Agrifood systems and COVID-19

Analysis of policy responses in countries with food crisis situations (2020-2021)
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Authors: Jafari, Areej and Stamoulis, Kostas

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 2022
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the result of a partnership between the Food and nutrition security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) Programme and the Global Network against Food Crises. It has benefitted from extensive collaboration across many FAO teams and country offices, and would not have been possible without the support, expertise and dedication of many individuals.

It was prepared by Areej Jafari and Kostas Stamoulis, who reviewed, analysed and built on over 15 country profiles assessing the potential effects of COVID-19 related policies on agrifood. These national reports were developed by consultants in close collaboration with the FAO Representations in each country.


Both the country profiles and this cross-country analysis have benefitted from extensive support and technical inputs from numerous individuals. In this regard, the authors would like to specifically mention Aurelien Mellin, Immaculate Atieno, Lavinia Antonaci, Karel Callens, Stefania di Giuseppe, Marco Knowles, Juan Carlos García Cebolla, Solal Lehec, Luca Russo, Ricardo Suppo, Máximo Torero, Sophie Tadria, and the FAO Statistics Division especially, Carlo Caiiero, Sara Viviani, Anne Kepple, José Rosero Moncayo and Juan Feng.

The authors would also like to express their gratitude to Ruth Raymond for editing and Rachele Santini and Carlos Laorden for designing and formatting this report. Additional thanks to Egle de Angelis, Emilie Chazelle, Francesco de Lieto Vollaro, Alessia de Stefani, Pedro Ferreira, Paola Landolfi and Sarah Wright for logistics and operational support.

Finally, the authors would like to thank the European Union – and its delegations in the relevant countries – for its essential and active role in the FIRST partnership and its support to this exercise, as well as for its continued financial support to both FIRST and the Global Network against Food Crises.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYMS</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFN</td>
<td>Afghan afghanis (currency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEMAC</td>
<td>Central African Economic and Monetary Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEPI</td>
<td>Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Cadre Harmonisé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Colombian pesos (currency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSN</td>
<td>Food Security and Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAVI</td>
<td>Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRFC</td>
<td>Global Report on Food Crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDP</td>
<td>Humanitarian, development and peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRP</td>
<td>Humanitarian response plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally displaced persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFPRI</td>
<td>International Food Policy Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPC</td>
<td>Integrated food security Phase Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDCs</td>
<td>Least developed countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSMEs</td>
<td>Micro-, small and medium enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small and medium enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSDCF</td>
<td>United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States dollars (currency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAT</td>
<td>Value-added tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY MESSAGES

• In countries in food crisis, restrictions to contain the spread of COVID-19 affected agrifood systems on both the demand and supply sides.

• The agrifood sector was protected by exemption policies and facilitation measures, which made it easier for the sector to adjust and operate to pandemic restrictions and non-COVID related shocks.

• COVID-19 increased the vulnerability of people whose livelihoods were already endangered by accumulated shocks. Government and humanitarian support have expanded existing programmes or established new initiatives to target vulnerabilities created by COVID-19.

• Governments have put mechanisms in place to facilitate coordination among branches of government and, in some cases, have delegated decisions on COVID-19-related programme design and implementation to subnational entities, not all of which are equal to the task.

• The implementation of measures to support agrifood sectors and vulnerable groups is uneven. Countries lack data and adequate resources to implement effective programmes.

• The impact of COVID-19 is difficult to disentangle from the effect of other crises and stresses in countries in food crisis, however, our analysis indicates that food insecurity has increased during the pandemic. Agricultural production seems to be resilient to the crisis due to targeted support measures.

• Despite the relaxation of restrictions, the pandemic continues to have a negative impact on people’s livelihoods. Negative coping mechanisms hinder a rapid recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

• Stakeholders agree that the pandemic presents an opportunity for rethinking the transformation of agrifood systems. However, very few countries have formulated concrete proposals, partly due to continuing successive waves of the pandemic.

• The very few countries that have finalized COVID-19 recovery plans have neither set investment priorities nor taken a systems approach. Most plans also lack sufficient focus on gender and healthy diets.
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

According to the Global Report on Food Crises 2021 (FSIN, 2021), the 55 countries and territories covered by the report suffered a “remarkably high” severity of acute food insecurity. This magnitude of acute food insecurity, which is the largest since the report started monitoring the situation five years ago, is the result of persistent conflict, economic shocks, weather extremes and the COVID-19 crisis. According to the report some 155.3 million people experienced a crisis or worse situation (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) \(^1\) in 2020.

The food security situation has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the restrictive measures undertaken by governments to contain its spread. The disruptions in economic activity associated with measures to control the pandemic have caused economic slowdowns and downturns, further intensifying the fragility of peoples’ livelihoods. Therefore “traditional” or “pre-existing vulnerable groups” have been particularly hard hit.

The GRFC reported widening inequalities and exposed structural vulnerabilities in local and global agrifood systems, which particularly affect the most economically vulnerable households. These challenges accompany the frequent threat of weather extremes, which result in crop and livestock losses, destroy homes and infrastructures, and displace people. Such shocks – especially when persistent or recurrent – drive millions of people to lose their livelihoods and severely reduce their access to adequate food.

While it is extremely difficult to separate the effects of COVID-19 and related restrictions on agrifood systems from those of other shocks, the aforementioned report indicates that there is strong evidence of significant deterioration in food security as a result of the pandemic in the countries covered in the report. The global recession sparked by the pandemic has substantially contributed to the deterioration of the social and economic conditions in countries in food crisis.

This report provides a comprehensive, cross-country analysis based on individual country profiles for 15 countries in food crisis.\(^2\) Each profile describes the policy measures enacted by governments, development and humanitarian partners to contain the virus, including measures taken to protect the functioning of agrifood systems from major disruptions. The profiles assess the effects of such measures on agrifood systems and vulnerable groups, including long-term implications and the investments necessary to make agrifood systems more resilient in future. The report is structured around key messages and findings that are generally valid across the profiles. Examples are used to illustrate some of the policy measures, their impacts and lessons learned.

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\(^1\) The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a standardized scale that integrates food security, nutrition and livelihood information to determine the nature and severity of a food crisis. The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) is a tool that helps to produce rigorous, and transparent analyses of current and projected food and nutrition situations. CH and IPC partners work closely to harmonize their tools and analyses. Based on the IPC scale, Phase 3 denotes an acute food and livelihoods crisis.

\(^2\) Profiles were prepared for the following countries: Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Iraq, the Sudan, Zimbabwe, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ethiopia, Colombia, Mali, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, and Honduras. Updated profiles were made for seven countries (Nigeria, Somalia, the Central African Republic, the Sudan, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Mali) for which the information needed updating. Those seven profiles were prepared earlier in the process and they did not capture policy responses related to the successive waves of the virus.
Important characteristics of countries in food crisis covered in this report

All 15 countries covered in this report are countries in food crisis as defined by the Global Report on Food Crises (GFRC) 2021 (See Box 1). Ten are considered to be in protracted crisis according to the definition of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS): Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Table 1 and 2 provide a snapshot of some characteristics of the countries included in the cross-country analysis. The tables describe the underlying drivers of food insecurity in the 13 countries for which data are available.

- Almost all countries were affected to varying degrees by all main drivers of food crises listed in the table during the period in which the pandemic hit.5
- In 12 of the 13 countries, conflict and insecurity are considered a driver and in seven of these, conflict and insecurity are considered a primary driver.
- Conflicts and insecurity are internal rather than inter-country and, in most cases, affect parts of the countries. Some border tensions are also present. However, in five countries, conflict, communal violence or social unrest are widespread.

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3 Acute food insecurity data were not available for Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Therefore, those countries were not covered in the GFRC 2021.

4 A country is considered to be in protracted crisis if it meets three conditions: the share of humanitarian assistance is over ten percent of total overseas development assistance; the country is among the low-income food-deficit countries as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the country was in crisis and required food assistance for four consecutive years (2016-2019; 2020) or eight out of the ten previous years (e.g., 2010-2019; 2020).

5 The exception is conflict in Zimbabwe.
A combination of pre-existing economic shocks and the COVID-19 related recession is driving food crises in 12 out of 13 countries, albeit with differing degrees of importance (with COVID-19 being mainly a secondary driver). The pandemic hit some countries while they were undergoing adjustments, including devaluations, budget restrictions and political reforms. Depending on the timing of these economic adjustments, countries experienced high rates of inflation (such as occurred in the Sudan, Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Ethiopia).

All countries experienced climate extremes of various degrees (floods, droughts, flash floods, river flooding, etc.) although, in most cases, these events were localized.

### TABLE 1 | Main food crisis drivers, characteristics and localization of conflict or insecurity and displacement numbers by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Main food crisis drivers</th>
<th>Conflict/insecurity</th>
<th>Displacement</th>
<th>Internally displaced persons (IDPs)</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Conflict and insecurity - widespread</td>
<td>2,900,000 72,000 Pakistani refugees and asylum seekers (in Khost and Paktika provinces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central African Republic</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Conflict and insecurity from January to September 2020, in Bangui, Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoran), Kaga-Bandoro (Nana-Grébizi), Bria (Haute-Kotto), Bambari (Ouaka), Batangafo (Ouham), Grimari (Ouaka), Birao (Vakaga) and Bangassou (Mbomou); end of 2020, violence in the north-west and centre and insecurity in the eastern regions</td>
<td>680,000 9,000 refugees and asylum seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia*</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Insecurity, armed conflict, and inter-community tensions in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri,</td>
<td>5,500,000, (2,900,000 newly displaced in 2020) 490,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Main food crisis drivers</th>
<th>Conflict/insecurity</th>
<th>Displacement</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secondary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tertiary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main characteristics and localization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Internally displaced persons (IDPs)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Desert locusts and other pests</td>
<td>Insecurity and conflict in some areas of Addis Ababa, SNNPR, Oromia, Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz; recent conflict in Tigray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Insecurity and social unrest - widespread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Violence and crime - widespread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Economic shocks, weather extremes, including COVID-19</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>Lingering effects of prolonged widespread conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Economic shocks, weather extremes, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Conflict, including intercommunal conflict, violence, and crime in the northern, central and Liptako-Gourma areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (16 states and Federal Capital Territory)</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Conflict in the three northeastern states; violence, banditry and intercommunal conflict in north-western and northcentral states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Desert locusts, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Conflict and insecurity - widespread</td>
<td>2,700,000, 1,300,000 of them newly displaced in 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Conflict and intercommunal violence - widespread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Main food crisis drivers</th>
<th>Conflict/insecurity</th>
<th>Displacement</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sudan</td>
<td>Economic shocks, including COVID-19</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Conflict or insecurity</td>
<td>Conflicts in Kassala, Red Sea states and across Darfur; violence in Darfur area, South Kordofan, Kassala and Gezira states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) *</td>
<td>Economic shocks (including COVID-19)</td>
<td>Weather extremes</td>
<td>Agricultural pests and diseases</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source: Information elaborated by authors based on FSIN, 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information not available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agroclimatic conditions</th>
<th>Main characteristics, 2020-2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Flooding, flash floods, and lingering effects of past drought; water stress in early 2021 and water deficits persisting locally (southern and western regions), as well as delayed cultivation due to continued precipitation in certain areas, e.g., Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central African Republic</td>
<td>Rainfall deficits and floods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia*</td>
<td>Flooding (South Kivu, Haut Lomami, Tanganyika and Haut Katanga, North Kivu and Kongo Central).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>Drought, flooding, flash floods and landslides, causing large scale displacement (600 000 people), localized crop losses and reduced pasture and water availability; below-average rainfall in March–May 2021.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Below-average rainfall and drought for second consecutive year; tropical storms and localized heavy rainfall and floods with related crop and livestock losses; favorable rains in March 2021 but poor access to agricultural seeds due to poor harvests in previous agricultural seasons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Prolonged drought and related wildfires, scarcity of potable water and reduced crop production; hurricanes and related home and infrastructure damage; contaminated water, increased food safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2 | Agroclimatic conditions by country
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agroclimatic conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main characteristics, 2020-2021</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Below-average rainfall, high temperatures and drought, leading to reduced surface water inflows into country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Flooding in the regions of Menaka, Ségou, Gao, Bamako and Timbuktu and related losses of homes, assets, livestock, food stocks and crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (16 states and Federal Capital Territory - FCT)</td>
<td>Torrential rainfall, river floods and flash floods and related crop losses and production shortfalls in Kebbi, Jigawa, Niger, Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano States and the FCT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Severe flash flooding and river overflows, causing significant crop losses, destruction of property and displacement; dry spells and related crop losses, water scarcity and pasture shortages, as well as decreased agricultural employment opportunities and income; tropical cyclones, floods, livestock losses, destruction of property, and damage to critical infrastructure, and shipping and fishing equipment; below-average rainfall during the 2021 Gu (April–June) season across most of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>Abnormally heavy rainfall and related flooding for the second consecutive year weakened infrastructure and eroded livelihoods and led to significant crop losses in the worst affected areas including Jonglei, Pibor, Lakes and Unity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sudan</td>
<td>Heavy rains and overflow of the River Nile led to the worst flooding in more than three decades, affecting 17 out of 18 states, with production losses estimated at over 1 million tonnes in rainfed areas; more than 108 000 heads of livestock were lost, mainly in North Darfur, Blue Nile and Sennar states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)*</td>
<td>Early end of rains in southern regions and several dry spells, which reduced food availability and income opportunities; floods and related crop losses in February-March 2020; a water crisis also severely affected livelihoods and drought-induced livestock losses; in 2021, tropical cyclones, related damage to essential infrastructures and risk of excessive rainfall, flooding in riverine areas, crop destruction and extensive damage to infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Information elaborated by authors based on FSIN, 2021

*Information not available.
Selected food security and nutrition indicators for countries in food crisis

In this section, we compare selected food security and nutrition indicators in the countries in food crisis covered by this report with those in least developed countries (LDCs) more generally. In general, countries in food crisis fare better on all indicators also because the group includes some large, middle-income countries (such as Nigeria, Iraq and Colombia).

The differences in the prevalence of undernourishment shown in Figure 2. While the prevalence of undernourishment is lower in countries in food crisis than in the LDCs for almost all years, the differences are rather small, ranging from 2.6 percentage points to -2.6 (for one year). The average difference is 1.33 percentage points (or 6 percent). What is most notable, though, is the much stronger deterioration in 2020 in the group of crisis countries, compared to the broader group of LDCs, which has led to an inversion of the ranking for the two groups in terms of the average prevalence of undernourishment.

FIGURE 1 | Prevalence of undernourishment

![Prevalence of undernourishment](source)

Source: FAO, 2021a. For a definition of prevalence of undernourishment, see FAO et al., 2021.

The group of analysed countries in food crisis differs from the group of Least Developed Countries also in terms of the average prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). This indicator goes beyond hunger and includes people who face uncertainties about their ability to obtain food and have been forced to compromise on the quality or quantity of food they consume. With this indicator, which points to access to food, countries in food crises show a higher prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity than the LDCs since year 2016, together with an acceleration of the worsening between 2019 and 2020.

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6 Economic performance (GDP growth) for the individual countries with food crises covered in this report can be found in Table 3.
A similar case holds for stunting rates (see Figure 3). Stunting rates are high but declining in both groups of countries. The differences between the two groups of countries are small and narrowing over time. For the 11-year period from 2010 to 2020, the average difference was 2.4 percentage points or 6.38 percent with the trend difference narrowing towards the end of the period.
Adult obesity is increasing in the countries covered in this report as well as in the LDCs (see Figure 4). Rates of adult obesity in countries in food crisis rose from 10.3 percent in 2010 to 12.3 percent in 2016 (the last year for which data on adult obesity can be found) for an increase of 19 percent for the seven-year period. Obesity in the countries in food crisis is significantly higher than in the least developed countries (with an average of 11.3 percent versus 5.2 percent for the seven-year period).

**FIGURE 4 | Adult obesity**

There are a number of possible explanations for the above results:

- Several of the countries in this cross-country analysis belong to the LDC group as well (Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan). Many of the LDCs that are not included in this analysis are facing their own crises, mainly conflict. Therefore, the closeness of social metrics, such as undernourishment and stunting between the LDC and the food crisis group, is not surprising.
- Data on national income do not necessarily tightly correlate with child nutrition, with other factors playing a role (e.g., women’s education, nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, etc.).
- The nature of the crises in many countries is regional and does not affect the whole country; therefore, overall growth may not be severely impacted.

**Vaccine inequality and the process of recovery**

The global delay in vaccine production and the unequal distribution of the vaccines between north and south, combined with the emergence of new COVID-19 variants, has forced many governments to reimpose restrictive measures to contain the spread of the virus. Such actions further delay economic recovery in low-income countries and widen inequalities, both within countries and between the global north and south. New COVID-19 variants are even affecting countries that have successfully contained the pandemic, e.g., Thailand, Viet Nam, and Bangladesh. All countries examined in this report rely to various degrees on the International
COVAX Initiative for access to the vaccines. However, the rate of vaccinations is extremely slow and access to vaccines is still highly uncertain as are the criteria for setting vaccination priorities (except for front line health personnel).

Many of the countries examined for this report lack the capacity to accurately monitor COVID-19 due to lack of health care facilities, testing equipment and trained health professionals. Therefore, infections, morbidity and mortality due to the virus are most likely under-reported. Testing and monitoring are also not neutral. The very poor, especially in remote areas, lack appropriate information and the means to access testing centres. Women have less access than men to health services.

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7 COVAX is the vaccine pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, a partnership launched in 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the French government, and the European Commission. It was created to ensure equitable and fair access to a diverse portfolio of COVID-19 vaccines, with a particular focus on scaling up development, manufacturing, and shipping capabilities in all participating countries. It is directed by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, or GAVI), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and the World Health Organization (WHO).
MAIN FINDINGS

Policies and governance

KEY MESSAGE 1. In countries in food crisis, restrictions to contain the spread of the virus affected agrifood systems on both the demand and supply sides. The nature and severity of restrictions changed during successive waves of the pandemic. In all countries, restrictive measures were progressively eased over the first stages of the pandemic (March–October 2020).

All countries examined for this study experienced similar measures to contain the spread of the virus, including curfews, lockdowns, prohibition of public gatherings, suspension of international and local travel, closing of schools and universities and other places for public gatherings. In principle, the extension or easing of restrictions was dictated by the epidemiological situation. In practice, socio-economic pressures had a lot to do with easing the restrictions.

In Zimbabwe for example, a national lockdown was initially planned for 21 days, but was extended several times until it became indefinite, subject to fortnightly reviews. Ethiopia announced a state of emergency and implemented a partial lockdown, which was less strict than those observed in most countries reviewed. During the state of emergency, all the preventive measures were strictly enforced for the first five months, but were gradually relaxed afterwards. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Haiti and Mali, during the first wave there were no adjustments to restrictions during the first wave due to the severity of the epidemic in certain regions, although the enforcement of restrictions was uneven.

In the Sudan, restrictions were gradually applied across all 18 states, with each state deciding on the appropriate measures based on their circumstances. The relaxation of restrictions began in the Khartoum state followed by the resumption of movement across states and districts until all movement restrictions were lifted in September 2020. Economic pressures compelled the states to eventually allow “non-essential” businesses to operate in the formal commercial and industrial sectors.

Closing borders, mainly to individuals but also, in some cases, to merchandise was a common initial response to the pandemic. However, restrictions on the movement of merchandise proved to be economically detrimental for importers and exporters and were soon relaxed. The problem with cross-border trade of merchandise was due more to trade frictions and border delays due to controls (especially at land border checkpoints) that to outright bans by exporters to protect domestic availability. Informal cross-border trade continued through porous borders even under restrictions.

In the Sudan, the land borders and checkpoints with neighbouring countries, such as Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and South Sudan, were initially closed but exceptions were made for cargo, food and medicines, including humanitarian cargo trucks, which were allowed to enter vulnerable areas. All cross-border movements were allowed a few months after the initial closing. Similarly, authorities in Somalia closed borders with neighbouring countries except for food, medicines and necessary goods before relaxing them gradually. The initial suspension of domestic and international flights, with the exception of humanitarian and necessary cargo
flights, was revoked after a few months. In South Sudan, the suspension of domestic and international flights lasted for less than a month.

Ethiopia did not impose restrictions on the movement of goods if they complied with the health measures declared in the state of emergency. Ethiopian Airlines restricted flights to more than 80 destinations in March 2020, resuming flights in July 2020, while cargo flights continued flying to all destinations during the pandemic.

In March 2020, Colombia closed aerial, maritime, land and river borders to passengers but allowed cargo movements. International flights were suspended until 19 September 2020. Maritime borders were opened in December 2020. Land and fluvial borders with Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Peru reopened on 29 May 2021.

Many of the countries examined for this report experienced a second wave in November or December of 2020, and, in certain cases, the spread of the virus was twice as rapid as during the first wave. However, countries have undertaken “lighter” containment measures in this phase, avoiding strict lockdowns and movement restrictions (including border closures) in recognition of the detrimental economic and social effects experienced during the first wave. Instead, countries opted to strengthen individual protective measures and physical distancing, reducing working hours for public employees and restricting social and religious gatherings.

For example, during the second wave, the Sudan chose not to suspend domestic and international commercial passenger and cargo flights, and flights of goods and humanitarian supplies continued as usual with no considerable interruption. Although land borders remained open, strict health-related measures were implemented land border checkpoints with neighbouring countries. Somalia took similar steps, allowing the movement of people locally and across the borders, while in Nigeria only individual protective measures and physical distancing were implemented during the second wave. In Mali, controls and testing were reinforced and measures, such as spraying of markets, were intensified.

However, not all countries imposed lighter measures. In January 2021, Zimbabwe reinstated the lockdown measures that had been gradually relaxed towards the end of 2020. The January measures were accompanied by strict enforcement of COVID-19-related regulations: restricted movements of people and limited business operations, particularly in the informal sector, which was regarded as a potential super spreader of the virus. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo a curfew was reinstated in December 2020 but only in the most affected provinces and the curfew hours were adjusted based on the epidemic severity.

**KEY MESSAGE 2.** During the initial and successive waves of preventive measures, the agrifood sector was protected to ensure smooth functioning. Governments exempted food and agriculture from movement restrictions (through comprehensive exemptions or special permits) to ensure the operation of input and product markets and avoid compromising the harvest. Exemption policies and facilitation measures made it easier for the sector to adjust and operate within the context of restrictions and non-COVID-19 related shocks.

In South Sudan, the agrifood sector was declared essential and remained operational during the lockdown, except during the night-time curfew hours. In a labour-intensive agrifood system, such as in South Sudan, mobility restrictions would have been catastrophic. The government also ensured that logistical activities, such as transportation related to agrifood systems, were uninterrupted. Similarly, from the very beginning of the crisis, the agrifood sectors in Honduras and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were exempted from restrictions.
on movement and activity. In Honduras, this included supermarkets, grocery stores, agrifood businesses, food and beverage distribution centres, agriculture harvesting and agrochemical enterprises.

In Iraq, exemptions from rigorous restrictive measures were seen as critical to the continued functioning of food supply chains, since the country depends heavily on imported production inputs and consumption goods. Moreover, transport services and movements across governorates were allowed for agricultural harvesters, agricultural equipment, crops, and agricultural products, including live animals and veterinary supplies.

Exemptions for the agrifood sector were not always automatic. In the Sudan, for example, it took a petition from the farmers’ union to convince government authorities to give exemptions and special permits to farmers to purchase and transport agricultural inputs as well as to ease movement of food, market shortages. The government prioritized the agrifood sector for fuel distribution since fuel scarcity and skyrocketing fuel prices (due to cut in subsidies and the devaluation) negatively hit many productive sectors. However, even when businesses were allowed to operate, workers were reluctant to go to areas with high viral load. A similar pattern was observed in Afghanistan where exemptions of agricultural products were not automatic and cross-border trade ceased for almost three months. Eventually, restrictions had to be relaxed due to negative effects on exports and food availability through imports.

Although most containment measures included some level of exemption from movement restrictions on agrifood products, restrictions on the movement of people affected agrifood trade and production indirectly. In Central African Republic, for example, the crisis committee formed to deal with the management of the pandemic, quickly authorised the circulation of agricultural and food products. However, the ban on the movement of passenger vehicles had the effect of hampering local food trade as the few vehicles available generally transport people and food to markets at the same time.

Even when restrictions were in place, their implementation, as well as exemptions, ran into obstacles and were generally patchy, especially during the first wave. Enforcement of the measures was problematic particularly in sparsely populated areas.

In Nigeria, during the first wave, the exemption for food and agriculture-related activities was not very effective. Obtaining the necessary movement permits for categories of persons involved in food-related services often proved difficult because offices were closed or had limited working hours and limited personnel available to process requests.

In Afghanistan, restrictive measures were more severe in densely populated urban centres such as Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Nengarhar and Balkh, which were placed under a strict lockdown, while in rural areas and less densely populated cities, restrictions were lighter, and enforcement was weak. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, despite the efforts of the national government and provincial authorities, the application of measures, such as the ban on the movement of people between the city of Kinshasa and other provinces of the country, has been ineffective despite the presence of checkpoints.

In the Sudan, although government authorities made significant efforts to implement COVID-19 restrictions and containment measures, widespread leakages were reported, particularly in movements between towns and along highways. Some economic activities continued amid weak compliance and enforcement of curfews. Similarly, in Somalia there was weak compliance with the measures concerning gatherings and curfews, while informal trade continued, including through porous borders by evading controls exercised at formal crossing points.
Agrifood systems and COVID-19
Analysis of policy responses in countries with food crisis situations (2020-2021)

In Ethiopia, the implementation of COVID-19 measures varied by region. There was strong monitoring of compliance with COVID-19 regulations in the capital Addis Ababa, but less so in other cities and rural areas, where markets remain crowded, and drivers and passengers do not follow health protocols.

Governments announced national and local support schemes for the agrifood system through input subsidies, set prices for public procurement, direct distribution of agricultural inputs, promotion of mechanization, financial support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and facilitating trade flows for agrifood imports and exports, including imports of agricultural inputs. Furthermore, governments facilitated market operations using a combination of trade measures, public reserves and monitoring and (direct) control of prices.

In Nigeria, the National Agricultural Seed Council provided 81,000 tonnes of certified seeds to farmers in May 2020 to ensure continued agricultural activities during the lockdown and ensure that farmers would have enough seeds for the planting season.

To mitigate a serious cereal production shortfall in Zimbabwe, which was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government lifted import duties on maize, wheat, maize meal and wheat flour for 12 months starting in May 2020. The objective was to allow more cereal grains to be imported by private traders. Also, in July 2020, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority expanded the list of agricultural inputs and equipment exempted from import duty and the value-added tax (VAT). In May 2020, the cabinet announced a 30 percent price premium as an incentive for early maize delivery to the state-owned enterprise Grain Marketing Board. The Government of Zimbabwe successively increased the producer price for cereal grains four times between February and July 2020 to attract more farmers to contributing to the strategic grain reserve in light also of the very high inflation rate in the country. The Government of the Sudan imposed a ban on sorghum exports to neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea and South Sudan from April to October 2020 in response to fears that some major wheat-producing countries intended to reduce their wheat exports to the Sudan. The measure was a reaction to the impacts of COVID-19, but also, to keep food prices from rising sharply in the face of a spiralling inflation (reaching an annual rate of 330 percent in February 2021), which put enormous upward pressures in nominal food prices even in the face of a good agricultural season.

The Government of Ethiopia and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) launched a new 305.7 million United States dollars (USD) programme that included delaying credit repayment schemes to help farmers continue to access farm inputs to strengthen their resilience.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, starting in April 2020, measures to support the agrifood sector included suspending the provincial tax collection on agricultural products, and the collection of the VAT on the import and sale of basic and consumer products. In Somalia, to counter-balance international price increases, the government abolished border taxes for rice and drastically reduced import duties on other foods such as dates and cooking oil. It is doubtful that governments can continue such policies for long, since domestic revenue from import tariffs is a major revenue source particularly in periods of reduced economic activity and reduced fiscal receipts lower exports and associated export revenues.

In Afghanistan, prices were monitored and the strategic wheat reserve was used to stabilize prices. Increases in the reserve were obtained through imports from neighbouring countries and purchases from farmers’ associations by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. To keep prices from rising, the government distributed free food to needy and
vulnerable communities from the strategic reserves and sought to prevent hoarding and price fixing. Starting in late May 2020, to maintain adequate market supply, the government took action to ensure that all supply routes were open to people and merchandise, both inside Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries such as Kazakhstan and Pakistan.

In March 2020, the Government of Colombia established a mechanism to monitor the prices of agrifood inputs, and in April it approved a three-month tariff exemption for imported grains for animal feed (soy, corn and sorghum). Access to markets was supported by putting in place mechanisms such as a four-month scheme to subsidize the transport of fresh or perishable food, an electronic platform for farmers and complementary measures to reinforce the contract farming programme in the context of COVID-19. It also paid a subsidy to 25 000 potato producers to compensate them for the impact caused by lockdowns and mobility restrictions.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela lifted import tariffs on agricultural products and an array of food imports while introducing tariffs on rice and maize to protect domestic production of these foods. In Honduras, the government banned the export of beans – a staple food in the country – to help ensure their availability on domestic markets. In addition, the government introduced price controls on products that are part of the basic food basket, as well as on personal and household hygiene products for the duration of the crisis. In Haiti, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued a press release punishing agrifood product speculation with five years in prison and a fine of USD 1 125.

Despite a dramatic reduction in global oil prices at the start of 2020, Iraq announced a National Food Security Project (2020-2022) aimed at stimulating local cereal production. This included subsidized agricultural inputs (e.g., for 2020-21 season 70 percent of wheat seeds were subsidized for registered farmers) and guaranteed higher prices for output.

The agrifood sector also benefited from economy-wide policies and programmes: support to the banking sector, infusion of funds in the economy and lowering of interest rates. However, benefits accrued mainly to the formal agrifood economy.

In South Sudan, the Central Bank of South Sudan cut the Central Bank rate by five percentage points, from 15 percent to 10 percent, and reduced the reserve requirement ratio from 20 percent to 10 percent between April and July 2020. Both actions were reversed in November 2020 by bringing the rate and the ratio back to their initial values. In Zimbabwe, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe extended the deadline for meeting the minimum capital levels for financial institutions by 12 months.

The Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) has taken a series of measures aimed at boosting the economy by facilitating access to credit for the private and public sectors. The measures included: (i) the downward revision of the key rate from 3.50 to 3.25 percent; (ii) the downward revision of 100 points on the rate of the marginal lending facility from 6.00 percent to 5.00 percent; and (iii) the increase in liquidity injections from 240 billion Central African CFA francs (FCFA) (approximately USD 432 million) to FCFA 500 billion (USD 899 million). These measures aimed to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19, taken at the level of the Central Banks and targeting the formal sector only. However, in most of the countries examined for this report, the informal sector is dominant throughout the agrifood sector, thus reaping only indirect benefits from economy-wide measures to support the financial system.

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8 The key rate is the interest rate at which banks can borrow when they fall short of their required reserves.
The Government of Colombia softened the conditions of FINAGRO’s ongoing credit lines for strategic sectors and established two new subsidized credit lines targeting small farmers, the first in March 2020 “Agro Produce” to lend up to 1.5 trillion Colombian pesos (COP) 500 000 million (approximately USD 410 million) to finance working capital needs, and a second in October 2020 “Agro Avanza” to allocate COP 44 000 million (USD 12 million) to subsidize interest rates. In parallel, the government signed agreements with farmer’s associations and financial agents to facilitate access to credit in rural areas, particularly trying to reach farmers not familiar in dealing with financial institutions.

In Ethiopia the government decided to forgive all tax debt before 2014/15, a tax pardon on interest and penalties for the tax debt of 2015/16-2018/19 which cover 3099 taxpayers and exemption from personal income tax withholding for 4 months for firms who keep paying employee salaries despite COVID-19 disruptions.

In the context of food crises and multiple shocks and stresses, the extent to which measures to support the agrifood sector were taken as a direct result of the pandemic or in response to other emergencies (such as locust invasions, floods, conflict or economic distress) is not always clear. Many of the interventions established by the countries examined in this report were extensions of existing programmes, which were amended to deal with challenges arising from COVID-19. Such an approach reflects the urgency of putting together policies and programmes based on limited information and in very short timeframes.

In Zimbabwe, the agriculture sector benefited from the government’s COVID-19 stimulus package. However, the package was initially designed to assist the sector to recover from two consecutive drought seasons and the prevailing adverse macroeconomic conditions. There was some restructuring of the pre-existing Presidential Input Support Programme, which facilitates access to agricultural inputs conditional on the adoption of a climate-smart and conservation agriculture practices.

In the Sudan, the government made bulk purchases of sorghum and wheat from farmers and increased imports to support food distribution and prevent price hikes for cereals. This initiative was not just in response to COVID-19, but also a reaction to the persistent economic difficulties plaguing the Sudan even prior to the onset of the pandemic. In Nigeria, in June 2020, the Federal Executive Council approved the Nigeria Economic Sustainability Plan, a 12-month, USD 5.9 billion “transition” plan that was designed before the onset of the pandemic. The Mass Agricultural Programme, part of the aforementioned plan, is expected to create millions of direct and indirect job opportunities in the context of the economic challenges facing the country.

Governments are providing financial support and facilitating access to credit by the private sector including MSMEs ensure, to the extent possible, the continued operations of agrifood firms.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) disbursed USD 1.1 billion in non-interest loans nationwide through its Anchor Borrower’s Programme and Targeted Credit Facility to support households and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) affected by COVID-19. In the Sudan, the government requested that banks reconsider the terms of loan repayments by private companies impacted by the pandemic. Fiscal measures also included deferrals or discounts in the payment of utility expenses for businesses and self-employed workers and reduction or the deferral of taxes and other social contributions, particularly by agribusiness SMEs. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Honduras, the governments have provided credit to agrifood businesses.
In Somalia, support to SMEs and MSMEs was mainly funded by development partners and coordinated by the government. Support included a combination of loans and grants. Targeted businesses included small and medium food-producing firms, agrotechnology and businesses led by IDPs and returning migrants. In Mali, support to SMEs and industries in the revised 2020 budget included a tax return to companies impacted by the restrictive measures (on a case-by-case basis and by sector) and the mitigation of penalties arising from tax audits. However, most actors in agrifood systems are part of the informal economy so they did not have access to such schemes.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the government adopted measures to protect SMEs, such as the suspension from April to June 2020 of payments of rental income tax by companies, and of the application of penalties in the event of delay in the customs clearance of essential goods, including food products. The free supply of water and electricity was also granted to SMEs affected by the pandemic in April and May 2020.

**KEY MESSAGE 3.** COVID-19 increased the vulnerability of people whose livelihoods were already endangered by accumulated shocks. Governments and development and humanitarian partners established and funded programmes and policies to support poverty reduction, food security and nutrition, and employment for individuals who were vulnerable before the pandemic as well as those who have become vulnerable because of the pandemic. Such support has expanded existing programmes or established new initiatives specifically targeting vulnerabilities created by COVID-19.

Vulnerable groups include smallholder farmers, pastoralists, individuals employed by MSMEs, small market traders and agricultural workers, displaced persons and refugees, and day workers, especially in urban areas. Vulnerable groups particularly affected by the pandemic include women (as household providers, victims of domestic violence and small-scale entrepreneurs), children, and people with disabilities and households that depend on migrant remittances (domestic or foreign). Even a temporary disruption of economic activity may have long-term consequences for these groups due to their lack of access to assets, savings or credit or to organized social protection programmes.

**Support to livelihoods affected by the pandemic was provided by expanding or repurposing existing social protection programmes, adding new ones or diverting funding from other emergency or long-term development programmes. Unless replenished, the diversion of funds from other programmes will compromise emergency assistance and longer-term development.**

In Zimbabwe, the Food Deficit Mitigation Programme, which pre-existed COVID-19, distributed maize to an additional 160 000 households across the country’s eight rural provinces, starting in March 2020. Also, the grain portion per household increased from 30 kg to 50 kg per month after the first lockdown in March 2020. Also in March 2020, the Government of Zimbabwe announced that a 600 million Zimbabwean dollars (approximately USD 24 million) facility would be set aside to provide unconditional cash transfers of about USD 8.00 per person per month for three months (April to June 2020) to one million vulnerable households. To support the government’s efforts, UNICEF is mobilizing USD 74.7 million in 2021, of which USD 18.9 million will go towards emergency social cash transfers and USD 16 million towards health responses.

In Nigeria, in response to a request by the Federal Government, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided direct support to over 160 000 vulnerable people in Abuja, Lagos and Kano States in November 2020. WFP introduced flexible, agile and innovative last-mile delivery
services to bring COVID-19 assistance direct to the doorstep via Uber-like taxi services, motorized rickshaws, motorbikes or boats to ensure physical distancing. Beneficiaries were assisted through a combination of cash and food donated from the government’s strategic grain reserve.

Somalia’s COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, which is coordinated by the humanitarian and development community, responded to the immediate consequences of the pandemic between April and December 2020. The plan directed humanitarian and development agencies to orient their interventions to mitigating the pandemic’s impact and improving the livelihoods and resilience of the communities. Such re-orientation meant reduced funding for other emergency situations or longer-term development programmes.

In the Sudan, measures to support vulnerable groups were taken before the pandemic to deal with the severe economic crisis caused by the country’s stabilization programme (budget reductions and a substantial devaluation). The Quasi Universal Basic Income programme, which aims to provide cash to 60–80 percent of poor households in the Sudan, began in May 2020 at about the time when COVID-19 was starting to spread. However, the original aim of the programme was to assist families to cope with the sharp increases in prices and the reduction in bread and fuel subsidies. It was expanded to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 containment measures. A COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan was developed in May 2020 as an addendum to the 2020 Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The COVID-19 addendum addresses both the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic and its immediate humanitarian consequences. It covers areas such as health, food security, livelihoods, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), refugees, logistics, gender-based violence, child protection and shelter.

The humanitarian community in South Sudan has adapted existing programmes, refocusing activities, scaling up some and scaling back others in the Country Preparedness and Response Plan to assist people affected by measures to reduce the spread of the virus. Life-saving operations by the humanitarian community have continued throughout the pandemic period, with operations increased in areas such as food assistance and WASH, which were identified as priorities following the release of IPC findings in December 2018. COVID-19 was identified as one of the key drivers of acute food insecurity through its impact on the economy, incomes, food systems and supply chains. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health and associated partners provided maternal and child health care services, severe acute malnutrition management, mental health care, support to victims of gender-based violence, vaccine immunization and hygiene services.

In Afghanistan, a World Bank-supported programme equalling 1.6 percent of GDP was launched to distribute food staples and hygiene products in rural areas (amounting to USD 50 per household) and a combination of cash and in-kind transfers in urban areas (amounting to USD 100 per household). Almost 90 percent of all Afghan households qualified under the programme’s criteria. A free bread emergency distribution programme was also launched and funded by the government budget. Electricity bills in Kabul were waived for two months, benefiting about 1.5 million residents. Assistance also targeted conflict-displaced people and returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Some of this support was repurposed or modified to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, especially the health aspects: the European Union’s funding of the Emergency Response Mechanism programme, which

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9 The QUBI programme was budgeted as for 50 percent government and 50 percent donor support, especially the World Bank and the United Nations. The plan is to eventually cover 80 percent of the population at an estimated cost of USD 2 billion USD or 5.25 percent of GDP according to IMF estimates.
predates the COVID-19 crisis, and which ensures timely and flexible emergency assistance to people who have been recently displaced, was modified to include a COVID-specific clause.

In Afghanistan, the European Union supported a nutrition response in view of the nearly three million children under five years of age suffering from malnutrition. Several agencies provided support to nutrition programmes under the nutrition field cluster for example, WFP-supported programmes for the treatment and prevention of moderate acute malnutrition in the provinces most affected by COVID-19. However, only 25.5 percent of the government’s revised HRP, with an estimated funding requirement of USD 114.6 million for nutrition, had been funded by September 2020.

The Government of Ethiopia approved COVID-19-related adjustments for the implementation of the Urban Productive Safety Net Programme. Beneficiaries of this programme receive an advance of three months’ payment while on leave from their public works obligations and are able to withdraw 50 percent of their savings to cover expenses arising out of the COVID-19 emergency. Citizens identified to be at high risk of COVID-19 exposure and who need assistance will also receive three months’ payment.

In Mali, household support measures included a special fund for the poorest families of USD 180 million, the free distribution of seeds, agricultural inputs and food aid for the most vulnerable groups. There was also an exemption from value-added tax on electricity and water bills for all consumers for three months during the first pandemic wave in 2020. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the government introduced six new social assistance programmes, including “Stay at Home Benefits”, which reaches 6 million private and self-employed workers. Although the value of the transfers has been adjusted, the country’s high rates of inflation mean that the value of these benefits is depreciating.

In Colombia, the government modified five existing social programmes to provide unconditional cash transfers from an investment of more than COP 7.8 trillion, which the government estimates to benefit more than 8.5 million households. Registries and databases on the programmes were reviewed and updated to include new beneficiaries affected by the crisis. It also created specific programmes for specific groups not previously covered, such as rural elders and former members of demobilized illegal armed groups. The government increased the coverage of the Nutritional Support Programme by 32 percent, to reach a total of 1 732 000 rural and urban families with the delivery of nutritionally reinforced food baskets.

Countries put programmes in place to support employment including in the agrifood sectors.
The programmes target populations affected by multiple shocks and crises, including COVID-19.

In Zimbabwe, the government set a target to recover, in 2021, an estimated 150 000 formal jobs lost in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Sudan, in June 2020, the government applied a five-fold average increase to the salaries of all public sector employees to mitigate the effects of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural reform and adjustment programme, which called for currency devaluation and the removal of subsidies on fuel, imported wheat and wheat flour starting in January 2020. Although it was planned prior to the pandemic, the implementation of the salary increment was accelerated because of the effects of COVID-19 on the economy, in particular, escalating food prices caused by COVID-19-related restrictions. In Honduras the government introduced the “Solidarity Contribution Programme”, which temporarily ensures employment to people working in the agrifood industry among others.

Innovative programmes to support employment and incomes have been put into place in Somalia. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
through the Growth, Enterprise, Employment, and Livelihoods project employed around 300 young people to produce 500,000 facemasks, which were later handed over to the Health Ministry. Employment programmes in Somalia included public works projects and retraining women and youth entrepreneurs in agricultural activities, mask making, etc. However, the extent to which these programmes responded to new vulnerabilities created by COVID-19 or were continuations or expansion of past programmes is not clear.

To increase employment opportunities and generate income for vulnerable communities, the Government of Afghanistan allocated USD 13 million to cash-for-work projects aiming to reconstruct potable water systems and irrigation canals. The project was implemented in the provinces that have been most economically affected by the pandemic.

In Haiti, the contingency plan drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture included a focus on physical, economic and social access to food through labour-intensive works oriented towards the agricultural sector (e.g., cleaning of irrigation canals, repair of rural roads, etc.) and strengthening security in production areas, transport circuits and markets.

During the state of emergency in Ethiopia, companies were prohibited from laying off workers and terminating their employment. Government employees who are at higher risk of COVID-19 (elderly, pregnant women, people with underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home while still receiving their salaries. Employers are obliged to provide temporary loans for workers and guarantee that they can return when the situation improves.

In May 2020, Colombia launched the Employment Support Programme, which provided a monthly payroll to protect formal employment. In September 2020, the programme was extended until March 2021. In October 2020, the government launched “Economy for the People”, which aims to invest COP 1.7 trillion in 580,000 enterprises and micro-businesses over two years.

After the defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in 2017, and immediate reconstruction, international partners are investing in job creation programmes. For example, the European Union has focused on stabilization, governance and sustainable job creation. Most notably, at the start of 2021, the European Union launched a 100 million euros comprehensive programme (with a coordination role for FAO) focused on pro-poor agricultural production and sustainable farming practices; the programme aims to introduce high-quality, high-tech and climate change adaptation practices while using an agricultural value chain approach to support agribusinesses and rural financial services.

In most countries, school feeding programmes were expanded or alternative programmes were established to provide meals to students following school closings. The coverage of alternative programmes (in terms of school children reached) faces challenges and is, in general, lower due to difficulties and increased costs in reaching beneficiary families.

In almost all countries examined for this report, schools closed from March 2020 to August 2020, affecting the capacity of girls and boys to access school feeding programmes on a daily basis. For some students, such programmes provide the only nutritious meals they will consume in a day. Some countries put in place alternative programmes to those delivering meals in schools at national level while others only provided meals to children in areas most affected by the pandemic or other crises. Logistical and delivery issues were dominant and alternative modalities had to be found to reach pupils and their families. In every case, support from the international community was critical.
In Somalia, WFP developed an e-shop application platform where parents of eligible children could express their needs and have food delivered to their door by local retailers free of charge. This scheme partially compensated for the loss of school meals during school closures.

In Nigeria, the federal government implemented a modified version of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme to deliver a one-time supply of dry food rations valued at USD 12 using a door-to-door voucher distribution system to pupils in households already benefiting from the programme in the Federal Capital Territory, Ogun and Lagos states. The school meals were later extended to all states currently participating in the programme and covered about 28 percent of schoolchildren.

In the Sudan, WFP announced the expansion of its school feeding programme across 15 states and over 100 localities to reach 1.8 million pupils, up from 1 million in 2019. In the Central African Republic, the alternative school feeding programme developed by WFP following the closure of schools has benefited 346,330 students in 937 schools in the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham Pendé, Nana Gribizi, Nana Mambéré, Mambéré Kadei, Ouaka, Kemo (seven prefectures out of 16 in total).

In Honduras, the COVID-19 Emergency School Feeding Protocols delivered to rations of dried food to homes for 55 days. To protect indigenous and Afro-Honduran People, who are among the most vulnerable, the government delivered food to 381,000 indigenous children. In Haiti, the recovery programme included the distribution of food kits containing local products to the beneficiaries of school feeding programmes that were interrupted because of the pandemic. This offered an outlet for local agricultural producers.

In Colombia, the government granted greater budgetary capacity and autonomy to territorial entities so that, in coordination with educational institutions, they could continue the school feeding programme, which serves approximately 5.7 million schoolchildren per year; given the impossibility of receiving food in schools, the programme was adapted to deliver food baskets for home consumption.

A central task force was established in nearly all countries to deal with the pandemic. In some cases, only government institutions were involved. In others, health professionals, scholars, businessmen and civil society organizations were also included. The role of the task force was generally to monitor and coordinate national action on the pandemic. The links between subnational and national level actions (for example in the case of school meals in Colombia as mentioned previously) tended to be less than effective, which may have impeded efforts to reach. Local authorities did not always have the skills and means to design or implement programmes and, as a result, vulnerable groups were not reached. Several variants of governance schemes are found, and some are described below.

In Zimbabwe, the COVID-19 response committee included a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from the private sector, academia and professional associations, civil society organizations, and development (technical and donor) partners. In August 2020, the
government merged the COVID-19 response initiatives carried out by various stakeholders into a single response plan and established a 13-member technical steering committee under the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

In Mali, the committee responsible for coordinating and monitoring the economic and social responses to the pandemic comes under the authority of the Prime Minister. In Haiti, the coordination of the crisis response also falls under the authority of the Prime Minister and brings together representatives of the public and private sector, international organizations and civil society. The government has created three structures: (i) a scientific unit mainly consisting of health specialists responsible for monitoring the evolution of the disease and making recommendations to the government; (ii) an information unit to inform the population about the evolution of the pandemic and the various measures taken; and (iii) a multisectoral committee whose mandate is to coordinate the response to the pandemic, particularly with the international humanitarian and development community.

In Haiti, a large part of the funding has come from the international community. The overall budgets allocated to each ministry have not increased. Each institution has had to adapt its activities and budget and reallocate resources internally. This approach made it possible to build on existing processes and teams. On this basis, most institutions were able to quickly come up with programmes that could be implemented immediately. In addition, the emergency context enabled the use of accelerated or simplified procedures which, in some cases, improved the performance of ongoing projects.

In Somalia one of the main obstacles to reaching vulnerable people in the districts, rural and remote areas was the lack of appropriate local administrative structures and capacities. As a result, a significant share of health care, medicines and other support did not reach the right people in those areas. In addition, disputes between the central government and some state administrators erupted over restrictions on flights and the closure of borders. There are also concerns about vaccine distribution and coverage since the capacity of the local administrations to reach vulnerable and needy people in remote and insecure locations is significantly impeded.

In the Sudan, lack of administrative and governance capacity as well as the fragile economic situation limits the country’s ability to enforce restrictions and implement new policies. As a result, there is inadequate enforcement of COVID-19 measures, especially in rural communities where there is also insufficient access to health services. Demonstrations and civil unrest were common prior to the COVID-19 crisis in the country and were related to the deep economic crisis and subsidy removals under the economic stabilization package. Paradoxically, during the pandemic, the restrictive measures and fear of contagion reduced civil unrest in the country at least for a period.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck the South Sudan at a time when its vulnerabilities were at unprecedented levels. As the youngest country in the world, South Sudan hasn’t had the time or opportunity to develop institutions that can manage policies. Civil war broke out in December 2013, barely three years into its independence and, since then, the country has been highly unstable, with dire consequences for a population that is considered one of the poorest in the world. Nevertheless, the South Sudan Government established the COVID-19 High-Level Task Force in March 2020, before the first case was announced. Chaired by the First Vice President, the task force was given responsibility for several aspects of the COVID-19 response: overall coordination and leadership; planning and monitoring; points of entry; risk communication and community engagement; surveillance, rapid response teams and case
investigations; infection prevention and control; case management; and operations support and logistics.

In Colombia, the national government declared a state of economic, social and ecological emergency, empowering mayors and governors to make the necessary additions, modifications, transfers and other budgetary decisions needed to address the emergency and to fulfil.

In Ethiopia, the fragile political system has been under reform since 2018. The COVID-19 crisis disrupted the reform and delayed the general election planned for May 2020. As a consequence, there has been political friction between the government and the opposition.

Ethiopia’s governance capacity and preparedness to respond to COVID-19 is limited. However, the government aimed to maximize coordination among public agencies at different levels, establishing a national task force chaired by the Prime Minister. The task force has been engaged in COVID-19 information dissemination and communication, mobilizing resources, developing strategies and documents. A central command post was established to ensure compliance with COVID-19 prevention protocols. However, the commitment of the federal government did not always trickle down to regional and local administrations whose capacity and preparedness remains weak.

The traditional split between humanitarian and development interventions becomes more evident in the light of the COVID-19 crisis. In a context of protracted political and humanitarian crises, increasing needs and vulnerabilities, the arguments for streamlining humanitarian, development and peace efforts are even more persuasive. Adopting a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach could strengthen the response to the crisis by focusing on collective outcomes, addressing medium to long-term issues and bringing different actors together.

In Afghanistan for example, where conflicts are increasingly protracted and climate-related shocks are more intense and frequent international donors and some United Nations agencies repurposed funding from existing programmes to face those emergencies to ones that deal with the effects of the pandemic. Sustainable development and durable solutions to displacement are not possible without peace. Humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding cannot be sequential processes

To this end, a humanitarian-development or humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, could help reduce the gaps between the objectives and activities of various actors, and strengthen their impact. By considering food insecurity issues collectively, humanitarian, development and peace actors would be better able to address the needs of vulnerable people before, during and after crises. This approach challenges the status quo of the aid system, which typically does not pursue coordination and continuity among project-based development and humanitarian interventions.

In the Central African Republic, development partners recommitted to supporting the agricultural sector in 2016. However, security remains a critical factor for the sector, hence the importance of developing a collaborative approach that integrates HDP issues. In Haiti, the HRP (2021-2022) published in March 2021 calls for USD 235.6 million in 2021 to meet the needs of 1.5 million of the most vulnerable people. The plan is structured around four strategic objectives, the first of which is to reduce the number of people in need of humanitarian aid by at least 20 percent by strengthening the HDP nexus.
In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 plans to develop specific programmes to maximize the impact of interventions and strengthen synergies between agencies and with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) following a HDP nexus approach.

In Ethiopia as of 31 March 2020, a synergistic approach to COVID-19 humanitarian actions has been coordinated by the established Emergency Coordination Centre and national and regional task forces were established in all regions. Following the launch of the government plan for COVID-19, the humanitarian organizations have joined efforts in responding to COVID-19 challenges. All have strengthened coordination within Ethiopia at all administrative levels. Food and non-food task forces were reactivated, and new ones formed for health and nutrition, agriculture and livestock, water and sanitation sectors. These emergency taskforces meet regularly pulling together focal points from the government, NGOs and donor community.

**Implementation**

**KEY MESSAGE 5.** The degree of implementation of measures to support agrifood sectors and vulnerable groups has been uneven. In general, policies and strategies designed to protect the agri-food sector and vulnerable groups were under-resourced vis-à-vis assessed needs. Lockdowns and health measures (distancing, travel restrictions) as well as the lack of timely and accurate data to support targeting and monitoring, have hampered the implementation and effectiveness of the programmes.

While a flurry of reports on COVID-19 and agrifood systems have been released by governments, international organizations and researchers, there have been very few comprehensive, ex post assessments of programmes dealing with the effects of the pandemic. Available reports deal with mainly ex ante assessments of impact of the pandemic on the agrifood system or sub-sectors. Comprehensive evaluations on the implementation of policies and programmes regarding the agrifood system is hampered by (i) many of the programmes designed on predicated on financial support from internal and external resources which in many cases were not mobilised; (ii) the difficulty of disentangling those policies and programmes from other programmes to deal with crisis situations; (iii) many of the policies and programmes are parts of larger ones; (iv) the changing situation regarding the pandemic (waves) meant that modifications had to be done to the programmes; (v) and lack of sufficient data and information for a (process) evaluation of policies and programmes as policy assessments are not habitually carried out in the countries concerned and thus monitoring systems for policies and programmes are lacking.

The political crisis facing countries such as Haiti, Mali, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2020/21, combined with the lack of monitoring systems and restricted access to certain parts of the country due to security issues makes it very difficult to assess the effectiveness of response measures. Only 5.1 percent (approximately USD 12 million) of Haiti’s 2021 HRP had been funded as of May 2021. An earthquake in southern Haiti in August compounded the country’s needs.

In Afghanistan, strategic reserves were not sufficient to cover the population’s urgent requirements for food. Shortages and difficulties in food distribution due to movement restrictions created panic and resentment. Over the past couple of years, a transition to cash-
based assistance has been useful for dealing with food distribution, yet this was challenging during lockdown because the currency exchange markets and money transfer services were shuttered and other measures, such as smartphone money transfers, had limited reach.

Afghanistan’s revised HRP for 2018–2021, issued in January 2021, and included measures to respond to the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic. The revised HRP estimates that 35 million people need social safety net services, 14 million of whom are in acute humanitarian need. This was up from 9.4 million at the start of 2020. Funding needs were projected at USD 152.2 million, with actual committed funding at USD 18.7 million. Of this, only 12.3 percent had been mobilized by September 2020.

In Zimbabwe, the monthly cash transfer was only partly implemented, with just 200 000 of the one million targeted households receiving cash transfers from the Department of Social Welfare by August 2020. The Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster of the United Nations has indicated that the budget for food assistance under the HRP represents 90 percent of total cluster financial requirements, while support for agriculture and livelihoods represents 10 percent of the total budgetary requirements under the cluster. Only 26.8 percent had been secured by 19 February 2021.

The 2020 Sudan HRP had a total resource requirement of USD 1.63 billion (including both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 responses). The COVID-19 addendum has a total resource requirement of USD 283.5m with 37.4 percent funded as of January 2021.

Somalia’s humanitarian and development partners developed and published the HRP 2021 with an estimated USD 1.09 billion in required financing. As of April 2021, less than ten percent of the plan (USD 102.8 million) has been funded. Somalia’s HRP is expected to respond to the crises and their impacts (including but not exclusively COVID-19), to provide humanitarian and emergency assistance to vulnerable people and enhance their resilience and recovery.

In May 2020, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo launched the Multi-sectoral Emergency Programme to Mitigate the Impacts of COVID-19. Only two million people were expected to benefit from cash transfers planned for December 2020, while the number of food-insecure people was estimated at 21.8 million in September 2020. In addition, it is important to note that the political events that took place in early 2021 only allowed the government to conduct day-to-day business for several months, which affected the implementation of many programmes, including the multi-sectoral emergency programme.

Insufficient data on vulnerable groups and the lack of formal registration of individuals and enterprises have complicated programme implementation and monitoring as well as compromised its effectiveness.

In the Sudan, efforts to strengthen coordination between various actors (e.g., donor agencies, public sector institutions and the private sector) has been constrained by the poor information systems concerned with agriculture and food.

In Nigeria, the national social register, which was created in 2015, is used to select beneficiaries of social assistance programmes. However, its accuracy has been questioned as has the transparency and effectiveness of programmes using the database. Various stakeholders have identified the need for reliable information to make the right decisions at both policy and implementation levels.

In South Sudan, humanitarian actors are on the forefront of efforts to track the effects of COVID-19 on various sectors, e.g., health, food security and livelihoods, gender, social protection and WASH. Several small and targeted surveys have been undertaken to determine
the impact of the COVID-19 response on particular sectors and locations, and larger, nationwide surveys such as the food security and nutrition monitoring system survey are helping stakeholders to understand the national and county-level impacts of the pandemic.

Large parts of Mali and the Central African Republic are not accessible to the government because of insecurity, which makes collecting data (such as on the spread of the pandemic, the affected populations, the food security and nutrition situation, vulnerable groups etc) a challenge. In both countries, NGOs were mobilized to access such territories. There is no information on how that may have affected data and evidence generation (namely whether any data were generated and their accuracy).

Informal workers, including in the agricultural sector, are an important segment of the workforce in all countries. However, there is not much data available on informal workers and, since they are not registered, they do not have access to social protection and other programmes. As a result, it was very difficult to provide timely support to this group during the pandemic. In the Central African Republic, it was reported that most market stallholders who were eligible for support programmes targeting micro, small and medium enterprises were unable to access them.

In Zimbabwe, the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster, coordinated by WFP and FAO, developed an Emergency Needs and Response Tracker to help manage operations on the ground and ensure they can quickly immediately respond to any emergencies in addition to their regular cluster activities. Although the tracker focuses on activities related to food assistance, it has also expanded into other areas and actions such as: scaling up of efforts to enhance and protect animal health; providing support on post-harvest management and processing; enhancing surveillance of pests such as locusts and fall armyworm as well as diseases.

Ethiopia established a national task force responsible for COVID-19 information dissemination and communication. An Inter-ministerial task force assesses the extent of impacts and recommends solutions at regular meetings. The government mobilized a public-private partnership with agro-industries, large-scale importers and Ethiopian Airlines Cargo to ensure timely delivery of required inputs.

The functioning of agrifood systems has been facilitated by various policies and measures, but these have mostly been insufficient to counteract the restrictive measures put in place to limit the spread of the virus. However, temporary disruptions in the production and supply chains have been noticed and recorded, especially regarding logistics, processing and access to inputs.

In Nigeria, a review of response measures showed that they were partly effective in ensuring a smooth functioning of the agrifood system. Disruptions in agricultural activities and supply chains did occur and disturbed food processing and farm production. In an interview by Reuters, several farmers in Benue State highlighted that access to inputs, especially seeds, were hindered. Mobility restrictions and lockdowns disrupted the release of new seed varieties and the production and supply of early generation seed, despite the government’s efforts to distribute seeds where they were needed the most. Mobility restrictions also impeded access by seed producers to agro-inputs and mechanization services.

In Zimbabwe, COVID-19 restrictions had a negative impact on the beef value chain, resulting in logistical supply bottlenecks that hampered the sourcing and sale of cattle. The implementation of lockdown protocols saw beef cattle slaughters for the first quarter of 2020 decline by 16 percent to 103 451 compared to the same period in 2019, while second quarter slaughters amounted to only 49 530 heads, 24 percent below the same period in 2019.
In Afghanistan, supply and demand channels were disrupted as ports of entry were closed and imports of final food products and ingredients were stopped or delayed. These measures slowed and, for a period, stalled the supply of raw materials to food processors and outlets. The measures disrupted national and international trade and logistic systems and destabilized the immediate and final trend of end-user demand and supply.

In Ethiopia, COVID-19 shifted consumer demand for dairy products. More than half of consumers in Addis Ababa reported avoiding the consumption of animal-sourced foods due to the suspicion that COVID-19 virus is transmitted through the consumption of animal products. COVID-19-related measures also impacted the supply of agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilizers) and reduced availability of livestock feed in Ethiopia.

Very few countries have launched nutrition-specific interventions as part of their COVID-19 response. National budgets for development, food security and agriculture are facing serious uncertainties as priorities shift to health and other emergency response plans. Government financing of support measures faces a shrinking revenue base also due to the abolition of import taxes on food and other essentials and the collapse in export revenues.

In the Sudan, the Federal Ministry of Health reports that 30 billion Sudanese pounds (approximately USD 545 million) has been allocated to prevent the collapse of the Sudanese health system and another Sudanese pounds 20 billion (USD 364 million) to support people affected by the lockdown measures in Khartoum. In the absence of generous external loans or grants, internal borrowing has to increase but this has been hampered by the scarcity of cash in the banking system. For example, the government borrowed almost 85 percent of the banking system’s reserves in the six months between January and June 2020 and could not go further without wreaking undesirable effects on prices and the stability of the currency.

The macroeconomic crisis underway in Venezuela hinders its ability to respond to the crisis. The National Executive recently revealed a 99 percent decline in oil export revenues in 2020, only 1 percent of what they accounted for in 2013. This directly impacts the government’s ability to finance programmes and measures to counter the effects of the pandemic. Almost all resources used to import medicines, food, spare parts and equipment for agriculture and put in place aqueducts, transport, electricity and other basic infrastructure and social services come from oil export revenues. This situation is compounded by the country’s inability to access funding from the IMF.

In Somalia, measures taken by the government may have affected its ability to implement its priorities. For example, taxation at the border is a key income source for the government. Waiving the tax on some imported food items to ensure smooth market functioning and prevent food price spikes has sacrificed that income. The Ministry of Finance has, estimated a 40 percent decrease in the government income due to the pandemic.

A variety of fiscal measures has been taken in Colombia, including tax moratoriums and tax reductions. An Emergency Mitigation Fund and the COVID-19 Emergency Mitigation Sub-account of the National Disaster Risk Management Fund was created to allocate COP 40 billion to support the sectors most affected by COVID-19. In parallel the government adopted measures to strengthen the National Guarantee Fund, with additional resources estimated at COP 70 trillion, to support the issuance of new credit and maintain continuity in financial and economic activities. According to the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework, to cover projected financing needs in 2020, Colombia planned to resort to external sources for USD 10 855 million (38.9 trillion COP or 3.8 percent of gross domestic product). A new fiscal reform is planned for the second half of 2021.
In Nigeria, the National Assembly approved the establishment of a USD 1.3 billion COVID-19 Crisis Intervention Fund, as part of the Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill 2020. The fund has been earmarked for the upgrading of health facilities nationwide and to finance a national public works programme, as well as any other interventions that may be required in the future. However, Nigeria’s internally generated revenue is low, therefore a huge fiscal gap will be created as a result of COVID-19. Analysis of the above funding sources shows that one-third of the funds needed will need to be sourced from outside the government purse.

COVID-19 and the impact of containment measures

KEY MESSAGE 6. The impact of policies to contain the pandemic and support agrifood systems and vulnerable groups affected by COVID-19 is difficult to disentangle from those of other crises and stresses in countries in food crisis (e.g., economic crises, pests, climatic shocks and conflict). However, our analysis of country profiles supports the hypothesis that food insecurity has increased during the pandemic mainly because of the COVID-19 recession. Agricultural production seems to be resilient to the effects of the crisis due to targeted support measures.

In some cases, better harvests and easing border and domestic movement restrictions resulted in smoother functioning markets following COVID-related disruptions (while other shocks may have continued to exist). In a context of spatially segmented markets exacerbated by COVID-19 movement restrictions, substantial regional and sub-national differences are found in terms of agricultural performance and prices. Local production is often key to food security.

The second part of Table 3 shows cereal production during two periods prior to the pandemic: 2019 and the average for five years before the pandemic (2015-2019). One key finding is that primary agriculture seems to resist COVID-19-related restrictive policies and associated disruptions as well as declines in aggregate demand (represented by the changes in GDP shown in the first column of Table 3). Estimated cereal production in 2020 seems to be in line with both the five-year average and the 2019 level for almost all countries. One important reason is that agrifood systems were exempted from the restrictions in all countries and received active government support, which could have had a positive overall effect on primary production. As seen in some country profiles, the post-farm segments of the supply chain may have suffered more damage from the pandemic-associated restrictions. However, increases in the overall production of cereals may mask regional and local reductions due to a lack of availability of inputs and access to markets.

As can be seen in Table 3 the two countries that experienced the largest fall in GDP growth in 2020 were both oil producers – Venezuela and Iraq. Clearly, the deep fall in global prices caused havoc for their oil-dependent fiscal revenues.
Agrifood systems and COVID-19
Analysis of policy responses in countries with food crisis situations (2020-2021)

TABLE 3 | Inflation, real GDP growth and cereal production by country (2019-2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Inflation (a)</th>
<th>Real GDP growth (a)</th>
<th>Cereal production (million tonnes) (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central African Republic</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (16 states and Federal Capital Territory)</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sudan</td>
<td>163.3</td>
<td>197.1</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)</td>
<td>2 355.1</td>
<td>5 500.0</td>
<td>-23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>557.2</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (a) IMF World Economic Outlook (April 2021)

COVID-19 and access to food in 2020: results from FIES surveys

Nine of the 15 countries analysed in this report were included in a study conducted by the FAO Statistics Division to explore the extent of food insecurity in 2020 using the FIES (Boero et al., 2021). The study reports estimates of the annual food insecurity in the national population in 2020, and compares it, when possible, with the same assessment in 2019. It found a very large increase in the prevalence of food insecurity in Nigeria, the countries were the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity may have been greatest among all analysed countries. There, the combined prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity (which correspond to the Sustainable Development Goals indicator 2.1.2), increased from around 50 percent to almost 75 percent in just one year. A significant part of the deterioration involves severe food
insecurity, which almost doubled, growing from less than 18% to more than 30 percent. Among the countries covered in this report, statistically significant increases in the annual prevalence of food insecurity from 2019 to 2020 are also found in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe, while the change was within statistical bounds for Iraq. Due to lack of comparable assessments in 2019, it was not possible to determine the change from 2019 to 2020 for Haiti, CAR, Somalia, where rates of moderate or severe food insecurity were very high in 2020 at around 80 percent of the population, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it was found to be around 70 percent.

The study also explored the extent of recent food insecurity (as experienced over the four weeks preceding the survey) and compared it with the most recent IPC acute food insecurity assessment. In most cases the results are broadly consistent with the results from IPC analyses (below), providing additional evidence on the likely impact of the COVID pandemic on food insecurity.

COVID-19 and Acute Food Insecurity: results from IPC analysis

Table 4 presents country-specific data on IPC-CH measurements of high acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) as well as the weighted means for the group. Three numbers are reported: the 2019 peak number, the 2020 peak number and the peak 2021 number (as of June 2021). However, compatibility issues in comparing results across time-periods (for the same country) do exist and are presented in Box 2. Besides, it needs to be underlined that the differences between periods for a particular country in Table 4 (e.g. between peak 2019 and peak 2020) may reflect the dynamics of other factors underlying the crises and not just the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the 9 countries for which we have comparable results for the three periods, the (peak) prevalence of acute food insecurity increased in 2020 compared with the peak number in 2019, indicating that COVID-19 (a common crisis driver for all countries during the period) has had a negative effect on food security. Besides, as the analysis in Box 2 shows for the two countries for which the samples have been normalised to be comparable (the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Honduras) acute food insecurity increased between 2019/20 giving more support to the detrimental effects of COVID-19 on acute food insecurity.
Box 2: Compatibility Issues related to comparisons of IPC results

Acute food insecurity estimates are considered comparable when the following criteria are met: the same areas are analysed, the difference in the population analysed of each estimate being compared is lower than 10 percentage points, and the same sources and methodology are used. For some countries, the coverage of food security analyses between years varies in terms of population (e.g. rural only vs. rural and urban) or areas analysed (e.g. part of the country vs. whole country). This affects the comparability of the number of acutely food-insecure people between time periods.

On the basis of the criteria above, the acute food insecurity estimates for 2019, 2020 and 2021 cannot be directly compared for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Honduras and Iraq due to significant differences in geographical and population coverage between rounds of analysis (see below for more details):

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the 2020 figures cannot be directly compared to the 2019 peak analysis due to an 11 percent increase in the population analysed from almost 60 million in 2019 to almost 67 million in 2020, and expansion of geographical coverage. The 2020 peak analysis covered nine additional urban centres and 29 new territories notably to account for rising acute food insecurity conditions in urban areas affected by restrictions to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like most urban centers around the world, cities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been hit harder by COVID-19 restrictions than rural areas. In 2021, the total magnitude increased due to the size of the population analysed (66 million in 2020 versus 96 million in 2021). The number of people in acute food insecurity in 2021 is the highest ever reported for the DRC, this is partly due to the additional areas analysed including urban areas. However, the prevalence of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) slightly decreased compared to the previous analysis in 2020. It should be noted that the 2021 IPC analysis in DRC covered a greater number of areas, in particular areas relatively less affected by cyclical factors that contribute to acute food insecurity than areas already covered in the previous rounds of analysis. It is also worth noting that comparing the same 62 districts analysed in 2019 to 2020, the population classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) would nevertheless increase from 11.5 million people to 15.6 million and remained mostly unchanged in 2021 (i.e. 15.7 million) a,b.–

In Ethiopia, the IPC analysis in 2020 was expanded to include Meher-dependent areas, therefore the increased geographical coverage resulted in higher numbers of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) that year than in 2019. However, the inclusion of these areas during the harvest period meant that the prevalence fell from 27 percent during the 2019 peak to 16 percent at the peak in 2020. The 2020 and 2021 peak estimates refer to comparable populations analysed and similar geographical coverage – i.e. 53 million people analysed compared to 56 million, respectively, in the same areas.

In Honduras, 13 departments (partially including Francisco Morazán) were analysed in 2019, compared to the entire country in 2020. In the 12 comparable departments covered by the 2019 and 2020 peak analyses, the number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) doubled from roughly 700 000 to 1.4 million. The 2020 and 2021 peak figures are comparable in terms of population and geographical areas covered.

In Iraq, in 2019, the peak number of acute food insecurity was calculated based on the entire population (100%) analysed, while only the conflict-affected population (15%) was considered in calculating the 2020 peak number. No estimate was available for 2021 as of September.
In South Sudan, although the prevalence of IPC Phase 3 or above among the population slightly decreased over the three years, it remained considerable at 55–61 percent, including around 108 000 people in IPC Phase 5 in April–July 2021. In the group of countries monitored for this study, the weighted average of prevalence of food insecurity increased by 3.5 percentage points in 2020 (from 19 to 22.6 percent) and a smaller increase between 2020 and 2021 (1.6 percent).\(^{10}\)

Further increases in food insecurity are expected in several countries for which results can be directly compared as per the criteria in Box 2 between 2020 and 2021 (Ethiopia Haiti, Honduras, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan). The situation is expected to slightly improve for the Central African Republic and Zimbabwe while for the Sudan and Mali the situation is expected to be very similar to 2020.

However, in countries facing multiple crises, it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for changes in acute food insecurity and to ascertain the role the pandemic may have played. The situation in terms of the virus spread is still uncertain at best, as many countries are continuing to experience successive waves of the COVID-19. Furthermore, vaccination prospects are not good in low-income countries in general and possibly even worse in countries in food crisis. Although the country profiles show that governments are now placing more emphasis on the smooth functioning of the economy (including agrifood systems), highly contagious variants may force them to reapply severe measures such as local or general lockdowns, movement restrictions, etc.

Table 4 points to the recession caused by the pandemic as a chief determinant of the increase in acute food insecurity. A positive five-year average GDP growth turned negative during the pandemic year and then rebounded in 2021. This indicates that major drivers behind the increase in acute food insecurity in 2020 were the pandemic, the measures to contain it and the international environment. The regularity with which happened points to the pandemic as an important reason that a positive growth rate turned negative (or, in the case of two countries, became even more negative) over and above other shocks and stressors.

In summary, although the increase in acute food insecurity may also be attributed to non-COVID-19 related drivers, the pattern and magnitude of increases in 2020, the universality of the condition and projected changes in 2021 indicates a clear negative impact of the virus and associated restrictions on food security.

\textit{In all of the countries examined for this report, COVID-19 appears to have amplified the effects of other shocks and stressors on acute food insecurity.}

\(^{10}\) The weighted average for a particular year was calculated by dividing the sum of food insecure populations for all countries divided by the sum of the sample sizes.
### TABLE 4 | Acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) by country (2019-2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Acute Food Insecurity</th>
<th>Numbers of acutely food insecure and their share of the population surveyed in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above</th>
<th>Peak 2019 (%)</th>
<th>Peak 2020 (%)</th>
<th>Peak 2021* (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>11 286 353</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13 154 519</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13 154 519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central African Republic</td>
<td>1 809 109</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2 362 737</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2 289 736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>890 635</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>N.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>15 577 676</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21 834 710</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>4 341 420</td>
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</table>

Source: (a) FSIN, 2021; IPC Global Partners, 2021b,c,d
Notes:*as of June 2021.

In Colombia, the economic downturn caused by the pandemic increased poverty levels, which reached 42 percent of the population in 2020. An additional 3.5 million people fell below the poverty line, with the result that 21 million people risked being unable to access food. According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview issued by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), there are 3.5 million acutely food insecure.

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11 For Afghanistan, the numbers for 2020 and 2021 are identical for the following reason: For the Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the IPC used for Afghanistan in 2021 is the same as that used for 2020, as the analysis period covered both years – i.e. November 2020-March 2021 – and reflected the peak estimates of acute food insecurity of both years at the time of the analysis. The IPC analysis released in October 2021 indicates a significant deterioration in acute food insecurity, with nearly 19 million people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, classified in Crisis or Emergency (IPC Phases 3 or 4) in September-October 2021, rising further to 22.8 million people in November 2021-March 2022.
people in Colombia, and 73 percent of the 1.7 million Venezuelan migrant and refugee population in Colombia were severely food insecure in 2020.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the pandemic did not affect the integrity of the agrifood chain, suffering more from difficulties in obtaining diesel, gasoline and other inputs, as well as climate variability from La Niña, which caused higher precipitation rates, flooding and difficulties for agriculture. The fuel shortage, along with other mobility restrictions, has moved the industry into shorter chains. Even with these adversities, producers and agro-industries reported a better performance in 2020 than in the previous year.

In Zimbabwe, the continued deterioration of the economy remains the major driver of acute food insecurity and poverty. Numerous, unpredictable policy changes have created an unstable macroeconomic environment. Drought and poor harvests during the 2019/20 season, also had a significant impact on the food security situation of most households. However, although it is difficult to disentangle the impacts of COVID-19 and relevant restrictions from other factors in an inflationary and unstable economic environment, the sheer collapse of growth in 2020 points to COVID-19 as an important driver of the recession.

In South Sudan, a confluence of factors makes it difficult to reach definitive conclusions regarding the effects of COVID-19 on market availability, supply chain functioning and prices. Such factors include conflict and flood-related reductions in crop production in some areas, earlier than-normal depletion of harvest stocks, degraded road conditions affecting market access and functionality, currency devaluation, and diminished household purchasing power. Domestic cereal production, despite some increases in 2019 and 2020, will continue to be unable meet the country’s needs with the projected 2021 cereal deficit remaining substantial. Although this represents an overall 3.5 percent decline from the 2020 deficit, in flood-affected states, where the food security situation is already alarming and cereal production declined in 2020 due to extensive flood damage, the cereal deficit is projected to increase by 7 percent in 2021.

In Somalia, the pandemic and follow-up measures have been accompanied by other crises such as floods and locust infestation. From April to June 2020, the heavy Gu rains damaged critical transport infrastructure, blocking supply corridors from main markets to remote areas in several regions across the country. Access to markets continued to be difficult as the rains rendered the main supply corridors impassable in addition to the limited maritime transportation due to COVID-19. Therefore, it is not an easy task to distinguish the impacts of various shocks on the food supply (e.g. effects of flooding vis-à-vis those related to COVID-19 restrictions). Informant interviews point to the flooding as being a more serious impediment to mobility, especially during the rainy seasons causing food prices to differ between producing and consuming regions. The effects of COVID-19 were more pronounced during the initial restrictive measures as markets were undersupplied and demand shifted due to panic buying. The relaxation of measures benefited most regional food markets, but not those markets in conflict-prone and flooded areas.

In the Central African Republic, the COVID-19 pandemic took place in a context of prolonged food insecurity, due to the underperformance of family farming systems, combined with a political-military crisis that has persisted since 2013 and the occupation of the eastern part of country by an armed rebellion, which has exposed people to recurrent internal displacement. The Central African Republic does not have adequate infrastructure, which contributes to the loss of its potential in the agricultural sector. However, 70 percent of the working population relies on subsistence farming and depends on fluctuating rainfall for their livelihood. The main source of food energy is cassava, which is threatened by diseases, while corn and some
legumes are threatened by the armyworm. In a normal year, the lean period lasts at least three months in the south and five months in the north, corresponding to the dry season. This “normal” food supply situation was greatly aggravated by the effects of higher food prices caused by measures to restrict the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, during the second quarter of 2020.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the structural factors that intensify the impacts of COVID-19 on agrifood systems include: (i) the prevailing insecurity in several parts of country over more than two decades and the repercussions of armed conflicts and inter-communal violence (ii) the persistent economic and financial crisis linked to the significant drop in the prices of raw materials, especially copper and cobalt; (iii) the fragility and precariousness of the health system as a whole; and (iv) poor access to basic social services (education, drinking water, hygiene and sanitation).

In Ethiopia, COVID-19 has doubled the number of people needing humanitarian assistance, which is already overstretched by desert locust infestation and conflict displacement. Sharply reduced economic activity and associated reductions in employment, real incomes and access to food have had severe effects on food security and nutrition, especially for already vulnerable countries and groups.

In Zimbabwe, rural households have experienced an average 51.5 percent reduction in income compared to 2019. Coupled with food and fuel price increases, the resulting drop in poor peoples’ purchasing power is expected to reduce the consumption of food, especially of higher-cost nutritious food, with implications for the nutritional status of poor households. The 2020 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee Rural Livelihoods Assessment reported that 57 percent of rural households rely on less expensive or less preferred foods. Access to casual labour was reported to have been severely affected by the restrictive measures with 42 percent and 60 percent of respondents respectively reporting complete or partial loss of employment or income over the previous fortnight during the second half of 2020, compared to pre-COVID-19 lockdown. The same effects were noted for wage labour in urban areas, where 23 percent of households completely lost their income source, according to a World Bank assessment report. In Nigeria, a report from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) shows that 88 percent of the households in four regions lost about 50 percent of their income due to the pandemic.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all sectors (agriculture, formal and informal trade, etc.) have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly because of the reduction in economic activity. A recent survey carried out by FAO shows that more than 40 percent of households recorded a drop in their overall income in 2020 compared to the previous year. Among these households, 24 percent estimated their income losses to be more than 50 percent. Among agriculture households in the province of Kwilu, 61.4 percent reported a decrease in their income or their production 28.9 percent.

In Afghanistan, the extremely poor (i.e., individuals living on USD 1.9 or less per day) have borne the brunt of the economic disruption triggered by COVID-19. Over 55 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line before the pandemic. The revised Afghanistan HRP for 2018-2021 identified 18.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance due to COVID-19, ongoing conflict and natural disasters. The number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2021 is approximately six times larger than four years ago when the multi-year HRP was first developed.
A CGIAR’s analysis of COVID-19 impacts show that Ethiopia’s lockdown, which began in mid-March 2020 and lasted for seven weeks, led to a 14.3 percent decline in GDPF, an equivalent of USD 1.9 billion. The Ethiopian economic output declined by 2.3 percent between 2019 and 2020, largely because of the pandemic. The national poverty rate increased by 9 percent during the lockdown. Foreign direct investments fell from 20 percent of GDP to 2.2 percent of GDP. The recession resulted in 10.1 million additional people falling below the poverty line. Thirty-eight percent of casual workers lost their jobs, followed by wage employees in the private sector (20 percent) and the self-employed (11 percent). The agricultural sector experienced the fewest employment losses (5.3 percent) while the hospitality sector the highest (38.4 percent).

On average, a local food basket consumes at least 50–75 percent of household income in many of the countries in our study, so even temporary price hikes can have substantial negative impacts.

In Afghanistan, food prices, already affected by climatic factors, were exacerbated by COVID-19 and are likely to further increase if current weather patterns persist. According to WFP’s market monitoring, the average wheat flour price increased by 12 per cent between mid-March 2020 and the second week of March 2021, while large increases were also observed for pulses, sugar, cooking oil and low-quality rice. The exact degree to which prices have increased because of the pandemic cannot be known for sure. These price increases are accompanied by declining purchasing power for casual labourers and pastoralists; this has deteriorated by almost 19 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively compared to March 2020.

In the Sudan, an average local food basket consumed at least 75 percent of household income prior to the pandemic. The Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank measured COVID-19’s socio-economic effect on Sudanese households. The survey revealed that 20 percent of households could not afford to buy basic food staples such as bread and milk.

FEWSNET reported in December 2020 that food consumption and dietary diversity had deteriorated among poor households in Zimbabwe, with wild foods such as mushrooms as well as fruits and insects in short supply. According to the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund survey findings, 74 percent and 90 percent respectively of respondents reported that they had experienced an increase in household expenses in general and food expenditures in particular due to high prices.

In South Sudan, according to the food security and nutrition monitoring system survey conducted among rural households in in August and September 2020, an estimated 43 percent reported experiencing shocks due to COVID-19 restrictions. These included unusually high food prices (33 percent), loss of income by household members (21 percent), reduced employment for household members (10 percent), and unusually high costs of fuel, transport and other non-food items (11 percent).

Widespread informality among people working in the agrifood system in rural areas is a source of vulnerability.

In Honduras about 50 percent of the economically-active population – about one million people – is informally employed. This group has been particularly affected by the pandemic. It includes, for example, street vendors who lost employment during the lockdown and were not able to recover even once it was lifted. In Zimbabwe, the lockdown period led to a sharp reduction in the activities of the non-agricultural informal sector in rural and urban areas. This led to a decline in incomes of over 50 percent among people engaged in the informal sector, most of whom are women.
In Ethiopia, COVID-19 disruptions have affected the food security of 14 million informal sector workers, including people in temporary jobs such as street vending, petty trade, lottery ticket sales shoe-shining, assisting taxi drivers and other similar activities. It should be noted that in Ethiopia, women make up 65 percent of the informal workforce.

As has been reported in other sections of this report, informal workers and entrepreneurs did not have access to government programmes for registered workers in MSMEs, social protection programmes or economy-wide programmes, e.g., to expand loans to MSMEs by commercial banks, moratoriums on loan repayment etc.

The crisis has affected internal and external migration and the movement of agricultural labour in some countries. Moreover, the reduction in migrant incomes and remittances due to the global recession is negatively affecting rural populations in many places.

In Nigeria, migratory labour across the country and from neighbouring countries was disrupted by restrictions to interstate and cross-border movement, limiting labour supply in high potential agricultural areas in the north. This reduced engagement in agriculture. Currently, labour wages are slightly below average since labour demand is below average including for agriculture. In Zimbabwe, between April and November 2020, 32,047 Zimbabwean migrants were officially recorded as having returned from neighbouring countries.

In the Sudan, restrictions on the movement of people within the country and across its borders reduced the number of internal and external workers – particularly from Ethiopia and South Sudan – seeking labour opportunities in rain-fed farming in the Sudan.

In Afghanistan, the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were the main factor influencing the high rates of return migration, with more than 75 percent of returning migrants – most of whom lived in the neighbouring Islamic Republic of Iran – citing the loss of employment as the primary reason for their decision to return. Afghanistan and its neighbours have maintained border restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19, increasing the demand for smugglers, who have in turn increased their fees and sought alternative – often riskier – routes to avoid detection according to the Mixed Migration Centre.

In South Sudan, remittances provide an important source of external financing, averaging 35 percent of GDP. The World Bank predicted that this would decline to 7.2 percent in 2020 because of the COVID-19 outbreak and the economic situation in migrant host countries.

In the Sudan, the economic crisis and the lockdown of Khartoum State, which hosts the largest number of migrants, forced workers to return to rural areas even without prospects for employment. This increased the size of rural households and dependency rates and reduced the flow of remittances to their families. The reduction in incomes and external remittances from Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries during the shutdown has affected many families in the Sudan. The reduced employment activities in the Gulf States led to a decline in the flow of remittances by as much as 80 percent between January and April 2020.

In 2020, a decrease in remittances by 57 percent and 23 percent was documented in the Central African Republic and Mali respectively. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the number of households receiving transfers fell from 24.3 percent to 16.3 percent during the same period. This decrease included the sums received (58.1 percent) and the frequency of transfers (75.6 percent). In Mali, migrant remittances represented 6 percent of the GDP in 2018, which corresponds to USD one billion. A large part of these funds was invested in food and agricultural inputs (e.g., fertilizers, phytosanitary products, plows, etc.). The decrease in
cash transfers from the diaspora therefore reduced the access of some producers to 
agricultural inputs at the start of the rainy season.

About 33.1 percent and 23.8 percent of Ethiopians have lost remittances from within Ethiopia 
and from abroad respectively. In Ethiopia, 28 percent of the young people from Amhara and 
Oromia regional states permanently migrated to the urban areas between 2010–2014. 
However, an already high rate of unemployment in the urban areas of 19.1 percent has made 
life difficult for rural-urban migrants. About 260 000 Ethiopians, an average of 10 000 per 
month, were deported from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia between May 2017 and March 2019. 
During COVID-19, 2 870 Ethiopians returned from Saudi Arabia.

In Haiti, remittances from abroad, mainly from the United States of America, increased by 20 
percent in 2020 compared to the previous fiscal year. According to the Central Bank, this 
increase in transfers was synchronized with the stimulus package of the United States 
government and reflects the importance of solidarity within the diaspora. These transfers 
certainly contributed to reducing the negative impacts of reductions in economic activity in the 
country.

In Colombia, between 14 and 17 March 2020, the government closed land, maritime and river 
borders with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as well as with Ecuador, Panama, Peru and 
Brazil. Similar measures were adopted by neighbouring countries. This placed an additional 
burden on the thousands of migrants present in Colombia, who saw their possibilities for 
travelling back to their countries of origin and to other countries in the region drastically 
restricted. In early February 2021, the Government of Colombia announced the creation of a 
Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan migrants, which, according to official estimates, 
could benefit around two million people.

KEY MESSAGE 7. Despite the relaxation of restrictions in the summer and fall of 2020, our 
analysis shows that the pandemic, building on the effects of other shocks and stressors, 
continues to have a negative impact on people’s livelihoods. Negative coping mechanisms 
employed by households hinder a rapid recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

In Zimbabwe, an assessment in October 2020 found that although the relaxation of lockdown 
restrictions had largely opened agricultural input and output markets, thereby providing 
farmers with more options for accessing inputs and selling their produce, some households 
were still at risk of chronic food insecurity and poverty. While most households returned to 
their normal farming activities, their recovery efforts were threatened by the increasing costs 
of securing production inputs (77 percent), their limited ability to sell agricultural produce (36 
percent), increasing grain prices in local markets (35 percent), and limited access to off-farm 
work (40 percent). A general increase in the cost of living due to COVID-19-related disruptions 
was reported by 56 percent of the households. The availability of cereal grains in local markets 
was critically low at the time of the survey, which coincided with the start of the lean season. 
The situation was aggravated by movement restrictions on both people and grains, which 
made it difficult for traders to bring in grain from other areas of the country.

In Ethiopia, while no major restrictions were imposed on the import of goods and food-related 
inputs (seeds, fertilizers and chemicals), supply systems were disrupted by COVID-19 
restrictions. The interruption of the school feeding programmes also had important impacts in 
the country: In Addis Ababa alone, about 360 000 children have been fed in all primary schools 
of the city twice-a-day before school openings were suspended for an indefinite period due to 
the COVID-19 pandemic.
In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a FAO survey conducted during the last quarter of 2020 found that 86 percent of households found it increasingly difficult to access production inputs – seeds and fertilizer in particular – due to insufficient availability in local markets (26 percent) and specialized local shops (23 percent), higher than usual seed prices (20 percent) and lack of funds or credit to buy seeds (15 percent).

In Nigeria, the livelihoods situation in the northeast is precarious. Although many COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, activities, such as petty trading, construction work, water vending, and agricultural labour, showed evidence of deterioration during December 2020. The report also noted that persistent conflict, recurrent flooding and the pandemic and related measures have further worsened socio-economic indicators in that part of the country, including household incomes and livelihood activities, including farming and food production. Adverse coping mechanisms employed by poor households and MSMEs during the COVID-19 crisis may have long-term implications for the livelihoods of poor people.

In the Sudan, even before the pandemic, families were reducing the frequency and number of meals from three to two meals a day, purchasing low quality food and/or borrowing money from relatives or friends. Unless the situation improves, this negative coping behaviour could persist, even without pandemic-related restrictions, and will have long-term nutritional implications.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, poor and very poor households that have lost all or part of their sources of income have adopted coping strategies such as the diversification of income sources (harvesting, agricultural work, non-agricultural work, trade) or reduced food consumption in terms of quantity or quality. As previously mentioned, the average cost of the food basket in the Democratic Republic of the Congo increased during the last quarter of 2020.

In Ethiopia, about 32.3 percent of households who lost income due to COVID-related restrictions have used extreme coping strategies such as selling assets or reducing food or non-food expenditures. Moreover, 31.4 percent of total households reported at least one example of adult members passing an entire day without food due to a lack of resources. Consumer demand for dairy products has shifted and more than half of the consumers in Addis Ababa reported avoiding the consumption of animal-sourced foods due to the perceived risk of COVID-19. Pandemic-related measures also impacted the supply of agricultural inputs and reduced the availability of livestock feed.

In 2019, Afghanistan faced one of the most severe food crises in the world. A limited capacity to mitigate the additional effects of income loss during the COVID-19 crisis has forced most Afghan families to rely on coping strategies that have potentially long-term negative effects on household welfare. Increased child labour and early marriages two such strategies. Pending a thorough analysis, indications are that affected households may be forced to reduce their expenditures on education and nutritious food or to sell their assets, with implications for livelihoods and human capital accumulation.

Increasing indebtedness has been another coping strategy followed by Afghan households facing difficulties. The Whole of Afghanistan Multisector Assessment shows that household debt is spiralling, both in terms of the number of people in debt and the scale of the debt. Average household debt is now 46 299 299 Afghanis (AFN) (approximately USD 604), up from AFN 9 813 (USD 128) in 2019. For 53 percent of the households, the main reason for taking on debt was to pay for food.
The pandemic and restrictive measures put enormous pressure on agrifood SMEs and MSMEs due to both lack of access to production inputs and to reduced consumer demand.

Two rounds of a survey carried out in Somalia (February to July 2020 and July 2020 to December 2020/January 2021) examined inter alia coping strategies by MSMEs to avoid closing during the pandemic. The survey reported that 45 percent and 37 percent of firms had temporarily closed their business at least once during the two main phases of the survey respectively. Their main coping mechanisms included reducing staff wages and salaries, working hours and number of staff members; increasing remote and online work; and starting or increasing the delivery of goods, services, or takeaway. The latest findings show that firms expected to return to normal levels of sales and workforce around June/July 2021.

In Zimbabwe, a survey conducted by the SIVIO Institute between April and May 2020 revealed that 32 percent of MSMEs folded up operations altogether; 63 percent lost between USD 1 000 and USD 3 000 in revenue during the first two months of lockdown; 69 percent could not restock without external assistance; 57 percent could not afford to pay salaries for the next month; 40 percent could not afford to pay rent; and 50 percent would require external assistance to recover.

In Iraq, a panel survey undertaken by FAO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) over 2020 and 2021 showed that SMEs have not yet recovered from the pandemic. Average monthly revenues were still down from USD 6 011 in February 2020 (pre-COVID-19) to USD 3 790 in May 2021. Performance for SMEs in the food and agriculture sector was down from USD 7 269 to USD 5 746.

Collecting primary data on nutrition (including anthropometric data) in the context of the pandemic has been difficult because of physical distancing and travel restrictions. However, a few countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, monitored food consumption and diets during the pandemic using remote surveys. In every case, the surveys reported a deterioration of people’s diets in terms of quantity or quality due to reduced purchasing power or price increases or lower incomes (or all of three).

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a survey carried out by the National Institute of Statistics in Kinshasa in June 2020 found that the crisis had a significant impact on food consumption: a large proportion of households have been forced to adopt survival or adaptation strategies, often based on reducing the frequency or quantity and quality of meals.

In the Central African Republic, according to a survey carried out by the Central African Institute of Statistics and Social and Economic Studies, the World Bank and WFP from 27 August to 4 September 2020, 64.4 percent of households do not have economic access to a “healthy diet” while 28.8 percent of them reported a drop in labour income. Lack of similar data for previous (pre-pandemic) periods makes it difficult to attribute such effects entirely to COVID-19.

**Lessons learned and prospects for recovery**

**KEY MESSAGE 8.** The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted fragilities in agrifood systems and identified areas that need policy attention. Stakeholders agree that the pandemic presents an opportunity for rethinking the transformation of agrifood systems. However, very few countries have formulated concrete proposals to strengthen the resilience of such systems. This is partly due to continuing successive waves of the pandemic.
As noted in the previous section, some of the lessons learned during the first wave of the pandemic have been “applied” in successive waves. The fundamental lesson has been the need to avoid horizontal lockdowns and movement restrictions and to concentrate instead on health-related actions, including physical distancing. However, some more general, long-term structural issues have been identified and reported in the profiles.

The need for effective crop marketing and logistical arrangements and systems, particularly transportation services, markets, storage and handling, are of paramount importance for the national agrifood sector.

In Zimbabwe, the challenges experienced in distributing food to local markets during the first lockdown exposed weaknesses in the national agrifood supply chains. The pandemic has highlighted the need for effective logistical arrangements that enable the smooth flow of agricultural inputs, outputs and agriculture-related services, including procurement, transportation, storage and handling.

In Nigeria, movement restrictions affected logistics and supply chains for food and agricultural inputs and outputs. Farmers and businesses focused on processing, packaging and marketing perishable produce need greater mobility and access during periods of movement restrictions. A practical action would be to work directly with the leadership of the National Union of Road Transport Workers at the state and local levels to issue movement permits to companies involved in transporting food and agricultural commodities.

An important policy lesson learned in the Sudan is that wholesale and retail markets and agribusiness enterprises must remain open since they employ many poor and vulnerable people who depend on daily earnings. In addition, national stakeholders have recognized need to strengthen or establish adequate food-related infrastructure throughout agrifood systems, including storage facilities and means of transport.

Strengthening coordination mechanisms among various actors (e.g., donor and development agencies, public sector institutions and private sector actors) has been identified as a major need in most of the countries included in the analysis. The production of accurate and timely information should be a major outcome of such coordination.

As was mentioned in Section 2 of this report, inadequate data and information (including early warning) have severely hampered programme implementation, targeting and rapid intervention in agrifood systems and livelihoods.

In the Sudan’s experience, lack of efficient information systems and low use of digital means complicated efforts to address the impacts of the pandemic since information on number of affected farmers and producers and agrifood enterprises was lacking.

The governance and coordination mechanisms that were established in the early stages of the pandemic (and remain in most countries) were mostly led by health institutions. Discussions, data and budgets were mainly oriented toward health issues and tended to neglect the socio-economic implication of the crisis, including on food systems. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo for example, neither non-state actors (producer organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector) nor representatives of the agrifood sector or social protection services were part of the coordination structures created in the context of the pandemic. As has already been mentioned, in Haiti, each ministry was requested to develop its own response plan, which made it very difficult to implement an integrated and multisectoral response. The lack of coordination also applies to monitoring and impact analysis. Each actor tends to evaluate their own actions and there is no comprehensive monitoring mechanism to measure the overall effect of interventions.
In the Central African Republic, the president and vice president of the country coordinated the pandemic response, which included 17 ministries (including agriculture and livestock ministries) and representatives of UN organizations. However, local authorities were not included in the coordination mechanisms, while inter-ministerial coordination was often lacking even though ministries were included.

The need for a long-term recovery and resilience-building strategy and related mechanisms has been identified as crucial for enhancing the preparedness of countries to COVID-19 and other future large-scale crises.

In Somalia, the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment identified the need for a mechanism to enhance the crisis preparedness of the country in future. The report highlighted the urgent need to implement more self-reliance measures to enable the country to withstand crises, to support poor and vulnerable communities, and to provide an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive and grow. This includes strengthening government capacity to generate revenue, increasing the resilience of the private sector, diversifying the economy and creating more robust regional economic cooperation.

In nearly every case, strong self-reliance and self-sufficiency in food have been identified as important components of resilience. The diversification of production and employment is also emphasized, as is the need to broaden both export and import markets. Key informants in Zimbabwe agree that one of the main policy lessons to be drawn from the COVID-19 crisis is the need to expand and expedite efforts to address structural weaknesses in the food economy by reducing reliance on imported staple foodstuffs, promoting processed or semi-processed (rather than raw) exports and expand the number of import and export markets. This has implications for national policy, which should aim to strengthen agro-industry and food safety and encourage investment in value-adding activities. This will require providing technical and logistical support to SMEs and start-ups, reducing red tape in food export and import licenses and designing tailored technical and financial support schemes.

Some strategic directions regarding the short and long-term resilience of agri-food systems were provided at the regional level. The Commission of the African Union, together with African ministers of agriculture, trade and finance, offered some strategic directions to countries (Committee of Experts on Funding):

- the development of the budgetary spaces support agricultural revival and trade;
- the definition of subsidy mechanisms for inputs and agricultural equipment;
- the reduction of customs formalities relating to trade in agricultural inputs and materials;
- the facilitation of access to agricultural equipment markets by farmers in partner states;
- encouraging development finance institutions to set up guarantee and refinancing mechanisms to support loans and guarantees in the agricultural and logistics sectors;
- debt and interest rescheduling for agricultural businesses heavily impacted by the pandemic;
- authorization to postpone certain reimbursements to save businesses and farm workers from bankruptcy and to protect previous efforts to make the recovery faster and better;
- identification of agricultural operators and logistics chains most exposed to the effects of the crisis;
- sharing the tasks of agricultural and commercial recovery among the ministries concerned so that these strong messages echo in the policies and governance of the agricultural sector.
Countries need to design more inclusive pro-poor policies and to put into place flexible social protection mechanisms to include the “new” vulnerable groups emerging because of current crises.

The consensus among opinion leaders and key informants in Zimbabwe is that the COVID-19 pandemic has particularly impacted the livelihoods activities of poor people and vulnerable groups due to the lack of policies and programmes promoting inclusive growth. In the Sudan, the necessity of including the Zakat system and other social protection instruments in medium- and long-term recovery and resilience solutions was a critical policy lesson learned from the pandemic. In addition, policy-makers recognized the need to facilitate access to communication technologies (e.g., Bankak and Fawery mobile money services) that can help provide financial support to farmers and small agrifood businesses during a crisis. This requires a well-designed national registry system that allows proper targeting. However, the high cost of implementing such programmes requires partnerships between the government and the private sector.

In Nigeria, the implementation of government social protection policies revealed widespread concerns about the selection criteria used to determine benefits. The social registry used a three-stage targeting process, which was based on geographical targeting, community-based validation, and proxy means-testing (PMT) to identify the poorest people in Nigeria. Yet given the enormous cost of universal social protection, the social registry was only able to include two percent of the more than 90 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty. For social protection interventions to be more effective in the future, they need to be better designed and well-targeted to protect those most vulnerable to crises and shocks.

In the Central African Republic, the recurring cycle of armed violence and the effects of COVID-19 containment measures have helped increase the number of vulnerable people in need of assistance. The multiple crises faced by the country in 2020 highlighted the need for coordination and a proper beneficiary identification system. In the last quarter of 2020, a social safety net unit was set up in the Ministry of Humanitarian Actions and National Reconciliation by the government with support by development partners. This unit will oversee: (i) a harmonized system to identify, target and register beneficiaries; (ii) a harmonized system for paying beneficiaries; (iii) a national monitoring and evaluation system; (iv) pilot activities, including cash transfers and labour-intensive public works; and (v) an advisory mechanism for public structures and international partners to facilitate the implementation and promotion of social safety net programmes.

A recurrent policy lesson in most countries covered by this report is the need to strengthen early warning assessments and climate vulnerability analyses to inform properly early action and response interventions to mitigate the impact of shocks on the agrifood system.

An emerging policy lesson for Zimbabwe is the need to strengthen crop and livestock early warning assessments and climate vulnerability analyses. Regular scenario modelling is needed to forecast and anticipate the impacts of various forms of shocks and stresses. These early warning assessments are also critical for making data and empirical evidence available to inform policy and programme interventions. In the Sudan, improving information systems is a prerequisite for facing future crises. This includes data collection, management and analysis of production and market information. Scaling up digital technologies and online platforms can not only improve the operations of food markets but can also be used to provide various services to the agrifood sector, including extension and financial services.
In Iraq, the crisis has led to strengthening of data collection, analysis and reporting among international partners coupled with efforts to strengthen government capacities (human and institutional) for such activities.

In Nigeria, the lack of preparedness increased the impact of floods in 2020. Substantial numbers of people in Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, Kaduna, Benue, and Niger States, as well as in Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, and Sokoto states in the northwest are either at stressed (IPC-CH Phase 2) or crisis (IPC-CH Phase 3) levels of acute food insecurity. Some farmers lost their entire harvest for the year and many people have been displaced. Most states affected by flooding were already food crisis hotspots and the food harvest that was expected to help cushion the effect of COVID-19 has been lost. Enhancing preparedness capacity entails asset creation and preservation, increased livelihood opportunities and enhanced agricultural value chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed that policy processes are not inclusive, especially for small agrifood producers and informal sector workers, who are vulnerable to shocks and stresses and left out of mainstream economic activities.

In the Sudan, most small-scale farmers and agribusiness operators receive little support, despite their contribution to the economy. The policy incentives that exist suffer from lack of funding. The government must design policies that create productive and efficient food systems to meet the current and future challenges facing small-scale producers, particularly vulnerable groups and those depending on food in rainfed and irrigated agricultural systems.

In Zimbabwe, the pandemic has exposed the extent to which small producers and informal sector workers, who are extremely vulnerable to shocks and stresses, are excluded from mainstream economic activities, lacking access to productive resources and social protection.

In the Central African Republic, efforts by the Central Bank to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19 relate only to the formal sector, while most farmers – who occupy the informal sector – were unable to benefit from such measures. Rural households have in general very little means of accessing any type of social protection or economic support even during a pandemic.

**KEY MESSAGE 9.** The very few countries that have finalized COVID-19 recovery plans have neither set investment priorities nor taken a systems approach. Most plans also lack a focus on gender and healthy diets.

In Zimbabwe, the Agricultural Recovery Plan advocates for private sector-driven growth while it proposes that government action focuses on “accelerating policy implementation, legal, institutional and structural reforms to strengthen macroeconomic stability as well as improving the business environment.” This policy stance needs to be realized by actual interventions that increase production and productivity across all agricultural value chains. The goal of Zimbabwe’s first National Development Strategy (NDS1) Macroeconomic Framework (November 2020) is to sustain high economic growth of over five percent, driven by the agriculture, mining, energy and manufacturing sectors. In the agrifood sector, the NDS1 seeks to restore the country’s regional breadbasket status, to increase the food self-sufficiency level from 45 percent in 2020 to 100 percent and reduce food insecurity from the current peak of 59 percent to less than 10 percent by 2025.

In the Sudan, although there are discussions at federal and state levels about the need for more resilient health and food systems, these have yet to be translated into serious, workable
and implementable plans due to budget limitations. It is also not clear how agrifood policies should address major challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and environment degradation.

In Nigeria, plans to recover from the pandemic include: (i) addressing rising insecurity especially in conflict zones; (ii) diversification of the economy, promotion of agrifood systems and reduced dependency on the oil sector; and (iii) reduction of friction between herders and farmers through support to commercial fodder production. However, up to this point, the plans are thin in terms of detail.

In Zimbabwe, the key informants consulted for this analysis believe that addressing food insecurity and malnutrition is a major step to building back better while ensuring the sustainability of agrifood systems. On 27 January 2021, the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, and Rural Resettlement announced that it had set up a new department, the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, to focus on the implementation of a Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan. The new department is mandated to enhance dietary diversity and improved nutritional outcomes, especially in rural areas where consumption of fish products is common.

Achieving the desired agricultural and economic growth in Zimbabwe requires resolving the issue of land tenure security and promoting climate-smart agriculture principles. The government promises to facilitate access to affordable agricultural financing through various strategies, such as establishing a Land Bank. It will review contract farming and agricultural marketing frameworks to ensure wider coverage of most crops and livestock grown by smallholders in terms of funding. Some key informants recommended that future interventions in the country’s agrifood sector should target structural issues that limit the ability of citizens to access productive assets that enable them to become resilient against climate change and other shocks.

Recovery planning usually follows a sector approach to addressing the agricultural transformation. In a few countries, agrifood systems are being placed at the centre of COVID-19 recovery plans.

In Zimbabwe, the government needs to incentivize agricultural production by providing adequate financial support for production and marketing commodities, particularly by smallholder producers. In the medium- to long-term, it should resolve outstanding land reform-related policy issues and promote investments in local value addition activities. Promoting inclusive growth is essential to strengthening the resilience of the national agrifood system to future pandemics and shocks. In the Sudan, while capacity building and additional resources are certainly required to agrifood challenges, there is also a need to understand and address the root causes of unequal access to resources, knowledge, assets, technology, and markets supply and value chains by marginalized groups.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’s Economic and Social Response and Recovery Plan places the expansion of financing mechanisms for agrifood chains and agricultural inputs and the sustainable and resilient plan for agricultural production and livelihoods at the heart of economic recovery. It focuses on strategic agrifood value chains (legumes, vegetables, fruits, oilseeds, roots and tubers, cereals, sugar cane, coffee, cocoa, among others) that include a capacity building and extension component focused on vulnerable populations and family farmers.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The cross-country analysis examines the information, analysis and knowledge contained in 15 country profiles on the agri-food systems policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from the first quarter of 2020 up to the first quarter of 2021. All 15 countries are classified as countries in food crisis. Individual country profiles and the cross-country analysis are unique in terms of their contribution and design. They present and analyse in detail agri-food policy responses through collecting and synthesizing knowledge and information on policies and programmes enacted and implemented to different degrees by governments, development and humanitarian partners but also, more importantly, by consulting key stakeholders in the individual countries. The profiles and cross-country analysis present lessons learned but also long-term actions needed to strengthen the resilience of food systems.

The analysis tracks agri-food policy responses through successive waves of the pandemic and shows how, in all cases, economic concerns prevailed in the balance between actions to contain the virus and actions to protect the functioning of agri-food systems.

The country reports and the cross-country analysis also highlight that policy responses have made a difference in protecting the agrifood systems and vulnerable groups despite a rather weak implementation relative to policy objectives. The exact degree to which policies made a difference cannot be assessed with the tools available, but the country-by-country qualitative analysis points to an overall positive outcome. While we know from many sources that agriculture has been more resilient than other sectors, we should recognize that active policy has contributed to this outcome. Governments and development partners are usually well equipped to deal with crises in primary agriculture and have adequate mechanisms to support this sector. This is not necessarily the case for the myriad of mostly informal SMEs operating between primary production and the final consumer. These were negatively affected by movement restrictions, labour shortages, and lack of access to markets for their inputs and reduced demand for their services. Yet, the tools, mechanisms and policy frameworks at the disposal of governments and development partners were mostly inadequate to provide meaningful support to SMEs in the agri-food systems, particularly informal entities. In many countries, this sub-sector of actors has fallen in an institutional vacuum and this gap must be addressed in recovery programmes.

The cross-country analysis draws attention to the need to reduce the negative impacts of malnutrition on COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, and the impacts of the COVID-19 economic crisis on nutrition. Tackling undernutrition, but also obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases, which often co-exist with undernutrition, is key as they contribute to increased COVID-19 morbidity and mortality. However, reduction in consumption of nutritious foods is one of the key coping strategies of households faced with loss of income caused by the pandemic, compounding the negative impact of the pandemic and the other crises confronting countries in food crisis.

The pandemic and associated policy responses exposed governance weaknesses, especially in food crisis contexts. The country profiles and cross-country analysis revealed fundamental weaknesses in governance and institutional structures to deal with often cumulative crises situations. Lessons from COVID-19 can inform the transformation of food systems towards greater sustainability and foster investments in governance, institutions and capabilities to increase food systems resilience, thereby contributing to more peaceful, inclusive and just societies.
Finally, the analysis shows that, too often, COVID-19 recovery plans have been underpinned by a crisis management approach that is too linear, operating a too rigid distinction between an acute crisis management phase, followed by a recovery phase. Yet, as infection waves continue to come and go, and with vaccination rates remaining extremely low in most countries with food crisis, it is highly unlikely that the pandemic will be behind us in the near future. A more likely scenario is that countries in food crisis will have to manage their recovery and rebuild their economies whilst dealing with occasional resurgence of COVID-19 infections, in a context of multiple fragility drivers. Applying an HDP approach will help actors to manage the trade-offs between addressing immediate, short-term crisis response needs, building on the policy lessons learnt outlined in this report, and enabling the long-term, structural changes needed to make food systems more sustainable and resilient to shocks and crises.
REFERENCES


All references, citations and source documents related to specific countries can be found in the relevant country profiles prepared by the FIRST Programme and the Global Network against Food Crises, which are referenced below. The whole series of country profiles assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national agrifood systems and its long-term policy implications can be found at https://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/resources/country-profiles/en/.

AFGHANISTAN


CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC


COLOMBIA


ETHIOPIA


HAITI


HONDURAS


IRAQ


MALI


NIGERIA

SOMALIA


SOUTH SUDAN


THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO


THE SUDAN


VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)


ZIMBABWE
