



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



©FAO/Luis Tato



to assist over

**48.9 million people**



FAO requires

**USD 1.1 billion**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided critical livelihood support to safeguard the livelihoods of over 24 million people against the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

## FAO in the 2021 humanitarian appeals

Levels of acute hunger soared throughout 2020 and the impacts are likely to be felt throughout 2021 and beyond without urgent and scaled up action.

Country after country has recorded shocking new figures and, globally, the total number of people who experienced acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels in 2020 is expected to far exceed 2019's high of 135 million people.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has been a further push factor in 2020, adding to the effects of conflict, flooding, dry spells, desert locusts and pre-existing economic crises.

Of extreme concern are the estimated 30 million people in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 4 or Emergency levels of acute hunger, who are already experiencing excess mortality and irreversible stripping of vital livelihood assets. Millions are on the precipice – one stress or shock away from a rapid deterioration. With or without famine declarations, people are already dying of hunger. Hundreds of thousands of girls, boys, women and men are at extreme risk in at least four countries; most in conflict zones where humanitarian access is restricted or challenging.

**Nearly four out of five people live in rural areas and rely on some form of agricultural production for their livelihoods.** The most severe manifestation of acute hunger remains a largely rural phenomenon; averting famine must therefore begin in rural areas and include large-scale and collective action to save livelihoods, and therefore, lives. With support, they have the means and the capacity to produce the food needed to stave off acute hunger.

**FAO's decades-long presence and experience** in providing emergency livelihoods assistance as well as its strong local partner networks in even the most difficult-to-access and conflict-affected rural areas means it is



©FAO/Luis Tello

well positioned to facilitate large-scale livelihoods operations that target the most vulnerable and at-risk communities. Livelihoods-safeguarding interventions not only enable people to rapidly produce nutritious food but are cost-effective and can lay the foundations for recovery in the future, protecting people from the worst effects of the next crisis. In addition, they preserve human dignity and enable people to remain on their land and continue producing when it is safe to do so.

The shocks of 2020 will reverberate long into 2021. Fighting rising acute hunger with the same solutions will simply lead to the same results – safeguarding the majority from immediate risk but employing huge resources and providing them no means for recovery or self-reliance. Support to agriculture-based livelihoods cannot be an afterthought – livelihoods assistance is life-saving and must be at the core of efforts targeting rural populations. Livelihoods assistance, especially when provided together with cash (cash+), helps people immediately access the food they need, produce more and better food for their families and communities, gain an income from selling a surplus, and protect themselves from the next shock. Even in active conflicts, where farmers have no option but to keep farming, fishers to keep fishing and herders to keep caring for their animals as best they can, emergency agriculture support distributed just once can mean a family feeds itself for months.

Recognizing that close monitoring and agility are crucial tools in preventing rapid deteriorations, in 2021, FAO will continue to expand its anticipatory action linked to early warnings to protect livelihoods before a disaster.

We will continue investing in the most vulnerable people and their livelihoods so that they can lead their future recovery and pull themselves out of acute hunger.

Desert locust control operations in the Greater Horn of Africa and Yemen protected over 3.1 million tonnes of cereal, valued at USD 939 million and sufficient to feed more than 20.8 million people for one year and protect more than 1.5 million pastoral households.

## Contact

Office of Emergencies and Resilience  
OER-Director@fao.org  
fao.org/emergencies  
Rome, Italy

Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



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