicing 191 573 children, pregnant and lactating women and girls. WFP also assisted 146 531 beneficiaries from its current livelihoods programme using food or cash transfers (WFP Nigeria, 2020a). WFP plans to conduct an assessment of its actions on food security before the end of 2020.

A previous emergency response plan for the northeast region, which targeted 1.1 million people with food assistance, was revised upward due to COVID-19. An additional 800 000 people were targeted for food and nutrition support, especially women and children affected by a decade-long insurgency in the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. In addition, WFP distributed two-months' worth of food assistance, including rice, beans, salt, tomato paste, vegetable oil and palm oil, in camps for 425 500 displaced people (21 percent of a total of 2 million internally displaced persons) (WFP Nigeria, 2020b) in August (IOM, 2020a).

## **UNICEF**

Misinformation about the nature of COVID-19 and the steps needed to avoid it was widespread in the early days of the pandemic. Misleading information about breastfeeding stopped many mothers from continuing the practice. In partnership with the National Orientation Agency (NOA), UNICEF used mobile vans to communicate directly with community members, providing information on how to stay safe and promoting breastfeeding as a crucial way of keeping babies healthy (UNICEF Nigeria, 2020). Messages were also transmitted through UNICEF/Enugu State on-air broadcasts called 'COVID-19 Radio Talks', which aired on eleven stations. UNICEF encouraged the government to establish a task force on nutrition and provided technical support to the Federal Ministry of Health, which resulted in the development of the Nigeria Food and Nutrition Response Plan for COVID-19.

## **UN Women**

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is working with elected female members of the National Assembly and members of the African Women's Leaders Network to address violence against women and girls (VAWG), which was exacerbated by the movement restriction policy. On-air discussions were held on germane topics, including susceptibility/risk factors of women to COVID-19; coping with pregnancy and nursing infants during the crisis; preparedness of health care centres in identifying and responding to suspected cases of COVID-19; cross-border and interstate transmission of COVID-19 with implications for women; and the role of security agencies and women in combating criminality. These discussions were complemented by the airing of audio jingles for COVID-19 sensitization, produced by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. Weekly radio programmes on Women, Peace and Security are being broadcast live on Globe FM in Bauchi and Radio Benue in Benue State, in partnership with International Alert and the State Ministries of Women's Affairs.

## **International financial institutions**

### **The World Bank**

The World Bank's Board of Directors approved the Nigeria COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project (World Bank, 2020a), which will provide USD 114.28 million to help Nigeria prevent, detect and respond to the threats of COVID-19, with a specific focus on state-level responses. This includes USD 100 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA) and USD 14.28 million grant from the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility. As of the time of writing, implementation of the project had not yet begun.

## Bilateral agencies

### USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Nigeria is spending USD 26 million USD through its West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH), which is jointly implemented by a consortium of international development organizations comprising Creative Associates International, Pragma, Dalberg, Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA), Connexus Corporation and Fryam. WATIH seeks to improve private sector competitiveness and support private sector agribusiness in five value chains (maize, soybean, rice, cowpea and aquaculture) in seven states (Kebbi, Kaduna, Benue, Niger, Delta, Ebonyi and Cross River) (USAID, 2020a). The five-year activity started in 2019 and is expected to end in 2024. The USAID mission in Nigeria provided USD 14 million in new funds to WATIH to respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19. The primary purpose of this new funding is to increase access to working capital by businesses affected by COVID-19; prevent and mitigate job losses; and help respond to local and regional supply chain disruptions, shortages of critical medical supplies and services, and agricultural inputs and food staples.

### European Union

The European Union in Nigeria contributed USD 54.6 million to the UN One joint basket funding (i.e. 86 percent of the total funding in July 2020), which supports several responses initiated by the Government of Nigeria. In addition, the European Union has also granted some of its implementing partners the flexibility to incorporate COVID-19 work into existing European Union-funded programmes. For example, through Oxfam in Nigeria the European Union has provided grains for 2 000 households across four local governments of Adamawa state under the 'Lean-Season/COVID-19 Food-Loan Programme (Leadership, 2020).'

## Civil society organizations (including international non-governmental organizations)

Following the outbreak of coronavirus in Nigeria, 133 civil society organizations (CSOs) took decisive action to initiate projects on: camp coordination and management; coordination and support services; early recovery and livelihoods; education, emergency shelter and non-food items; food security, health, nutrition, water and sanitation; and protection (children and violence against women).

For example, Plan International provided critical support to displaced people by distributing food packages to 28 724 vulnerable families. Each food package contained 10.5 kg of sorghum or millet, 3 kg of beans, 1.5 kg of cereal, 0.972 kg of vegetable oil and 0.15kg of salt. The support aimed to enhance household food and nutrition security for vulnerable individuals, such as children, people with disabilities and the elderly, female and child headed households in the host community and internally-displaced persons camps who have been affected by insurgency and were under lockdown due to COVID-19 (Plan International, 2020).

Women in the New Nigeria and Youth Empowerment Initiative (WINN) is supporting 1 500 vulnerable people in three LGAs in Gwoza, (Pulka), Maiduguri, and the Mafa LGA in Borno state. Through this project, WINN distributes food items, operates cash transfers and provides hygiene kits and educational materials on prevention and response to COVID-19 (HPC, 2020b).

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) is implementing a project that addresses livelihood needs and provides mitigation and response support on COVID-19 in Borno and Yobe states. This project aligns with the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan, which is prepared to address protracted or sudden crises that may require international humanitarian assistance.

A comprehensive list of COVID-19 response efforts undertaken by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs found on the website of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (OCHA, 2020b).

## 2.e. What funding is being provided by the humanitarian and development community?

### One UN COVID-19 Response Fund

A shared United Nations strategy to amplify the Nigeria Government's response was initiated in March. Managed by UNDP, the Nigeria One UN COVID-19 Response Fund aims to coordinate and align the efforts of UN agencies and to leverage partnerships with the government, development partners, foundations, CSOs and the private sector support COVID-19 interventions in Nigeria (UNDP, 2020a). The One UN response fund focuses on includes risk communication and community engagement (RCCE); strengthening state level operational capacity for surveillance, infection prevention, and control; building capacity of healthcare workers in case management and strengthening hospital capacities to respond; and engagement with CSOs to reverse the negative impact of COVID-19 on access to essential health services.

The PTF COVID-19 has made progress in coordinating Nigeria's engagement with bilateral and multilateral bodies and international organizations to share lessons, best practices and technical assistance. By July, the One UN COVID-19 Response Fund had mobilized the funds shown in the table below.

**Table 1. Funds raised by the One UN COVID-19 Response Fund, July 2020**

Development and private sector partners	Amount in USD
Aliko Dangote Foundation	3 889 335
AP Maersk	200 000
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	1 000 000
European Union	54 618 300
Government of Switzerland	400 000
Government of Norway	1 050 000
MacArthur Foundation*	400 000
UN agencies	Amount in USD
FAO	44 000
ILO	25 000
IOM	100 000
UNAIDS	44 000
UNDP	1 400 000
UNESCO	30 000
UNFPA	230 000
UNHCR	50 000
UNICEF	150 000
UNWOMEN	45 000
WFP	100 000
<b>TOTAL (as of July 2020)</b>	<b>63 775 635</b>

Source: UNDP, 2020a

By June 2020, the Project Board of the Response Fund (supported by a technical committee established to review the One UN COVID-19 Response Fund) had allocated USD 42 767 450.16 for interventions to be undertaken by participating UN agencies.

The pandemic is putting increased strain on already limited funding for humanitarian and development organizations. Some are allowing greater flexibility in how their money is spent through simplifying current funding arrangements and negotiating with donors, while keeping accountability over the use of funds. Funds are being reallocated to align with the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19,<sup>2</sup> provided that this is not at the expense of other life-saving activities.

The OCHA office in Nigeria reported that funding for the Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 is at a historic low (OCHA, 2020a). Only 40 per cent of the USD 1.08 billion required to provide life-saving assistance to 10.6 million people had been received by the end of September (OCHA, 2020a).

In an effort to shift resources to priority locations and urgent activities, UNDP reallocated existing internal resources to industries or areas of the economy that have been hard hit by the pandemic (mostly the informal sectors, SME and low income households).<sup>3</sup>

## IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

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### Food security and nutrition: latest data and projections

According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET)'s Food Security Outlook, June 2020 to January 2021, it is unlikely that a famine is currently taking place in inaccessible areas. However, famine could occur if there is a dramatic uptick or shift in conflict that isolates households from typical food and income sources, and humanitarian assistance for a prolonged period of time (FAO and WFP, 2020).

The June 2020 Cadre Harmonisé (CH)<sup>4</sup> report predicted an increase in the number of people needing of food assistance, from 3.7 to 4.3 million as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Food Security Sector, comprising international NGOs, national NGOs and UN agencies working on agriculture, cash and market, inter-cluster nutrition and programme quality in Nigeria, continued their advocacy efforts with donors in order to fill the gap and support those additional people in need of food assistance (OCHA, 2020c). In July, Food Security Sector partners participated in a number of key activities, including food distribution and livelihood support as part of COVID-19 risk mitigation measures (OCHA, 2020c).

The October-November CH report shows that by August 2021, more than 13.8 million Nigerians will need urgent attention in 16 states – Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Gombe, Zamfara – and the Federal

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<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 GHRP is a joint effort by members of the Interagency Standing Committee, including United Nations and other international and non-governmental organizations with humanitarian mandates, to analyse and respond to the direct public health and indirect humanitarian consequences of the pandemic, particularly in countries already facing other crises.

<sup>3</sup> Source: WFP Nigeria key informant.

<sup>4</sup> The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) is an analytical framework for the Sahel and West Africa that uses various indicators of food and nutrition security outcomes to estimate vulnerable populations for more effective food crisis management. The CH relies on the existing food security and nutrition information systems already in place in most countries.

Capital Territory. The report also indicates that more than nine million Nigerians are expected to be in food crisis between October and December 2020 (The Guardian, 2020).

Results from Nigeria COVID-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey (conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank between 9 and 24 August) showed that about 54 percent of households have been engaged in livestock production since mid-March, with nearly 36 percent of them reporting that the pandemic had impacted their livestock activities. While a significant share of households generally sell livestock at the best of times, about 17 percent reported that the pandemic prompted them to sell. Over 67 percent of households reported that their total income decreased compared to the same period last year, and this decrease was evident across the three main sources of income: wages, agriculture, and non-farm enterprise.

### Beyond COVID-19: food crisis hot spots

The food insecurity situation in Nigeria changed significantly between 2019 and 2020 due to several factors. Based on the CH framework, in 2019, 14 states had *minimal food and nutrition situations*. In 2019, states that experienced *under pressure situations* (conflict situation) were localised in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) whereas in 2020, the states *under pressure situations* increased to six, progressing into Zamfara, Kaduna and Bauchi states. This can be attributed to increasing insurgent attacks in the northeast and armed banditry, kidnapping, and cattle herders-farmers clashes in Kaduna and Bauchi states. The BAY states had *crisis situations* in 2019 and 2020 but the crisis was more widespread in 2020. With the increasing insecurity and increasing insurgent attacks in the BAY states, some parts of Borno state are facing an increasingly grave humanitarian crisis. It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already critical food security situation in many States.

### How have the pandemic and associated measures affected agrifood systems?

COVID-19 response measures have impacted Nigeria's agrifood systems in a variety of ways, as described below.

#### Decline in availability of farm labour and mechanization

Restrictions on the movement of people between regions have reduced the availability of hired labour for farming. For example, many workers hired during the planting season in Ogun State (in southwest Nigeria) came from other states. Since the lockdowns were implemented at the start of the planting season, land preparation activities were probably severely affected by a shortage of hired labour (n.b. the real impact of the lockdown measures on land preparation has yet to be assessed).

#### Limited availability of agro-inputs

The lockdown has restricted access to agro-inputs for major staple crops, such as cassava, yam, rice, etc. For example, poultry feed millers in southern Nigeria had severely reduced access to maize, a very important input to poultry feeds that is sourced from the northern part of the country. Labour shortages further reduced the availability of maize for poultry feed production. This led to a spike in the price of maize from USD 0.23 per kg in March to USD 0.47 kg in mid-August (Berkhout, 2020). Consequently, many feed millers had to either shut down their operations or to operate below capacity. As the Chairman of Poultry Association of Nigeria (PAN), representing numerous stakeholders in the industry, including Day Old Chicks Merchants Association of Nigeria, the Livestock Industry Foundation for Africa (LIFA), and the Feed Millers Association of Nigeria, lamented in an interview, "COVID-19 lockdown has sent several farms to an early grave," adding that other farms are on the verge of collapse because they either cannot

get maize to produce feed or they cannot afford to buy finished feed for their chickens. It is against this backdrop that, on 3 September, President Muhammadu Buhari directed the release of 30 000 tonnes of maize from the national reserves to animal feed producers (Ojewale, 2020).

### Decline in investment in agribusinesses

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on agribusiness investment has yet to be properly documented or quantified. However, the delay in the commencement of the 2020 farming season, uncertainties related to the pandemic (e.g. limited knowledge about the duration of the outbreak, the effectiveness and impact of government policy measures, and the reaction of economic agents to these measures) as well as negative investor sentiments, may have caused a decline in agribusiness investments, particularly in value chain financing and long term investments, such as value chain upgrading and research and the development of agrifood technologies.

Two business surveys conducted by USAID's WATIH targeted businesses that submitted proposals for co-investment grants (USAID, 2020b). These surveys, conducted in April and August, found that 68 percent of respondents planned to continue with their planned investments; 30 percent of the respondents who made staff cuts said they laid off at least a quarter of their workforce. Eighty six percent of survey respondents reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had adversely affected their ability to sustain their operations and financial situation, with 28 percent indicating that they had partially suspended operations. One survey respondent left this comment: "We have lost many of our onion and tomato production, because the weekly farmer's markets were suspended, and we lack storage capacity."

### Decline in food exports and imports

Under rules introduced by shipping regulators, the crews of vessels entering the Nigerian waters are required to observe a mandatory 14-day quarantine before they can discharge their goods or take up fresh cargo. According to Muftau Abolarinwa, president of the Cocoa Association of Nigeria, this has stalled the shipment of cocoa at the Lagos port and delayed arrivals from farms and warehouses. The restrictions on movement of goods and border closures have created a decline in the export of crops such as cocoa, cashew and sesame; Nigeria is projected to lose over USD 160 million due to the impact (Odutola, 2020a) on these two crops alone. The pandemic has also forced Nigeria's trade partners to close their sea and air borders to non-essential traffic for a period of five months, which has disrupted global supply chains for exports and imports of essential goods and services required in the agrifood systems in Nigeria. The Cocoa Association of Nigeria noted that between 5 000 and 6 000 tonnes of cocoa beans were stuck at the Lagos port and warehouses across the country, as the lockdown disrupted transport and port activities (Odutola, 2020b).

### Reduction in food availability

Signs of the reduced availability of agricultural produce, such as rice, maize, groundnut, yam, millet, sorghum, and cassava, were evident from the third quarter of 2020 (PwC, 2020). This can be attributed to the late start of the farming season, which was caused by movement restrictions order as well as the September floods, which affected 16 states in Northern Nigeria. The flooding coincided with the harvest and virtually all of the crops that had been produced were lost.

The situation is particularly worrisome due to the depletion of the national strategic food reserves, which seems to be happening faster than the rate of replacement, due to low productive capacity. Information obtained from key informant interviews suggests that local agribusiness players could face shortages of key inputs or raw materials, such as fertilizers, and feedstock for crop and livestock production. The suspension of open-air markets has reduced in-

country and regional trade and prevented farmers from selling their produce, sometimes leading to localized food scarcity and increased prices.

Farm gate prices decreased due to market shutdowns and reduced movement by traders, especially between states. For the same reason, the price of food items in regional markets increased substantially. As a result, farmers were making lower profits by selling in local markets while urban consumers were paying higher prices because of limited supplies in regional markets. In Ogun State, a tonne of cassava which cost USD 26 before the pandemic rose to USD 99 within three months (Future Agricultures, 2020). Despite the termination of lockdown measures, commodity food prices still remain high (FAO, 2020b).

### Extreme weather events and climate change

The nation's weak and inefficient early warning system has put Nigeria in a state of unpreparedness, causing untold hardship for smallholder farmers. The Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency warned that severe flooding would affect most parts of the country throughout August and September. However, virtually nothing was done to inform and prepare rural smallholder farmers for what to expect. The situation in Kebbi – the country's biggest rice-producing state – is especially dire, as vast farmlands have been completely submerged due to the most recent rains (OCHA, 2020d).

## What have been the short-term effects of the COVID-19-related health and economic crises and associated measures on livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition, and future prospects?

### Increase in food insecurity

According to a UNDP study (UNDP, 2020d), the secondary impact of containment efforts is evident, particularly with respect to food security. Over the course of two and a half weeks of the first phase of lockdown, there was a 46 percentage points increase nationwide in the number of people experiencing deteriorating food security conditions. The study concluded that:

“Containment strategies operate within a myriad of economic, social, cultural and religious underpinnings and their effectiveness will be ultimately determined by inherent capacities to mobilise citizens to take ownership of these strategies. Connecting the science of virus containment with the unique constructs of Nigerian society will be vital not just for responding to the pandemic but also for rebuilding efforts.”

### Decline in household income and food consumption

According to another UNDP study (UNDP, 2020c), about 1.4 million individuals in three States (Lagos, Ogun and the Federal Capital Territory) experienced an abrupt drop in employment during the lockdown. Lagos and Ogun, where it is estimated that the informal sector provides about 60 percent of the work force with employment, are expected to be most strongly impacted, with the urban poor and satellite communities that depend on urban centres for their livelihoods expected to bear the brunt.

The income-generating capacity of farm labourers and other food system agents, including petty traders, small- and medium-scale food processors, was badly affected due to limited opportunities for daily labour, the closure of local markets, decline in local demand and reduced remittances. Many were unable to earn income for over four months during the lockdown. The movement restrictions have increased their risk of financial hardship and many came to depend on government or humanitarian food aid.

Results from the first three rounds of the national phone survey described above showed that a large percentage of households reported income loss, and many are still moving in and out of work. During the first round of the survey, 42 percent of job losses could be traced directly to COVID-19, with a higher percentage among the poorest people (49 percent) and urban households (48 percent), compared to the wealthiest (39 percent) and rural households (38 percent). The commerce, service and agricultural sectors were hit hardest by measures to contain the spread of the virus (The World Bank, 2020b).

Key informant interviews revealed a fall in household consumption due to restrictions on movement, which caused households to restrict their spending to essential staple food items, such as rice, maize, gari and yam, depending on geographical location. Loss of income has resulted in the adoption of negative coping mechanisms, such as consuming cheaper and less preferred foods, and reducing the size and frequency of meals (FAO, 2020c). Some of these coping strategies became obvious during the lockdown when there was a decline in the consumption of nutritious fruits and vegetables (strawberries, apples, grapes, carrot etc.) normally consumed by middle to high income households; this was because supermarket supply chains were disrupted by border closures. Higher food prices due to shortages also contributed to a decrease in household food consumption. The food and nutrition security of low-income urban households was sharply impacted by the substantial reduction in income flow due to the crisis. In addition, high prices in some urban markets caused by restrictions to the movement of traders to and from the farm gate further compounded food security concerns among low-income urban households (FAO, 2020b), (Aromolaran, *et al.*, 2020).

### Panic buying and sharp price spikes

A fall in Nigeria's export earnings due to the plummeting price of crude oil (Nigeria's pre-eminent export commodity) and increased transaction costs has strained the local currency and driven up food prices, particularly of imported foods. The federal government's pronouncement of the first phase of lockdown in Abuja, Lagos and Ogun states on 29 March came into nearly immediate effect, leaving little room for people to plan. As a result, panic buying caused the price of basic foodstuffs and other essential household items to skyrocket. In Lagos, it was reported that the price of gari (white) maize and sorghum rose between 42 and 46 percent between March and October (FAO, 2020b). These price spikes were further compounded by the flooding that affected 16 agrarian states in Northern Nigeria during September.

The Nigerian inflation rate rose to 13.71 percent (year-on-year) in September, 0.49 percent point higher than the 13.22 percent rate recorded in August 2020, as noted in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) report, released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). According to the report, Nigeria has endured persistent increases in inflation rates during 2020, growing from 12.13 percent in January to 13.71 percent in September, the highest recorded in 30 months. Food inflation, a closely watched component of the inflation index, rose by 16.66 percent in September, 0.66 percent increase compared to 16 percent recorded in the previous month, while on a month-on-month basis, the food sub-index rose by 1.88 percent compared to 1.67 percent recorded in August (Oyekanmi, 2020).

### Migration, displacement and remittances

In August, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that over 2.7 million people have been displaced due to the insurgency in the north-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, communal clashes in the north-western and north-central regions, and natural disasters (FAO, 2020d). Given the implications of COVID-19 for Nigeria's economic situation, it is anticipated that there will be an impact in migration-prone communities. In the south, to which

approximately 20 500 Nigerian migrants returned from Libya and Europe due to COVID-19, the pandemic has heightened vulnerabilities associated with reintegration into communities of origin in several states, including Edo, Delta and Lagos among others (IOM, 2020b). Most displaced households and migrants have limited income and rely on humanitarian assistance to cover their basic needs.

Many Nigerian migrants who work in countries that have been severely hit by COVID-19, such as Spain, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, saw their ability to work and thus remit funds back home significantly limited. The Economist reported that Nigeria relies on “major lockdown economies” for 54 percent of remittance incomes (Andam, et al., 2020a). An analysis by the World Bank found that diaspora remittances to Nigeria will drop by 20 percent in 2020 (Anaeto, 2020). Second quarter data from the CBN shows that Nigeria recorded the level of lowest remittances from abroad since 2008. Apart from helping to stabilize the exchange rate, remittances are a critical cushion for millions of families in Nigeria. Remittances also help many Nigerians meet their normal health needs

### Which groups are most likely to be severely impacted by COVID-19 and associated measures?

- Labourers, mainly women and young girls in rural areas, and migrant workers in agricultural value chains have been severely impacted by the crisis. Most are engaged in low-income value chain activities that were stalled during the lockdown and the government measures led to lost wages, lost livelihoods and jobs. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conducted a survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on female-owned businesses in Nigeria, which found that 61 percent of respondents were unaware of government interventions for small businesses such as the issuance of a three-month repayment moratorium for all government funded loans issued by the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export Import Bank (TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni loans). Knowledge of these interventions was affected by location, affiliation with groups and associations, access to information, and the internet. Most respondents in Lagos, Ogun, Kwara, Kano, and Ondo were aware of the interventions, with significantly less knowledge across the other states. Lack of awareness prevented 39 percent of respondents from taking advantage of opportunities to them (UNFPA, 2020).
- There is a growing concern about the impact that COVID-19 is having on the so-called ‘almajiris’: marginalized young children of school age who roam the streets in a quest for survival.<sup>5</sup> During the early days of the pandemic, hundreds of Almajiri children were returned to their states of origin in a bid to flatten the spread of the Coronavirus. Many tested positive to COVID-19. For example, among the 169 tested in Kaduna, 65 were positive, as were 91 of the 168 tested in Jigawa, in Gombe, eight of the 48 children tested had the virus. In Bauchi, the number was seven out of 38 (BBC, 2020b).
- The impact of COVID-19 will be felt most keenly in already vulnerable communities (internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities), particularly in fragile conflict-affected areas of the northeast and the middle belt region, which is currently experiencing a major conflict between poor and hungry herders and farmers. People in less accessible areas, who are cut off from markets and humanitarian assistance, face major food consumption gaps. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network,

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<sup>5</sup> The word ‘Almajiri’ is derived from the Arabic ‘Al muhajirun’, an emigrant. It usually refers to a person who migrates from his home to a popular teacher in the quest for Islamic knowledge.

displaced persons camps in inaccessible areas near the Lake Chad basin have very limited access to food and income and are likely to experience an emergency (IPC Phase 4) (FEWS NET, 2020).

### Rise in gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) has been a crisis in Nigeria for a long time. The lockdown seems to have exacerbated the situation. Between March and June, 299 cases of violence against women and girls were documented across seven states; 51 of these were sexual violence cases involving minors between the ages of 3 and 16 (Action Aid, 2020). With the restriction of movement, couples were compelled to stay at home together for weeks, creating additional tensions and sometimes leading to frustration and aggression (SOAS, 2020). Data on reported incidents of GBV cases in Nigeria based on preliminary information from 24 states showed that, while in March there were 346 reported incidents, in the first part of April reports spiked to 794, depicting a 56 per cent increase in just two weeks of lockdown (UN Nigeria, 2020). The United Nations Women described the increase in GBV due to COVID-19 as a 'shadow pandemic.' There was also been an alarming increase in reported cases of rape and killings of women and girls during this period.

## FOOD FOR REFLECTION: LONG-TERM POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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### Structural factors exacerbating the impacts of COVID-19 and obstructing the agrifood sector

The Nigerian agricultural sector is the key to the country's drive for economic diversification. The sector has grown consistently at an average of 2.6 percent over the past three years. As of the first quarter of 2020, agriculture accounted for about 22 percent of the Nigerian GDP compared to trade at 16.1 percent, oil and gas at 9.5 percent, manufacturing at 9.7 percent and financial services at 3.8 percent (PwC, 2020). The agricultural sector is the largest employer in the country, providing jobs for more than one-third (36.4 percent) of the Nigerian labour force.

A number of structural factors have a strong potential for exacerbating the impact of the pandemic on food security, nutrition and the management of the food system. These factors require short- and long-term policy measures and responses from all stakeholders. The following sections describe some of the structural factors that require particular consideration.

### Escalating levels of conflict and increase in violent extremism

Conflicts arising from armed banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and communal tension in the north-western and north-central states are driving increases in fatalities and displacement, and further constraining livelihood activities. Recent attacks by Boko Haram and military operations across the northeast continue to hinder agropastoral and seasonal livelihood activities, including blocking access to fields by smallholder farmers.

Violent extremist groups often use disasters – natural or manmade – to enhance their recruitment through propaganda aimed at marginalized portions of the population (UNDP 2020e). They also exploit security vacuums that are created as the government diverts its attention to containing the outbreak or as the various entities of the security infrastructure are themselves affected by outbreaks. If pandemic-related domestic priorities force governments to dilute their security presence in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region, given the nature of porous borders among the LCB countries, it could lead to a massive security vacuum in the region.

A recent report on how the pandemic could hinder efforts to address climate change shocks and violent extremism in Lake Chad holds that the crisis will have serious spill over effects in the region

(NRI, 2020). While the eventual scale of the pandemic remains unknown, the social, economic and political impacts to date indicate that the pandemic is bound to trigger formidable challenges and could slow down the fight against insurgency. The pandemic will compound geopolitical tensions and pose a real risk to achieving Nigeria's sustainable development targets on public health, climate actions and peacebuilding.

Already, security resources are being diverted to provide healthcare facilities, food, water and medicines in states with very high numbers of coronavirus cases (NRI, 2020). The armed forces are being called on to transfer COVID-19 patients to hospitals and quarantine centres, enforce social distancing (particularly in overcrowded urban slums) and business lockdown measures, protect government and community food storage facilities from terrorist attacks, and support mass burial activities.

There is a high risk that military personnel in the LCB region will be reduced. Limited resources will undermine the capacity of regional governments to provide support such as ammunitions, equipment and funding for soldiers who remain in the battlefield. At the same time, military personnel will find themselves squeezed on all fronts: their working conditions could facilitate the spread of COVID-19 and, if they become infected and are quarantined, they will be unavailable to curtail attacks from insurgent groups.

### Weak early warning systems and lack of preparedness

The lack of preparedness increased the impact of floods in 2020. Substantial populations in Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, Kaduna, Benue, Niger, Katsina, Zamafara, Kebbi and Sokoto states are at either a Stress (IPC Phase 2) or Crisis (IPC Phase 3) stage. Some farmers have lost their entire harvest for the year and many people have been displaced. Most of the states affected by flooding are already food crisis hotspots and the harvests that were expected to help cushion the effects of COVID-19 have been lost. The implication is that the recovery process will be longer as well as more challenging.

### Weak economic diversification

Nigeria's wellbeing relies on oil and gas. Export revenues from agriculture and manufacturing must be increased to lessen the country's dependence on oil. Nigeria has a comparative advantage in a huge array of agricultural products, ranging from cocoa, cashews, maize and sesame to leather and cement. Giving the continuing restrictions on travel and the shipment of goods from Nigeria to Europe, the country is taking conscious efforts to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). With increased interest in continental Africa trade, Nigeria has great prospects for facilitating access to market for goods and services with the free movement of people and capital across continental Africa.

### High youth unemployment

Nigeria's unemployment rate, which was 23.1 percent (or 20.9 million people) at the end of 2018, is expected to rise to 33.6 percent (or 39.4 million people) at the end of 2020, if urgent steps are not taken (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020). About 60 percent of the 200 million population are young people, of which 55.4 percent are unemployed/underemployed (Garba, 2020). The Government of Nigeria has identified agriculture as a sector with high potential for employment generation, food production and poverty reduction (FAO, 2020e). Agribusiness and agricultural programmes have considerable potential to help young people to transform subsistence agriculture into business opportunities that support food security and rural development. Motivating the interest and capacities of young entrepreneurs with investments, attractive policies and government support of private small enterprises will drive the sector.

The Nigeria Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP) has been developed as a 12-month transition plan that will take effect when the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) ends in 2020. The objectives of the new plan are to:

- stimulate the economy by preventing business collapse and ensuring liquidity;
- retain or create jobs using labour-intensive methods in key areas like agriculture, facility maintenance, and housing;
- undertake growth-enhancing and job-creating infrastructural investment in roads, bridges, solar power, and communications technologies;
- promote manufacturing and local production at all levels and advocate the use of 'made in Nigeria' goods and services to create job opportunities, achieve self-sufficiency in critical sectors of the economy and curb unnecessary demand for foreign exchange, which might put pressure on the exchange rate; and
- extend protection to the very poor and other vulnerable groups – including women and persons living with disabilities – through pro-poor spending.

Achieving these objectives will require a mix of project and policy approaches that focus on the creation of jobs across the fields of agriculture, agroprocessing and food systems in general. The aim is to safeguard existing micro-, small- and medium-size businesses while ramping up local productive capacity by encouraging opportunities for innovation in the various sectors. The NESP offers ample, targeted and focused opportunities for the humanitarian and development community to support the Government of Nigeria.

### **How can the humanitarian and development community assist with building better food systems in the medium-term?**

#### **De-escalate rising levels of conflict and violent extremism in Nigeria**

The humanitarian and development community should aim to strengthen local capacity for reconciliation and social cohesion in a select number of affected communities in the northeast.

#### **Enhance weak early warning system and lack of preparedness capacity**

The humanitarian and development community should support early recovery and resilience to shocks through asset creation and preservation, increased livelihood opportunities and enhanced agricultural value chains. Food insecurity will persist if adequate food and livelihoods assistance is not sustained while the situation remains fragile. Such challenges call for an urgent action and the Humanitarian Response Plan has already identified food security and nutrition as priority areas for Nigeria.

#### **Strengthen economic diversification**

The humanitarian and development community should strengthen the capacity of federal, state and local actors in promoting economic diversification in Nigeria by prioritising sectors with high growth potential that can create new employment opportunities and increased incomes, as well as support the management of food security and nutrition programmes in line with national targets set out in the ESP for the short-, medium- and long-term. Such efforts should prioritize rural areas, locations with pockets of severe food insecurity and people in refugee camps using vulnerability-based targeting approaches that integrate gender analyses. The overall aim is to achieve the transition from direct relief assistance

### Reduce high youth unemployment

Emergency assistance should be complemented by vocational training and the use of cash grants targeting women and adolescent girls and boys who are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity in order.

### Support the transition from emergency stabilization to building resilience.

The PTF COVID-19 Response Plan was designed to cover a two-year period from 2020-2022. During this period it will be critical to support the federal government's efforts to develop strategies, systems, frameworks and initiatives that will ensure a seamless transition from a crisis response to resilience building.

## INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

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### What are some recent government initiatives with relevance for agrifood systems?

As noted previously, the PTF COVID-19 works with government actors, including the Joint Technical Task Team of the Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to coordinate and oversee Nigeria's multi-sectoral inter-governmental efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The PTF has no specific mandate for agrifood systems in Nigeria. However, the ESP has three core objectives relevant to agrifood systems:

- restoring growth through macroeconomic stability and economic diversification in the key sectors driving and enabling economic growth, with a particular focus on agriculture;
- increasing social inclusion, creating jobs and empowering young people, with a focus on value chain development;
- building a globally competitive economy by investing in infrastructure, improving the business environment and promoting digital-led growth.

The *Food For All: Agriculture and Food Security* component of the NESP aims to:

- expand production and output by working closely with the private sector to address issues along the value chain, including production, harvesting, storage, transport, processing and marketing;
- explore financing options so that smallholder farmers can access interest-free credit with a small administrative charge;
- involve farmers and agricultural cooperatives in efforts to increase agricultural labour capacity nationally;
- partner with the private sector on strategies to increase yield, including throughout grower schemes and knowledge transfer protocols and providing greater access to energy for production and refrigeration;
- guarantee markets and mitigate postharvest losses through a combination of private sector off-takers, commodity exchanges, government buy-back schemes and strategic reserve purchases.

### What are the implications of the crisis and related policies for ongoing conflict and social tension?

The lockdown measures disrupted peacebuilding efforts by humanitarian and security actors, especially in fragile environments such as the north-east and north-central regions. Community level peace building, social protection and early recovery measures in the north-east play a central role in rebuilding social bonds, reintegrating former combatants and restoring community livelihoods. The spread of COVID-19 into communities and the restrictive measures used to contain the crisis disrupted these interventions. However, there is no clear evidence that a relapse into violence is likely. Nevertheless, a complete lockdown in a conflict setting where social bonds are weak, has resulted in civic unrest and exacerbated community conflicts. This may have also exacerbated the transmission of the virus.

### Does the Government of Nigeria have the administrative and governance capacities needed to implement new policies and programmes and enforce restrictions?

Insights from discussions held with government officials and development partners underline that that it is not a yes or no answer whether the government is equipped with the administrative and governance capacities to implement new policies and programmes or enforce restrictions. It's about what is the kind of policy, what capacity is on ground and what is the gap between what is needed and what is available. In other words, there has to be a balance between what the government wants to achieve and what capacity is on ground to do it.

Several development partners and stakeholders in Nigeria believe that the institutional frameworks for responding to COVID-19 exists but administrative bottlenecks, centralized decision-making and inconsistencies as to roles and responsibilities are slowing progress. In addition, communications between ministries, departments and agencies (MDA) are poor. The challenges cross sectors, so the responses also need to be multisectoral and effective coordination is necessary to ensure proper implementation and impact.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed flaws in the response of the government to healthcare and social security. Nigeria is not unique in this, yet its reliance on oil exports to fund government expenditures made the country particularly vulnerable following the collapse in oil prices. A small silver lining is to be found in the belief that the oil price crash will act as a catalyst for increased investments and support to the agrifood system.

### What efforts have been made to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on agrifood systems?

Several UN agencies and international organizations and beyond are contributing to national efforts to collect country data on the impacts of COVID-19 on food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, and the policy and other responses from governments and stakeholders. This section highlights various assessments that have been conducted by development and humanitarian agencies as part of efforts to document and exchange this information. This list does not include assessments on the impact of COVID-19 on non-agricultural sectors, such as health, water sanitation and hygiene and education amongst others.

#### FAO

FAO leads a project on strengthening the use of data in Nigeria to track the Sustainable Development Goals and support decision-making and coordination in response to COVID-19. FAO is also jointly leading the socio-economic pillar of the United Nations response to COVID-19, alongside the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). FAO offers critical policy advice to enable governments at the federal and state levels to respond to the socio-economic shocks of the pandemic on agriculture and food systems (FAO, 2020f).

## UNDP

UNDP has reoriented its programmes to the emerging needs and priorities arising from COVID-19. Several projects have been redesigned – with the agreement of their donors – to integrate community mobilization, information-sharing and support for COVID-19 responses. Redesigned projects include the Human Security Trust Fund and the Peace Building Trust Fund in Nasarawa and Benue state. UNDP conducted series of rapid socio-economic assessments and published three policy briefs:

- *The COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria: potential impact on the north-east;*
- *The COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria: potential impact of lockdown policies on poverty and well-being; and*
- *The COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria: Citizen perceptions and the secondary impacts of COVID-19.*

## WFP

The Ministry of Agriculture in the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) requested WFP to provide technical support for an emergency food security assessment. The assessment concluded that the ministry should increase the target number of beneficiaries in the urban and peri-urban locations of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where there are large populations of vulnerable people dwelling in the slum areas.

WFP is using the mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM) approach to gather data on household food consumption, coping and market conditions, including availability, prices, activity levels, and challenges. Data has also been collected for food security outcome monitoring. WFP is conducting a vulnerability and essential needs assessment throughout the country to gain an understanding of the impact of the pandemic. In the coming weeks, it plans to undertake a Cadre Harmonisé Analysis, the results of which will inform a review of the WFP portfolio in Nigeria and any adjustments that may be required.

## IFPRI

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) conducted a study on the costs of COVID-19 in Nigeria under its strategy support programme. The study looked at the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies adopted to curtail the spread of the disease. It focused on the federal lockdown the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja and Lagos and Ogun states from late March to early May; the federal lockdown in Kano from mid-April; and the state lockdowns that were implemented from mid-April for around seven weeks in Akwa Ibom, Borno, Ekiti, Kwara, Osun, Rivers, and Taraba states (Andam *et al.*, 2020b).

## The World Bank and the National Bureau of Statistics

The COVID-19 NLPS was carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics with technical support from the World Bank to track and monitor household welfare and behaviour a period of 12 months. The survey follows a representative sample of Nigerian households to assess how key indicators that may underpin policy response are changing over time. So far, four rounds of household surveys have been conducted: Round 1 in May; Round 2 in June; Round 3 in July; and Round 4 in August.

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The **Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme (FIRST)** is a strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and FAO. Through a network of policy officers embedded in government bodies, it works hand in hand with over 22 countries on setting the right conditions to promote both public and private investments in sustainable agriculture and creating an enabling environment for these investments to contribute to achieving food security and nutrition.

Launched by the European Union, FAO and the World Food Programme at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the **Global Network against Food Crises** is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors united by the commitment to tackle the root causes of food crises and promote sustainable solutions to eradicate hunger and malnutrition through leveraging analysis and knowledge sharing, strengthened coordination in supporting evidence-based policy responses and collective efforts across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus.

A joint effort between FIRST with the Global Network has produced assessments on policy responses related to COVID-19 and their impact on agrifood systems in 13 countries. In particular, FIRST brought policy analysis capacities to support the programming priorities of FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) and the Global Network in these countries; FAO's OER and the Global Network provided quantitative assessments of the impacts of the pandemic on food security and nutrition.

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