

**Thematic Evaluation Series**

# **Real-time evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme Phase II**

## **Annex 2. Self-assessed contributions**

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMIS	Agricultural Market Information System
BOHESI	Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative
CPF	Country Programming Framework
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
FVE	Federation of Veterinarians of Europe
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
ILO	International Labour Organization
INTA	Institute of Agricultural Technology (Nicaragua)
IPSA	Institute for Agricultural Protection and Health (Nicaragua)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OER	FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience
PIR	National Rural Investment Programme for Sustainable Development (Nicaragua)
PPE	Personal protective equipment
RCCE	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
SuTP	Syrians under Temporary Protection
TCP	Technical Cooperation Project
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBF	World Banana Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WOAH (formerly OIE)	World Organisation for Animal Health
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVA	World Veterinary Association

## List of self-assessed contributions, geographical coverage and priority areas

#	Title	Geographic Coverage	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7
1	Adapting targeted support to Kuchi pastoralists in Afghanistan for COVID-19	Afghanistan	X				X		
2	Preventing and responding to the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on food security in Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	X						
3	A novel approach to communication and knowledge sharing: COVID-19 risk mitigation among food chain workers	Global (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen)	X						
4	Preventative health messaging in Pakistan	Pakistan	X						
5	FAO Data in Emergencies Hub	Global (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Venezuela [Bolivarian republic of], Yemen, Zimbabwe)	X	X					
6	National Rural Investment Programme for Sustainable Development (PIR) for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nicaragua	Nicaragua		X					X
7	Building resilience of Syrians under Temporary Protection and host communities in Türkiye through supporting socioeconomic integration and creating livelihood opportunities	Türkiye			X		X		

#	Title	Geographic Coverage	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7
8	Investing in the foundations of social protection systems for ensuring shock responsiveness.	Philippines			X				
9	Technical capacity building to improve the quality of native and domesticated foreign ( <i>acriolladas</i> ) seeds in Nicaraguan family agriculture	Nicaragua				X	X		
10	Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS)	Global				X			
11	Occupational health and safety in the banana industry under the COVID-19 pandemic	Ecuador				X			
12	Resilience of rural households in Nicaragua's Dry Corridor after the impact of COVID-19 and innovation and diffusion of technology for adapting agriculture to climate change	Nicaragua					X		
13	In Colombia El Campo Sigue	Colombia	X				X		
14	Strengthening resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and contributing to poverty reduction in peri-urban Kinshasa through agricultural livelihoods support	Democratic Republic of the Congo					X		
15	Strengthening the livelihoods of vulnerable populations facing COVID-19 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Democratic Republic of the Congo					X		
16	Grow your own vegetables: promoting home gardening for improved nutritional status among vulnerable households in the towns of Juba, Nimule, Wau and Aweil	South Sudan					X		

#	Title	Geographic Coverage	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7
17	Operationalization of the Joint Risk Assessment	Egypt, Kenya						X	
18	Global guidance on risk assessment and One Health risk mitigation measures	Global (Egypt, Canada, United States of America, Oman, Indonesia, Viet Nam, United Arab Emirates)						X	
19	Monitoring of the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa in the context of COVID-19	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, West Africa and the Sahel	X						
20	Strengthening knowledge management for COVID-19 response	Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, West Africa and the Sahel	X						
21	Household Food Basket: early actions to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Senegal and the impacts of the crisis on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups	Senegal	X						
22	Special programme for food Security in response to the impacts of COVID-19 in Lesotho	Lesotho			X		X		
23	Improving the abilities of youth in East Africa to start and manage successful agribusinesses during COVID-19	Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Eastern Africa		X					X
24	Vegetable market corridors in Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	X						
25	COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme on agriculture and food systems in the United Republic of Tanzania	United Republic of Tanzania	X	X		X		X	X
26	Data for decision-making and building back better through climate-smart Agriculture in Armenia	Armenia		X					X
27	Policy dialogues in the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean	34 countries including Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba,				X			

#	Title	Geographic Coverage	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7
		Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, Uruguay							
28	Rapid needs assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods and food security in order to guide a targeted response by the humanitarian community and inform the generation of appropriate policies to safeguard food security and nutrition	21 countries including Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	X	X			X		
29	Food systems and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: analysing impacts and supporting country responses	Chile, Panama, Paraguay, Peru,		X					
30	Action sheets under the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and Regional Response Plan	Near East and North Africa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
31	Regional policy and advocacy on addressing COVID-19 impacts	Near East and North Africa		X					
32	Regional task force and monitoring mechanism	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Yemen		X					

# 1. Adapting targeted support to Kuchi pastoralists in Afghanistan for COVID-19

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan and PA5 - Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Afghanistan
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO Afghanistan, Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER)-Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (KORE)
<b>Office or Division</b>	OER
<b>Comments (optional)</b>	FAO. <i>Adapting targeted support to Kuchi pastoralists in Afghanistan for COVID-19: Promoting COVID-19 safe migration and livestock markets while tailoring livestock packages and cash-for-work schemes</i> . Rome,; FAO, 2020. <a href="https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1546en">https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1546en</a> .

## 1.1 Introduction

1. Close to 80 percent of the Afghan population depend on agriculture for their primary livelihood. Along with the health risks posed by the pandemic itself, the secondary impacts related to the measures to reduce transmission of COVID-19 had significant adverse impacts on agricultural households. The price of animal feed and fodder and livestock transportation spiked, and the cost of basic food supplies rose by around 20 percent. While farmers were able to harvest crops in the first year of the pandemic, marketing and storage capacities were strained and affected the following crop cycles. Around one-third of livestock and poultry farmers reported disrupted access to feed and veterinary services.
2. For Kuchi herders, these indirect effects of COVID-19 intensified their pre-existing vulnerabilities. Thirty percent of Kuchi herders were unable to access traditional grazing lands during their summer migration on account of international and provincial border closures, while just under half face major marketing challenges. Livestock markets in both western and eastern provinces operated under capacity due to movement restrictions over the spring and summer. Containment measures blocked veterinary services and inputs, as well as Kuchi access to adequate fodder, intensifying localized tensions with farmers.
3. Over one-third of all surveyed Kuchis reported using negative coping mechanisms to save their livestock. Fodder prices rose 25 percent across all provinces, and even 50 percent within certain provinces. COVID-19-related restrictions on movement during the spring and summer months, compounded with eroded coping capacities of Kuchi herders and limited awareness of COVID-19 safety measures during migration, posed additional risks to Kuchi households during their autumn and winter seasonal transhumance.
4. Women in Afghanistan, particularly rural and Kuchi women, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in many ways. This differentiated impact is due to their limited access to resources, information (including COVID-19 safety measures), technology, markets, financial assets, local institutions and decision-making. As a result, the COVID-19 crisis has further reduced their economic opportunities and access to nutritious foods while increasing their workloads and escalating gender-based violence.

## 1.2 Rationale

5. The intervention is linked to PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan. It addressed components one (ongoing, near real-time assessment and monitoring the food security impacts of COVID-19), two (producers are able to increase food production and income, store and transport their

produce and safely access markets), three (most vulnerable are able to continue producing and accessing food, while levels of acute food insecurity do not rise) and four (ensuring food supply chain actors are at lower risk of virus transmission). It also addresses PA5 on Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery, components one (the most vulnerable are safeguarded in rural and urban settings) and two (transformative economic recovery is supported) of FAO's COVID-19 emergency response and recovery programme.

6. Afghanistan has faced forty years of ongoing conflict, and the increase in frequency and intensity of droughts (climate-related weather extremes) has sparked new rivalries over diminishing natural resources as pasturelands and arable fields further degrade. In a country like Afghanistan, with multiple drivers of food crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic only worsened the already critical food security situation of the whole population, where 39 percent (11 million people) were already facing acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels.
7. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO, together with partners,<sup>1</sup> assessed and monitored<sup>i,ii</sup> the food security impacts of COVID-19, which facilitated a timely, rapid and targeted response.

### **1.3 Contribution analysis**

8. Fifty-nine thousand five hundred beneficiaries were reached and supported, through tailored interventions to address the specific needs of men and women within Kuchi communities. This involved other vulnerable smallholder households, including women-headed households, and addressed both the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 crisis.
9. In addition to projects expressly designed to respond to COVID-19 impacts on the agricultural livelihoods, pre-existing emergency and risk reduction projects were adapted to mitigate and manage the adverse impacts of COVID-19 and its containment measures. FAO interventions consisted of the following:
  - i. Pre-existing livestock protection packages for vulnerable herding households were modified to include Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This was paired with specific awareness raising and sensitization of the Kuchis on COVID-19 safety measures for livestock keeping, transhumance and participating in livestock and other markets. Other elements of the package included deworming medicine, animal feed and fodder, fodder seed distribution, anticipatory animal health monitoring and technical training.
  - ii. Unconditional cash transfers and/or cash-for-work options were distributed to facilitate the uninterrupted self-purchase of animal feed and fodder and household food baskets, creating critical cash flows at the household level.
  - iii. Technical trainings were conducted through implementing partners on COVID-19 safety measures. This involved herd management, including distancing guidelines and sanitation measures during herding, shed cleaning, vaccination and deworming, and the processing and packaging of livestock products, as well as safety measures for livestock workers and extension service providers.

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<sup>1</sup> Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA), Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), New Consultancy and Relief Organization (NCRO), Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), Afghanistan National Re-Construction Coordination (ANRCC), Organization for Relief Development (ORD), Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), OXFAM, and many others.

- iv. Support for COVID-19-safe livestock markets and their continued, uninterrupted functioning through work with market stakeholders to adopt good practices that minimize the spread of the virus. For example:
  - On-site activities involve support for the safe and continuous functioning of livestock markets through the adoption of new safety and sanitation measures pertaining to COVID-19 developed by FAO Afghanistan, the distribution of hygiene and disinfecting agents, the provision of COVID-19 PPE including thermal screening equipment, and sensitization trainings with market stakeholders, including managers, vendors, traders, porters, and other workers.
  - Customers were targeted through regular announcements on COVID-19 safety measures over loudspeakers. This was complemented by in-person dissemination of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials throughout the market. This is continuously monitored to ensure compliance with new health regulations.
- v. Contingency planning and safety provisions were developed at the provincial level for COVID-19-safe seasonal pastoralist migrations, including support in facilitating transhumance to winter pastures. These typically begin in September or October but were impacted by COVID-19-related closures.
- vi. On-site awareness raising sessions were given to migratory herders, and Kuchi-specific hygiene kits were distributed along seasonal transhumance routes.
  - Containing PPE, soap, and sanitizers, the hygiene kits, combined with in-person sensitization trainings, encouraged sanitation good practices as mitigation strategies against virus transmission.

## 1.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

10. In Afghanistan, where FAO provided timely assistance to 59 500 vulnerable people from smallholder farming and herding households, the Organization contributed to reducing the likeliness of families resorting to negative coping strategies in order to feed themselves. It also contributed to protecting their livelihoods. More specifically, as part of intervention, a total of 4 400 Kuchi livestock nomadic households (39 867 people) were provided with livestock protection packages (concentrated animal feed and deworming medicine), distributing a total of 440 tonnes of concentrated animal feed and providing a total of 313 litres of deworming medicine, reaching a total of 10 992 small and large ruminants. All beneficiaries of livestock protection packages received training on sustainable and climate-resilient livestock management. Furthermore, through the project's UCT intervention, 2 000 Afghans vulnerable received cash transfers.
11. As a result of intervention, 99.4 percent of beneficiaries confirmed receiving very good quality animal feed. Moreover, 72.7 percent of the households fed their animals with feed received from FAO. Among those who did not feed their animals with the received feed, 97.8 percent of them stored it while the remaining 2.2 percent loaned it to others. This is a common social custom amongst the Kuchi households to support each other.
12. With the animal feed provided, 78.2 percent of the households fed between one to ten cattle/yak, while 52 percent of the households reported that they fed one to ten small ruminants with feed received from FAO; 78.8 percent of the households reported that the animal feed they received was sufficient for one to two months, while 15.1 percent of the households reported that the animal feed was sufficient for three to four months. In terms of animal health and production-related benefits, 61.2 percent of the households reported that their animals' appetite improved

thanks to the deworming and animal feed. In turn, this helped to sustain the animals and, in most cases, increase their weight, body condition and overall health. Furthermore, 53.3 percent of the households reported that the animal feed led to an overall increase in milk production, resulting in an increase in dairy production.

13. With regards to provided unconditional cash transfer, 90.4 percent of the households reported that the cash received improved their access to food. One out of four households reported that the cash received reduced their debts, and 18.1 percent of the households reported that the cash received helped them restart their livelihood (buying agricultural or livestock inputs). Other benefits derived from the cash received included the prevention of an impending debt, paying for medical treatments, and buying tools for home gardening.
14. After receiving the animal feed and health treatment (deworming medicine) from FAO, Abdul Manan saw a 40 percent increase in his animals' body weight, as well as up to 50 percent in their productivity. "A sheep that used to weigh 25 kg, now weighs up to 35 kg. Goat milk production has increased by at least 50 percent on a daily basis and that was very pleasing," the Kuchi herder said. "If I hadn't received FAO's crucial support, I would have sold all my remaining animals as well because I would not have been able to afford animal feed," Abdul Manan added.<sup>iii</sup>
15. "I don't think my goats will have reached the next spring because they were already tired and vulnerable to any disease due to our winter migration. They would have been affected very badly" says Nasruddin. "The quality of feed from the market is much lower compared to the 'magical feed' provided by FAO. My animals quickly got in good shape to weather the whole winter" says the Kuchi herder.
16. In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO and partners contributed to reducing the risks of transmission through simple measures. Nasruddin added: "I did not know that by applying these easy steps, we could prevent COVID-19. Had we known this by early spring last year, we would have saved the lives of some of our relatives who died due to this disease."<sup>iv</sup>

## 1.5 Good practices & lessons learned

17. The interventions to support the Kuchi people can be replicated in contexts where there are nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, and where raising livestock forms a significant part of local livelihoods. While short-term shocks to herding communities were addressed with feed distribution and access to veterinary services, among other inputs, the effects of the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated the underlying vulnerabilities of Kuchi pastoralists. Hence, more work is needed to amplify ongoing interventions that address these deeper drivers of vulnerability and existing inequalities.
18. Good practices and lessons learned from FAO interventions in support of Kuchi people include:
  - i. A thorough baseline analysis is an essential prerequisite for understanding the existing vulnerabilities and inequalities that predate the spread of COVID-19, as well as the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Understanding the underlying factors of vulnerabilities to inform the design of the COVID-19 response only contributes to a more comprehensive response that supports resilience building.
  - ii. Having a scenario analysis that anticipates potential impacts of COVID-19 and pandemic-related closures and containments ahead of time helps in the design of response interventions. This can be coupled with available evidence to present a clearer picture of

potential adverse impacts on both immediate and longer-term livelihood and food security.

- It is also recommended to include a combination of existing and anticipated impacts within the analysis, for example a Rapid Assessment Survey, and to collect sex-disaggregated data to support the design of gender-responsive interventions.
- iii. An institutional background in emergency response and support, including experience in assisting nomadic communities, is advised. A wide network of partners should be in place in order to maintain technical standards, initiate a rapid response and enforce quality control, ensuring the adequate participation of women and their (formal and informal) networks.
  - iv. Innovation is key. The COVID-19 crisis has presented an opportunity to think outside of the box in terms of designing response interventions. It is important to envision a new set of forward-thinking initiatives that go beyond standard response options, using a human rights-based, gender-responsive and inclusive approach. For instance, in order to mitigate COVID-19 transmission risks, the project established a hotline for the trainings, which remained available for two additional months after project completion.
  - v. FAO internal procedures need to be better calibrated and made more dynamic to be able to quickly overcome the constraints posed by a pandemic-induced emergency. In order to address challenges of social distancing and movement restrictions, FAO developed standard operating procedures and guidelines on COVID-19 safety measures to be adopted in agricultural and livestock/live animal markets in Afghanistan in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). These guidelines were translated into local languages (both Dari and Pashto) and printed using visually rich contents for ease of use in sensitization sessions.

## 2. Preventing and responding to the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on food security in Burkina Faso

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan, component 4 - Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Burkina Faso
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO Burkina Faso, OER-Global Programme Support Team and OER-Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (KORE)
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Burkina Faso and OER

### 2.1 Introduction

19. The central region of Burkina Faso has been facing critical levels of food insecurity in the last five years. The national nutrition survey undertaken in September 2018 showed that about 28 percent of children under five years of age had stunted growth, and almost 9 percent were malnourished. By November 2018, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) showed that the food security and nutrition situation was critical. This situation worsened during the June/August dry, lean season, which affected about 676 200 people.
20. The COVID-19 outbreak in Burkina Faso in March 2020 and the restrictive measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the virus worsened the socioeconomic conditions of many households that had been chronically vulnerable to food insecurity.

### 2.2 Rationale

21. In Burkina Faso, as in some food-insecure countries, many food chain workers lacked correct information regarding the virus transmission and guidance on how they could protect themselves at work, when travelling to work and at home. Rural audiences are often difficult to reach. Messages developed for global audiences may not resonate with populations in rural contexts. Further, messages may not be in the local languages. All of this impedes certain population groups from accessing information.
22. This intervention was linked to PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan. It addressed component four on ensuring food supply chain actors are at lower risk of virus transmission. This was done through awareness raising and sensitization campaigns among food chain workers to increase the capacity to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain, preventing impacts on their health, as well as avoiding food production and supply chain disruptions.
23. FAO Burkina Faso, with funds from CERF, also worked towards alleviating the living conditions of households under quarantine in Ouagadougou by ensuring them access to healthy and nutritious vegetable and animal food through an alternative market supply and by promoting trade mechanisms that were in line with pillar 3 of PA1. In collaboration with the social action service and the health cluster, 4 200 households were identified to receive assistance from the FAO list of social protection beneficiaries.

## 2.3 Contribution analysis

24. CERF funding<sup>v</sup> enabled FAO and its partners to contribute significantly to the fight against the spread of COVID-19. This was done through local-level awareness and outreach that was adapted to the communication channels and methods most used by local communities, and that took into consideration local contexts and languages. The FAO country office shared key messages through local platforms and channels.
25. As part of the project, 1 500 posters to raise awareness among beneficiaries on barrier gestures, as well as 4 700 stickers with the logos of the various project partners were made for the COVID-19 protection kits before they were distributed to the direct beneficiaries of the project.
26. In addition, television and radio spots in French, Mooré, Dioula and Fulfulde provided information on knowledge of COVID-19. It covered aspects such as how to observe barrier gestures. Vaccination points were designed and aired on Radiodiffusion Télévision du Burkina. It is estimated that this national channel reached around 2 800 000 people. Furthermore, a documentary film on the capitalization of achievements was produced and will be broadcast on the same television channel.
27. FAO Burkina deployed 300 young volunteers from the Burkina Faso National Volunteer Programme to support awareness for one month in ten high-traffic sites in Ouagadougou. They exchanged directly with the people they met to get them to adopt barrier gestures and adequate nutritional practices in the context of COVID-19. In total, about 262 515 people were reached by this awareness campaign.<sup>vi</sup>
28. CERF funding also enabled FAO and its partners to contribute significantly to the reduction of its impacts on the most vulnerable populations in the Commune of Ouagadougou, the epicentre of the disease in Burkina Faso, through an intervention that enabled 4,200 vulnerable households (29 400 people) in the Commune of Ouagadougou to meet their needs, improve their nutritional practices and carry out agricultural production activities, including animal production.
29. The 4 200 households benefited from USD 235 113 distributed in the form of unconditional cash (i.e. approximately USD 56 per household) and COVID-19 protection kits with three reusable masks, one hand-washing device, three balls of soap and one awareness poster.
30. Among these 4 200 households, 1 500 additionally received an agricultural kit (155 g of tomato, cabbage, onion and lettuce seeds; one bag of 50 kg of NPK fertilizer, one hoe, one rake, one can of biopesticide), and 1 000 received a breeding kit (poultry kit: ten hens, one breeding rooster, 50 kg of poultry feed, one chicken coop, prophylaxis; rabbit farming kit: four does, 1 breeding rabbit, 50 kg of rabbit feed, one hutch, prophylaxis; fattening/milk kit: 200 kg of livestock feed).
31. In addition, training in market gardening and livestock production techniques was provided to these last two categories of beneficiaries, as well as local awareness raising on nutritional education and protective measures against COVID-19. This concerned all beneficiaries. Technical partners responsible for the distribution of Kits and inputs also benefited from an online awareness training on barrier gestures in order to limit the risk of contagion.

## 2.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

32. Provision of critical information and awareness raising messages for potential individuals at risk of COVID-19 transmission, as well as unknown vectors of spread, contributed to protecting the

health of families and those with whom they may have had direct contact. COVID kits (masks, soap, hand wash, etc.) were distributed. These were effective awareness and preventive measures that made it possible to reduce the proliferation of the virus and limit the chain of transmission.

33. All this support enabled 4 200 vulnerable households in the Commune of Ouagadougou to better understand COVID-19 and barrier gestures. It also helped to protect their members against the transmission of COVID-19, while meeting their need, to improve nutritional practices and to carry out agricultural and livestock production activities.

*Adjara Nikiema: "Since they started talking to us, they explained things to us well and it's been a pleasure. They told us how to take care of ourselves for our well-being. They tell us to wash our hands regularly, to take care of our vegetables, and to wash them well before selling them."*

34. Provision of timely, and season-sensitive agriculture and livestock inputs to vulnerable households protected their livelihoods and enhanced their access to nutritious food at the household level, while contributing to the local economy. The social results were immediately visible in the tense economic and social context. The distributions had a considerable beneficial effect because this action made it possible to reconstitute the production capacities of agricultural and pastoral households in emergency situations. The distribution of cash also made it possible to provide financial and food relief to the most vulnerable households.

35. Furthermore, the distributions had an immediate positive effect on the beneficiaries as it came at the right time, when the need for support was most pressing. Given the general vulnerability of households, one could read a feeling of relief and joy on the faces of each beneficiary. Indeed, they will once again be able to meet their most basic needs and protect themselves from food insecurity through the optimal use of agricultural and livestock inputs that generate income for them.

*Awa Deme: "We had cash, poultry feed and chickens... We will take great care of what we have received so that in a few months the results will be visible".*

36. The provision of cash flow for vulnerable households, especially during lockdowns that restrict labour flows, contributed to supporting the household economy.

*Assibi Yao: "The project has been of great help to me. I received in the first place the sum of 30 000 FCFA. Afterwards, we received nose masks, a device for washing hands with soap. After that, we attended trainings and we received poultry. We then had a chicken coop and finally poultry feed. This support has strengthened my activity. It was a great help to me."*

37. The project had a progressive positive impact on the household incomes of the beneficiaries. Indeed, the optimal use of agricultural and livestock inputs offered them abundant harvests. For example, in the market gardening section, the quantities of seeds offered by FAO to each market gardening producer made it possible to produce around 25 lettuce beds.

38. The large production of vegetables (cabbages, tomatoes, onions and salads) with high nutritional value in vitamins, plant fibres, minerals and antioxidants, contributed to support household nutrition, while increasing their income as they were able to sell the surplus. This contributed to food availability in the local markets, thus benefiting inhabitants of Ouagadougou.

39. The price of a salad crate on the local market would cost 5 000 to 10 000 FCFA. That represented a gain of 150 000 FCFA over a period of five months. This is without forgetting the harvest of

tomatoes, the sale of which could generate up to 115 000 FCFA of gain, and onions 175 000 FCFA. Thus market gardening households were able to gain around 425 000 FCFA spread over a period of seven months. Among breeders, the availability and use of agricultural and livestock inputs by the beneficiaries made it possible to produce a significant amount of foodstuffs in eight districts in Ouagadougou. This intensive and collective production resulted in a considerable increase in food availability, in this case animal products such as meat, alongside poultry, rabbit and milk production.

## **2.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

40. FAO built on mechanisms from previous interventions (social protection mechanism) to select beneficiaries. This not only facilitated and expedited the process but also contributed to ensuring that previous resilience, food security and nutrition gains of these beneficiaries were not lost due to the impacts of COVID-19.
41. Understanding the context and the targeted beneficiaries was crucial for the design of communications strategies. This was done in local languages via local media with a large audience. This amplified the reach and impact of the communications campaign to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The capacity to adapt to the new conditions was crucial.
42. The synergies and complementarity of actions between FAO and other partners, such as the young volunteers from the Burkina Faso National Volunteer Program proved to be a successful strategy in reaching local people in a more personal manner and facilitating the transmission of the messages related to COVID-19 prevention.

### 3. A novel approach to communication and knowledge sharing: COVID-19 risk mitigation among food chain workers

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Appeal, component 4 - Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Global (countries that used the guidelines to tailor their communications strategy include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, the Niger, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen)
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	OER, Global Programme Support Team and Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (KORE)
<b>Office or Division</b>	OER

#### 3.1 Introduction

43. Food production, marketing and distribution are essential services. A range of food chain workers such as farmers, food delivery drivers, butchers and market sellers, work tirelessly every day to sustain our food chains. Even in the face of COVID-19-associated risks, these essential workers are keeping communities alive, fed and healthy.
44. Given the particular vulnerability of food chain workers in food-insecure countries, the impacts of the pandemic on their food security and livelihoods – and on the functioning of the food chains they make possible – are of serious concern.
45. FAO, through OER, supported critical agricultural value chains in food crisis countries, in collaboration with a range of partners under a global project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. This project, led by OER’s Global Programme Support team with assistance from various other teams and units across FAO and beyond, bolstered COVID-19 awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns among food chain workers. It produced a communications toolbox to support FAO decentralized offices and partners in the development of tailored COVID-19 communication packages. This increased the capacity to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission along the food supply chain. A second outcome was the documentation of emerging Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)-related COVID-19 responses through the development and dissemination of fact sheets, films, videos, and other multimedia knowledge products. The project was titled “Global level coordination and advocacy to ensure people along the food supply chain are not at risk of COVID-19 transmission.

#### 3.2 Rationale

46. This intervention linked to PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan. It addressed component 4 of FAO’s emergency response, ensuring food supply chain actors are at lower risk of virus transmission.
47. Since late 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to spread around the world, devastating lives and livelihoods. With the worrying number of incidents where markets and processing facilities became “hubs of COVID-19 infection,” there has been growing concern about the potential impacts of COVID-19 and related containment efforts on food security and livelihoods. This is especially true in contexts of high vulnerability, in populations that were already experiencing food crises and in nomadic communities. These groups were particularly vulnerable to the impacts of pandemic-related movement restrictions.

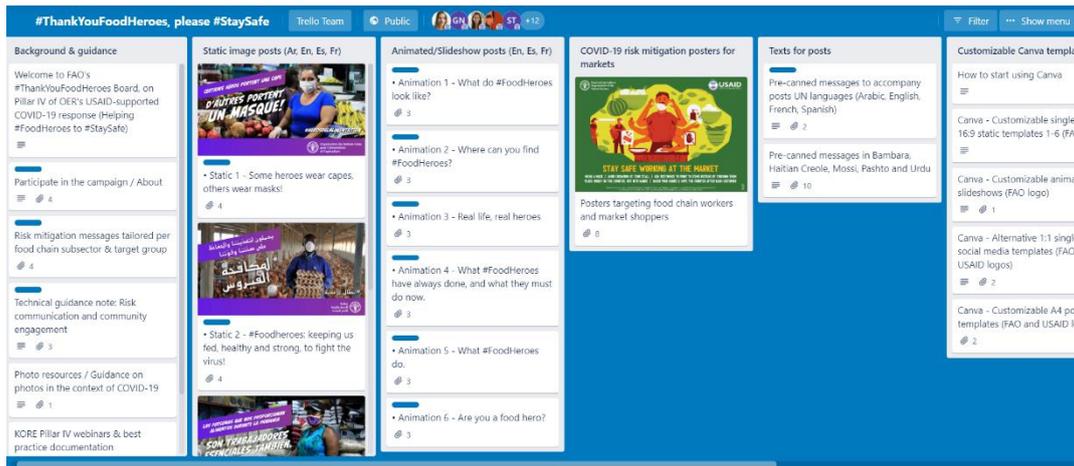
48. In some food-insecure countries, many food chain workers lacked correct information regarding virus transmission and guidance on how they could protect themselves at work, when travelling to work and at home. Rural audiences are often difficult to reach, and messages developed for global audiences may not resonate with populations in rural contexts. Further, messages may not be in their local languages, impeding certain population groups from accessing the information.
49. While animals or food of animal origin cannot transmit the COVID-19 virus to humans, the COVID-19 awareness raising and sensitization campaigns among food chain workers prevented contamination along the food chain and lessened the risk of essential food chain workers becoming ill with the virus. This impacted not only their health but also disrupted the food supply chain, causing repercussions in availability and access to food.
50. The initiatives and interventions designed and implemented by the project team reflect the global good practice on RCCE as prescribed in the FAO guidance note "Ensuring people along the food supply chain are not at risk of COVID-19 transmission through risk communication and community engagement"<sup>vii</sup> developed to support pillar IV of the country-level activities under the framework of FAO's component of the Global COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan. Under this same project, the guidance note was translated and published in other languages to extend its reach. In addition, two other relevant publications were developed to advocate for the implementation of COVID-19 coping measures and adaptation strategies on fisheries and aquaculture,<sup>viii</sup> and to ensure food safety in the time of COVID-19.<sup>ix</sup>

### **3.3 Contribution analysis**

51. The core project implementation team was supported by contributions and support from colleagues from various units within FAO beyond the OER, such as the OCC, the Food Systems and Food Safety Division (ESF), the Animal Production and Health Division (NSA), the Indigenous Peoples Unit, OER-KOREx and the Forest Steward Council (FSC) who worked together to implement the activities under this project. The project team established a working group of experts at the launch of the project, which was made up of various internal FAO and external partners, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health (WOHA), the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the World Veterinary Association (WVA). The working group acted as a forum for global coordination and advocacy and allowed the team to collect existing information and good practices on food chain safety in a COVID-19 context, identify and fill knowledge gaps, and develop key messages and guidance for food chain actors with a focus on small-scale producers in vulnerable contexts. The working group was established under the existing Emergency Management Centre, a joint OER and CJW platform, with a vast network of partners developed through its Incident Coordination Groups.
52. Key messages on COVID-19 prevention for people along the food supply chain were identified with guidance from the working group. Those messages were then incorporated into communication materials in a way that was adapted to target audiences in the different countries and contexts.



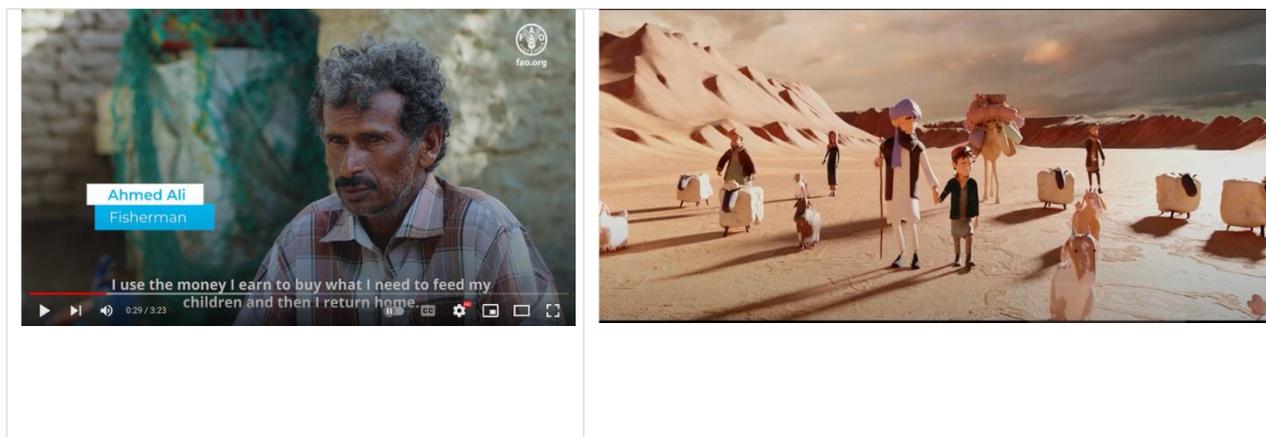
53. Target audiences and main food chain sectors were identified through regular meetings with the expert working group. The project team produced a toolbox of COVID-19 risk mitigation communication materials (e.g. posters for print and online, social media posts supporting the idea of food chain workers as food heroes, public service announcement scripts for radio, etc.) targeting food chain workers. The communication materials produced under the project were easily accessible via an online file sharing platform with blank versions for other organizations<sup>xi</sup> to use with their own logo, as well as a platform hosting all products with FAO branding.<sup>xii</sup>



54. In addition, several missions and webinars were organized, with a focus on occupational health and safety along the food supply chain through OER's KORE network.<sup>xiii</sup> The virtual events were held as part of the webinar series on Risk Communication and Community Engagement for COVID-19 prevention along the food supply chain.<sup>xiv</sup>



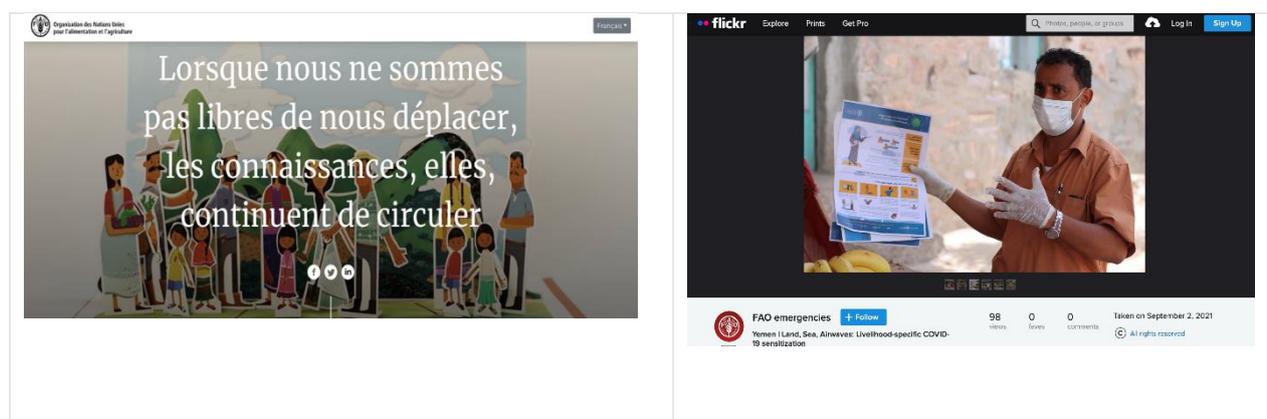
55. Besides that, KORE, via missions and virtual webinars, analysed and documented COVID-19 sensitization activities in diverse settings to produce factsheets,<sup>xv</sup> feature stories,<sup>xvi</sup> photo galleries,<sup>xvii</sup> and live<sup>xviii</sup> and animated films<sup>xix</sup> that detail innovative interventions and the emerging evidence base around their impacts. KORE offers a platform for country offices to package and share their experiences with a broader global audience, plus organize documentation missions and support qualitative data collection.



56. Calls for local-level awareness and action around COVID-19 required outreach that was adapted to the communication channels and methods most used by local communities and that took into

consideration local contexts. The team supported country offices, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, only to name some that develop communication materials in local languages and deploy a series of radio broadcasts to reach agriculture producers in remote areas. This has been done in combination with promoting sustainable agricultural practices to boost community awareness on the risks of COVID-19 transmission and prevention measures. It has reached more than 11 million rural people to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission through the local platforms and channels, and to collaborate on identifying success stories and lessons learned at the country level.

57. A dedicated web page<sup>xx</sup> was also developed on the KORE website to host the various products and webinars<sup>xxi</sup> developed under this project. It includes animated films, webinars, fact sheets, “Voices from the field” videos, photo galleries and posters.



### 3.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

58. The activities of the project focused on the production of materials that were provided to regional and country offices for dissemination at the local level. The effects and reach of those materials and the key messages they conveyed are estimated to have reached more than 11 million rural people. An aspect of significant change caused by project activities was that the project team had a broad overview of many FAO interventions and projects across various contexts. FAO was then able to document, showcase and disseminate key aspects and evidence-based impacts of those interventions. This enabled the team to not just focus on one project, but to have a broader view of RCCE interventions that are embedded in different programmes across FAO.

### 3.5 Good practices & lessons learned

59. This project was implemented with a novel approach, involving colleagues from across the Organization and from external partner organizations. As such, the project team faced challenges due to the never-before-seen nature of the approach, which, thanks to smooth collaboration, were overcome. This approach to project implementation could be used as a model for future FAO projects. The involvement of other units and teams helped to expand the reach of the project and ensure the delivery of activities.

#### 3.5.1 Good practices

60. Gathering technical information about best practices on how to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 along the food supply chain and turn them into key messages to be disseminated - reaching the most remote locations through a RCCE approach, for which guidelines in the four United Nations languages were developed and published.

61. Working in close collaboration with the WHO, WOAHA and ILO, along with the Joint FAO/WHO Centre (CODEX Food Standards and Zoonotic Diseases) (CJW) ecological management class platform, the FAO Animal Production and Health Division (NSA), the Systems and Food Safety Division (ESF), the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI), the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP), the Indigenous Peoples Unit and decentralized offices as well as the Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (KORE) and Office of Communications (OCC) to develop and disseminate technical material, develop posters, films and animation, and host webinars.
62. Taking technical information and turning it into something usable for small communities gives people an opportunity to tell their story. This small programme is an excellent example of knowledge sharing and partnership that could be broadened beyond the COVID-19 response.
63. Factors that are essential for implementing a project supported by various teams and units are: regular and transparent communication between all those involved. This is defined by great collaboration and a joint willingness to find solutions to any challenges, regular meetings to ensure tasks were dealt with, good leadership and support for the team.

### **3.5.2 Lessons learned**

64. Considering this new approach was being adapted as it was being rolled out, it would be essential to develop clear SOPs and a general model to follow for future projects. This is to clarify all roles and ensure success and minimal challenges.
65. In terms of the production of communication materials that were developed with guidance from several external partners, a clear way of working would need to be developed at the onset to reduce obstacles along the way in terms of brand use and clearance lines.

## 4. Preventative health messaging

<b>Priority Area(s) covered</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Appeal, component 4 - Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Pakistan
<b>Author(s)</b>	FAO Pakistan, OER-KORE
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Pakistan, OER

### 4.1 Introduction

66. In Pakistan, 60 percent of the population relies on agricultural livelihoods and resides outside of urban centres. The agriculture sector contributes 18.5 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), but natural hazards, including earthquakes, flooding, and drought, have presented persistent challenges to rural communities. Outbreaks of conflict, internal displacements and desert locust swarms have caused additional disruptions.
67. Even prior to the spread of COVID-19, a fifth of the population – 40 million people – remained food insecure. According to the *2020 global report against food crises*, approximately 3.1 million people within drought-affected areas in Balochistan and Sindh are identified as being in Phase 3 or 4 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Crisis and Emergency. Rural poverty rates in these two provinces hover at close to 50 percent.
68. The global pandemic and its related containments deepened these pre-existing fault lines, highlighting the need for swift and inclusive messaging around good practices for managing and mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 virus. Forty percent of Pakistan's population is unable to read or write, primarily within rural districts, which have the country's highest illiteracy rates. This created an added difficulty in communicating remotely with many of Pakistan's hardest-to-reach farming communities and, in particular, women.

### 4.2 Rationale

69. The intervention is linked to PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan and addressed component four of FAO's emergency response, ensuring food supply chain actors are at lower risk of virus transmission.
70. The continuing COVID-19 pandemic – and its related lockdowns – triggered a massive cash crisis around the world for families who depend on informal earnings, including daily wage workers. In Pakistan, a nationwide lockdown was imposed on 21 March 2020. This had major reverberations on the food supply chain and agriculture sector, where restrictive measures threatened the livelihoods of workers and smallholder farmers. In total, as of 12 July 2020, there were 248 872 confirmed cases throughout Pakistan.
71. Lockdown-related challenges have created new threats to public health, with communities struggling to adhere to restrictions while still securing food for their families. Overall, society's most vulnerable and food insecure segments have been disproportionately affected by the immediate impacts of lockdown measures, which include sudden unemployment, food price shocks, disruptions in marketing and food trade, logistics and production, and upended labour migration patterns.
72. FAO Pakistan, together with partners, delivered both physical and remote sensitization messages by harnessing the FSS platform to disseminate crucial information on virus prevention, including close to 80 000 materials printed and distributed by over 300 000 frontline workers. Along with

livestock management, organic pesticides, kitchen gardens, and climate-smart agriculture, the schools now emphasize COVID-19 mitigation practices, from routine handwashing to physical distancing guidelines. The trainings themselves are also being conducted at a distance, using popular messaging platforms to stream sessions and teach COVID-19-safe protocols.

73. COVID-19 sensitization was also complemented with remote communication technologies, ranging from social media posts, local radio broadcasts and newly modified online components to the FFS platform.
74. The initiatives and interventions designed and implemented by FAO Pakistan are in full alignment with global good practice on RCCE as prescribed in the FAO guidance note "Ensuring people along the food supply chain are not at risk of COVID-19 transmission through risk communication and community engagement." This was developed to support pillar IV of the country-level activities foreseen under the framework of FAO's component of the Global COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan.<sup>xxii</sup>
75. The first principle for effective RCCE is understanding the context and information needs. In Pakistan, indeed the sensitization and information provision campaigns were carefully designed following community consultations to understand the context and information needs and ensure that the messaging was tailored to be effective in curbing the spread of the virus.
76. Following this, the key messages on COVID-19 prevention for people along the food supply chain were developed based on the WHO and other relevant guidance. Appropriate channels and platforms for RCCE were selected. As with all effective RCCE campaigns, a number of different communication modalities and channels were adopted in order to be highly inclusive and participatory. These ranged from remote communication technologies, such as social media posts, local radio broadcasts, and newly modified online components of the FFS platform, to physically distanced field-based trainings. All initiatives were designed to be able to access hard-to-reach rural communities, as well as a broad range of food supply chain workers, politicians and community leaders, and vulnerable groups. This included religious or ethnic minorities, refugee and indigenous communities, and the chronically ill or disabled.
77. Effective RCCE also requires meaningful engagement, partnerships and field-level collaboration. In this case, FAO's partnership with the Ministry of Health, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other United Nations (UN) agencies was instrumental for developing and distributing significant numbers of communication materials (e.g. posters and brochures), which were translated into local languages and displayed in supermarkets, local food shops, and other public places.

### **4.3 Contribution analysis**

78. The intervention targeted smallholder farmers and vulnerable households in Pakistan, primarily among remote agricultural populations.
79. FAO's COVID-19 response options in Pakistan focused on targeted, preventative health messaging within an initial 8–12-week timeframe and across a range of both digital media and broadcast platforms. These are being supplemented by physically distanced field-based training. Training was designed to access hard-to-reach rural communities, as well as a broad range of food supply chain workers, politicians and community leaders, and vulnerable groups. This includes religious or ethnic minorities, refugee and indigenous communities, and the chronically ill or disabled. Key features of the intervention include:

- i. The development and distribution of over 80 000 information, education and communication (IEC) materials (e.g. posters and brochures), translated into local languages and displayed in supermarkets, local food shops, and other public places. Health and physical distancing guidelines are also being shared remotely via radio broadcast, WhatsApp and FAO Pakistan social media channels, including Urdu messages and infographics developed by FAO's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP).
- ii. The mobilization of at least eight digital influencers to create educational social media posts that both highlight information around COVID-19 and combat misinformation.
- iii. Local radio broadcast slots featuring FAO's technical expert recorded messages targeting FAO intervention districts within remote areas of Sindh province, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where television and digital media are not available.
- iv. The planned production and dissemination of short animations dubbed into local languages emphasized COVID-19 mitigation practices, including handwashing and physical distancing. These were shared via social media and WhatsApp, as well as via television broadcast slots.xxiii
- v. Online awareness sessions conducted by FAO field staff, who now works from home, as well as the harnessing of FAO's FFS network to raise further awareness through hands-on, participatory demonstrations at the field level. This includes a module on hygiene, nutrition and safety adapted to emphasize key learnings around COVID-19 prevention good practices.

#### **4.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

80. The assumption is that agriculture producers and food supply chain actors in Pakistan are at a reduced risk of virus transmission. They know how to reduce the transmission risk of COVID-19 along the food production and supply chain, due to awareness raising campaigns in line with WHO guidance. As a beneficiary's testimony exemplifies, FAO's contributions have resulted in positive changes:

*"My name is Summaya, we are a family of 2 brothers and 3 sisters. My brothers are farmers and my sister-in-law and I work here locally in our garden.*

*At first when we learned about COVID-19, we did not believe in it. We started hearing about it on the news, and on my brother's mobile phone, but the effects of the virus were still so outlandish to us.*

*When the news first spread, we could not believe it. So many people had begun to die, and we began to take the virus seriously and began to take care at home. Initially people would call it a conspiracy, but now we know that this isn't true and the virus is very real.*

*When COVID-19 first began, we were at a loss as to how to deal with it. Everywhere we looked, we were being told to take great care, and then our community went into lockdown. My father is a farmer, and my brother drives a rickshaw, taking children to school. Once we went into lockdown, my brother lost his job and was stuck at home, and we barely had any provisions at home.*

*Everyone was mentally distressed, and the FAO staff would periodically come to us and teach us how to keep safe, as well as raising awareness on using kitchen gardens to fulfil our nutrition as well as to earn our keep. During the early days of COVID-19, many people were dying because they wouldn't take precautions and because hospitals began to close down. Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, headaches, and nasal congestion, but we can take precautions such as wearing masks, gloves and to keep distance from each other. We*

*also learned how to keep our dishes away from other people's dishes to prevent the virus spreading.*

*If we ever had fever or congestion, we would try and use home remedies to fix the problem because we didn't know any better.*

*COVID-19 caused a great deal of misery among our people. They had no food, and had to resort to begging in some occasions. I tried to help anyone I could, however I could. Using the surplus vegetables which I grew in my garden, I distributed food among some of my community members which helped them during this difficult time."*

## **4.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

81. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 raised exponentially in Pakistan in the first two months of COVID-19 pandemic, affecting many rural populations within FAO intervention areas. As businesses began to reopen after the lockdown, there was increased urgency to mitigate the risk of a resurgence of the virus among food supply chain workers, including farmers, suppliers, vendors, rural communities and other stakeholders.
82. In Pakistan, around 40 percent of people are unable to read and write, especially in rural areas. Illiteracy rate is highest among Pakistani women, hovering at just over 50 percent, and also concentrated in remoter districts. Coupled with rural women's more sedentary lifestyles, this created obstacles in targeting remote female audiences. Thus, personalized, social media-based communications helped override this gendered information gap, additional programming for radio was developed, including 18 radio programmes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over a nine-week interval. Five further radio spots, along with public service announcements (PSAs) translated into local languages and recorded for television broadcast, were played in each of Pakistan's five provinces and shared by FAO's digital channels.
83. In addition to the 80 000 posters already distributed throughout public spaces, 11 000 new copies of the IEC posters were disseminated within the remotest districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
84. As the harvest season approached, the intervention was upscaled to include standard operating procedure (SOP) infographics, translated into local languages and made using easy-to-understand visuals, and linked to food safety and safe harvesting. These were shared through digital media platforms and on WhatsApp. Further interventions also targeted youth, small business owners and women for information dissemination on COVID-19 safe practices.
85. Since the beginning of the campaign, extensive research within communities was conducted regularly to ensure that the interventions that were carried out were in line with evolving issues and that the messaging was tailored to be effective in curbing the spread of the virus.
86. Interventions initially piloted within a single intervention district were replicated and operationalised throughout every province in Pakistan, as well as carried out by partner agencies. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) partners with the Government of Pakistan, the WHO, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and other UN agencies and implementing partners.
87. The intervention, designed with illiterate rural populations in mind, and to allow its replication in areas with similar demographics and in communities facing similar challenges.
88. The FAO model for the targeted messaging of rural populations has been included in the National Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy, currently being implemented by the

Ministry of Health, with rural populations and smallholder farmers identified as priority groups for information dissemination.

## 5. FAO Data in Emergencies Hub

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1- Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food crisis contexts. PA2- Data for Decision-Making. Ensuring quality data and analysis for effective policy support to food systems and Zero Hunger.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Global
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	OER
<b>Office or Division</b>	OER
<b>Comments</b>	<a href="https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org">https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org</a>

### 5.1 Introduction

89. The short term and long term impacts of COVID-19 on food security were difficult to predict at the onset of the pandemic. That said, lessons from previous pandemics or global crises indicated that food security could rapidly and dramatically deteriorate as a result of the pandemic, particularly in countries with chronic vulnerabilities and those affected by or at risk of food crises. The limited available data at the beginning of the pandemic showed that this was already happening across a range of countries.
90. The complexity of the crisis and the context-specific nature of its impacts called for a coordinated global-regional-country monitoring and assessment framework; common analysis of risks and potential implications of COVID-19 for food security in food crisis contexts; and tailored guidance to identify the most appropriate anticipatory actions and response options.
91. In its contribution to the Global COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan, FAO proposed the establishment of a global data facility (Data in Emergency Hub)<sup>xxiv</sup> to create a common understanding of COVID-19 impacts on agriculture-based livelihoods and the critical food supply chains in food crisis contexts to inform programming and policy options. The facility was established in close collaboration with key partners such as the World Food Programme, the global Food Security Cluster and the Global Network against Food Crises, and it supports and complements other ongoing relevant initiatives, such as the Integrated Food Security Phases Classification (IPC) and Cadre Harmonisé (CH). The Data HUB has been made possible with funding from the USAID.
92. The data facility has gradually progressed to a more structured and institutionalized information system, the monitoring of multiple shocks, beyond COVID-19, and their impacts on agricultural livelihoods and food security, being a core pillar of it.

### 5.2 Rationale

93. The objective of the Data in Emergencies Hub, a food security data and analysis facility, is to improve decision making in support of the food security and livelihoods of all actors in key agricultural, livestock and fisheries value chains in high priority food crisis countries, with a focus on producers.
94. The focus of the Data Hub was on understanding the unfolding effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on value chains that are critical for the livelihoods of millions of rural poor in chronically fragile, food insecure environments, where the existence of large numbers of populations in IPC Phase 3 or higher is commonplace, social safety nets are either fragile or non-existent and it is thus economic and largely agricultural related activity which holds the key to household food security.

95. The Data Hub filled a gap in relation to in-depth and near real-time analysis of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on food availability at micro and meso-levels in food crisis countries. Till now, it has assessed the impacts of COVID-19 and other shocks on value chains involving vulnerable households in 26 countries, primarily for the purpose of understanding when and which interventions should be put in place to avoid major deterioration of food security and to assist in recovery. It complements monitoring systems that are more focused on food access issues – such as WFP's MVAM; those which take a more macro-level look at food availability impacts – such as FAO's Global Early Warning System (GIEWS)<sup>xxv</sup>, and those assessments which are aimed at understanding and informing food security policy level issues and challenges resulting from COVID-19 related impacts.
96. The Data Hub is situated within and contributes to FAO's broader corporate COVID-19 response and recovery umbrella programme to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 on agrifood systems, food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable.

### **5.3 Contribution analysis**

97. During the first months of the pandemic, most literature on the impacts of COVID-19 were based on projections or theory. More recently, evidence on the impacts of the crisis on the livelihoods of households in several countries has been published. The Data Hub contributed to the growing body of evidence, focusing specifically on agricultural households in 28 of the world's poorest and most food insecure countries. As such, it sheds new light on the impact of COVID-19-related restrictions and other shocks on the lives and livelihoods of these households, using original datasets collected by interviewing households early on the onset of the pandemic.
98. The data collected and the information generated on the impact of COVID-19 and other shocks on agricultural livelihoods, with a specific focus on smallholder farmers in food crisis countries informed response and recovery interventions to support the most vulnerable smallholders whose livelihoods depend on agrifood systems.
99. Through the Data Hub, a sheer volume of data is collected and analysed two to four times a year from over 50,000 households across 25 to 30 countries. It is one of the largest datasets assembled so far to look at the impacts of COVID-19 on rural and agricultural livelihoods.
100. The Data Hub hosts comprehensive data sets on impacts of COVID-19 and other critical shocks to key agricultural livelihoods and value chains produced on a regular basis for food crisis countries and made widely available through an interactive geospatial platform. This platform includes country level interactive dashboards, a global maps gallery, a repository of microdata and aggregated data, StoryMaps and reports.
101. These serve to inform Government and Resource partner decision making, Food security clusters at national and global levels, Early warning and anticipatory action, Internal FAO processes and products; and complement and/or feed into IPC/CH, FEWSNet and WFP monitoring, Global Network Against Food Crisis country briefs and monitoring.

### **5.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

102. The Data in Emergencies Hub,<sup>xxvi</sup> supports up-to-date monitoring of the impact of shocks on agricultural livelihoods; including through the use of technology for remote assessment; in the most food-insecure countries in the world to provide a picture of food insecurity in fragile environments.

103. Understanding the impact of multiple shocks, including COVID-19 is critical to inform and adapt emergency responses. Countries in which a dedicated assessment has been conducted appear in the list of “food crisis countries” published annually by the multi-agency Food Security Information Network (FSIN). These countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.
104. Information generated by the Data in Emergencies information system has informed various processes so far.
105. Findings have been used in many countries to support programme design and fine-tune targeting strategies. This has in turn enabled better resource mobilization. Afghanistan is one of these countries where the hub has become a regular source of information in support to decision-making. In Afghanistan too, data have helped underpin the declaration of drought in 2021. In Zimbabwe, monitoring data have justified the targeting of new vulnerable provinces in emergency responses.
106. In addition, data produced by the monitoring system have become a precious resource for other analytical mechanisms, such as the IPC and the CH. FAO has become a primary data provider in many countries, like Sierra Leone, helping in turn improve the accuracy of food insecurity projections. Given the importance of the IPC and CH processes, it has greatly contributed to raising FAO’s profile in the country landscape, as a key food security analysis supplier.
107. Lastly, the data in emergencies initiative has leveraged capacity building of local partners, particularly the ministries of Agriculture, scaling-up and alignment of local information systems, and information sharing across a wide community of users, from local governments to donors.

## **5.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

### **5.5.1 Good practices**

108. Monthly assessment on the progress of the development of the Data Hub, against the Plan of Action (PoA) including the analysis of indicator deviations, challenges, successes per output and next month priorities, contributed to keeping the development of the Data Hub at a good pace, while allowing to address issues as they appeared and to have realistic actions for each month ahead, and in views of the final outcome.
109. Development of short country-specific summaries to interpret the dashboards aid understanding amongst non-specialists.
110. Ongoing design of an upgraded version of the hub (more apps, user-friendly functionalities, more resources, automated processes), fully integrated in a more structured and standardized workflow, was critical to improve the timeliness and comparability of data sets across time and place.
111. Ongoing internal discussions with the communication division, the corporate geospatial platform, and the microdata repository unit, served to ensure appropriate linkages and alignments (agreement found on the sharing of data on both the data hub and FAO’s corporate microdata platform).

### **5.5.2 Lessons learned**

112. Some local partnerships with governmental institutions for data collection created significant delays in some countries, this needs to be taken into consideration, when the information is needed for programming and planning purposes.
113. The performance of Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews remained below expectations in some countries despite the measures taken, resulting in significant delays. This has been due to various factors including limited mobile phone penetration, overly complicated or lengthy questionnaires, mistrust of the modality of CATI by some respondents and sampling difficulties. All of these challenges have been progressively addressed in the two years since the system was first established.
114. Challenges related to the setting-up and application of sound data analysis protocols on the first completed household datasets (including weights) were solved by establishment of a strong data analytics team at global level and several rounds of training of local and regional specialists.
115. In the context of rural phone surveys, sample design in the absence of reliable sample frames was extremely complex and impacted the analysis and interpretation of data.
116. Internal clearance processes slowed down the public dissemination of reports.
117. The design of a global data architecture and workflow was difficult due to the heterogeneity of data sources, formats and questionnaires. This was addressed through development of structured and consistent data workflows, formats and indicators which were applied consistently across the 26 countries.
118. Establishing a monitoring system with multiple stakeholders took more time in some countries and required adaptations in data collection modalities. This included face-to-face interviews and hybrid systems – i.e. face-to-face plus Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) to overcome the challenge.

## 6. National Programme to Support Rural Investment for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nicaragua

<b>Priority area</b>	Priority area 2 - Data for decision-making: ensure data quality and analysis to provide effective policy support to food systems and the Zero Hunger goal Priority area 7 - Transformation of food systems: rebuild to transform during the response and recovery period
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Nicaragua
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO Nicaragua

### 6.1 Introduction

119. The growth of the Nicaraguan economy has been affected by various shocks since 2018. These include the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of 2020 and hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020, which according to MHCP data, totaled USD 742 million in losses and damages equivalent to 6 percent of GDP. The pandemic generated tension on the economy. However, the advance of vaccination, the favourable external context, the effective response of public policies and the constant promotion of production boosted the expectations of economic agents, positively affecting the 2021 economic activity. In this context, the Nicaraguan economy entered the expansion stage of the recovery process, presenting a growth of 10.3 percent after registering -1.8 percent in 2020 and -3.8 percent in 2019.<sup>xxvii</sup>
120. In this context, the Government of Nicaragua requested FAO to generate analytical reports and technical studies on the development of rural investments in the country's agricultural sector. The resulting process allowed the government to decide where to promote rural investment processes, namely the agrifood chains of meat and milk livestock, coffee, beans and cocoa. In fact, the studies carried out showed that increasing public investments in the agricultural sector of half a percentage point of the GDP would favour a general GDP increase of 2.2 percent and an agrifood GDP increase of 5.9 percent. Further, this would reduce urban and rural poverty by 0.5 and 1.6 percent, respectively, between 2022 and 2031. This work process also led the public and private actors consulted to make pronouncements and commit to a better recovery and transformation of agrifood systems, aiming at more resilience, carbon efficiency, inclusivity and sustainability.

### 6.2 Rationale

121. The intervention is linked to the Priority area 2, Data for decision-making and its result 4;<sup>xxviii</sup> and Priority area 7, Transformation of food systems. The latter is based on the concept, "Building to transform" during response and recovery and works with the Hand-in-Hand initiative as a basis for expanded action. According to result 5,<sup>xxix</sup> it lays the foundation for an inclusive, ecological and resilient post-crisis recovery.
122. Agriculture, fishing, livestock and forestry sectors account for 16 percent of Nicaragua's GDP<sup>xxx</sup> and employ more than 28.5 percent of the population.<sup>xxxi</sup> In this sector, livestock, beans, coffee and cocoa generate 42 percent of the country's total exports. They use 34.33 percent of the land and generate around 1 055 000 direct and indirect jobs, of which 560 000 are exclusive to livestock combined with agriculture.
123. Despite its relevance and the progress achieved through public and private actions, the sector still faces productive, environmental and socioeconomic challenges, as well as climate vulnerability. This is due to the country's geographical conditions, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the passage of hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 and the projected climate risks to 2030

and 2050 for water, biodiversity and food security in Central America, as reported in the 2022 IPCC report: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.<sup>xxxii</sup>

124. FAO and the Government of Nicaragua signed the Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2018–2021 in October 2018. This defined as a line of work the preparation of sectoral studies and analyses that serve as evidence for the strengthening of public policy processes.
125. The approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, the Central Bank of Nicaragua and the Ministry of Agriculture were agreed upon and coordinated in 2019. Accordingly, the FAO Agrifood Economics Division (ESA) in Rome and FAO Nicaragua, with the support of Programme III of the FAO Strategic Programme for reduction of rural poverty (SP3), developed the study “Analysis of alternative ways of public investment in agriculture.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> The work was carried out between 2020 and 2021 with a set of studies that included productive public investment scenarios updating, evidence-based microregions’ types analysis, chain studies and studies on climate change. This led to the elaboration of the National Rural Investment Programme for Sustainable Development (PIR) for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nicaragua.
126. The promotion of rural investments requires significant commitment, partnerships and collaboration at both public and private level. In this case, FAO partnered with the National System of Production, Consumption and Commerce coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, which is composed of 14 public sector institutions. This was key for the PIR work process because allowed for harvesting information and technical consultations. Partnerships were developed with regional and national research centres such as the Tropical Agricultural Research and Education Centre and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture.
127. Partnerships were also developed with non-governmental organizations that focus on productive issues, producers and producer organizations and associations, rural SMEs, national and the multinational business sector, local financial institutions, as well as international, multilateral and bilateral cooperators. FAO worked either directly with all of these actors or preparing the studies during the identification and deepening phases. Among the PIR framework activities, FAO managed national and local workshops and focus groups, expert consultations, and progress and result presentations.

## 6.3 Contribution analysis

128. FAO's contributions to PIR preparation are classified into two levels: 1. strategic; and 2. technical.

### 6.3.1 Strategic level

129. This includes a portfolio of four Investment Programmes and 21 project profiles for the meat and dairy livestock, beans, coffee and cocoa chains meant to mobilize USD 500 million in the period 2022–2030. Nicaragua's PIR includes five project profiles for each public policy areas-related value chain that are directly relevant to the agricultural sector and connected industries. These are: (a) technological development; (b) technical assistance and direct support for innovation; (c) adding value to rural areas; (d) improvement in chain organizations and governance; and (e) financing and promotion of private investment. Further, a project to facilitate access to markets serves the four chains, following the guidelines of country image and territorial identity.

- vi. For the execution of these 21 projects, a 5-year USD 500 million investment is deemed necessary. The proposed allocation by production chain is 45 percent for livestock, 30

percent for beans, 20 percent for coffee and 5 percent for cocoa. This means an average investment of USD 2 850 per actor, given the ca. 175 000 beneficiaries of the four chains.

130. *Strategic political dialogue with globalist public institutions* In an unprecedented process for FAO Nicaragua, the PIR constituted a programmatic framework for initiating a high-level dialogue with the officers in charge of the nation's budget at the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, the Ministry of Development, Industry and Trade, and the Central Bank of Nicaragua. The prospective ESA FAO study (2019) highlighted the reactivating effect of the agricultural sector. In its footsteps, this situation has promoted a still active joint work to develop the sector.
131. *Strategic policy dialogue with the private sector* The PIR consultation process led to an exchange of knowledge between actors of the value chains. This involved professionals from different specialties and very experienced production, industry and trade leaders.
  - vii. Four hundred and eighty among the producers and organizations were consulted, including 120 coffee producers from four coffee-growing areas, in 17 municipalities of the country; 180 livestock producers from 19 municipalities in the country; 180 cocoa and coffee producers in 15 Nicaraguan coffee and cocoa-growing municipalities.
  - viii. Two hundred and sixty-seven experts from companies, trade unions, the private sector, civil society, academia and international cooperation. Three virtual events witnessed the participation of 73 experts from the bean chain. Three virtual events with the participation of 44 experts from the cocoa chain. Six virtual events with the participation of 104 experts from the dairy and meat chain. Surveys were carried out on 46 coffee, cocoa and dairy companies and cooperatives.

### 6.3.2 Technical level

132. *Rural Investment Programme (PIR)*. The PIR was designed with high technical standard due to the seriousness of institutions, experts and chains' actors involved. Both the national and local processes were unprecedented in the country.
  - ix. The programme has been built on 21 technical documents, developed by FAO with the support of three institutions, namely NITLAPAN Institute, CATIE Institute and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture and 22 experts. More than 667 people took part in 20 workshops and focus groups for consultation and validation.

## 6.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

133. The Government of Nicaragua used the analytical studies and reports through the National System of Production, Consumption and Commerce. Accordingly, it prioritized 2022–2031 investments for the agrifood chains of meat and dairy livestock, beans, coffee and cocoa. A 0.5 percent increase of public investment in the agricultural sector would generate the following socioeconomic benefits: a 2.2 percent increase in GDP, a 5.9 percent increase in agrifood GDP, and a 0.5 and 1.6 percent reduction, respectively, in urban and rural poverty between 2022 and 2031. This would contribute to the National Plan to Fight Poverty and for Human Development 2022–2026.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The policy recommendations to boost a USD 500 million specific investment for the post-COVID-19 agrifood recovery was based on these data. The policy also focused on poverty reduction and that the recovery turn into an agroclimatic, low-emission and climate-resilient transformation of the rural productive matrix.
134. In the livestock private sector, FAO contributed an environmental sustainability agenda that was agreed upon by the Nicaraguan Chamber of Beef Exporting Plants (Canicarne), the Nicaraguan Chamber of the Dairy Sector of Nicaragua (Canislac), the Federation of Livestock Producers of

Nicaragua (Faganic), the Nicaraguan Livestock Commission (Conagan), the Association of Brahman Livestock Breeders of Nicaragua (Acbn) and the Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua (Upanic).<sup>xxxv</sup>

135. This is relevant, considering that 28 percent of land use is for livestock<sup>xxxvi</sup> and that, according to the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC),<sup>xxxvii</sup> the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU) represent the main GHG-emitting sector with 79 percent of total emissions in the period 2000–2015. Further, it is the main direct cause of deforestation and forest degradation assessed by the INF REDD+ for the period 2000–2015.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The commitment of the private sector, therefore, is a great achievement. The signatories agreed in promoting and continuing to support zero livestock and agricultural activity in protected areas; developing silvopastoral systems and forest plantations in buffer zones; promoting zero agricultural activities in protected areas along with all the chain members and indigenous communities, and developing warranty mechanisms to avoid trade of raw material from protected areas.
136. At the public sector level, the studies on climate change mitigation and adaptation in the livestock, beans, coffee and cocoa chains contributed to the National Climate Change Policy being approved by Presidential Agreement 04-2022.<sup>xxxix</sup> This guideline aims at reducing GHG emissions and increasing carbon sequestration in agricultural production systems. Its framework improves efficiency, productivity, resilience and adaptive capacity, in coordination with other conservation, environmental protection and climate adaptation policies.
137. The contribution was also possible because Nicaragua's advances in 2021 national policies and strategies suggest a good enabling environment for the PIR. These include the National Plan to Fight Poverty and for Human Development 2022–2026 (PNLCP-DH); the establishment of the Secretariat for Climate Change of the Presidency of the Republic (SCCP); the National Climate Change Management System; the national climate change policy principles and guidelines (Presidential Decree 04-2022), and the National Strategy for the Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (ENDE-REDD+).

## 6.5 Good practices and lessons learned

### 6.5.1 Best practices

138. Programmatic vision of FAO's actions in the countries. A good practice of the PIR process in Nicaragua has been the consolidation of the programmatic approach of FAO's work with the country, clearly defining the medium-long term purpose, joining efforts around it and disseminating it to the country's public and private actors.
139. Mobilization of investments Analytical reports and studies aimed at technical evidence for the design and decision-making of public policies. This influenced the new 2022–2026 MPP signed on 16 May 2022.<sup>xl</sup> In fact, one of its priority areas is about increasing public and private investments to promote decent and equal employment, reduce rural poverty, and contribute to the agroclimatic transformation of the productive matrix. It takes on the framework of sustainable, inclusive development, adapted to climate change and low emissions, in line with Nicaragua's international commitments on climate.
140. This good practice has also supported the Government's technical dialogue with multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. The following technical cooperation and investment projects contributed to the expansion phase of the country's economic growth recovery initiated in 2021.

## 6.5.2 Lessons learned

141. Working with the stakeholder community The magnitude of the challenge pursued by the PIR requires the consultation of all the public and private sectors involved, civil society, academia and co-operatives. This takes a shared table to analyse the different options and ways of financing. However, the current political environment of the country makes this task a huge challenge. Trust and common vision among various stakeholders are much needed to lose not the focus on equitable territorial development.
142. Inclusion of women, youth and indigenous and African-American peoples This is a cross-cutting challenge for all development initiatives. It calls for methodologies and tools to promote the fair and equitable treatment of women, young people and indigenous and African-American peoples, from decision-making to initiative implementation.
143. One FAO. The joint work between the different areas of FAO has been one of the great positive revelations of the Nicaraguan process. This was reflected at the level of the FAO country office while working with the government. The parties especially appreciated this finding during the economic study led by ESA. In this instance, the FAO team (country office and ESA) coordinated a methodological co-design with the government. Both parties – FAO and Government – managed to bring expectations closer, commit to the study and assess the results obtained. This work by One FAO stood out also in the collaboration with the RLC teams and the Subregional Office in Panama. Here the common objectives combined technical and financing efforts to advance on the path mapped out by FAO Nicaragua. According to those consulted, some key aspects that determined such a successful coordination have to do with: (i) recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the different technical teams, always seeking validation and complementarity; (ii) respecting every leaderships, in this case the country FAO Representative, and technically supporting the dialogues with the government; and (iii) trusting, supporting and committing to the programmatic lines of FAO country representatives.



## 7. Building resilience of Syrians under Temporary Protection and host communities in Türkiye through supporting Socioeconomic integration and creating livelihood opportunities

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA-3 Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery. PA-5 Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Türkiye – (Adana, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay, İzmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Manisa, Sanliurfa and Van provinces)
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Cagatay Cebi, National Project Coordinator
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Türkiye

### 7.1 Introduction

144. Türkiye hosts more than 3.7 million Syrian refugees. It is the host country with the largest refugee population in the world. Around 95 percent of Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) live among Turkish communities outside of the 14 temporary accommodation centres, especially in the south and southeastern regions.
145. The majority of SuTP can only access employment in the informal sector. They generally earn less than minimum wage or that of locals employed in similar jobs. As a result, they tend to rely on temporary and seasonal job opportunities. Work in the agricultural sector for the SuTP – despite being subject to low wages, exploitation and insecurity – is often the sole opportunity for a livelihood. This is especially the case for those who are underskilled and do not speak Turkish.
146. The Turkish Government’s Exit Strategy from the ESSN Programme (2018) reports that the Turkish labour market in 2018 has seen a decline in job creation. This has led to a rise of unemployment and a heavier burden on the economy in terms of social assistance costs. The strategy adds that the SuTP are mostly low-skilled and do not meet the requirements of the labour market. Therefore, they are largely dependent on social assistance. To reverse this situation, the Government finds it necessary to enhance the skills and competencies of the SuTP.
147. The agriculture sector offers considerable opportunities for investment, economic growth and the regularization of jobs. Work permit waivers in the sector contribute to this. Many SuTP had previously worked in the agriculture sector. According to FAO, there is a shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour in the areas of: livestock care and maintenance, orchard/plantation management and harvesting, meat processing, greenhouse operation and maintenance and post-harvest processing and packaging.

### 7.2 Rationale

148. The action mainly contributes to PA-3 Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery as its main goal is to support socioeconomic integration and to create livelihood opportunities. Further, the action contributes to PA-5 Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities as its aim, among others, is transferring climate-smart agriculture knowledge to smallholder farmers through FFS activities and supporting women-lead rural cooperatives.

149. FAO Türkiye's comparative advantage is that it has a well-established capacity for assessing, responding and monitoring rural poverty, food insecurity, under-nutrition and general vulnerability. Its response addresses capacity development needs for agrifood systems at both the country and the community level. FAO Türkiye leads the Food Security and Agriculture sector under 3RP Türkiye and has a dedicated Syria Refugee Resilience Plan (SRRP) that provides a framework for the successful implementation of various projects targeting the Syria refugee crisis. A dedicated SRRP team that was formed in 2017 has substantial operational and technical experience on the subject. This allows FAO Türkiye to respond to crises in a fast, result-oriented and efficient manner.
150. The project was in its inception phase when COVID-19 broke out and containment measures were officially announced by the Government. Immediately following the outbreak, the Project Task Force guided the project to align with government measures and to tackle and reduce the unforeseen impacts of COVID-19. A steering committee meeting was held with all stakeholders and the resource partner and the European Union. It adopted a series of measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

### **7.3 Contribution analysis**

151. The main target groups of the project are vulnerable seasonal agricultural workers among SuTP and Turkish host communities, together with small-scale producers/entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. The beneficiaries are 50 percent Turkish and 50 percent Syrian. This ratio takes into consideration aspects of social cohesion, the "do no harm" approach and the risks of social tensions. For the SuTP, the action prioritizes ESSN programme benefits if they work informally in the agriculture sector. This aims to facilitate transition towards more stable, dignified and formal job opportunities.
152. The project works to improve the self-reliance of livelihoods for 6 200 vulnerable SuTP, IPASH and Turkish host community households living in the targeted provinces. Here, the SuTP population is high and the agrifood sector is an important economic factor, employing the majority of people. FAO anticipated that, as a result of the project, at least 1 400 unemployed SuTP, IPASH and Turkish agricultural workers found formal jobs, or more secure seasonal employment under decent working conditions. This helped to reduce shortages of skilled and semi-skilled labour.
153. The expected project outcome is achieved through the following three outputs:
- i. Agrifood vocational skills of vulnerable SuTP, IPASH and unemployed Turkish host community men and women are improved.
    - 3 000 vulnerable SuTP, IPASH and unemployed Turkish men, women and youth are awarded vocational training certificates by concerned bodies in order to increase their chances of gaining employment in the future.
  - ii. Climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practices knowledge and skills of Turkish smallholder producers, SuTP and IPASH farmers (with legal access to land) are improved.
    - 1 500 smallholder SuTP, IPASH and Turkish men and women producers adopt climate-smart agriculture technologies and practices, and good agricultural practices' principles.
  - iii. Formal employability of male and female SuTP, IPASH and Turkish host community agrifood workers enhanced and short-term employment created for male and female SuTP seasonal workers.

- 1 400 vulnerable male and female SuTP, IPASH and Turkish host community agrifood workers formerly employed by the private sector and 1 500 SuTP benefit from short-term jobs and training through community-based cash for work (CfW+) schemes.
  - Ten women-led cooperatives, with at least 50 percent of women members and 10 percent of SuTP and IPASH members, provided with technical support, guidance, mentorship and training for business development and their facilities strengthened for production, sales and marketing.
154. Integrated vocational training courses consist of a combination of theoretical knowledge and on-the-job learning. About one-third of training courses are dedicated to classroom teachings that are conducted in mixed groups of about 25 trainees (i.e. refugees and host communities). Theoretical knowledge covers both vocational subjects and complementary subjects that include workplace health and safety, food hygiene, basic life skills, child labour and work ethics. On-the-job trainings are conducted on farms and in agrifood companies under the supervision of a training mentor. Through this learning experience, trainees gain the skills, knowledge and competencies that are needed to perform tasks related to the concerned vocational subjects. In addition, province-level basic Turkish language courses are delivered in parallel with the vocational trainings. The language courses target the SuTP and IPASH women and men, and are in line with government modules.
155. FAO and implementing partners, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and its provincial directorates, identified facilitators based on their technical capacity in the FFS approach and climate-smart agrifood techniques. FAO also identified Master Trainers from universities, government institutions and private sector agricultural support service providers who train and support FFS facilitators. In addition, the project prepares and disseminates quality educational and communication materials. The FFS facilitators are tasked with mobilizing new and existing groups of between 20 and 30 likeminded men and women farmers from the selected beneficiaries, as well as implementing and monitoring the FFS approach.
156. The project also seeks to increase formal employment in the agricultural sector. In targeted provinces, it facilitates beneficiaries' access to social insurance by stimulating the demand and supply of services. In this context, the project provides a subsidy for the first six months of employed beneficiaries' insurance premiums.
157. In close collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Social Security, FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in establishing agriculture employment desks within the targeted provinces directorates. The desks facilitate the employment of successful trainees from the vocational training courses and provide skilled labour to the local producers and agrifood industries by acting as a focal point between the employers and the workers.
158. Furthermore, job fairs were conducted in ten provinces between November 2021 and January 2022. This was in partnership with the provincial directorates so that project beneficiaries can better access employment opportunities and support their participation in the labour market. The job fairs aimed at providing new outlets for beneficiaries who completed their education by acting as a kind of intermediary to gain information about direct access to employment opportunities, the labour market and workers' rights. Beneficiaries were incentivized by meeting with private sector representatives, producers and other actors in the agricultural production process and all related fields.

159. The project also strengthens the capacities of women cooperatives in the agrifood sector by providing technical support, guidance and mentorship in business development and marketing strategies. Women cooperatives, in line with the rules and regulations of the Turkish Government, are supported in project provinces in the area of agrifood business development to strengthen self-resilience, create new employment opportunities and increase the income of the vulnerable SuTP, IPASH and host communities.

## **7.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

160. The vocational training programme was completed by the end of January 2022. One hundred twenty-five vocational training groups have completed their activities since the beginning of the project. The total number of graduated trainees is 2 947. Among these beneficiaries, 1 458 (49.5 percent) are SuTPs/IPASH and 1 836 (62.3 percent) are women.
161. On FFS implementation, 60 groups completed their training successfully in all targeted provinces, and 1 500 trainees graduated from these training programmes. Accordingly, among all FFS trainees, 4 percent are SuTPs and 38.5 percent are women.
162. Within the scope of the agricultural employment desk activities, all vocational training and Agricultural Skills Development Programme (ASDP) trainees were registered as job seekers in the National Employment Agency's ISKUR system. The employment desks started job placement activities after vocational trainings finished. Under this task, 1 179 vocational trainings (40 percent of those trained), 12 ASDP and 184 FFS trainees (12 percent of those trained) found employment by the end of April 2022.
163. The beneficiaries who found employment after vocational trainings are supported by a social security premium (SGK) for a period of six months in order to further assist beneficiaries in entering the formal employment market. There were 73 beneficiaries under annex 4 (compulsory scheme) and 396 beneficiaries under annex 5 (voluntary scheme) for 469 beneficiaries in total.
164. FAO Türkiye contracted a service provider in order to assess the impact of the project on the local labour market. Preliminary findings of the study indicate a large increase in the employment rate; 48 percent of the increase can be directly linked to FAO interventions.<sup>2</sup> The study further found a slight positive impact on the issuance of work contracts and work permits/exemptions.

## **7.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

### **7.5.1 Good practices**

165. The effective identification of beneficiaries who are both vulnerable and able/willing to utilize the newly-gained skills through x and y processes was one of the major good practices of the project. The SRRP team of FAO Türkiye considerably improved a procedure for beneficiary selection. This helped the project.

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<sup>2</sup> Here is a detailed look at the effects of FAO contributions. SuTPs: Moderate increase in employment levels for women (+22 percent) and men (+38 percent); IPASH: Large increase in employment levels for men (+50 percent) and moderate increase for women (+10 percent) [note: non-representative sample size]; Turkish host communities: Large increase in employment levels for both women (58 percent) and men (+43 percent). Source: Preliminary findings of the Labour Market Assessment of OSRO/TUR/901/EC, April 2022. RM Team.

166. From the outset, the project effectively engaged with the private sector, namely possible employers to create awareness and an understanding of the project's scope. This facilitated the hiring of trainees and resulted in better choices for on-the-job company selection.
167. The FFS activities addressed specific problems faced by farmers in the targeted provinces and districts. As a result, farmers were able to overcome their main challenges. For example, they:
  - i. identified that a problem among the Cotton Producers' FFS Group was lack of knowledge and experience on Integrated Pest Management. After the FFS, they were able to reduce the pesticide amount by nearly 30 percent thanks to integrated disease and pest protection (IPM) implementations, and climate-smart agriculture techniques. They also contributed to increased crop yield.
  - ii. identified that a problem of the Olive Producers' FFS Group was low quality oil and productivity levels. After the FFS, they changed their harvesting and storage methods in light of scientific developments. With the support of input packages, farmers started using harvest boxes instead of sacks and prevented quality losses in olive and olive oil.
168. Building a strong link between FFS activities and vocational trainings ensured solid support to the employment of the beneficiaries.
169. Social security premium support allowed many seasonal agriculture workers to be registered and included in the national social security system for the first time.

### **7.5.2 Lessons learned**

170. The duration of practical, on-the-job trainings could have been longer in order to further increase the manual skills of the beneficiaries.
171. Further awareness creation and follow up is required to ensure the sustainability and larger-scale adoption of the FFS approach at the national level.
172. The design of the project did not allow for a concrete assumption of the long-term impact of social security premium support. The support system should be further monitored and assessed together with the national governmental institutions.

## 8. Investing in the foundations of social protection systems for ensuring shock responsiveness

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA3: Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	The Philippines
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Social Protection Team of the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division
<b>Office or Division</b>	ESP

### 8.1 Introduction

173. Facilitating the economic inclusion of men, women, youth and the elderly in rural areas is critical to ending hunger and achieving sustainable, long-term rural poverty reduction. This became an even more urgent imperative given the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impacts on income, food security and nutrition, especially among poor households. Accordingly, FAO supported the national social protection system of the Government of the Philippines in responding to COVID-19.
174. Poverty incidence among Filipinos in the first semester of 2015 was estimated at 26.3 percent. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2015) indicates that farmers and fisherfolk have consistently been reported as the poorest. It is estimated that 34 percent of farmers and fisherfolk in the Philippines (totalling 4 million people) live below the national poverty threshold and that approximately 5.6 million farmers and fisherfolk hover just above this threshold.<sup>3</sup>

### 8.2 Rationale

175. COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on agricultural livelihoods, particularly in poor communities of farmers and fisherfolk. Disaster-prone communities have been even more exposed to its negative socioeconomic impacts. Results from a survey conducted by the World Bank and the Philippine Department for Social Welfare and Development showed that the most pressing issues during COVID-19 were, on the one hand, a lack of income opportunities and reduction of pay and, on the other hand, continued insufficient food supply, health and nutrition issues. Disruptions to jobs and livelihoods caused by lockdown measures were exacerbated by recurring natural shocks, such as typhoon Odette, which warranted declarations of a state of calamity by the government.
176. Such circumstances were particularly challenging for the newly established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), which has the highest incidence of poverty in the country. The economic impact was severe due to the vast informal sector present in the region, the unusually high rate of employment in agriculture and the high share of wage labourers. This meant that highly restrictive measures on the movement of people and goods negatively impacted income for many in the region, with dire repercussions on access to food and health services.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Philippine Statistic Authority, the monthly poverty threshold for a family of five is an average income of PHP 8 022 per month. This amount is enough to cover a single family's basic food and non-food needs. Poverty threshold refers to the minimum income a family or individual must earn in order to be considered "not poor." The Government of the Philippines, 2014. PSA: Poverty incidence among Filipinos registered at 24.9 percent as of first semester of 2013. In: *Official Gazette*. 29 April 2014. Cited 3 November 2022. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2014/04/29/psa-poverty-incidence-among-filipinos-registered-at-24-9-as-of-first-semester-of-2013>

177. Within this context, the Philippines' flagship social protection programme, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4Ps), along with the COVID-19 emergency cash assistance programme and the Social Amelioration Programme (SAP), were the main social assistance instruments used by the government to support households in managing the COVID-19 shock. Despite their coverage, the ability of these programmes to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 was limited. This was partly due to difficulties in extending coverage to new beneficiaries. In fact, the targeting accuracy of the programmes varied greatly.<sup>xli</sup> This experience highlights the need to invest in developing the capacities of national social protection systems so that they are able to provide adequate support to households, including shock response.
178. In the Philippines, FAO's COVID-19 Recovery and Response Programme: Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty, was geared towards enhancing the national social protection system's response to COVID-19. In doing so, it also strengthened its capacities to better address future shocks.

### 8.3 Contribution analysis

179. FAO's COVID-19 Recovery and Response Programme: Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty builds on collaboration between the Government of the Philippines and FAO, which has been ongoing since 2016. This collaboration had resulted in foundational investments in the national social protection system. These investments – made through a programmatic approach that brought together extra-budgetary resources from several projects<sup>4</sup> and regular programme resources<sup>5</sup> – have been geared towards enabling the national social protection system to provide poor households in rural areas with improved access to social protection and complementary agricultural interventions.
180. The main government counterparts in these endeavours are the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), particularly the Ministry for Social Services and Development.
181. The COVID-19 Recovery and Response Programme leveraged a vast body of policies and plans, including the Philippine Social Protection Plan 2020–2022. This was in accordance with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017–2022, and the newer Philippines Roadmap for establishing an adaptive and shock responsive social protection system that was adopted in 2021. This was developed with technical support provided by FAO under the OSRO/RAS/901/EC project "Scaling up Forecast based Financing/Early Warning Early Action and Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) with innovative use of climate risk information for disaster resilience in ASEAN" (USD 2 862 866<sup>6</sup> from 1 May 2019 to 28 February 2022).
182. FAO played a key role in advocating for a policy framework to strengthen the social protection system, enable the policy environment, and in facilitate and coordinate the dialogue process.

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<sup>4</sup> These include: i) OSRO/RAS/901/EC "Scaling up Forecast based Financing/Early Warning Early Action and Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) with innovative use of climate risk information for disaster resilience in ASEAN;" ii) UNJP/PHI/070/UNJ "Ensuring inclusive and risk-informed shock-responsive social protection resulting in more resilient communities in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM);" and iii) FMM/GLO/136/MUL "Transforming future face of agriculture: Promoting socio-economic inclusion."

<sup>5</sup> These are difficult to quantify since they include staff time at both the headquarters and decentralized offices, in addition to costs associated with contracting service providers, running offices, etc. Indicatively, between 2016 and now the headquarters have provided USD 200 000 to cover staff costs and contracting of service providers.

<sup>6</sup> To date, USD 347 915 of this multicountry project has been used to finance activities in the Philippines

183. Additionally, FAO supported the operationalization of the Roadmap for establishing an adaptive and shock-responsive social protection system by conducting feasibility studies, simulating and testing responsive and anticipatory protocols, and piloting the delivery of emergency cash transfers through the system. More specifically, between 2020 and 2021, through the UNJP/PHI/070/UNJ project “Ensuring inclusive and risk-informed shock-responsive social protection resulting in more resilient communities in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM),” (USD 966 390 from 1 February 2020 to 15 July 2022), FAO provided continuous technical assistance to government partners during system scale up and partnered with the BARMM Ministry of Social Services and Development to enable the use of the social protection system in the region. This allowed for implementing the horizontal expansion of coverage during COVID-19.
184. In December 2021, through the FMM/GLO/136/MUL project “Transforming future face of agriculture: Promoting socio-economic inclusion” (USD 1 500 000<sup>7</sup> from 16 September 2019 to 31 December 2022) and in partnership with the provincial government of Catanduanes, the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, FAO conducted a simulation exercise to test the readiness of the Anticipatory Action Multi-Purpose Cash Transfer scheme in the event of a severe typhoon hit. This included guiding a table-top simulation with local officials, testing communication channels and delivering multi-purpose cash grants.
185. In order for these results to be achieved, an essential precondition was to strengthen the capacities of national and local government actors. Towards this end, and through the above-mentioned FMM/GLO/136/MUL, FAO organized and held the Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection (ASRSP) training course for the Philippines.<sup>xlii</sup> This online training course ran for eight weeks and was delivered in partnership with the Economic and Policy Research Institute in the second half of 2021.

#### **8.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

186. The ability of the Philippines' national social protection system to reduce poverty and food insecurity, and enhance the economic inclusion of households in rural areas, is paramount to strengthen the resilience of its beneficiaries. In a context of increasing and compounding shocks, this also holds true for its capacity to scale up in order to provide additional support to families when such shocks occur. An essential prerequisite for this to happen was the enhancement of national actors' capacities to design and implement social protection interventions. In light of this, the online training on Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection that FAO organized and delivered was significant as it enabled participants from different government agencies to understand the relevance of social protection in addressing shocks. It also equipped them with the tools to strengthen the domestic system in a similar way.
187. Significant outcomes were achieved as part of the previously described process. First, under the “Scaling up Forecast based Financing/Early Warning Early Action and Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) with innovative use of climate risk information for disaster resilience in ASEAN”, the Government of the Philippines developed its *Roadmap for establishing an adaptive and shock responsive social protection system* with technical support provided by FAO. The Roadmap was adopted in 2021 by the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cabinet Cluster and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. This five-year roadmap is a crucial

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<sup>7</sup> To date, USD 280 000 of this multicountry project has been used to finance activities in the Philippines.

milestone for reducing the vulnerabilities of fragile households in the country, thus increasing their risk management capacity, and enhancing their economic inclusion and resilience.

188. Second, under the “Ensuring inclusive and risk-informed shock-responsive social protection resulting in more resilient communities in BARMM”, FAO supported the operationalization of the aforementioned *Roadmap for establishing an adaptive and shock responsive social protection system*. During COVID-19, in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, the Philippines’ flagship social protection scheme, and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4Ps) expanded horizontally to include 181 000 new beneficiaries who received a PHP 5 000 cash grant per household. Additionally, the programme expanded vertically for 326 000 existing beneficiaries, who received a proportional increase to their standard PHP 3 650 cash grant.
189. Third, towards the end of December 2021. This was part of a simulation exercise to test the delivery of anticipatory action ahead of typhoons under the “Transforming future face of agriculture: Promoting socio-economic inclusion”, multipurpose cash grants were distributed to newly identified 1 072 smallholder farmers and fisherfolk in the province of Catanduanes. It specifically targeted the two typhoon-prone municipalities of Gigoto and Baras. Those who did not have a bank account and pay-out card were given one. As a result, PHP 3 220 was provided to identified beneficiary households that had been excluded from social protection programmes. This allowed them to cover expenses for transportation, basic needs and livelihood support. They could then cushion the impact of earlier emergencies and the prolonged negative socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
190. As beneficiaries’ stories exemplify, FAO’s contributions have resulted in long-lasting changes:
  - i. Joselito Barba, 57 years old, is a smallholder farmer cultivating high-value crops like cassava and pechay on his land in the municipality of Baras, Catanduanes Province. His livelihood was severely affected in 2020 when initial COVID-19 contingency measures were introduced, and once more when Super Typhoon Goni hit the province. In addition to these shocks, in 2021, he became sick with COVID-19 and was prevented from cultivating his land for over a month. With the multipurpose cash transfer that was delivered by a partnership between FAO and the provincial government of Catanduanes under the “Transforming future face of agriculture: Promoting socio-economic inclusion”, Joselito hopes to compensate part of his lost income. He is also confident that the social protection support will allow him to be more resilient in withstanding livelihood shocks.
  - ii. At 72 years old, Amelita Garcia Zuniga is a labourer on a rice farm in the municipality of Baras, Catanduanes Province. For years, she has had to work the fields to support her family. Upon receiving the multipurpose cash transfer distributed by FAO and the provincial government, as part of the simulation exercise under the “Transforming future face of agriculture: Promoting socio-economic inclusion”, she was able to buy rice to feed her family. This ensured their food and nutrition security. She said that this was a blessing that could not be measured in such difficult times.

## 8.5 Good practices & lessons learned

191. With specific reference to the COVID-19 Recovery and Response Programme: Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty, an important good practice was the contracting of GCash and Metrobank in 2022 to deliver cash assistance. These partnerships with financial service providers on the digitalization of cash assistance constitute a crucial step in improving the delivery of financial support to underserved areas, as well as enhancing the economic inclusion of end beneficiaries. Additionally, they hold great potential in opening up new, timely and more effective

transfer modalities for emergency scale-ups, such as cash transfers, in anticipation or in response to a shock.

192. Important lessons learned with respect to FAO's social protection support to Members are that investments in the foundations of social protection systems over time are critical in enabling them to rapidly respond to shocks. Foundational investments that FAO contributed to in the Philippines and that enabled swift response are:
  - i. Policy: In recent years, FAO played a key role in nurturing an enabling policy environment to strengthen the social protection system and make it adaptive and shock responsive. This included FAO's direct contributions in drafting and facilitating the process that led to the adoption of the Philippine Social Protection Plan 2020–2022 and the Roadmap for establishing an adaptive and shock responsive social protection system. This provided the basis for FAO's involvement in supporting the national and BARMM Government through scale ups at the height of the pandemic as well as in piloting anticipatory protocols for typhoons.
  - ii. Institutional coordination: Extensive consultations conducted with stakeholders in developing the Roadmap made it possible to forge a common understanding of how to respond in the face of shock. This contributed to a swift expansion of the 4Ps, something that would not have been possible if different stakeholders had not shared a common vision.
193. With respect to FAO operations, the main lesson is the need for FAO to have a standard cash transfer process. This would help increase the timeliness of interventions. Since FAO currently does not have such a process, the Organization had to spend a big amount of time looking for a possible financial service provider that would facilitate the delivery of cash transfers to recipients. Further, a one-FAO approach on cash transfers would contribute to the efficiency and effectivity of the programmes being implemented by the Organization, making it more responsive to the needs of the beneficiaries.

## 9. Rapid needs assessment of the impact COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods and food security in order to guide a targeted response by the humanitarian community and inform the generation of appropriate policies to safeguard food security and nutrition

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA 1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan PA 2- Data for Decision-making PA 5 - Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	21 countries in the Region
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Anna Ricoy and Raquel Peña Alvarez, FAO RLC
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO RLC, Regional Initiative 3
<b>Comments</b>	This initiative was in part funded by a regional emergency TCP/RLA/3802 on addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the agrifood system in the Latin American and Caribbean region. It was also supported by a global USAID-BHA project, OSRO/GLO/022/USA, on setting up a global data and analysis facility on the impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture and food security in a food crisis context.

### 9.1 Introduction

194. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the worst economic and social crisis in a century. The region has the highest number of deaths reported by COVID-19 globally, despite the fact that its population barely amounts to 8.4 percent of the world's population. As a consequence of the prolonged health and social crisis, the extreme poverty rate increased to levels from 27 years ago (13.8 percent), while it is estimated that the general poverty rate decreased slightly from 33 to 32.1 percent.<sup>xliii</sup>
195. Latin America and the Caribbean is the region where food insecurity is rising the fastest, from 22.9 percent in 2014 to 31.7 percent in 2016.<sup>xliiv</sup> From 2019 to 2020, the increase in moderate or severe food insecurity was sharpest in Latin America too.<sup>xliv</sup> The situation has been exacerbated by pre-existing structural vulnerabilities, profound inequalities, hunger and malnutrition. The livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups have been widely disrupted by the pandemic, negatively affecting their access to food.<sup>xlvi</sup>
196. For millions of smallholder farmers in the region, the COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis within a crisis. This is particularly true for countries that already face high levels of food insecurity, are highly vulnerable to multiple natural and/or socioeconomic hazards, and have little coping capacity. Restrictions on movements, combined with supply chain disruptions, have limited farmers' access to inputs as well as availability of labour. Therefore, if the situation is not addressed effectively, it could compromise progress on poverty alleviation, food security and the achievement of all SDGs.
197. This crisis has generated demands for support from governments in the region, mainly through their Ministers of Agriculture, to structure responses in the short and medium term. This is meant to face the immediate effects of the pandemic on food availability and access, and recover food systems with a livelihood resilience approach. For this, it was necessary to implement rapid assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods and food security. This allowed for designing comprehensive responses that account for the differentiated impact on the poor and vulnerable rural populations that depend on agriculture, as well as small and microenterprises at the base of the food system.

## 9.2 Rationale

198. The intervention was designed before the launch of the RRP and fits under both PA 2 Data for Decision Making and PA 5 Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery. It has provided updated primary information about the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods, value chains and the food security of vulnerable smallholder farmers. It contributes to evidence-based factors for decision-making on COVID-19 response and recovery strategies in the agricultural sectors.
199. Activities implemented in the region were part of a Global FAO effort led by the Emergency Needs Assessment Team of the Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) to enhance local capacities for supporting evidence-based decision-making and monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 and other shocks. In this sense, FAO has provided a robust methodology and solid instruments, at present, known as the Data In Emergencies Hub.<sup>xlvii</sup> These elements have been adapted to the needs and information gaps in each specific country and in coordination with the government counterpart. FAO contributes to:
- i. identifying who experienced the worst impacts of COVID-19 on food security and livelihoods, as well as why, where and when;
  - ii. supporting, feeding and complementing other evaluation exercises and relevant assessments such as the Post-disaster Needs Assessment, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and the Humanitarian Needs Overview;
  - iii. ensuring the measurement of variables relevant to agriculture and food security in existing monitoring systems;
  - iv. generating a basis for the discussion of transformative response and recovery measures; and
  - v. promoting evidence-based sectoral COVID-19 response and recovery strategies.
200. The information generated has also contributed to advocacy efforts for the agriculture sector, not only in terms of addressing the consequences of the pandemic but also being able to monitor the impacts of different shocks (beyond COVID-19) on agricultural livelihoods and food security. All of the above deals with the main objective of design, along with anticipation, response and recovery strategies with higher levels of efficiency, effectiveness, targeting and return on investment.
201. With technical support from FAO, the relevant local government counterparts in each case, mainly the ministries of agriculture and the statistical departments, led these exercises. In some countries, other key actors of the United Nations system, such as the WFP, were also involved. The data collection and analysis was mainly conducted by local partners, governments or NGOs, and FAO country offices.

## 9.3 Contribution analysis

202. The intervention targeted vulnerable agricultural households. More than 35 000 remote surveys were conducted in 21 countries in the region by using two main data collection modalities and different partnership formulas.
- i. Computer-assisted Telephone Interviews through:
    - GeoPoll (global agreement): Colombia (1st round), Venezuela and Haiti (2nd round);

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- local service providers: Colombia (2nd round) and the Dominican Republic (led by the WFP).
  - a government counterpart: El Salvador (General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses), Honduras (Technical Unit for Food and Nutrition Security), Haiti (National Coordination of Food Security), Ecuador (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock), Guatemala (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food), Paraguay (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock); and
    - a local partner/NGO: Guatemala and Paraguay (key informants).
  - ii. Web-based surveys/computer-assisted personal interviews (Kobo)
    - This depends on internet coverage (key informants, mainly): the Caribbean and Venezuela.
203. FAO provided technical assistance to carry out these exercises in order to respond to immediate information needs for decision-making. This perspective also aimed to generate local capacities and promote the sustainability of the initiative. This was done through the implementation of regular monitoring processes at the household and local trader levels to understand the dynamic impact of various shocks on food security and agricultural livelihoods.
204. Each round of data collection and analysis lasted an average of four months and was conducted during mid-2020 and at the end of 2021, depending on the country. The core instrument was a household survey. This that was complemented by other non-household instruments for traders and other key informants, such as agricultural extension officers, food sellers. Partnerships were key in optimizing coverage and resources, coordinating efforts and complementing analyses.
205. The following steps were taken before starting the data collection exercises:
- i. A preliminary analysis was carried out with the government and other relevant actors to jointly define the scope and feasibility of the evaluation, considering:
    - the information surveys that had been conducted by the different actors;
    - the information gaps or needs, especially in relation to rural and agricultural populations;
    - for what purposes the information was going to be used; and
    - the situations, e.g. conflict, which could hinder the data collection process in some areas.
  - ii. The instruments for data collection were adjusted according to the reality of the national context, the decision-making processes to which they were aimed and the critical milestones in the production systems.
  - iii. The sampling framework was designed to guarantee a balance between coverage and statistical representativeness (at the subnational level, admin 1). It considered the availability of databases on agricultural households. The exercises did not necessarily target the whole country. Rather, they were mainly focused on food insecurity hotspots and strategic areas for programming.
206. As a final product, reports were obtained, highlighting the following information of vulnerable smallholder households:
- i. sociodemographic features
  - ii. engagement in agriculture

- iii. wealth proxies
- iv. shocks to livelihoods (including COVID-19, drought, floods, etc.)
- v. impacts of COVID-19 restrictions
- vi. income raking and income changes
- vii. for crops, livestock and fisheries/aquaculture:
  - main product
  - change in production
  - production difficulties
  - changes in sales and prices
  - marketing difficulties
- viii. Food security indicators:
  - Food Insecurity Experience Scale
  - Livelihood Coping Strategies
  - Household Dietary Diversity Score
- ix. Needs for assistance
- x. Recommendations

## 9.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

207. There is evidence that, thanks to FAO's intervention, relevant institutions in different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were able to address their needs for updated and disaggregated information about the impact of COVID-19 on agrifood systems, food security and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. This information was used to support decision-making and allowed the countries to design evidence-based, COVID-19 response and recovery instruments, while advocating for the need to mobilize and allocate resources for the more vulnerable households with food-based and agriculture-based livelihoods.
208. One of the most relevant examples was the case of Guatemala where, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, FAO conducted a national assessment of the impact that COVID-19 and the tropical depressions of Eta and Iota had on the livelihoods of family farmers. Data collection was carried out through telephone interviews with a simple random sample of 8 315 farmers. This selection was taken from a universe of 406 380 family farmers registered with a telephone number in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food database. This provided valuable information from each of the 340 municipalities in the country with a reliability level of 90 percent and a margin of error of no more than 10 percent.
209. Thanks to the assessment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, with the support of FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), designed a Stipends for actions programme to restore the productive units of subsistence family farmers hit by the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 and tropical storms Eta and Iota in 2020.<sup>xlviii</sup> In its first phase, which was implemented in February 2021. The programme served 2 792 families with a total funding of USD 800 000.
210. The beneficiary families carried out different works to recover their production systems, implement soil and water conservation practices, establish agroforestry systems and replant

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crops.<sup>xlix</sup> After a verification of the actions by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, beneficiary families received Q 1 000 (around USD 131), mainly through electronic mobile transfers. In addition to the cash transfer, they also received in-kind agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers and poultry, as well as technical assistance to enhance their productive capacities.

211. The second phase of the programme was launched in December 2021 by the President of Guatemala. The intervention covers a total of 35 000 beneficiaries with a total state investment of Q 35 million (approximately USD 4.5 million).<sup>l</sup> According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government of Guatemala intends to harness this evidence-based programme to “boost the local economy, reduce the risk of food loss, cover a wide range of family needs, improve plots and repair damage to land.”
212. From a more regional perspective, common survey findings in different countries included the following:
  - i. a decrease in income that hinders access to food, decreases the demand for food and generates decapitalization in small producers;
  - ii. difficulties in accessing seeds and inputs (an increase in prices and decreased availability).
  - iii. production losses due to difficulties in accessing markets and challenges for conservation/transformation;
  - iv. difficulties in accessing livestock feed and veterinary services; and
  - v. deterioration of food security and loss of productive assets due to the adoption of negative coping strategies.
213. FAO’s contributions have resulted in positive changes, which translated into:
  - i. support in the implementation of emergency livelihoods’ assistance, such as the aforementioned Stipends for Actions Programme;<sup>li</sup>
  - ii. incorporation of a COVID-19 adapted version of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale module in the Honduran household survey;
  - iii. adoption of a methodology in Paraguay (Statistics Division of the Agricultural Extension Directorate), improved databases for agricultural households, and a base for analysis of regarding the impact of COVID-19 on rural women;
  - iv. the Minister of Agriculture of Guyana presented, within the framework of World Food Day and the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of FAO (November 2020), key assessment findings, linking them to government proposals for response, recovery and resilience building actions in the short, medium and long term;
  - v. dialogue exercises and participatory processes for the definition of response and recovery strategies in the agriculture sector (Ecuador);
  - vi. formulation of investment profiles for promoting transformative recovery in the agriculture sector and subsectors (Antigua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia);
  - vii. provision of primary data for monitoring SDG 2 (Food Insecurity Experience Scale) and calculating the IPC (Haiti and Honduras);
  - viii. support the assessment of the impacts of Eta and Iota on food security and livelihoods for advocacy and resource mobilization purposes (Central America and Colombia);

- ix. formulation of Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans.
- x. design of project proposals to donors (DG-ECHO) and provision of baseline information for Project implementation (Canada): Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador; and
- xi. complementary information for the definition of typologies of Hand in Hand in Haiti.

## 9.5 Good practices & lessons learned

214. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has been one of the most affected regions in the world by COVID-19, not only in terms of confirmed cases but also food security and other socioeconomic impacts. This has affected many vulnerable rural households with food-based and agricultural livelihoods. The region has also presented significant information gaps: this includes a direct absence of updated information disaggregated by territory, gender and age to inform targeted and tailored decisions that support COVID-19 response and recovery strategies in rural areas and agricultural livelihoods.
215. Strict lockdown measures made it difficult to access certain territories. That is why remote data collection methodologies became a highly relevant solution. There were a number of challenges, and the following good practices and lessons learned were also evident from the experience:
- i. The poorest households have difficulties in accessing telephone lines, and this can generate an exclusion bias. Whenever possible, it is advisable to try to counteract this reality with safe face-to-face solutions, such as focus groups.
  - ii. It was key to access a sampling frame that covered agricultural households. However, this was not always easy. In most cases, there were either no agricultural household databases or they were not up to date.
  - iii. It is essential to consider the seasonality of the agricultural production cycle and the specific calendars for other complementary data collection and analysis exercises (Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification-IPC, etc.) to maximize the use of the results.
  - iv. Non-response rates need to be taken into account when selecting the group of respondents.
  - v. In general, and especially in complex contexts where distrust can be generated, it is important to inform participants about the details of the exercise prior to conducting it. This can be done through networks and other media/channels in the country.
  - vi. Whenever possible, it is preferable to involve Ministry of Agriculture extension agents in the role of enumerators (compared to calls via Geopoll). This also reinforces the idea of establishing a continuous monitoring system.
  - vii. It is essential to ensure a capacity building strategy for the interviewers who conduct the surveys (Geopoll or agricultural extensionists) and FAO.
  - viii. Ensure the support of IT and GIS experts, as well as the use of standardized tools for the analysis and visualization of information (ArcGIS, Google Dashboard, etc).
  - ix. Although it is a learning process, it is important to reduce the time between the collection of information and the presentation of results. This is due to the fact that the current contexts of systemic risk mean that the needs are constantly changing and, therefore, it is necessary to have information available as soon as possible in order to design and

implement relevant, effective and timely actions to mitigate and respond to the impact of shocks.

- x. Translating data into recommendations that are specific to the political, economic and social context of the country is a challenge. In crisis contexts, time is very short. The needs of the most affected people are high, and they have to be addressed urgently. In addition, resources are limited, which requires a prioritization of response and recovery actions that may not always be able to respond to all the problems or to cover all the people affected. In the face of new and complex crises, there are no infallible formulas.
  - xi. It is not easy to attribute the negative changes on livelihoods and food security to a single cause (COVID-19) nor is it feasible to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable population in isolation from other pre-existing problems. Although the exercise focused on the impact of COVID-19, the results showed that, in some countries, COVID-19 was not always perceived as the most important problem – nor was it seen by households as something isolated. COVID-19 aggravated previous issues. This generated cascading effects on agricultural livelihoods, food security and value chains.
  - xii. It is essential, from the design of the sample to the review of the instruments, to consider aspects of gender, age and ethnicity. This aims to guarantee a differentiated and inclusive analysis of the needs of the most vulnerable groups.
  - xiii. Whenever possible, it is worth collaborating with other actors that already have a relevant experience and an added value in data collection on food security and nutrition, such as the WFP. It is important to think about joint country exercises (Ecuador and Haiti).
216. It is worth noting that the work initiated with the Rapid Needs Assessments on the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods and food security – worldwide and in the Latin America and Caribbean region – has provided the foundation for the consolidation of FAO's global Data in Emergencies Hub. Beyond the specific impacts of COVID-19. At present, the Data in Emergencies Hub drives regular monitoring processes at the household and local trader levels to understand the dynamic impact of various shocks on agricultural livelihoods. By targeting 25 of the most food-insecure countries in the world – including Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Haiti and Colombia – this system provides a regularly updated and highly accessible picture of food insecurity in fragile environments, triggering mitigation and response actions.

## 10. Technical capacity building to improve the quality of native and domesticated foreign (*acriolladas*) seeds in Nicaraguan family agriculture

<b>Priority area</b>	Priority area 4: Trade and food safety standards; facilitate and accelerate food and agricultural trade during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Priority area 5: Building the resilience of smallholder farmers for recovery: protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery, and improving risk management capabilities
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Nicaragua
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO Nicaragua

### 10.1 Introduction

217. A period of negative GDP variation rates affected Nicaragua due to recent adverse shocks, namely the 2018 sociopolitical crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of 2020 to date, and the hurricanes Eta and Iota at the end of 2020. However, the economic activity significantly rebounded in 2021, consolidating the positive trajectory observed since the end of 2020 and recording a GDP growth rate of 10.3 percent.<sup>lii</sup>
218. In the country, the agricultural sector is key to socioeconomic development. It significantly grew (76 percent) over the past ten years. The 2020–2021 production cycle<sup>liii</sup> recorded the sowing of 1.13 million ha. Sixty-three percent of this was basic grains, whose productivity rates continue to be low compared to the rest of the Central American countries. It is worth noting that about 5 percent and 10 percent of sown areas used certified maize and bean seeds, respectively. This highlights the challenge of good quality seed supply to increase the production of basic grains by family farming. On the other hand, there are still challenges to achieving adequate productivity levels by strengthening production practices, technologies and regulatory frameworks and institutional capacity building.
219. In this context, FAO, through specialized financial and technical assistance, has contributed to strengthening the research and transfer agendas of the Nicaraguan Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), the institutional and regulatory capacity of the Institute for Agricultural Protection and Health (IPSA) and the regulatory systematization capacity and information exchange in food security and natural resources of the National Assembly.

### 10.2 Rationale

220. The intervention is linked to two of the seven key priority areas of the FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, specifically contributing to:
- xiv. Priority area 4:<sup>liv</sup> Trade and food safety standards. Facilitate and accelerate food and agricultural trade during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Contributing to Outcome 2 Enhanced regulatory cooperation at the regional level to improve policy surveillance in agricultural value chains, promote the application and use of science-based standards (such as Codex) and promote mutual recognition and standardization of food safety systems through technical assistance and capacity-building activities on food safety standards in order to strengthen institutional implementation capacity.
  - xv. Priority area 5:<sup>lv</sup> Building the resilience of smallholder farmers for recovery: Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management

capacities. Contributing to outcome 2, Support for transformative economic recovery, line 1. In the face of epidemics, conflict and climate change, smallholder farmers adopt specific and environmentally sustainable practices in each context, as well as good practices for disaster risk reduction, both at the farm and community levels, thus fostering resilient food systems and improving food and nutrition security.

221. Based on the 2018–2021 CPF, signed between FAO and the Government of Nicaragua, the Organization continues the implementation of the “Mesoamerica without hunger programme funded by the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation. This programme provides technical and financial assistance to INTA and IPSA to improve the quality, access and availability of good quality seeds through their insertion in the formal system and in the planning of said institutions. It also promotes the organization of community seed banks (BCS, as per its Spanish *banco comunitario de semilla*) for developing productive self-management capacities and mechanisms for exchanging and selling surpluses in the local market.
222. The COVID-19 pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota affected the production of basic grain seeds, decreasing availability at the community level. This relieves the BCS role to support the local supply of quality seeds suitable for sowing throughout the agricultural cycle, ensuring the availability of basic food at the rural and urban levels. In addition, social distancing measures recommended by international organizations were promoted among producers and technical personnel to reduce the risk of disease spread, thus preventing slowdown of country food supply.
223. The intervention also provides specialized assistance to the IPSA for strengthening the National Seed System. This includes the diagnosis of the needs covered by the the system; the evaluation of the National Phytosanitary System, evidencing the need for updated sanitary regulations and seeds (updating and/or formulation of the Nicaraguan phytosanitary protection laws approved by the National Assembly, seed production and trade law, animal health and food safety, the last three sent for review by the commissions), the formulation of the National Bio-Input Strategy and capacity-building at the postgraduate level.
224. The programme also provides assistance to the National Assembly for systematize food and nutritional security, natural resources and environment, and interculturality and gender norms. The goal is achieving in the period 2020–2021 the approval of the Legal Digests in food security and nutrition and Natural Resources.
225. The results of the implementation of the programme in Nicaragua are part of the fundamental inputs for formulating the national programme strategy of comprehensive care of the Dry Corridor of Nicaragua.

### 10.3 Contribution analysis

226. Staring from the implementation of the National Component of the Mesoamerica without hunger programme, the coherence of FAO contribution stands out. The strategic and programmatic priorities of the implementation partners is highlighted by:
  - xvi. the link between the organization of producers in community banks of native and domesticated foreign seeds, the development of participatory plant breeding processes in banks and the production of bio-inputs to increase productivity mainly in the Dry Corridor communities;

- xvii. improving productivity and empowering local producers through community banks of native seeds, bio-inputs as alternative practices to climate change, and local knowledge and genetic resources;
- xviii. strengthening the capacities of the legislative sector by enacting laws and legal digests on the environment and food security;
- xix. reinforcing sanitary institutionality with normative update (update and formulation of three laws), assessing the National Seed System, and strengthening IPSEA officials skills in risk management, food safety and phytosanitary surveillance of agricultural products for the national and international market; and
- xx. strengthening INTA capacities for developing and expanding BCSs' national strategies, participatory plant breeding strategy and bio-inputs strategy.

227. It is also clear that the experience gained with the implementation of the national Mesoamerica sin Hambre programme component contributes to a long-term comprehensive strategy about the Nicaraguan Dry Corridor with a gender and generational approach and livelihoods adapted to climate change. The programme is in the initial phase of formulation. It involves nine national institutions that make up the National System of Production, Consumption and Commerce, for an expected mobilization of USD 40 million.

## 10.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

229. Throughout the programme's implementation life, the FAO intervention contributed to:

Programme outputs	Main results
Public institutions (INTA-IPSA) had their technical and institutional capacities strengthened.	The technical institutional and regulatory capacity of the IPSA for health surveillance was strengthened to boost national and international trade in agricultural products. Regulation was systematized and knowledge on food and nutritional security and sovereignty, natural resources and climate change was exchanged, thus strengthening the capacities of deputies to legislate on the matter. The regulatory framework for the production and marketing of good quality seeds was strengthened to improve the productivity of family farming.
The INTA research agenda on native seeds was strengthened.	INTA was strengthened in its research and technology transfer processes related to conservation and improvement of seeds adapted to the climatic conditions of the Dry Corridor. This contributes to increase the productivity of basic grains such as beans and corn in the Dry Corridor. Institution appropriated the tool "Global analytical framework for the evaluation of agroecology," validating the contribution of agroecology to the establishment of sustainable food systems. The tool is being implemented by INTA with the support of FAO in both conventional and research and technology transfer farms to evaluate the current state and propose an improvement plan for transition. Two lobster trapping technologies "Artificial shelters and foldable creels" in partnership with the Nicaraguan Institute for Fishing and Aquaculture (INPESCA) where validated. Both technologies contribute to reducing the accident rate of fishermen who use diving as a method of capture.
Families had their native seed productive skills improved for local supply.	Seven hundred sixty-seven families of producers organized in 100 Community Banks of native and domesticated foreign seeds seven hundred sixty seven improved their production, storage and marketing capacity regarding quality native seeds adapted to the climatic conditions of the Dry Corridor. During the life of the project (one hundred thirty-eight establishments produced 195 tons of seeds for sowing 3 831 ha of basic grains during the life of the project).
Producer groups could organize and develop mechanisms for the exchange and sale of native seeds.	Four thousand five hundred producers organized in 100 BCSs produce, store, exchange and sell native and domesticated foreign basic grain seeds (namely beans) ensuring the availability of quality seeds adapted to the climatic conditions of the Dry Corridor.

## 10.5 Good practices and lessons learned

### 10.5.1 Best practices

230. FAO coherently intervened with the strategic and programmatic priorities of the implementing partners (the National Institute of Agricultural Technology – INTA, the Institute for Agricultural Protection and Health – IPSA and the National Assembly). This has facilitated the implementation of the programme and its contribution to strengthen those institutions in implementing the national promotion strategies for food security and sovereignty, the resilience of livelihoods towards climate change and poverty reduction.
231. The implementation of three national strategies (BCSs, plant breeding and bio-input production) in the same producer organization brought close linkage and complementarity. This allowed for increased seed productivity, storage and exchange among the communities of the Dry Corridor.
232. The alliance with the legislative branch of the National Assembly was key to dynamize the processes of exchange and review of the presented bills. Hence, the Plant Protection Law of Nicaragua was approved and enforced in 2020. The same occurred about two legal digests with

the status of law (in food security and nutrition and Natural Resources and Climate Change matters).

233. A strategic alliance with two national universities (National Agrarian University and Engineering national university) was established for strengthening the postgraduate technical staff of INTA and IPSA in implementing the programme. This let technicians and professionals of these institutions improve their skills and successfully carry out activities related to the organization and administration of BCSs, participatory plant breeding and food safety.
234. South–South and Triangular Cooperation Mechanism is an instrument that allows to approach counterpart institutions for knowledge and tool exchanging and strengthening. The participatory validation of two technologies to improve lobster fishing stand out here. This is in order to promote the transition towards better trapping practices that reduce assisted diving accidents.

### **10.5.2 Lessons learned**

235. Although the intervention boosts the food security of families by strengthening their organization and the adoption of technologies and improvement of native and domesticated foreign seeds, more sustainability and dissemination efforts are required. It is essential to consolidate a long-term comprehensive intervention model that explicitly includes women and young people as intervention actors, incorporating issues related to income generation and the promotion of adaptation technologies.
236. The use of the South–South and Triangular Cooperation Mechanism has been a strength in the process of sharing knowledge and experience in safe fishing and health technologies. It is important to broaden the exchange issues and propose Nicaragua as an offerer and not just a recipient, particularly in terms of seeds and bio-inputs.

## 11. Agricultural Market Information System

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA4 – Trade and food safety standards
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Global
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) Secretariat
<b>Office or Division</b>	Markets and Trade Division (EST)

### 11.1 Introduction

237. The COVID-19 pandemic created much uncertainty and pressure on global food markets. In view of numerous outbreaks in food processing facilities (especially in the meat and livestock sector); labour shortages due to health-related lockdown measures; and logistical bottlenecks along global supply chains, countries and individual customers started to get worried about their food supplies, as illustrated by empty shelves in supermarkets around the world. Against this background, the G20 AMIS proved instrumental to help calm markets by closely monitoring the situation; providing up-to-date information on the global supply and demand situation of main food commodities; and regularly consulting with its partners in the ten member organizations of AMIS, which are FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the International Grains Council (IGC), the Group on Earth Observations Global Agricultural Monitoring Initiative (GEOGLAM), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank Group, as well as stakeholders in AMIS participating countries.
238. In doing so, AMIS responded to COVID-19 in the same way it had responded to similar shocks that carried the potential to seriously threaten the stability of global food markets, be it a climatic disaster, pest outbreak, trade conflict, energy crisis or animal health emergency. When the G20 Ministers of Agriculture created AMIS ten years ago, the hope was that AMIS could provide reliable, timely and objective information on the nature and possible impact of shocks and promote early discussion with key players in global food markets to seek a suitable response. In this context, the response of AMIS to COVID-19 offers another example that demonstrates the initiative's relevance in safeguarding global food market stability.

### 11.2 Rationale

239. AMIS predates the COVID-19 pandemic, so its rationale is broader than responding to the challenges of a pandemic. AMIS was launched in 2011 as an interagency platform to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security. Bringing together the principal trading countries of agricultural commodities, AMIS assesses global food supplies (focusing on wheat, maize, rice and soybeans) and provides a platform to coordinate policy action in times of market uncertainty. In this regard, AMIS is directly linked to PA4 of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, in particular Action 4 of this PA, which refers to market intelligence and early warning systems.
240. AMIS is composed of G20 members plus Spain and seven additional major exporting and importing countries of agricultural commodities. Together, AMIS participants represent a large share of global production, consumption and trade volumes of the targeted crops, typically in the range of 80–90 percent.

241. Lack of reliable and up-to-date information on crop supply, demand, stocks and export availability contributes to price volatility and may lead to uncoordinated policy responses that may exacerbate existing market instability. By enhancing transparency and policy coordination in international food markets, AMIS has helped to prevent unexpected price hikes and strengthen global food security.
242. To carry out its functions, AMIS consists of:
- i. Global Food Market Information Group, assembling technical representatives from AMIS participants, to provide reliable, accurate, timely and comparable market and policy information;
  - ii. Rapid Response Forum, composed of senior officials from AMIS participants, to promote early discussion about critical market conditions and ways to address them; and
  - iii. Secretariat, involving ten international organizations and entities, to produce short-term market outlooks, assessments and analyses and support all functions of the Information Group and the Forum.

### **11.3 Contribution analysis**

243. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an important opportunity for the initiative to show its value by helping stakeholders to better understand the implications of the health crisis on global food markets and by promoting informed policy decisions to avoid any unnecessary spill-over effects on global food security.
244. In the early days of the pandemic, AMIS was among the first to issue a preliminary assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 and related lockdown measures on global food markets.<sup>lvi</sup> It anticipated possible supply interruptions and higher food prices at the local level but saw no fundamental disruptions to international markets. A joint statement by the interagency Secretariat of AMIS in March 2020 declared food supplies as being sufficient to meet anticipated demand. However, it also pointed to the immense risk for global food security, most notably for vulnerable populations and their access to food in view of the expected economic downturn.<sup>lvii</sup>
245. The April 2020 meeting of the Global Food Market Information Group helped to share these assessments with AMIS stakeholders and to agree on a set of key policy messages going forward.<sup>lviii</sup> The meeting concluded that it would be of paramount importance to keep food markets functioning and to refrain from any restrictions that would disrupt international trade; a policy recommendation that was echoed in a joint statement of several World Trade Organization (WTO) members on 22 April 2020, with specific reference to data and analysis provided by AMIS.<sup>lix</sup>
246. These assessments, as well as a strong call for international collaboration by the outgoing and incoming AMIS Chairs,<sup>lx</sup> paved the way for the Extraordinary Meeting of G20 Agriculture Ministers on 21 April 2020.<sup>lxi</sup> In line with AMIS analyses and recommendations, the Ministerial Declaration considered global food supplies to be adequate and food markets to be well balanced. The meeting also called on all countries to avoid measures that would “create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global food supply chains,” which some observers believe has contributed to leaving international food trade relatively unscathed from the COVID-19 crisis.

### **11.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

247. The work of AMIS ultimately aims at promoting evidence-based policy decisions and international collaboration and dialogue in order to avoid the type of unilateral and ill-informed policy

witnessed during the 2007/08 food price crisis that exacerbated and, to some extent, event created the crisis rather than prevented or contained it.

248. Policy decisions are influenced by a whole array of factors, so it is simply impossible to solely credit AMIS for any policy decision that was taken (or that was not taken: e.g. imposing export restrictions) during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is indication that the work of AMIS did help policy makers rightly chose to calm rather than further destabilize markets. In fact, AMIS has widely been credited for its work during COVID-19, where the initiative proved to be “very efficient and successful” (as stated by the German representative to the AMIS Rapid Response Forum).
249. A way to measure the impact of AMIS is to look at official statements and declarations that were made during this period. For example, the final *Communiqué* of the extraordinary meeting of G20 Agriculture Ministers in April 2020<sup>lxii</sup> “emphasize[d] the work of the G20 Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and [took] note of AMIS’ assessment that at present global food supplies are adequate and food markets remain well balanced.” Further, it states that G20 members “commit and call on other members to continue providing timely and reliable information on global food market fundamentals to help markets, countries, and consumers make informed choices. Where appropriate, we will coordinate policy responses, supported by the AMIS Global Food Market Information Group and the AMIS Rapid Response Forum.”
250. The 2020 and 2021<sup>lxiii</sup> *Communiqués* of G20 Agriculture Ministers echo some of these assessments, stating that members “acknowledge and welcome the important contributions of the Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS) [...] to enhancing food market transparency and supporting coordinated policy responses for food security, and nutrition, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
251. Another example is the Joint Statement by Brazil, Canada, Italy and Egypt following the Extraordinary High-Level Meeting of the Group of Friends of Food Security and Nutrition on the impact of COVID-19 on food availability and supply, which was held on 4 April 2020.<sup>lxiv</sup> The statement calls on AMIS to continue monitoring global food markets and policies and provide up-to-date and reliable information, thus enhancing transparency and supporting timely and evidence-based decision-making.
252. Visibility of AMIS outputs increased markedly in 2020. The AMIS website tripled its average monthly visitors between March and May 2020, and still had about twice as many visitors in the remaining months of 2020 than in previous years. Similarly, the number of new subscribers to the AMIS Market Monitor reached 244 in 2020, about twice as high as in 2019, while the number of followers of the AMIS Twitter account reached more than 3 700.

## 11.5 Good practices & lessons learned

253. For any initiative, such as AMIS, that tries to impact policy decisions, such as AMIS, it is definitely an advantage that all the structures were in place. This involved close networks with stakeholders, clearly defined outputs and activities, and processes and procedures that operate immediately and effectively.
254. In addition, to influence policy, this takes time and cannot be generated over night. In this context, AMIS could rely on its long history of successful collaboration with partners and previous cases where AMIS had proven its impact and relevance.

255. Influencing policy is a long and multifaceted procedure. It is imperative to have all the right and reliable data, information and products in a timely manner, but also to have in place all the mechanisms that give access to policy makers. In the case of AMIS and COVID-19, knowledge was generated to provide rapid and to-the-point assessments. This allowed for the right policy recommendations and positions to be identified. The need to keep trade open and value chains functioning smoothly was identified from the beginning due to AMIS information and data.
256. Support was then gathered behind these positions within the AMIS networks. Namely, first this involved the members of the AMIS Secretariat Steering Committee. It was followed by the outgoing and incoming AMIS Chair and, finally, the AMIS participating countries. This was done before publishing any recommendations and handing them over to a higher level which, in the AMIS context, is the G20 Agriculture Ministers.
257. It is worth noting that the possibility to explore AMIS-like solutions in sectors beyond agriculture, notably the health sector, was also discussed during the pandemic. This can also be recognized as a key role that AMIS played.<sup>lxv</sup>

## 12. Occupational health and safety in the banana industry under the COVID-19 pandemic

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA4 – Trade and food safety standards
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Ecuador, Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO/World Banana Forum Secretariat
<b>Office or Division</b>	Markets and Trade Division (EST)

### 12.1 Introduction

258. The banana is the fourth most important agricultural commodity, as well as the most preferred and exported fresh fruit worldwide, both in terms of quantities and value. In 2020, over 119 million tonnes of bananas were produced and more than 21.5 million tonnes were exported worldwide. Bananas are therefore an important source of income generation and food security for thousands of rural households in developing countries. However, agrochemical intensive production and increasing costs of production, among other factors, have given rise to environmental, economic and social challenges in the sector, particularly with respect to human rights and decent work. Such challenges include occupational health and safety.
259. The COVID-19 crisis created additional challenges in the banana industry, especially related to workplace health and safety risks faced by agricultural workers. This raises concerns, *inter alia*, about the trade implications of the pandemic and the measures adopted to contain its spread. Agricultural workers often lack access to appropriate PPE, and water and sanitary facilities. They can be further exposed to overcrowded production sites, for example packinghouses, which pose increased risks of infection, particularly during an outbreak. In Ecuador – by far the leading exporter of bananas globally – the COVID-19 pandemic had damaging impacts. Here. The pandemic exposed the nearly 220 000 direct banana workers and approximately 2.5 million indirect workers that continued to operate under lockdown and curfew measures to unsafe and potentially fatal situations if necessary health and safety measures were not adequately implemented.

### 12.2 Rationale

260. The intervention began in early April 2020. It contributed to FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and in particular the PA4 – Trade and Food Safety Standards and PA1 – Global Humanitarian Response Plan.
261. The onset of the COVID-19 crisis had severe impacts on the Ecuadorian population, with the first case identified in the country in late February 2020. It soon led to overflowing hospitals and collapsed burial systems by April, to the extent that some families and loved ones were forced to leave the bodies of the deceased on the streets in some regions. By the end of 2020, Ecuador had registered over 200 000 cases and nearly 14 000 deaths. This is a significant figure given the country's population of only 17 million.<sup>lxvi</sup>
262. While the crisis was unfolding in the country, the Secretariat of the World Banana Forum (WBF), hosted by FAO's Markets and Trade Division, understood the need to produce and deliver online audiovisual guidance and training materials to support employers and workers in the Ecuadorian banana industry in implementing the highest levels of health and safety standards under the pandemic. In fact, this was affecting well-being of essential banana workers but also the export performance of their products and consequently the farmers' income.

263. The WBF,<sup>lxvii</sup> which was established in 2009, is a permanent platform of assembly for the global banana industry. It aims to enable collaboration and consensus among supply chain actors on good practices for the sustainable production and trade of bananas. Among the sustainability challenges addressed within the WBF are the risks related to the occupational health and safety of banana workers, particularly through the WBF Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative<sup>lxviii</sup> (BOHESI) that was piloted in Ecuador from 2014 to 2018. This initiative ultimately achieved institutional impact through the development of a national manual on health and safety in the banana industry that has now become mandatory under a 2018 Ministerial Agreement. As a result of the health and safety activities in Ecuador, the WBF has strengthened its working relationships and further enabled extensive collaboration with the Ecuadorian Government. These efforts also involved private sector representatives and banana producers' and exporters' associations.
264. As such, the WBF has gained extensive experience through the development of a national manual on occupational health and safety in the banana industry, as well as the production of a series of audiovisual health and safety training materials in 2019. Consequently, it was well positioned to support the development of additional audiovisual health and safety guidance materials on COVID-19 at the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, in line with WHO recommendations.
265. The COVID-19-related audiovisual materials were produced in collaboration with the Ecuadorian Government, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labour, who had supported BOHESI activities since its launch in the country in 2014. The revision of the materials also entailed extensive inputs from the private sector to include good practices on measures that were already being put into place by employers to reduce the health and safety risks for their workers.

### 12.3 Contribution analysis

266. The intervention targeted employers and workers in the Ecuadorian banana industry, as well as those of the Latin American banana industry more broadly, since the audiovisual materials were ultimately made publicly available online in Spanish. As the health and safety risks related to COVID-19 are very similar across different agricultural industries, it also aimed to be a valuable resource that could be used on plantations for other commodities.
267. FAO's COVID-19 response in the Ecuadorian banana industry through the WBF focused on developing targeted online audiovisual guidance materials that could be accessed easily by any banana producer or worker with a mobile phone or internet connection, including in remote and rural areas. The materials produced include one video for employers, which provides an overview of the health and safety risks that banana workers are exposed to because of COVID-19. The video also provides guidance on workplace health and safety measures that should be implemented for the protection of workers, including a focus on safe workplace organization, sanitation and hygiene, and PPP.<sup>lxix</sup> A second video – in two versions, namely a short version and an extended one – was produced for workers with the aim of highlighting the characteristics and symptoms of COVID-19, as well as demonstrating the prevention and control measures that should be followed at the workplace to ensure their personal protection against COVID-19.<sup>lxx</sup>
268. The content and videos were produced with support from the occupational health and safety specialist who had supported the WBF BOHESI from 2014 to 2018. The materials were developed in line with WHO recommendations, and further highlighted good health and safety practices that had been identified at the time. The transcripts produced were shared with the Ecuadorian Government – namely the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labour – for review and inputs. Sessions were held with employers and private sector actors - members of the WBF and relevant

actors of the industry - to collect additional feedback on the guidance materials before finalizing the contents. Ultimately, the final videos produced were the result of a series of consultations held with government and private sector representatives in Ecuador.

269. The final outputs were shared with the Ecuadorian Government for dissemination and later published on the FAO YouTube channel in early June 2020 to enable a broader reach in the target audience.

## 12.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

270. The audiovisual materials on workplace health and safety under the COVID-19 pandemic, produced by the WBF in collaboration with the Ecuadorian Government, have enabled a reduction in the transmission risk of COVID-19 along the food production and supply chain, particularly during the peak of the outbreak. The materials, which provide practical guidance regarding the measures needed to enable a safe workplace organization, proper sanitation and hygiene, and further highlight the proper PPE needed to reduce the possibility of transmission and infection were posted on the eLearning platform of the Ministry of Labour of Ecuador.<sup>lxxi</sup> This has enabled a broad diffusion of the materials to worker representatives not only in the banana industry but also other agriculture sectors. The materials have also been broadly endorsed and supported by local stakeholders, including the private sector. This is due to the success of previous WBF Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative activities that had been implemented in the country. The institutional impact achieved led to make the health and safety manual produced mandatory through a Ministerial Agreement in 2018.
271. Following the finalization and submission of the materials to the Ecuadorian Government, the WBF published the videos on FAO's YouTube Channel on 11 June. As of April 2022, the short and extended guidance videos for workers had more than 1 200 and 800 view, respectively, while the guidance video for workers had over 100 views.

## 12.5 Good practices & lessons learned

272. A good practice that enabled the achievement of the desired outcomes under this activity was the continued and strengthened collaboration between FAO's World Banana Forum and the Ecuadorian Government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labour, since the start of BOHESI activities in 2014. This cooperation enabled agreements to be reached in a quick and efficient manner. It further allowed for a fast process in the production of the guidance materials, as the ministries facilitated the necessary authorizations and health and safety protocols for the health and safety specialist and audiovisual company to travel and film on a banana plantation under the strict travel restrictions imposed at the time, when the outbreak was at its peak.
273. The intervention further highlighted the critical need to work with diverse stakeholders, including the government and private sector, to enable a greater impact. In this respect, the WBF strongly benefitted from its multi-stakeholder nature and its already established relationships with key actors of the Ecuadorian banana industry in the implementation and delivery of outputs. The WBF facilitates the necessary synergies among the private sector, the public sector and civil society organizations to complement each other in their processes to improve decent conditions for workers against COVID-19. The WBF is further able to facilitate an informed debate where problems can be revealed and discussed, providing clear data in order to set priorities of common interest.

## 13. Resilience of rural households in Nicaragua’s Dry Corridor after the impact of COVID-19 and innovation and diffusion of technology for adapting agriculture to climate change

<b>Priority area</b>	Priority area 5: Building the resilience of smallholder farmers for recovery: protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities
<b>Geographic coverage</b>	Nicaragua
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO Nicaragua

### 13.1 Introduction

274. Nicaragua is highly subject to climate variability and extreme events. Future scenarios presented in the IPCC’s Fifth Report, adjusted to country conditions, indicate that of the country’s 156 municipalities, 21 are threatened by hurricanes, 48 by drought, 33 by floods and nine by sea-level rise.<sup>lxxii</sup> Among the municipalities threatened by drought and floods are those that make up Nicaragua’s Dry Corridor.
275. Several studies carried out in the Dry Corridor highlighted the impacts of climate variability, e.g. prolonged droughts and extreme natural phenomena, such as hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihoods of its population. They highlighted the following.
- iv. Sixty-five percent of households undergo some level of food insecurity, 25 percent are exposed to severe levels and are less likely to be able to purchase sufficient food to consistently meet their food energy needs, while a further 20 percent are moderately food insecure, i.e. do not have regular access to nutritious and sufficient food.<sup>lxxiii</sup>
  - v. Families’ significant income reduction (more than 50 percent) and livelihood deterioration were mainly due to production drop, hurricane-caused loss of planting areas and next-cycle seeds, plus soil damage and the pandemic. The latter turned into food reserve reduction, income drop due to loss of employment in agriculture, increased cost of inputs and seeds, closure of small family businesses, and the need to devote more resources to the care of those affected by the disease.<sup>lxxiv</sup>
  - vi. More and more nationals left the country due to rising unemployment.
  - vii. The limited economic and social participation of women and young people on equal terms was accentuated during COVID-19 since they are responsible for the care of sick family members.
276. In this context, FAO, in coordination with the Institute of Agricultural Technology – INTA (an institution that belongs to the National System of Production, Consumption and Commerce), implemented two projects in the most vulnerable ten municipalities of the Dry Corridor, involving 56 communities. The projects promoted actions for reactivating production, reinforcing community management and organization, and developing small investments in rural enterprises aimed at generating income and sustainable food. The projects also enhance the use and adoption of technologies for adapting to climate change, providing nutritional education and preventing COVID-19. The experience developed in this framework laid the foundation for a comprehensive long-term strategy of attention to the Dry Corridor for making its food systems more inclusive.

## 13.2 Rationale

277. The intervention is linked to the Priority area 5<sup>lxxv</sup> Building the resilience of smallholder farmers for recovery: protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities by interventions aimed at promoting economic recovery and transformation. It especially contributes to the expected outcome number 2, Support for a transformative economic recovery.
278. Nicaragua's Dry Corridor is made up of 64 municipalities (42 percent of the 153 nationwide) comprising 21 percent of the national territory. The Dry Corridor hosts 37 percent of the rural population and contains ca. 67 000 farms (46 percent of them have an extension of less than 2 ha). The dominant productive models are dedicated to basic grains, vegetables and small livestock like chickens and pigs mainly for subsistence and, to a lesser extent, for commercialization. These production systems are closely linked to the climate, where the increase in temperatures increases the probability of drought and extreme phenomena-related floods that cause crop losses and increase the risk of food insecurity.
279. In addition to the problems in this area, and as a result of COVID-19, the number of Nicaraguan immigrants and emigrants has increased due to unemployment. This affects families by both disintegrating and benefitting them with remittance income. The economic and social impacts derived from the pandemic further enhanced the country's structural problems. These include poverty (24.9 percent)<sup>lxxvi</sup> and climate vulnerability (Nicaragua is the sixth most climate-affected country),<sup>lxxvii</sup> which, together with biosecurity measures to curb the spread of the virus, caused loss of jobs (-10 percent), reduction in the flow of remittances (-12 percent) and reduction in foreign direct investment (-35 percent).
280. In response to this problem, FAO partnered with the Institute of Agricultural Technology, national technical agencies (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture and the Dutch Development Cooperation Service), municipal governments and producer organizations (Semillas de Identidad, Fundación entre Mujeres and Asociación Nochari). It implemented both projects and provided a solid technical, methodological and investment alternative that contributes to solve problems related to climate change and COVID-19 impact in the Dry Corridor. Therefore, both for FAO and the government institutions at the national and regional levels became points of reference in the development of methodologies and links to institutional programmes and initiatives.
281. On the other hand, as a result of the new FAO country programming framework 2022–2026 in Nicaragua, the intervention model towards a long-term comprehensive strategy for attention to the Dry Corridor is going to be planned, validated, systematized and scaled up to public programmes and policies and new opportunities with the private sector and international cooperation. The goal is joining different technical and financial contributions for the benefit of the most vulnerable families.

## 13.3 Contribution analysis

282. The contribution of FAO to the projects "Resilience of the Dry Corridor of Nicaragua's rural households to the impact of COVID-19" (GCP/NIC/054/CAN) and "Innovation and diffusion of technology for adapting agriculture to climate change" (GCP/NIC/045/SWI) stands out for the following points.

283. The systematization of the experience laid the foundations for a comprehensive long-term strategy for attention to the Nicaraguan Dry Corridor with a gender and generational approach. It aims at diversifying production and strengthening agricultural livelihoods in coping with climate change.
284. In the period 2020–2021, actions have been implemented in conjunction with institutional initiatives for rural innovation and the increase of agricultural production and productivity, such as:
- viii. Territorial planning and management to strengthen livelihoods and solve community problems caused by climate change, the impact of drought, ecosystem degradation and COVID-19 benefitted 7 496 families in ten municipalities and 56 communities of the Dry Corridor. It formulated and implemented 95 community initiatives or small community projects.
  - ix. Capacity building and strengthening of the community social fabric developed, validated and promoted climate change adaptation practices and technologies, productive reactivation, information modules and multimedia tools for disseminating and exchanging knowledge about climate change, COVID-19 prevention, as well as food and nutrition.
  - x. Sixty Community Banks of native and domesticated foreign (*acriolladas*) seeds for the sustainable production of seeds and the increase of storage capacity were strengthened with the aim of improving communities' and small producers' resilience to climate change, while reducing the risk through the agricultural supply chain.
  - xi. Inputs and equipment for the 2022 establishment of 176 rural individual and group enterprises were planned, trained and provisioned for improving product quality of products, added value and marketing.
  - xii. A campaign to promote healthy eating and good hygiene habits for preventing COVID-19 was designed and implemented.
285. Existing alliances have been consolidated and new alliances have been established for strengthening the community social fabric; implementing small projects known as Community Initiatives; increasing production while preserving biodiversity; rehabilitating degraded water recharge areas: appropriating technologies for coping with the climate change, and an increase the rural income by means of added value and marketing for strenghtening food security and fighting poverty.

### **13.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

286. FAO intervention contributed to restore and strengthen the livelihoods and productive capacity of families with greater vulnerability and affected by COVID-19 in ten municipalities (56 communities) of the Dry Corridor. Specifically, the intervention achieved the following:
- xiii. The livelihoods of 7 496 families was strengthened by organizing 95 community initiatives or small projects. Moreover, 2 754 families benefitted from productive reactivation stimuli. By adopting climate-change adaptation technologies and thanks to water harvesting works and productive reactivation stimuli, these families improved their production units and rehabilitates sources of water recharge, thus boosting both quantity and quality of their food production for self-consumption and sale of surpluses.
  - xiv. Three hundred producers from 56 communities most vulnerable to climate change, organized in 60 Community Banks of native and domesticated foreign seeds, have been

trained and equipped for the production, storage and exchange of basic corn and bean seeds, ensuring their availability for the next agricultural cycle.

287. Inputs and equipment for the 2022 establishment of 176 rural individual and group enterprises were planned, trained and provisioned for improving product quality of products, added value and marketing. This resulted in the increase in income of families.
288. The participation increased among women, men and community youth organized in five networks (Network of Rural Community Promoters, Network of Community Initiative Boards, Network of Drinking Water Committees, Network of Entrepreneurs and Network of BCSs). Those were trained and participated in the development, validation and promotion of practices and technologies for adapting to climate change and reactivating production, as well as implementing a healthy nutrition and COVID-19 prevention campaign.

## **13.5 Good practices and lessons learned**

### **13.5.1 Best practices**

289. FAO has a programmatic vision. It defines the medium- and long-term working path, laying the foundations for a comprehensive long-term strategy for the care of the Dry Corridor. It links programmes and public policies, identifies new opportunities for joint intervention with the private sector and international cooperation, and aims at joining different technical and financial contributions for the benefit of the most vulnerable families. The programme is in its initial phase. It involves nine national institutions that make up the National System of Production, Consumption and Commerce, for an expected mobilization of USD 40 million.
290. The definition of an intervention strategy based on the development of specific gender- and generation-focused studies allowed to generate selection criteria such as vulnerability, food security and nutrition, and type of entrepreneurship. These were applied to select the target group, alliances and technologies to be promoted within the framework of the project, ensuring compliance with its objectives.
291. The community social fabric has been strengthened to favour the active participation of young people (generational change) and women in community work networks. These were meant as an active platform for promoting practices and climate-change adaptive technologies, reactivating production, ensuring food security and COVID-19 prevention, and facilitating knowledge transfer.
292. The consolidation of old and new alliances at the municipal government and community levels has been key to the joint implementation of community initiatives and the reactivation of production.
293. The Agroecological Production Unit and the Capacity Development Unit were established as showcases and spaces for exchange and training in order to appropriate climate-change adaptation technologies.
294. Three studies were developed for defining the implementation strategy of both projects and selecting the target group: i) diagnosis of conditions of vulnerability, needs and productive potential of rural families affected by COVID-19 and hurricanes Eta and Iota in the Dry Corridor; ii) measurement of food security indicators (food consumption score, index of home diet diversity, score of diet diversity in women of fertile age, average expenditure on food, and impact of COVID-19 on income sources); and iii) diagnosis of rural enterprises and use of technologies for marketing.

### **13.5.2 Lessons learned**

295. The consolidation of a single local intervention strategy of both projects requires greater planning and monitoring of joint work, as well as the complementarity of the technical teams.
296. Systematization and knowledge management processes are key to ensure the proper implementation of the project and must be carried out from the beginning of the intervention.
297. The collective work between the Environmental Management Units of the Municipal Mayors' Offices, the community networks (Boards of Directors, AdaptaJoven Network and Network of Monitors), as well as the technical team of the project have dynamized the implementation of field actions for the benefit of families. However, it requires a lot of time and must be addressed from the beginning of the implementation.



## 14. In Colombia El Campo Sigue

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1: Global Humanitarian Response Plan: addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food crisis contexts  PA5: Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery: protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Departments of Barbacoas, Magüí Payán and Roberto Payán, Department of Nariño (Southern Colombia)  Departments of Cesar and La Guajira (Northern Colombia).
<b>Office or Division</b>	OER and FAO Colombia

### 14.1 Introduction

298. The emergency situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the conditions of vulnerability in the country (weakness of the health system, food insecurity and malnutrition, predominance of informal employment in rural and urban areas, socio-cultural discrimination due to gender, age status, ethnic group, social class, and technology divide, among others). It was characterized by the complexities of responding in a pandemic (deterioration of the economic system, mobilization restrictions, communication challenges and the consequent alteration of the normal functioning and daily life of inhabitants, escalation of pre-existing social tensions and conflicts, increase in gender-based violence and disruption of livelihoods).
299. Some of these problems had been visible since the onset of the pandemic and required immediate action, while others became more evident as the pandemic evolved, requiring medium and longer term responses that contributed not only to recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic but also addressing root causes of risks and vulnerabilities.
300. FAO Colombia implemented complementary interventions to contribute to understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; this aimed to contribute to reduce the risk of transmission along the food chain, and to support the national and local governments in stabilizing access to food, and improving food security, especially for the most vulnerable population. Over all, this worked towards a resilient recovery.

### 14.2 Rationale

301. FAO interventions in Colombia were aligned to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, especially Priority Strategy 2 Decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion, food security and livelihoods, and Priority Strategy 3 Protect, assist and advocate for refugees, IDPs, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic. It also responded to FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Umbrella programme, specifically to Programme Area 1 Global Humanitarian Response Plan Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food crisis contexts and Programme Area 5 Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery; Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities.
302. With financial support from the USAID, FAO led the establishment of a data-driven monitoring system in the context of COVID-19 and other shocks. This was within the framework of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan. The objective of the mechanism aimed to support informed decision-making to strengthen food security and the livelihoods of all actors in the agricultural,

livestock and fisheries value chains in countries with a food crisis, with special attention to the most vulnerable producers.

303. FAO Colombia, through the #ElCampoSigue campaign, designed a communication and social mobilization strategy aimed at providing information to actors throughout the food chain. This is aimed to reduce the transmission of the virus and manage the impacts of COVID-19 in the agriculture sector, and in food and nutrition security.
304. Additionally, within the project Emergency assistance for vulnerable indigenous populations (host families and migrants) affected by the migratory flow from Venezuela and the COVID-19 crisis, on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, funded by the Belgian Government, an impact assessment covered 221 households in La Guajira and Cesar. It presented information on the recovery interventions of indigenous peoples, migrant populations and host communities in agricultural livelihoods (crops, livestock and fisheries), food security and nutrition in the context of COVID-19.

### 14.3 Contribution analysis

305. In Colombia 1 837 households dedicated to agricultural and non-agricultural activities were surveyed with Random Digital Dialling (RDD) technology: 850 were from FAO beneficiary households<sup>8</sup> and 987 were randomly selected. The study showed that 30.5 percent of the surveyed households suffered damages that led them to cultivate a smaller amount of crops; 42.4 percent were recently affected by moderate or severe food insecurity between July and August 2020; and 4.7 percent suffered the most severe level of food insecurity between July and August 2020.<sup>lxxviii</sup>
306. During the emergency generated by the pandemic, actions informed by the assessment contributed, on the one hand, to reducing the risk of contagion of the most vulnerable population in rural areas. On the other hand, these actions strengthened their capacities for food production and the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods. Differential actions were identified that combined prevention and containment at the local level. This included a return to normal living conditions or new normality through the rehabilitation, repair or reconstruction of the affected area and greater community resilience.
307. In relation to communication as a tool in times of crisis, FAO Colombia designed a communication and social mobilization strategy called #ElCampoSigue. It aimed at providing information to rural communities for managing the emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the agriculture, food safety and risk management sectors.
308. The strategy included the development of communication products that were transmitted through radio spots, text messages and social networks. Its communication was accessible to the target audiences. Further, it highlighted the experience in Colombia regarding the management of communication for advocacy, public training and awareness, as well as the adoption of self-care among the food chain actors. Concomitantly, biosafety items, essential information on preventive measures and personal protection items were distributed to vulnerable communities in rural areas, some of them hosting internally displaced persons and migrants.

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<sup>8</sup> The surveyed sample under the category of FAO beneficiaries consisted of peasant, family farms and community farming households that had direct or indirect contact with FAO Colombia through its programme areas: Food and fight against malnutrition; Natural resources, forest, land and water governance; Social and technological innovation for sustainable agrifood systems; Family farming and inclusive markets; and Risk management and rehabilitation of livelihoods.

309. The content of #ElCampoSigue campaign focused on the rural and indigenous communities most affected by the impacts of COVID-19. Its activities are detailed as follows:
- i. development of nine radio spots<sup>lxxxix</sup> aired between May and September 2020 through the Colombian Government's public radio station *Radio Nacional de Colombia*, reaching more than 1 300 000 people.
  - ii. thirty five #ElCampoSigue radio programmes<sup>lxxx</sup> were broadcasted through a local station in the rural areas of Barbaçoas, Magüí Payán and Roberto Payán, reaching approximately 3 500 daily listeners between 2020 and 2021.
  - iii. microvideos<sup>lxxxii</sup> with COVID-19 data, personal testimonies, and stories told in simple and popular language were distributed via the WhatsApp and Twitter accounts<sup>lxxxiii</sup> of FAO Colombia and of cooperating partners, targeting the rural population.
  - iv. biosafety kits<sup>9</sup> were distributed to 1 011 families (nearly 5 000 people: 411 in Nariño, 200 in Putumayo, 750 in La Guajira and 200 in Chocó).
  - v. 2021 calendars<sup>lxxxiii</sup> with COVID-19 prevention and biosafety messages from the agriculture sector were designed and distributed to 1 800 families in the departments of Bolívar, Córdoba, Chocó, Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño and Putumayo.
  - vi. widely distributed radio messages and microvideos for social media networks and emails on handwashing and the use of face masks for the garden, cleaning and disinfection of food, preparation of disinfectants and cleaning and disinfection of work tools.



#### 14.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

310. The impact assessment<sup>lxxxiv</sup> conducted in La Guajira and Cesar covered ethnic, migrant and receiving and host populations. It informed the response plan, which included the provision of cash transfers and/or food assistance for rural populations, the provision of inputs for rapid, diversified and safe food production, and promotion of recovery strategies to generate sources of income, job opportunities and reduce the vulnerability of households in the two departments. Specifically, 801 families (3 365 people) received cash transfers in the departments of La Guajira and Cesar to cover basic needs, mainly food to protect essential livelihoods. In response to the crisis caused by COVID-19 and the related measures to reduce transmission.

<sup>9</sup> Biosafety kits included antibacterial gel, liquid hand soap, a personal gel dispenser, disposable and washable face masks, alcohol, disposable latex gloves, a plastic spray bottle, disposable caterpillar-type caps, safety goggles, a face shield/face mask, a biosafety suit, an infrared thermometer, foot baths and pictograms (signalling).

- i. Capacities were strengthened at the household and community levels to carry out productive agricultural activities and improve their resilience.
  - ii. Biosafety protocols were implemented and disseminated at the community and institutional level with an ethnic approach to prevent actors in the food chain from being agents of transmission and spread of COVID-19.
  - iii. Supplies and tools were delivered for the development of agricultural activities in the communities, as well as the installation of irrigation systems, community water points, systems with windmills and solar systems in both departments.
311. Three key aspects were achieved from the #ElCampoSigue campaign: i) captured attention/interest: awareness was raised and interest was generated among the vulnerable rural populations to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the agrifood chain; ii) Influence: a favourable reaction in rural communities on self-care was generated; and iii) Impact: communications as a strategic instrument was used to accompany rural communities in sustaining the processes of production, transformation, transportation and marketing<sup>lxxxv</sup> of agricultural products, despite the economic barriers generated by COVID-19.
312. A webinar<sup>lxxxvi</sup> recreated the #ElCampoSigue radio broadcasts via a web space. Here, ECHO, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as representatives from FAO's main, regional and Colombia headquarters not only shared the experience and lessons learned from the communities but also emphasized how these communication tools had become strategic in supporting rural communities when it comes to sustain their production systems, despite the economic barriers that intensified with the pandemic.

José Angulo Cortés<sup>lxxxvii</sup> mentioned that he likes the radio programme #ElCampoSigue: *"it is an alternative for us to be able to receive training from FAO. We have learned new things... for us it has been good, we can feel close to our colleagues from FAO and we can receive training and strengthen our knowledge to apply it to our crops and animals."*
313. The communication and social mobilization strategy provided communities with information on managing the emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the sectors of agriculture, food safety and risk management. This resulted in communities' ability to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and to support themselves through local exchange of products.
314. The interventions supported livelihoods recovery and community well-being, in Cesar and La Guajira. The most vulnerable households emerged from the crisis moment and could resume their basic, social and economic activities. This ensured the production of their crops and guaranteed their agricultural livelihoods.
315. In the project implemented in Cesar and La Guajira, capacities were strengthened at the household and community level to carry out productive agricultural activities and improve resilience capacity with a focus on nutrition-sensitive agriculture. This process was developed from agricultural, livestock, food and nutritional education, as well as COVID-19 prevention components. Thanks to the transfers received, as well as the tools and supplies, the families of the benefited communities increased the production of food essential for their food and nutritional security. They also recovered and improved their sanitary conditions, and increased the production of bovines, goats and sheep.

Concepción Gómez<sup>lxxxviii</sup> shared that *"during the pandemic, we have not been able to meet in person... but through phone calls [with FAO] we held meetings. We have*

*worked on the production of the garden, we have grown beans, chard, tomatoes and a bit of everything, and we have nurtured ourselves from these as we have not been able to go to the town to buy vegetables..."*

316. Vulnerable indigenous populations were affected by the migratory flow from Venezuela and the COVID-19 crisis. Emergency assistance helped them. On the border between Colombia and Venezuela, 1 133 families increased essential food production for their food security and nutrition. The supply of water was ensured to 1 210 families and 801 families received cash transfers.

## **14.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

317. Social networks and platforms such as WhatsApp increase reach and offer an alternative means for the dissemination of information and training processes, despite restrictions on mobilization and attendance.
318. Alternative national media, such as radio and popular communication tools, are relevant and important mediums in disseminating information during the pandemic and reaching rural and ethnic communities.
319. Combining actions for the rapid recovery of production systems, both at the agricultural and livestock levels, strengthens food security and prevents the loss or premature death of animals.
320. Aspects such as dialogue, articulation and agreement with the communities were essential for the proper development and completion of the actions.
321. Any strategy aimed at reducing the impacts of COVID-19 and other possible future events must consider the sociocultural context of each territory and their autonomy to manage the emergency. It is important to move towards the design and implementation of strategies for anticipatory actions and responses to emergencies in order to reduce the impacts of COVID-19, the migration crisis, natural hazards and the economic crisis.
322. Interventions that combine the delivery of food assistance with actions for the rapid recovery of agricultural livelihoods contribute to reducing the root causes of risks and vulnerabilities in the face of future disasters and crises. Such a contribution builds resilience.

## 15. Strengthening resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and contributing to poverty reduction in peri-urban Kinshasa through agricultural livelihoods support

<b>Priority area</b>	PA5: Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities
<b>Geographical coverage</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa)
<b>Author(s), job title</b>	FAO Representation in Democratic Republic of the Congo, OER
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Representation in Democratic Republic of the Congo, OER

### 15.1 Introduction

323. The Democratic Republic of Congo continues to suffer the effects of COVID-19. In July 2020, the NGO Elan DRC analysed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on households in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>lxxxix</sup> It found that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the country's economic situation and, therefore, in the food security of households. Impacts were felt by low-income households, most of whom rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. For example, according to the study, 55 percent of households nationwide saw their incomes fall as a result of COVID-19. In Kinshasa, the epicentre of the pandemic, 66 percent of households not only saw their incomes fall but also had to cope with increased expenditure and higher food prices.
324. Faced with this situation, households adopted negative coping strategies based on reducing the frequency and quantity of meals consumed per day. As a result, people consumed less nutritious food. In almost 64 percent of households, one member skipped a meal, and 31.2 percent of households went a whole day without eating due to lack of money or other resources. Indeed, 55 percent of households experienced a drop in income, particularly among the severely affected low-income households, and 94 percent of households reduced their consumption of basic goods and services during the pandemic. These results confirmed the National Institute of Statistics (INS) figures in June 2020<sup>xc</sup> which stated that 28.6 percent of households ate only one meal per day.
325. Although the national state of emergency was lifted in November 2020, the food insecurity situation remained worrying. In Kinshasa, 76 percent of households surveyed said that they were not able to consume healthy nutritious food due to restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>xci</sup> In this context, improved access to safe and nutritious food and sources of income was key to enable households in Kinshasa, especially the most vulnerable, to be more resilient to the effects of COVID-19. This made them more able to cope with, respond to and adapt to the impacts of the crises.

### 15.2 Rationale

326. The FAO intervention (project OSRO/DRC/003/BEL) was in line with FAO's former Strategic Objective 5 (Improving the resilience of livelihoods to disasters and crises), Outcome 4 ("Countries have prepared for and responded to disasters and crises through effective interventions"),<sup>10</sup> the CPF, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2020 and FAO Democratic Republic of the Congo's Response Plan to COVID-19, in particular PA1-Pillar 4 on reducing the spread of the disease

<sup>10</sup> FAO's work on emergencies and resilience in the face of disasters and crises in FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031 is mainly covered by the programme priority area BL3-Agriculture and Food Emergencies, BL4-Resilient agrifood systems and BP3-One Health.

through information and raising awareness on prevention measures, pillar 3 on strengthening the availability of and access to food products, and PA5-Pillar 2 on supporting the development of local food value chains to enhance transformative economic recovery. Further, it is in line with the work of the Food Security Cluster in relation to the Democratic Republic of Congo's Humanitarian Action Plan 2020, which focuses on improving access to livelihood means. This aims to reduce and prevent food insecurity, rehabilitate and protect livelihoods, and improve access to food assets for food insecure households.

327. To do this, FAO Democratic Republic of the Congo, has a significant asset in that it has been present in the country since 1988. Together with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo FAO has built an operational mechanism and teams for rapid interventions in crisis and emergency areas. These efforts support and restore the livelihoods of populations affected by disasters, conflicts and crises while strengthening their resilience.
328. To address the problem, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock was the official counterpart of the project and the NGO partners were the *Secrétariat Général du Développement Rural* and *Droit à la vie* for the implementation phase. In addition, synergy was established with WFP and FAO actions, which complemented the efforts with unconditional cash for the beneficiaries in order to protect the most vulnerable while promoting economic recovery.

### 15.3 Analysis of the contributions

329. The main objective of FAO Democratic Republic of the Congo's contribution was to strengthen the socioeconomic conditions and nutritional situation of 2 550 affected households in Kinshasa, while reducing their risk to COVID-19 transmission. The activities that were implemented aimed to strengthen local food production of nutritious products, maintain access to food for the targeted households, stabilize their income and ensure dietary diversification – all this while reducing the risk of virus transmission along the agrifood system.
330. In order to achieve this goal, FAO's contributions were articulated in two areas of intervention.
- i. Reduce virus spread through contact and community cases by disseminating messages on how to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This was done through the distribution of 2 550 awareness leaflets in the local language (Lingala), the organization of well-designed campaigns in public places within the intervention zones, and the organization of exchange forums on COVID-19 within household groups.
  - ii. Strengthen the availability of and accessibility to fresh local food products through the establishment of associations for beneficiary households. This intervention distributed market gardening kits and provided technical support on horticulture, vegetable production and the consumption of nutritious foods. This was done through nutritional centres and 1 950 households that had been most affected by COVID-19. There were also efforts to disseminating training on responsible fishing and fish production and conservation to 600 fishers.

### 15.4 Significant change (outcome) story

331. In order to raise awareness on measures to reduce the transmission of the virus, households have been structured to be compliant with barrier measures. Training sessions with small groups of direct beneficiaries were organized on the role of community producers in limiting the spread of the pandemic were organized. FAO's direct beneficiaries were the first to adopt the barrier

measures as recommended by the health authorities and set an example for the rest of the population.

332. To promote the economic recovery of the most vulnerable, the 1 950 households that received market gardening inputs in the first production cycle had, on average, established about 3.5 amaranth beds. This rose to ten beds. Given the needs of the market and the agricultural season, households have diversified their crops by establishing more profitable fields of spring onions, sweet potato leaves or sorrel. A bed of spring onion is traded during the season for USD 40–50, while a bed of sorrel is traded for USD 20 and a sweet potato leaf for USD 15–20 per bed. In terms of projection, a household receiving this support will have a minimum income of USD 100 every fortnight. Indeed, thanks to the associative approach that had been put in place, the beneficiary households were able to define the selling price *vis-à-vis* the traders and the various intermediaries.
333. While 600 fishers increased their catch rate to an average of USD 80 per catch, they had no income due to the COVID-19 restrictions on mobility. These changes were possible due to not only the training but also a direct link between producer households and traders, which reduced the number of intermediaries.

## 15.5 Good practices and lessons learned

334. The achievement of these results was possible thanks to close collaboration with government institutions, which facilitated access to land, provided technicians for awareness raising and preventive support, put traders in touch with producer households, and ensured synergy with local structures. The involvement of state agents was a very effective way to ensure sustainability. This aspect anchored the approach directly in the local system. Collaboration with state and non-state providers goes a long way in reaching large numbers of vulnerable people and addressing pandemic issues at different levels of decision-making. This collaboration also allows FAO to reach vulnerable peoples living in hard-to-reach areas.
335. The interventions were implemented in a collaboration FAO/WFP/UNICEF. These institutions established a joint programme that strengthened the monitoring and supervision capacities of local Congolese state agents.
336. Community mobilization involving different segments of the population, such as local authorities, community leaders, civil society, community-based organizations, and vulnerable households, contributed to achieving results.
337. Community awareness in small groups of 20–30 people was a more effective communication and outreach strategy for successful behaviour change during a crisis situation.
338. The availability of mask, soap and hand wash in local markets facilitated the further adoption of preventive practices. Among the population, such practices should be encouraged to ensure the sustainability of FAO's interventions and reduce the risk of virus transmission.
339. The intervention associative approach of the intervention contributed to creating alternative economic opportunities. These include the diversification of income sources and the ability to build up savings. Overall, this helped to improve diets and therefore food nutrition and security.
340. Reinforcing producers' associations helped to enhance their skills and reduce the number of intermediaries. These beneficiaries were empowered to determine the price of their products for

themselves. As alternative, the association members were also empowered to gather the product and sell it in a larger market in Kinshasa.

## 16. Strengthening the livelihoods of vulnerable populations facing COVID-19 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

<b>Priority Area(s) covered</b>	PA5- Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: Protecting the Most Vulnerable, Promoting Economic Recovery and Building Risk Management Capacity
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo (Provinces of Kasai, Kasai central and Ituri)
<b>Author(s)</b>	FAO Representation in Democratic Republic of the Congo, OER
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Representation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

### 16.1 Introduction

341. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is characterized by a significant vulnerability linked to food insecurity and acute malnutrition. According to the results of the 20th cycle of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 27 million people are highly food insecure. Among these, 6.1 million people are experiencing critical levels of acute food insecurity.
342. Among the causes of this dramatic situation, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to worsening the country's already fragile situation.
343. Indeed, well before the declaration of the pandemic in March 2020, the IPC analysis covering the period from January to May 2020 had already predicted that 13.56 million people would become severely food insecure.
344. The measures taken by the authorities at the national and provincial levels to stop the spread of the pandemic — including the closure of land, air and river borders with the nine neighbouring countries and the restriction of intra- and inter-provincial movements — have had negative effects on the population food security situation, where 70 percent depend on agricultural activities. The main consequences were:
- i. Sowing areas were reduced due to difficulties in accessing production assets, such as inputs, labour, capital, and access to land.
  - ii. Food scarcity in local markets caused food prices to spike. At the same time, exchange rate fluctuations combined with reduced remittances from the diaspora led to a decline in people's purchasing power.
  - iii. A slowdown in the marketing of agricultural products compounded with the slowdown of markets and the reduction of commercial outlets, led to a drastic drop in the income of already vulnerable households,
  - iv. Lack of storage facilities and low processing capacity led to further post-harvest losses.
345. These consequences have contributed to keeping the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a complex humanitarian crisis. The populations of the Kasai regions, particularly the Provinces of Kasai and Kasai central as well as Ituri, are among those who bear the full brunt of the effects and the severity of this crisis. In fact, they have suffered from the colliding of several shocks for more than five years.
346. In these regions, the Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSA) surveys conducted by the WFP between August and September 2021 to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on household food security, show that, on average, seven out of ten people consume inadequate food.

## 16.2 Rationale/justification

347. Action under the project is in line with former FAO Strategic Objective 5 (Improve the resilience of livelihoods to disasters), outcome 4 Countries prepared for disasters and crises and coped with them through effective interventions,<sup>11</sup> the CPF, the Humanitarian Action Plan (HRP) 2020 and the FAO Response Plan to COVID-19 for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In particular these efforts aimed to reduce the spread of the disease through information and awareness on preventive measures, strengthen the availability of and access to food products, and support the development of local food value chains.
348. FAO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a significant asset, when it has been present since 1988 and has built with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo an operational system and teams for rapid interventions in the areas affected in crisis and emergency situations, and to restore the livelihoods of the populations affected by disasters, conflicts and crises while strengthening their resilience.
349. To solve the problem, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock was the official project counterpart for the monitoring and technical supervision. Further, the NGO partners targeted the beneficiaries and the distribution of inputs through seed fairs or direct distributions. In addition, a banking institution, ECOBANK in this case, was contracted as a financial service provider to ensure the distribution of conditional cash. This allowed not only protecting animal breeds from immediate consumption after their distribution but also the promotion of good breeding.
350. Through various coordination platforms, such as the food security cluster, the CRIOS (interorganization regional coordination) and the Cash working Group, FAO has contributed to the development of advocacy notes based on the good agricultural practices identified in the areas of intervention.

## 16.3 Contribution analysis

351. Over 18 months, this project aimed to improve the food security and nutritional status of households by improving access to diversified and nutritious foods and to the income of vulnerable people affected by the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19.
352. The households involved vulnerable populations: displaced persons, returnees and host families whose main means of subsistence is agriculture or animal husbandry. They benefited from agricultural kits, breeding stock (rabbits) and capacity building, while receiving technical support. To this end, particular emphasis was placed on women and young girls in economic strengthening activities through the Village Savings and Credit Associations approach.
353. The main elements of FAO's contribution included the:
- i. identification of 11 500 vulnerable households;
  - ii. distribution of 8 500 agricultural kits for households and 3 000 cores (rabbit brood stock);
  - iii. facilitation of access to land for 3 000 market gardening households, mainly composed of displaced persons, to enable them to develop agricultural activities;

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<sup>11</sup> FAO's work on emergencies and resilience in the face of disasters and crises in FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–2031 is mainly covered by the programme priority area BL3-Agriculture and Food Emergencies, BL4-Resilient agrifood systems and BP3-One Health.

- iv. training of 1 655 households on good agricultural practices and 3 000 other households on rabbit farming;
- v. distribution of cash to 3 000 households that received rabbit broodstock;
- vi. organization of awareness sessions on COVID-19 and preventive measures (barrier gestures) to reduce its spread;
- vii. in support of these sessions, community radios were used to raise mass awareness through spots and other radio programmes on the disease;
- viii. revitalization and empowerment of 40 producer organizations, and
- ix. initiation, setting up and support of 120 Village Savings and Loans Associations (AVEC) to facilitate access to small rotating loans thanks to member savings. These Village Savings and Credit Associations also contribute to the diversification of livelihoods and the reduction of negative coping strategies. Such efforts strengthen the resilience of participating households.

## 16.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

354. FAO's action aims to meet the challenge of strengthening information and awareness campaigns on preventive measures for the management and control of the spread of COVID-19. As a result, 12 610 people who participated in the various awareness sessions became promoters of the message within their communities to stop the spread of the disease.
355. Additionally, the actions aimed to strengthen the production capacities of households in order to facilitate the availability and accessibility of food products for the most vulnerable. This contributed to their resilience and had significant results as follows.
  - i. There was a production of 5 280 tonnes of food by 5 500 households over two cropping seasons, or nearly 960 kg per household, equivalent to a food stock of 7.4 months with a frequency of two meals per day.
  - ii. In addition, 3 152 other vulnerable households, including 1 523 women, each produced 195 kg of fresh vegetables (leaves and fruits) after three production cycles. This production contributed to the monthly family income of about USD 24 thanks to the sale of the surplus of crops.
  - iii. There was a relaunch of family breeding and facilitation of access to protein for 3 000 households (1 638 women) following 4 200 rabbit broodstock provided by the project.
  - iv. Also, to protect these distributed breeding stock from immediate consumption and to promote good breeding practices such as the construction of hutches using local materials and the purchase of food supplements, USD 150 000 were distributed to 3 000 households that received the breeding stock.
  - v. Forty structured producer organizations have legal texts and are recognized by local authorities. This allows them to operate legally,
  - vi. Three thousand and six hundred members of the 120 Village Savings and Loan Associations participate in the activities of their associations by buying shares for their savings and by granting credits (to the members who express need) from constituted savings.
  - vii. During the current cycle (1st), 2 736 members (76 percent) have already taken out at least one loan. For the most part, they are oriented towards the recapitalization of livestock (purchase of breeding stock) and the initiation of income generating activities.

356. Thus, the positive changes brought about by FAO's contributions are illustrated in the testimony of a beneficiary:

*"I respond to the name of Ngalula Muyaya Angel, married and mother of four children. I live in Kasai central. We were in indescribable difficulty when the government restricted population movements due to COVID-19. Already after the Kamusina Nsapu war, my husband and I were unable to ensure the survival of my little family because the agricultural activities that allowed us to survive were at a standstill due to a lack of seeds.*

*Through the FAO project, I had seeds in season A, which allowed me to resume agricultural activities. At the end of the season, I harvested 120 kg of maize and around 80 kg of cowpea, which now allows me to have stock for our food. I sold around 20 kg of maize and 20 kg of cowpea, I got CDF 60 000 (USD 30) which allowed me to pay school fees for three of my children and buy salt, soap and makayabo (dirty fish).*

*Today, with the purchase vouchers of USD 77.5 (CDF 155 000) that I received with great joy from FAO, I bought more cowpea seeds (15 kg) and maize (10 kg) at the fairs that I will sow for this season. This comes at the right time because my field is already plowed and I even doubled the area this season. In season A, I cultivated 35 ares. This season, I have 80 ares.*

*Since I have a stock of maize and cowpea that was harvested last time, during this campaign my children and I will eat during the cultivation period without any problem.*

*I am very grateful to FAO which allows me today to not only resume and grow my agricultural activity but above all because we are to bear all the burden of our family and I feel very proud."*

## **16.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

357. In the Kasai region and Ituri, displaced persons and returnees experienced enormous difficulties in undertaking agricultural activities, mainly due to a lack of land and other agricultural inputs. On the one hand, thanks to the action of FAO, access to land was facilitated for displaced households and other beneficiary returnees through the Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development approach, thus enabling this category of households to develop agricultural activities in complete safety. On the other hand, for access to agricultural inputs, the seed fairs organized allowed to offer more flexibility to the beneficiaries in the choice of seeds thanks to the coupons with monetary value received from FAO.
358. In addition, income from the sale of surplus crops enabled households not only to meet other immediate needs and purchase other goods, but also to build up savings through the purchase of shares where they have members. This gives them easy access to credit to undertake IGAs aimed at diversifying their livelihoods.
359. The conditionality of access to cash provided for beneficiary households of breeding stock, particularly the construction of hutches, contributed effectively to increased the participation of households in the project and the promotion of good breeding practices.
360. Finally, collaboration with state institutions for institutional support and the strong involvement of communities in project activities guarantee the sustainability of the action.

## 17. Operationalization of the Joint Risk Assessment

<b>Priority Area(s) Covered</b>	PA6 - Prevent Next Zoonotic Pandemic, component 3- Mainstream a One Health approach in environment and natural resource agencies at every level.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Egypt and Kenya
<b>Author(s)</b>	FAO headquarters
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO headquarters NSAH

### 17.1 Introduction

361. Published in 2020 by the Tripartite, including FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the WHO, the Joint Risk Assessment (JRA) operational tool has been providing an avenue for collaboration among the animal, human and environmental health sectors to assess the likelihood and impact of health hazard risks.
362. A successful joint risk assessment depends on effective communication among concerned sectors throughout the process, ideally leading to a consensus on the assessment outcomes and production of joint recommendations. This allows decision-makers to build and implement science-based risk management measures and risk communication messages that can be aligned between sectors or implemented together.
363. The joint assessment of health risks from zoonotic disease allows all sectors, acting together, to fully evaluate, understand and manage shared risks at the human–animal–environment interface with coordinated responses. The JRA will be more applicable and will have greater validity for questions at this interface than a risk assessment conducted by one single sector.
364. While the JRA operational tool describes step-by-step how to conduct each component of the process, it also provides model documents and templates to support its implementation by staff from national ministries responsible for managing zoonotic diseases.

### 17.2 Rationale

365. This intervention is linked to FAO’s Priority Area 1 (PA1) ‘Global Humanitarian Response Plan’ and addresses component four of FAO’s emergency response ‘Mainstream a One Health approach in environment and natural resource agencies at every level.’
366. Although it is important for the human health, animal health, and other sectors to conduct their own assessments to manage health risks within their own contexts, bringing together national information and expertise from all the relevant sectors to jointly assess health risks from zoonotic diseases is necessary to fully understand and manage shared risks at the human–animal–environment interface.
367. Multidisciplinary and multisectoral collaboration has become a requisite practice to effectively address health threats that emerge at the human-animal-environment interface, including COVID-19. A FAO-WHO-WOAH collaboration is taking root, as evidenced by their joint effort in developing, piloting and implementing the JRA tool in member countries, including Egypt and Kenya.
368. The JRA provides recommendations based on risk management options and communication needs (risk analysis) discussed during the JRA process. This allows decision-makers to jointly build and implement science-based risk management measures and align One Health communication messages between sectors.

### 17.3 Contribution analysis

369. The intervention targeted governmental officers from the relevant ministries, contributing to the One Health approach. For health concerns at the human–animal–environment interface, multiple sectors and disciplines were invited to bring and work together on national information and expertise. This applies to the JRA and opens the floor for using the same One Health concept for preparedness, surveillance, response and many other aspects of national health systems.
370. Responding to a request from the Governments of Egypt and Kenya, the Tripartite organized a JRA workshop in Cairo and Nairobi from 5–7 October 2020 and 8–9 July 2021 respectively, which benefitted more than 70 One Health practitioners from the human, animal and the environmental health sectors in both countries. The training of local experts on JRA methodology is a milestone for controlling zoonotic diseases in the country through a One Health approach. Furthermore, the workshop enabled health experts to assess priority health hazards jointly.
371. The two workshops were supported by technical experts from the headquarters and regional offices of FAO, the WHO and the WOA. The JRA workshop was coordinated by the respective Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, and Ministry of Environment, along with FAO and the WHO country offices.

### 17.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

372. By bringing different sectors together, the JRA operational tool led the way for a joint mechanism to establish a formal One Health structure for risk assessments which could later extend to other disease control and prevention aspects such as surveillance, preparedness and response.

**Figure 1. JRA workshop in Egypt**



373. National multisectoral coordination mechanisms (MCM) were able to establish a structure and working mechanism for JRA and bring relevant technical stakeholders together to share data across sectors, identify priority areas to improve the use of the JRA tool, and apply best practices together to perform a risk assessment of select priority zoonotic diseases. Through understanding the current situation (gaps, challenges and opportunities), One Health stakeholders were able to provide holistic risk management and communication options reflecting concerns from different sectors. Following the steps within the JRA OT, national MCM members identified the JRA country lead from the government and the structure of the JRA steering committee. They also determined the scope of the risk assessment of their selected hazards.

374. The team lead of FAO Egypt's Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Disease (ECTAD) affirmed that "FAO Egypt will continue supporting the national authority to strengthen the national One Health platform in line with global effort to address priority zoonotic disease. A multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach is key to address threats to humans, animals and the environment, including antimicrobial resistance and food safety."
375. Leveraging the greater attention and interest in strengthening the One Health activities at national and subnational levels triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 70 one health practitioners in Egypt and Kenya form multidisciplinary departments at the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Environment have gained the knowledge and good practices to establish, implement and sustain JRA for priority zoonotic diseases including COVID-19.

## **17.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

376. In order to make these structures and systems more sustainable and effective, (i) political will and high-level One Health leadership and (ii) subnational involvement and multilevel engagement are needed. Specific to JRA workshops, the training of national representatives in JRA facilitation has provided them with leadership skills and promoted national ownership of the risk assessment results. Risk framing is another valuable component of the JRA process that keeps the assessment focused on key concerns, ensures results will be practical and targeted, and improves mutual understanding of stakeholder perspectives and needs.

## 18. Global guidance on risk assessment and One Health risk mitigation measures

<b>Priority Area(s) Covered</b>	PA6 - Prevent the Next Zoonotic Pandemic, component 4 - improve national capacity to apply an extended One Health approach to prevent and manage spillovers
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Global
<b>Author(s)</b>	FAO headquarters
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO headquarters, NSAH

### 18.1 Introduction

377. The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the severely acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), is one of the greatest global shocks in generations. Around the world, livelihoods have been disrupted, while poverty and hunger are still rising.
378. The unique epidemiological situation of COVID-19 in recent history is represented by having a highly transmissible pathogen that can spread in all directions, namely human-to-human, human-to-animal, animal-to-animal, and animal-to-human. The pandemic spread of SARS-CoV-2 for an extended period has led to susceptible animal species being exposed to the virus due to direct and indirect contact with infected humans, thus creating opportunities for establishing new hosts for the virus with further animal-to-human transmission as evidenced through minks, white-tailed deer and hamsters.
379. Without having clear guidance on assessing the risks associated with such a unique epidemiological situation, countries might implement inappropriate mitigation measures that could endanger both livelihoods and biodiversity. Furthermore, the interventions that are not based on risk assessments could significantly shift the resources toward un-necessary or non-critical activities, thus creating drawbacks on the resources allocated to control other priority animal diseases.

### 18.2 Rationale

380. The intervention is linked to FAO's Priority Area 6 - Prevent the Next Zoonotic Pandemic, and addresses component four of FAO's emergency response, Improve national capacity to apply an extended One Health approach to prevent and manage spillovers.
381. The continuing COVID-19 pandemic and the established reservoir or intermediary host status in some animal species triggered many research institutions, veterinary services and wildlife authorities to conduct surveillance in animals to identify the susceptible species and/or take actions aimed at reducing the risk of animal-to-human transmission. However, those measures were sometimes lacking the dimension of risk assessment, livelihood considerations and biodiversity protection. For example, some countries imposed trade barriers by stipulating testing imported animals for SARS-CoV-2 (e.g. Indonesia) and others decided to cull infected animals without having evidence of a potential zoonotic transmission (e.g. Viet Nam). Furthermore, many FAO regional and country offices have reached out to FAO's Animal Health division (NSAH) for technical support to advise countries on the various detection and response measures related to SARS-CoV-2 in animals.
382. FAO, through its multidisciplinary experts in animal health and communication, and with a wide network of international laboratories and centres of excellence worldwide, has taken the lead in developing several global guiding materials and tools that can help countries design, plan, and

implement their country-specific One Health interventions to mitigate the risks and prevent COVID-19 at the human-animal interface.

383. The FAO surveillance team has led the process of assessing the risk of human or animal exposure to SARS-CoV-2 through contact with, handling or consumption of wild, domestic and aquatic animal species or their products. The exposure assessment paper included (i) the identification of current knowledge gaps regarding the zoonotic origin or animal-human spillover of SARS-CoV-2; (ii) recommendations for priority studies; (iii) summary of available evidence for SARS-CoV-2 susceptibility of different animal species; (iv) evidence-based recommendations on how to prioritize animal species for targeted field investigations or research studies; and (v) recommendations for targeted One Health investigations and studies to fill critical knowledge gaps evidenced by this exposure assessment. The exposure assessment paper was published online in July 2020,<sup>xcii</sup> followed by a webinar in the same month to present the publication to member countries.
384. FAO's exposure assessment has gained high visibility, being cited in 18 scientific articles and marked as a highly influential citation in Semantic Scholar.<sup>xciii</sup> Furthermore, the assessment has been posted on the websites of the Ohio State University<sup>xciv</sup> and the European Society of Veterinary Clinical Ethology.<sup>xcv</sup> A summary of the assessment has been published online after translation into all the official UN languages.
385. Another complementary global guidance on the recommendations for epidemiological investigation of SARS-CoV-2 in exposed animals was shared in September 2020 with FAO regional and country offices in the interested member countries for field testing. The final version was published online in November 2021.<sup>xcvi</sup> In addition, a specific supplementary material was published to investigate the potential recombination between SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses in camels, particularly MERS-COV.<sup>xcvii</sup>
386. More than 60 multidisciplinary experts from FAO headquarters, regional and country offices, as well as external experts, have contributed to the review process of both documents.
387. With technical support from FAO NSAH, both guiding documents have been used in designing and planning country-specific One Health activities for investigating SARS-CoV-2 in animals. Among those countries are Egypt, Canada, United States of America (USA), Oman, Indonesia, Viet Nam and United Arab Emirates (UAE).

### **18.3 Contribution analysis**

388. This intervention targeted the veterinary services, research institutions and other One Health partners worldwide.
389. FAO's COVID-19 response activities in the interested countries focused on implementing One Health epidemiological investigations (Indonesia, Oman, UAE), design standardized data collection sheets for the One Health field studies (Egypt and Canada), designed risk mitigation policies (Viet Nam, UAE) and applied research (USA). These are being supported through technical advice from FAO NSAH experts. Key features of the interventions include:
  - i. The guidance documents (including a summary of FAO's exposure assessment translated into all UN languages) have been published on the FAO website, shared with various stakeholders through email newsletters, posted through FAO social media accounts and presented in meetings and global conferences.

- ii. Support to veterinary services in building One Health collaboration with the public health authorities in the area of COVID-19 at animal-human interface to implement the One Health studies in animals exposed to COVID-19 infected humans (UAE and OMAN).
- iii. Support to camel-producing countries (Egypt, UAE, OMAN) in designing the One Health investigation protocol to investigate potential recombination between SARS-CoV-2 and other known (MERS-CoV) or unknown coronaviruses in camels.
- iv. Support to countries through technical backstop in designing SARS-CoV-2 risk mitigation activities on hamster-to-human transmission (UAE) or improving existing policies dealing with SARS-CoV-2 infected animals (Viet Nam).
- v. Support to Egypt, USA and Canada in standardizing the epidemiological data collection forms for One Health events of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to animals exposed to COVID-19 patients.
- vi. Support to Indonesia in implementing successful One Health investigation of a case of SARS-CoV-2 infection in a captive tiger.

#### **18.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

390. The assumptions are that the pandemic spread is triggered by human-to-human transmission, while unknown animal species are implicated in the initial zoonotic spill over. Many animal species belonging to different families demonstrated susceptibility to infection after natural or experimental exposure to the virus but, so far, no evidence shows that animals played a role in the pandemic spread.
391. During the first year of the pandemic, the reaction of the animal health authorities ranged from reluctance to the application of any measures, to adopting aggressive or unjustified mitigation measures and, in between, a range of poor to high quality One Health investigation and risk mitigation measures. FAO's contributions have resulted in positive changes in terms of the establishment of One Health epidemiological investigation and risk mitigation mechanisms in some countries:
- i. Indonesia already started field implementation of the One Health epidemiological investigation plan by investigating a case of potential human-to-tiger infection in a zoo.
  - ii. FAO Oman has used the FAO guidance documents to draft a project proposal and succeeded in getting funds from WHO to support a project on "Understanding and mitigating the risks of SARS-CoV-2 transmission from COVID-19 human patients to in-contact farmed and companion animals in the Sultanate of Oman." Accordingly, One Health is working with the respective public health authority to share the epidemiological data of the COVID-19 patients who had contact with animals to conduct a One Health epidemiological investigation. A letter of agreement has been signed between FAO OMAN and the Ministry of Agriculture to implement the FAO recommended One Health studies, including the potential recombination between SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses in camels.
  - iii. The FAO Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen (SNG) has used the FAO guidance documents to raise funds to support UAE in implementing One Health studies targeting the exposed animals. Letter of agreements among FAO SNG, and the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) and the central veterinary research laboratory (CVRL) have been signed to implement the FAO recommended One Health studies.

- iv. FAO Viet Nam have used the FAO guidance documents to advocate for changing the national risk mitigation policy from compulsory culling of SARS-CoV-2-infected animals to conduct a case-by-case risk assessment using FAO guidance.
  - v. The technical One Health working group consisting of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative and Provinces modified their epidemiological investigation forms to comply with the FAO recommendations and have used it in developing national guidance in March 2021 for managing SARS-CoV-2 infections in farmed mink in Canada ([link](#), appendix H). That modified the form used in epidemiological investigation of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to farmed mink in British Columbia during May 2021.
  - vi. A research team at Texas A&M University used FAO's One Health investigation guidelines to identify data needed for investigating SARS-CoV-2 transmission to pets in contact with COVID-19 patients.
  - vii. FAO's Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in Egypt, in collaboration with the national veterinary services, have standardized the national epidemiological investigation data of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to exposed animals.
392. Given the unique epidemiological situation of COVID-19, in terms of spreading through zoonotic and non-zoonotic directions with susceptibility of multiple animal species, countries requested guidance on the One Health epidemiological investigation, and risk-based surveillance and mitigation measures. Thus, three global guidelines in the area of risk assessment and One Health epidemiological investigation were developed and published, including a comprehensive list of potential susceptibility of more than 500 animal species. Within 6–12 months after publishing the guidelines, six countries were able to establish an evidence-based One Health mechanism to address some risks of COVID-19 at the animal-human interfaces. Further, 18 scientific articles covering One Health and COVID-19 at the animal-human interfaces have cited the guidelines.

## 18.5 Good practices & lessons learned

393. The pandemic spread of COVID-19 has gone on for more than two years. This has created daily opportunities for exposing various animal species to SARS-CoV-2. So far, natural infection with SARS-CoV-2 has been confirmed in 20 animal species, including pet, farmed and wild animals, of them, three species implicated in zoonotic transmission to humans.
394. FAO was able to coordinate with WHO in allocating from research and development to support several interested countries in East and West Africa, Latin America, and Asia to implement FAO's guidelines for the One Health epidemiological investigation of SARS-CoV-2 at the animal-human interface. However, the tight and short deadline of the WHO-funded projects and the uncertainty of finalizing the necessary national procurements of diagnostics in the planned time have led to a decision from FAO to not proceed with that project. Such problems could be avoided in the future by selecting countries with adequate resources for field sampling and laboratory testing, so no need for procurement to initiate the field work.
395. Wide-scale consultation with more than 45 multidisciplinary experts has been effective in ensuring relevance of the guidelines to different epidemiological contexts, One Health challenges and many field conditions.

## 19. Monitoring the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa in the context of COVID-19

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Appeal – BL4 Agriculture and food emergencies
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	West Africa and the Sahel
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Coumba Sow, Head of Emergencies and Resilience, Amadou Diop IPC Coordinator and Martin Naindouba Food Security expert
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO/REOWA/SFW

### 19.1 Introduction

396. Countries have experienced an unprecedented health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments in West Africa and the Sahel have taken measures to protect the populations from the spread of this pandemic. These measures included social distancing (closing of schools and public places, including some markets), movement restrictions, closing of air and land borders (except for goods), health protection actions, declaration of a state of emergency and the establishment of curfews. The health objective of these measures was quite obvious. However, they also had consequences on people's food security, nutrition and livelihoods, especially considering that the health crisis took place against a backdrop of extreme fragility in these countries and at a time when the Food Crisis Prevention Network expected about 19 million people to be food and nutrition insecure between June and August 2020. It was therefore important to ensure regular and close monitoring of the situation to inform governments, intergovernmental organizations and partners of the short and medium-term effects of this crisis on the food and nutrition security of populations. This aimed at helping, where appropriate, governments and regional institutions to take additional measures to protect both the lives and livelihoods of the populations.

### 19.2 Rationale

397. Within this context, the Cadre Harmonisé Technical Committee (CT-CH) developed a complementary information system to monitor the effects of COVID-19 and preventive health measures on the overall food and nutrition security conditions of the populations in all 17 countries of West Africa and the Sahel. To this end, an analytical tool was developed by the regional experts of the CT-CH and validated with the Government Early Warning System (EWS) agencies. The CH Technical Committee team used the data to produce monthly bulletins. Indeed, this intervention is linked to PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan and addressed component four of the fourth Better (BL4: Agriculture and food emergencies) of FAO's strategic framework. The objective was to inform national, regional and international decision-makers on the evolution of the food and nutrition security situation in the context of COVID-19, and to provide the necessary guidance for adapting the pandemic response and recovery.

### 19.3 Contribution analysis

398. The beneficiaries of this intervention were decision-makers at the national, regional and international levels. This included governments, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West Africa Economic Monetary Union (UEMOA), the permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS) and key donors, such as USAID and the European Union. The Technical Committee of the Cadre Harmonisé (CT/CH), chaired by FAO and REOWA, managed the monitoring system. The CT/CH worked remotely via Skype and telephone

to maintain regular contact with the experts. Five main monitoring areas were identified to provide information on:

- i. the health and nutritional situation: the state of the COVID-19 pandemic, measures taken, the functioning of health facilities, the management of nutritional for children under five years of age;
- ii. the functioning of the food production system, and agricultural and livestock markets: the regularity of their functioning, cross-border and internal flows, variations in the prices of consumer basic foodstuffs and products that usually provide a key source of income for vulnerable households;
- iii. the pastoral situation: the availability of biomass, access to grazing land, access to water points, conflict and transhumance;
- iv. the household living conditions: the situation of income-generating activities, agricultural and non-agricultural activities; and
- v. the risk of locust invasion: warning elements related to the presence of different forms of desert locust individuals (larvae or adults, solitary or gregarious) in agricultural and pastoral areas.

399. At the regional level, the main stakeholders are regional experts from CH partnership member organizations: Action Against Hunger, CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET (Famine Early Warning Systems Network), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, GSU/IPC (IPC Global Support Unit), JRC/EC (Joint Research Center of the European Commission), Oxfam, the WFP, UNICEF and Save the Children. At country level, the Government early warning system (EWS) agencies were the main pillars of the monitoring efforts. This monitoring system was implemented for a first phase of six months, from April to September 2020, followed by a second phase of 12 months, from January to December 2021.

#### **19.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

400. Between April 2020 and December 2021, monthly regional bulletins were produced and disseminated in a timely manner among all stakeholders and potential users of the information. These bulletins provided timely alerts on the impacts of COVID-19 on food and nutrition insecurity in West Africa and the Sahel. It is worth mentioning that thresholds were identified and actually triggered the update of the Cadre Harmonisé analysis in some countries, especially Nigeria and Burkina Faso in July 2020. For example, in Nigeria, the number of acute food insecure people (CH/IPC Phase 3 and above) moved from 7.1 to 8.7 million. In particular, the most significant increase in the number of acute food insecure people was observed in Kano State, the principal commercial center of northern Nigeria, where this number has more than doubled from 0.6 to 1.5 million people. In Burkina Faso, the updated CH analysis following COVID-19 monitoring revealed that 3.3 million people were affected by acute food insecurity, among which, about 11 400 people in Catastrophe (CH/IPC Phase 5). The results of these updates allowed the concerned countries to revise their response plans for improved and more appropriate interventions.

401. For other countries, the bulletins enabled them to better monitor the impacts of COVID-19 at the national level. In addition, the bulletins provided donors with insights on the deterioration of the region's food security.

## **19.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

402. In terms of good practices, the collaboration and networking were critical to the success of this intervention. Indeed, it was important to involve the governmental EWS agencies for the monthly data collection at country level. Furthermore, the active involvement of the Cadre Harmonisé technical partners in the design and implementation of the intervention was essential.
403. Regarding lessons learned, the continuous involvement of governmental EWS agencies alongside regional technical partners and donors in the process will help this kind of intervention succeed in the future. The timely release of funding to implementing partners is critical for the success of the intervention, since this allowed for the timely collection and analysis of data.

## 20. Strengthening knowledge management for a COVID-19 response

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Appeal – BL4 Agriculture and food emergencies
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	West Africa and the Sahel
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Coumba Sow, Head of Emergencies and Resilience and Mohamed Fadiga, Resilience expert
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAOR REOWA, SFW

### 20.1 Introduction

404. West Africa recorded the first cases of COVID-19 in February 2020. In response to this unprecedented crisis, the countries of the subregion established their response plan aimed at mitigating the negative effects of the pandemic on food security and the livelihoods of vulnerable populations. However, such a crisis reinforced the necessity to draw lessons from it in order to face the challenges as effectively as possible. This also allows for meeting the immediate needs of the populations that were hit hard by the measures taken to diminish the spread of the disease. Such an initiative is part of global reflections on the functioning of systems undermined by the crisis, threatened by new waves and confronted with increasingly complex risks.
405. It is within this framework that the FAO Resilience Sub-Regional Team in West Africa and the Sahel (REOWA) in collaboration with the Knowledge Sharing Platform on FAO Resilience (KORE) undertook an initiative in 2020 that aimed to capitalize on the interventions implemented by FAO in West Africa to respond to the impacts of COVID-19. By focusing on the learning opportunities that these interventions create and on the potential good practices that stand out, this capitalization complements various studies and mapping carried out at different levels of the organization.

### 20.2 Rationale

406. The intervention is linked to PA1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan and addressed component four of the fourth Better (BL4: Agriculture and food emergencies) of FAO's strategic framework, ensuring the implementation of emergency interventions benefiting from the latest knowledge, technologies or good practices.
407. Sharing knowledge and capitalizing on good practices have a key role to play in building the resilience of livelihoods amid crises like COVID-19. The experience accumulated in all sectors is considerable and solutions are identified on an ad hoc basis to confront and respond to shocks and crises that arise in different contexts. FAO, as an agency specialized in supporting the rural world, has proven expertise in the resilience of communities amid shocks and crises. This expertise and comparative advantage have been reinforced during the COVID-19 crisis, where the measures put in place to curb the advance of the pandemic have considerably affected vulnerable households and food systems. Knowledge management has been an important component of the response to COVID-19 in order to instill a dynamic of effective response and resilience based on learnings and good practices targeted in the subregion.
408. In addition to the measures adopted by several Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries – such as border closures, food distribution, covering household expenses like water and electricity and the reduction of taxes on rice, milk and fuel – a certain number of relevant initiatives have been planned and implemented by the country offices of FAO to provide

an emergency humanitarian response, strengthen resilience and facilitate the resumption of activities.

409. The experience capitalization initiative as part of the COVID-19 response in West Africa mobilized ten countries, and were guided and supported by REOWA teams and KORE through a two-phase process aimed at culminating in the development of learning products. This initiative offered a multilevel analysis, based on the responses to work in the countries, seeking to offer avenues for exchange at the regional level, while linking with the pillars of the global concerted action programme of FAO in the face of the pandemic. It is therefore aimed at different audiences in order to inform and offer them lessons that will serve their strategic, programmatic, operational and technical needs.
410. The connection and collaboration with other stakeholders (governments, institutes, non-governmental organizations and communities) is key in every learning process and a major factor of success in good practice capitalization, dissemination and appropriation. The KORE platform plays a key role in this area by creating a sharing platform with various stakeholder while liaising with REOWA's direct and constant contact with communities and stakeholders at the local and subregional levels.

### **20.3 Contribution analysis**

411. The good practices capitalization process, carried out in ten West African countries<sup>xcviii</sup> (Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leona and Liberia), was composed of two phases with the participation of various focal points at country level:
- i. Phase 1 – Information: through the focal points appointed within each country office to participate in this initiative, the teams of REOWA/KORE collected all the information in a matrix relating to the interventions that were carried out or were planned to respond to the crisis and adapt to this new situation. The first phase made it possible to have a coherent overview of the work carried out across the region and to identify specificities, similarities and complementarities between countries, as well as to extract the lessons that can be generated with the potential for good or promising practices.
  - ii. Phase 2 – Capitalization: based on the results of phase 1, the second phase will be organized around the collection of additional information aimed at substantiating the lessons learned, as well as confirming and documenting potential good practices identified within learning products. This phase is planned to align with the implementation schedules of selected interventions. Exchange sessions were facilitated in order to provide a space for learning by peers and sharing experiences.

### **20.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

412. This initiative, launched during the implementation period of the COVID Umbrella Programme (RRP), made it possible to target a total of 16 good practices across three main pillars, namely: (i) protecting the most vulnerable in rural and urban areas; (ii) promoting a transformative economic recovery; and (iii) strengthening capacities and institutions to improve resilience.
413. The analysis enabled stakeholders, such as the FAO country offices, and national and implementing partners to pay particular attention to the prevention of transmission risks. This was relevant during the distribution of inputs and cash, and training, to support new economic opportunities for women and young people. In other terms, sharing process among FAO country offices and national counterparts and partners promoted the replication of good practices and

the adjustment of their current practices. Awareness-raising activities about the pandemic focused on ways to prevent the spread of the virus and enable people to carry out their activities safely. These were emphasized among partners and stakeholders. In this context, FAO developed important COVID-19 guidance through FFS capacity building activities.<sup>xciix</sup> Furthermore, existing mechanisms at the community level, like Dimitra clubs and radio slots, were prioritized in order to share key messages to a larger population while reducing direct contact and viral transmission.

414. The direct implication of regional institutions such as ECOWAS and the Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control and in the Sahel (CILSS in French) favoured the appropriation and replication of these good practices into regional and local programmes. The Panier de la ménagère<sup>cc</sup> and ``Initiative Services Agricoles et Inclusion Digitale en Afrique<sup>ci</sup> are among the flagship initiatives against COVID-19 in the region. Moreover, FAO's active contribution to regional resilience knowledge fairs and events have contributed to the sharing and appropriation of these good practices among partners and throughout the various learning platforms.
415. A key achievement of this learning initiative within the Global Network against food crises for the Sahel (GloNet) project is the appropriation of important good practices in the formulation of regional programmes. This includes the Joint Sahel programme in response to the challenges of COVID-19, conflicts and climate change (SD3C). The significance of this lies in that the SD3C comes as a response to three great challenges as COVID-19 faced by the Sahel communities. This informed and nourished by the results of the knowledge process for a better adapted and efficient coordinated response.

## 20.5 Good practices & lessons learned

416. With the increase in COVID-19 cases in the subregion, almost all countries taking part in this initiative have integrated information and communication technologies to lead and strengthen their activities. As such, webinars, knowledge sharing forums and good practice sheets. have been important niches for disseminating and promoting their appropriation at the local level. Radio community awareness activities, cash transfers and a computerized early warning system for animal pests and diseases were scaled up in several countries of the subregion. These approaches have made it possible to manage COVID-19 while reducing disease transmission and ensuring the continuity of food systems.
417. On the other hand, the training of trainers on good animal health emergency management practices and compliance with barrier measures is an action that has been appropriated and undertaken at the subregional level. Added to this as a good practice is advocacy for the Movement and Control Service system (MOCO) to facilitate the movement of actors in the agricultural sector during periods of confinement. It is clear that the existing community mechanisms have been key anchor points and are an effective means for the dissemination and appropriation of good practices, capitalized on by FAO, in collaboration with regional institutions and other technical partners.

## 21. Household Food Basket: early actions to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Senegal and the impacts of the crisis on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Appeal – BL4 Agriculture and food emergencies
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Senegal
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Coumba Sow, Head of Emergencies and Resilience and Luca Parodi, EWEA expert
<b>Office or Division</b>	SFW

### 21.1 Introduction

418. In March 2020, the Government of Senegal implemented various measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate its impact on the population. These measures (border closures, curfews and state of emergencies) have notably resulted in the interruption of international and inter-regional trade, the closure of markets and the weakening of the informal economy. It has put the livelihoods and food security of the most vulnerable populations, especially children and women, at risk of: (i) reduction in food availability and accessibility; (ii) disruption of food value chains; and (iii) decrease in household income and purchasing power. This situation also had very significant medium- and long-term implications for the socioeconomic development of the country.
419. Before these risks to the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable households could take place, FAO, in collaboration with the Government of Senegal and two offices of the United Nations (UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA]), immediately analysed and scripted the potential consequences of the pandemic on food systems in order to identify the main challenges and define anticipatory actions and the emergency response to be implemented.
420. The FAO National Anticipation and Emergency Response Plan, which aims to support activities that save lives and safeguard food security, nutrition and livelihoods, supports the strategy of the Senegalese Government formulated in the Programme for Economic and Social Resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic (PRES). This plan targets the improvement of the food systems of urban and rural municipalities in order to make them more resilient and inclusive, taking into account the major risks identified through analyses and scenarios, such as:
- i. reduced availability and accessibility of food due to market closures and increased prices; and
  - ii. reduced access to markets for small producers and farmers, leading to production and income losses.
421. The OSRO/SEN/001/SFR project, entitled Early actions to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Senegal as well as the impacts of the crisis on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups, received USD 300 000 of funding by the SFERA-Anticipatory Action fund and it was part of this perspective. In addition, the project included a health component, with the distribution of COVID-19 prevention kits and the dissemination of information on ways to limit the spread of the pandemic.

### 21.2 Rationale

422. As part of the National Emergency Anticipation and Response Plan and in support of the PRES, the project was developed jointly by FAO, UN Women and UNFPA. It aimed to anticipate the

potential consequences of the COVID-19 crisis by supporting populations that face food insecurity due to the declined commercialization of their agricultural production and disruptions to the value chain caused by movement restrictions in eight municipalities in the regions of Dakar, Linguère and Kaolack.

423. The risk and scenario analyses carried out by FAO from March to April 2020 on the aforementioned potential secondary consequences of COVID-19 were at the origin of the launch of this pilot initiative.
424. The actions launched by FAO aimed at supporting small-scale women producers and traders to market their products and obtain an income during the period of market disruption caused by COVID-19. At the same time, the project conveyed their products to vulnerable households affected by food insecurity and whose food access was being further reduced by mobility restrictions and market closures. The rationale of the project was to establish a temporary link between vulnerable producers and vulnerable households in order to address the food chain disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.
425. The results of the assessment conducted by FAO in September 2020 on the effects of COVID-19 confirmed these stated risk perspectives, showing that 43.2 percent (with a standard deviation of plus or minus 4.9) of the rural population of Senegal was affected by moderate or acute food insecurity as a result of the crisis caused by the pandemic. In addition, 11.8 percent ( $\pm 3.3$ ) of the rural population was acutely food insecure, with 8.8 percent ( $\pm 3.1$ ) attributed to COVID-19. Overall, the results showed worsening food insecurity Senegal's rural areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The margins of error for the prevalence rates were estimated at 4.8 percent for moderate or severe levels and 3.1 percent for severe levels.

### **21.3 Contribution analysis**

426. The project relied on the Single National Register (RNU) of Senegal, which identifies the most vulnerable households, to identify the municipalities and households that need to be targeted. This involved distributing a supply of essential foodstuffs, that is, the family food basket, to 2 700 households (including 1 668 from the RNU) in the middle of the lean season from July to August. A sanitary kit composed of disinfectant products and protections was added in order to limit the spread of the pandemic.
427. The suppliers of the agricultural products making up the basket were identified near the distribution points in order to ensure a quality supply at a lower cost to the beneficiary households. Most of the producers involved in this project are women producers, processors of agricultural products, and/or associations and federations of small producers. These producers were the most affected by the COVID-19 restrictions.
428. The following organizations were involved and actively participated in the composition of the food basket in the intervention areas, taking into account their proximity to the target municipalities:
  - i. a platform of 300 members bringing together ten economic interest groups (GIE) of women processors of local products (cereals, fruits, vegetables);
  - ii. a platform of women fish processors (100 members);
  - iii. the National Federation of Horticulturists and Producers of Senegal (150 members);
  - iv. a platform of agricultural processors in Rufisque (75 members); and

- v. a network of women rice producers in the Senegal River Valley (REFAN), which supplied an order of 33 750 tonnes of rice distributed to vulnerable households.
429. The product collection phase was followed by a packaging and storage stage, then the distribution of the baskets. The FAO had signed memorandums of understanding with non-governmental organizations to collect and package the products, then deliver them to households, under the supervision of local authority representatives. Each family food basket distributed was accompanied by a sanitary kit containing disinfectants and means of protection to fight against the spread of COVID-19.
430. The initial objective of the project, following the meetings of the project team with the local authorities of each municipality, was to distribute, in two phases, food and health kits to 2 700 households listed on the RNU of the targeted areas. Faced with the difficulties of a large number of households affected by the health crisis and with a view to including vulnerable households not listed in the RNU, 178 additional households benefited from the second phase of distribution. This happened in agreement with the local authorities and beneficiaries. By the end of the project, 3 550 food and health kits had been made available to 3 336 households, including 2 878 female-headed households, at a particularly difficult time (the July/August lean season).
431. Communication actions accompanied the implementation of the project in order to share the approach adopted and the results obtained. The approach focused on territorial food systems (SAT), the individual and the right to food in times of pandemic. It included:
- i. multiactor governance involving all stakeholders (the national government, local authorities, public actors, the private sector and civil society);
  - ii. the management of urban and rural areas to strengthen urban-rural links;
  - iii. ecosystem management for greater resilience and reduced health risks; and
  - iv. the composition of baskets with local products.

## **21.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

432. The action was launched before the COVID-19 Umbrella programme and was based on a scenario analysis. Overall, the key outcomes of this project were safeguarding access to markets, revenue for small-scale producers and access to food for vulnerable households.
433. Overall, the project was able to sustain the livelihoods and incomes of small-scale producers and traders, as well as improve the resilience of households affected by the effects of COVID-19.
434. The food systems of the targeted localities have been strengthened and the income of producer groups and associations guaranteed through the marketing of their production to supply the food basket. The turnover of producers and the livelihoods of households has been secured and their resilience strengthened during the lean season. The distribution of locally produced nutritious foodstuffs to 3 336 vulnerable households has not only guaranteed the food security of beneficiaries but also supported the incomes of small producers working near the eight communes of the three targeted regions.
435. The family food basket consisted of diversified and nutritious foodstuffs, produced locally. The elements have indeed been selected to consider nutritional aspects, especiall for children up to five years old. The basket contained cereals (rice, maize and millet), processed products (fruits, vegetables and fish production [ketiah]), protein-based products (cowpeas and eggs) and fresh vegetables (carrots, cabbage and eggplant).

### 21.4.1 Human interest story



Note: Photos 1 and 2: Adjii Diallo, living in Rufisque Est (Dakar), beneficiary of the project.

436. Adjii Diallo lives in Rufisque Est, in the Dakar region, a city hard hit by COVID-19 and targeted by the project. Widowed, Adjii Diallo is disabled and raises three children alone (two boys and a girl). She rents a place in a part of town. Before the pandemic, she sold hygiene products at the city market to cover her expenses and finance her children's studies. Following the restrictions decreed by the Government of Senegal to combat the spread of the pandemic, she had to remain confined to her home. Appearing on the National Register, which lists vulnerable people, she was able to benefit from state food aid. However, this support was not enough to meet the family's needs. The distribution of the food basket organized by the project, entitled Early actions to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Senegal as well as the impacts of the crisis on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable layers, funded by SFERA-AA, was an essential contribution for her and her children, while waiting for the lifting of restrictions.

## 21.5 Good practices & lessons learned

437. Targeting of beneficiaries: the use of the RNU, which lists vulnerable households in Senegal, has made it possible to provide additional assistance to the actions carried out by the State during the health crisis. However, the fact that not all vulnerable households are listed in the RNU constituted a difficulty when targeting beneficiaries. The intervention of local authorities made it possible to select the most vulnerable households at the community level. This reference should be updated regularly through surveys and in partnership with community actors (village chiefs, notables, resource persons) in order to take into account any omissions and occasionally vulnerable households.
438. Registration of beneficiaries on the SAIDA (*Services agricoles et inclusion digitale en Afrique*) electronic platform: access to information useful for the implementation of professional (agropastoral) and COVID-19 prevention activities has been facilitated through this project.<sup>12</sup> This application, which brings together more than 30 000 members) makes it possible to raise awareness of the risks of COVID-19 to provide information on the price of foodstuffs and to facilitate the connection of producers and buyers. An evaluation by the beneficiaries of the accessibility of the platform and the advice it offers would make it possible to improve its performance.
439. The relationship between producers, who ran the risk of no longer being able to sell their products, and vulnerable households, threatened with reduced access to foodstuffs, was a tool for strengthening the food systems of the areas targeted by the project.

<sup>12</sup> The service is available at <https://digital.apps.fao.org>.

## 22. Special Programme for Food Security in Response to the Impacts of COVID-19 in Lesotho

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA5 Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities. Component 1: Safeguard vulnerable pastoral and agropastoral households through shock-responsive and risk-and gender-sensitive social protection schemes PA3 Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: Enhancing COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience for vulnerable populations; Component 2: Safeguard producer-oriented measures to support smallholders – farmers, livestock keepers, fisherfolk – to increase productivity and facilitate market access, including through e-commerce and other digital platforms.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Lesotho, National Coverage
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Mwesigwa David, Emergency and Resilience Coordinator
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Lesotho

### 22.1 Introduction

440. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the dramatic loss of human lives across the globe and presents an unprecedented challenge with deep social and economic consequences, including disruptions of food supply chains and the associated adverse impacts on food security and nutrition. Due to Lesotho's unique geographic position and proximity to South Africa, which was hit hard by COVID-19, the Government of Lesotho had to institute precautionary and preventative measures to curb the introduction and spread of the virus. While these measures were instrumental in ensuring that Lesotho remains free of the virus, their impact on the livelihoods and social well-being of the people was very severe. This was particularly true for the poor and vulnerable segments of the population who depend on menial jobs or informal trade for their daily food needs. Through a consultative process led by the COVID-19 National Emergency Command Centre, the GoL developed the National Preparedness and Response Plan. The overall objective of the plan was to mount a timely, consistent, effective and coordinated response to COVID-19. Initially, the plan was almost entirely health focused. It sought to:

- i. prevent importation and contain infection and spread of COVID-19;
- ii. protect residents of Lesotho under imminent threat of COVID-19;
- iii. provide a secure and safe environment to effectively manage the effects of COVID-19; and
- iv. effectively provide surveillance services and monitor mortality rate resulting from COVID-19.

441. To achieve these objectives, the Government of Lesotho declared a State of Emergency and enforced a lockdown of the economy in March 2020. Realizing that the impact of COVID-19 had far-reaching consequences on the national economy and livelihoods of the broader society, the Government of Lesotho developed/announced a more inclusive National Preparedness and Response Plan covering key sectors of Lesotho's economy. Budget estimates were made and funding commitments announced for different sectors to respond effectively to the threat and impact of COVID-19. The sectors in the plan included agriculture and food security, health, education, communication and transport, among others. A call was also made to development partners to support the national response plan in view of the limited fiscal space for the Government to effectively respond to the crisis.

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## 22.2 Rationale

442. The support from FAO was a direct contribution to Lesotho's national response plan by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security through the World Bank-funded Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II). It recognized that health must come first, but was also acutely aware that good health will be elusive without access to nutritious food for the most vulnerable. The support was directly linked to the FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme in the Africa Region, particularly in addressing the following priority areas:
- i. PA5 - Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: (Component 1: Safeguard vulnerable pastoral and agropastoral households)
  - ii. PA3 - Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: (Component 2: Safeguard producer-oriented measures to support smallholders)
443. The support allowed the agricultural sector to address time-critical needs required to minimize additional loss of lives and damage to social and economic assets caused by COVID-19. Safe food and nutrition were an essential part of the health response. It is for this reason that in August 2020, FAO entered into an agreement with the Government of Lesotho through its Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to implement a project entitled, Special Programme for Food Security in Response to the Impacts of COVID-19 in Lesotho, as an emergency COVID-19 response project. FAO received USD 5 000 000 in funding from the Government of Lesotho through the World Bank-funded Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP 2) as part of the Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC). The project was approved and implemented between August 2020 and May 2022.
444. The project was aimed at protecting agricultural livelihoods and ensuring that households produce their own food during the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project emphasized the need to protect all pillars of food security (availability, access, utilization and stability). In particular, it aimed to strengthen the availability and access to pillars of food security. The main objective of engaging FAO under this agreement was to contribute to reducing the negative impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture, food and nutrition security in Lesotho.
445. FAO Lesotho's comparative advantage for this COVID response project lies in its long-standing experiences working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Ministry of Social Development on issues related to agriculture and food security emergency response. FAO has been implementing several projects in Lesotho in the field of agriculture, food security, disaster preparedness and emergency response. The organization has vast country knowledge and experience, proven competence in emergency and rehabilitation operations, coordination and policy with a solid track record of programmes implemented in close collaboration with the government.

## 22.3 Contribution analysis

446. The key focus for this project was to contain the disruptions in the national food supply chain to the barest minimum, ensure that no crop production season was lost as a result of COVID-19 and facilitate access to production inputs for staple foods, homestead vegetable production, animal health interventions and training. The following key areas were supported under the project:
- i. Inputs distribution
    - Homestead vegetable production: FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) provided immediate support to 21 000 farming households

(105 000 individuals) across the country with vegetable production in partnership with the WFP, the IOM, the WHO and the Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU). This activity was implemented between August 2020 and May 2022, and covered the procurement of high-quality seeds of mustard, spinach, rape, onions, carrots and beetroots. Other inputs included 4 x 4 m shade nets and home gardening reading materials. The project also supported an additional 1 200 households from the four districts of Lesotho working with the Irrigation Department of Agriculture to support the production of irrigated vegetables using the small drip irrigation kits covering 0.25 acres of land. The beneficiaries received eight types of vegetable seeds each containing 100 g and a 10 m x 4 m shade net.

- Summer cropping: Under this output, the project supported 20 000 households to produce maize and beans during the 2021 summer season. In close collaboration with SADP2 and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the project was able to procure and distribute 200MT of maize seed and 750MT of NPK6:2:1 fertilizer in September 2021 to a total of 20 000 vulnerable farmers. More than 50 percent of these beneficiaries were women farmers. The project also procured and distributed 200mt of bean seed to promote the production of legume crops as part of the summer crop production. In addition, a total of 798 MT of potato seed were provided to support a combined total of 1 064 vulnerable farming households. The support was directed through the Potato Lesotho Association in the districts of Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Quthing, Mohale's Hoek, Mafeteng, Maseru and Leribe. Each farmer received a package of 30 x 25 kg bags of a certified potato seed and 6 x 50 kg bags of basal fertilizer.
- ii. The training and capacity building of farmers and extension staff on a diversified number of technical topics in agriculture covered all 68 resource centres throughout the country. Extension staff were trained on the newly introduced climate-smart agricultural technologies, which included conservation agriculture, protected agriculture, plant protection, food preservation and extension modalities, among others. Over 12 000 beneficiaries were trained across the country. The training of extension services and beneficiaries has been a focus for knowledge transfer to both extension officers and farmers, and was part of this project's objective. The project promoted productivity enhancing technologies and initiatives to help boost production and incomes of smallholder farmers. Special emphasis was made on promoting climate-smart production technologies. Through CERC, FAO supported the crop assessment, crop forecast and post-harvest assessments for the summer seasons in 2020 and 2021. This was done in partnership with the Disaster Management Authority and the Bureau of Statistics. COVID-19 prevention was mainstreamed into the various trainings that were conducted.
  - iii. Animal health and fodder production support to livestock-dependant households: the programme also recognized the importance of livestock in supporting the livelihoods and incomes of Lesotho's rural communities. The project worked with and developed capacities of the extension services for implementing high impact interventions to improve livestock productivity. The main focus for livestock interventions was to improve access to services, vaccines and feed. This output was designed to provide protection to livestock through a national vaccination campaign against Anthrax and Rabies. The office procured 15 000 doses of Blanthrax; 20 000 doses of Rabies vaccines and 1000 doses of Lumpy Skin vaccine. This vaccination was sufficient to vaccinate and treat 500 000 animals across the country, covering mainly cattle, goats, sheep and dogs. The project supported livestock farmers by providing pastures to complement animal feeding. 24MT of fodder seeds (eight different grass and fodder seeds) was received in the country. One thousand

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two hundred livestock owners with each farmer receiving 20 kg of at least two types of fodder seeds to plant an equivalent of one acre of fodder. Clear testimonials of farmers regarding the benefits from the project are included in the media articles that were published and are attached to this brief.

## **22.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

### **22.4.1 Inputs distribution (homestead vegetable production and summer cropping)**

447. The project supported and improved the livelihoods of 64 932 vulnerable farming households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Lesotho. The support by FAO was one of the largest responses to COVID-19 in the country. The project enabled households to access the required inputs, take advantage of the rains and utilize the season to the fullest. This would not have been possible otherwise, since access to inputs was a major limitation in the country.
448. Enabling farmers that have been affected by COVID-19 containment measures and the effects of two consecutive years of drought is at the heart of the response strategy for the agricultural sector. The support to farmers on the protection and restoration of agricultural livelihoods among farming households impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic was timely, as most farmers did not have seeds to plant and were going to miss the production cycle. Vegetable production, mainly by women, helped greatly to mitigate the negative food security impact of COVID-19 in complementing the food diets and having access to a nutritious, balanced diet. Women-run agribusinesses and inclusive value chains were strengthened. Although there is no data on the percentage increase in vegetable production and agribusiness to support this claim, the post-distribution monitoring reports indicates that women who participated in the programme can now aggregate their produce and sell to buyers. They also supply rural markets with vegetables. Women farmers who had land were provided inputs and knowledge to ensure they have enough for the next season. This support came at a time when access to seeds and fertilizer was very difficult to obtain due to the impacts of COVID-19. Farmers were able to plant one acre each to increase their production of maize.
449. The support to smallholder potato producers in the country has led to renewed engagement of the promotion of the potato value chain among key stakeholders, as demonstrated by the reorganization and election of the Potato Lesotho Association (PLA) National executive and the current drive to increase membership of the association in all districts. This engagement is meant to mobilize potato farmers, determine their needs and propose areas of support to the entire value chain.
450. The provision of fertilizers boosted the production of potato from 12MT to nearly 17MT/HA. This has greatly improved the potato supply in the country and opened up more opportunities for potato trade, as demonstrated by the presence of Lesotho-produced potatoes on the market space that was previously controlled by the importation of potatoes from South Africa. Small farmer cash flow, productivity, incomes and market access was greatly improved under this project.

**Table 1. Potato yields and value in selected project areas**

Place	Hectares	Expected yield (10 kg bags)	Price/bag (M)	Estimated value/area (M)	USD Equivalent 1 USD = 15 Maluti
Mokhotlong	21.2	36 000	60.00	2 160 000.00	144 000
Mantsónyane	14.1	23 200	60.00	1 392 000.00	92 800
Mpharane	16.3	28 000	60.00	1 680 000.00	112 000
Marakabei	16.5	28 000	60.00	1 680 000.00	112 000
Qacha's Nek	13.9	24 400	60.00	1 464 000.00	97 600
Matelile	16.7	30 000	60.00	1 800 000.00	120 000
Semonkong	17	28 000	60.00	1 680 000.00	112 000
Ha Tlali	17.8	32 000	60.00	1 920 000.00	128 000
Nyakosoba	16	30 000	60.00	1 800 000.00	120 000
<b>Totals</b>		<b>259 600</b>		<b>15 576 000.00</b>	<b>1 038 400</b>

Source: The Potato Association of Lesotho.

Notes:

Classes: currently, there are three classes which are small, medium and large. It was reported that medium accounts for 80 percent of the produce in all areas while small and large the 20 percent.

Price: price per kg is M6.00, meanin 10 kg is M60.00.

Market: the Potato Lesotho Association has engaged wholesale buyers and supermarket chains on Shoprite and Pick and Pay to supply potatoes produced from Lesotho.

Potato Lesotho Association now has 7 kg bags that are exclusively requested by Shoprite at M5.40/kg, meaning M38.00 per bag.

Packaging: this is available through the Potato Lesotho Association.

### 22.4.2 Training and capacity building of farmers and extension staff

451. The training of extension services and beneficiaries has been a focus for knowledge transfer to both extension officers and farmers, and is part of this project's objective. The training and capacity building of farmers and extension staff on a diversified number of technical topics in agriculture was conducted in all 68 resource centres throughout the country. FAO worked with the Ministry of Agriculture district teams to deliver training of several topics. Such trainings covered but were not limited to appropriate and applicable production technologies (climate-smart production technologies). Over 12 000 beneficiaries were trained across the country on the following areas.

- i. climate change and how it affects agriculture;
- ii. keyhole/trench plot gardening;
- iii. benefits of climate-smart agriculture technologies;
- iv. mulching and compose making, weed control: manual, mechanical and chemical;
- v. pest and disease control: IPM, biological, mechanical and chemical; and
- vi. farmers were also trained by extension staff on crops production techniques.

452. In all ten districts, extension staff were trained on the newly introduced climate-smart agriculture technologies, which included among others; conservation agriculture, protected agriculture, plant protection, food preservation and extension modalities.

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### **22.4.3 Livestock**

453. The main focus of the livestock component was to improve access to services, vaccines and feed. The programme also recognized the importance of livestock in supporting the livelihoods and incomes of Lesotho's rural communities. This was evidenced in the budget provision by the government for vaccines, drugs and stabilizing the prices of wool and Mohair in the country. The project supported livestock farmers by providing pastures to complement animal feeding. 24MT of fodder seeds (eight different grass and fodder seeds) was received in the country and provided to farmers. Each farmer received 20 kg of at least two types of fodder seeds to plant an equivalent of one ha of fodder for 1 200 livestock owners. This intervention has greatly alleviated the shortages of good and highly nutritious pastures to livestock farmers, as demonstrated by 1 200 ha of fodder production and continued demand for fodder seeds among livestock producers, which had not been the case.

## **22.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

### **22.5.1 Good practices**

454. FAO Lesotho's knowledge of the country and the agriculture sector that FAO supported was key in providing a timely response. FAO provided a proposal and an approach that would bring the required support to the intended beneficiaries. FAO has worked in emergency programming in partnership with the Government of Lesotho for many years and has developed a system of delivering support in the shortest time possible. This is a comparative advantage that has enabled FAO Lesotho to achieve the project outcomes.
455. Major business continuity practices that fostered effectiveness relate to the procurement systems that were supported at headquarters and the subregional level due to the threshold procurement limit at country office. The office received support from the technical and procurement teams to fast track the procurement of goods. This allowed FAO to source goods from the region and inside the country within a reasonable amount of time. The government's quick approval of the importation of goods was an enabling factor for success.

### **22.5.2 Lessons learned**

456. Early assessment and determination of actual needs is important in getting approvals and delivering services on time. In some cases, it is important to have the early anticipatory action that will provide some support while the project is approved. Anticipatory action programming is an innovative concept, linking early warning information to anticipatory action at the regional and country levels. While early warning systems functioned well initially, with the analysis and reporting of timely risk information, the link between early warning and anticipatory action was usually very weak. This limited the impact and use of this information. Hence, the paradigm of disaster risk reduction now focuses more on the on anticipation to mitigate or prevent the impact of extreme shocks like COVID-19 on food security and livelihoods.
457. With large emergencies like COVID-19, FAO should put forward funds to initiate activities. The Emergency Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) and SPHERA funds may not be accessed by all and on time. Such support needs to be readily available at country and subregional levels. Unlike other agencies, FAO has to wait and apply for resources from donors in order to intervene. Other UN agencies utilized the available funds to start most urgent activities as they waited for approvals from donors.

458. Lesotho depends on almost 70 percent of food imports from South Africa. Access to food during the COVID-19 lockdown was a major problem due to the restricted movement of goods and services in the country. One lesson learned from the lockdowns and other containment measures was that domestic production was much safer in the face of restrictions in movement and trade.
459. The surge teams to provide support to countries in programming and administrative areas are important when pandemics and other disasters happen. Keeping rosters of relevant profiles that can be activated on short notice will be very helpful to ensure early response.
460. It is key that the assessments conducted to understand the situation better cover all the required thematic areas. This will help in determining the needs and making the correct budgets for an effective response.
461. Given that the pandemic was a cross-sectoral crisis affecting more than one sector, it elicited the need for the UN to put in place well-coordinated joint programmes to deliver the needed support at once. It was hard to pull together a joint programme in a short time.

## **22.6 Key documents, websites, blogs and press releases**

FAO, n.d. FAO delivers emergency fodder seeds to vulnerable livestock farmers in Lesotho. In: *FAO*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/1456976>

FAO Regional Office for Africa, 2021. Emergency seeds, fertilizer cushion farmers in Lesotho against impacts of COVID-19. In: *FAO*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/1446421>

Teopista, n.d. Worldbank\_FAO emergency support to Lesotho. FAO, with financial support from the World Bank, distributed emergency fodder seeds to vulnerable Lesotho Livestock owners affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Photo gallery. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/149629672@N04/albums/72177720297042726>

## 23. Improving the abilities of youth in East Africa to start and manage successful agribusinesses during COVID-19

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA7: Food systems transformation. Component 4: sustain and strengthen agrifood enterprises. PA2: Data for decision-making. Component 4: evidence-based policy support for post-COVID-19 economic and social recovery.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	SFE (initially), RAF
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Mohamed Naeim, Nomathemba Mhlanga and David Phiri
<b>Office or Division</b>	SFE

### 23.1 Introduction

462. Despite relatively high economic growth in the East African economies, unemployment and more particularly youth unemployment remain a concern in the region. While countries in the region have experienced high growth rates, on average 5.8 percent per year between 2009 and 2014, unemployment rates have not declined. Youth unemployment has remained higher than the average unemployment due to their vulnerability and specific needs. As these figures are downwardly distorted by informal and partial employment, overall, these trends point to a problem of “jobless growth.”
463. Evidence shows that poverty among young people in Ethiopia, Uganda and Burundi, for example, is over 80 percent with 72 percent of the youth in Africa living on less than USD 2 per day (ILO, 2012). Overall, unemployment among East African youth is 51–57 percent. Unemployment is highest among rural women (62–66 percent). Moreover, their participation in self-employment is very low (7–10 percent). Unemployment rates tend to be higher among the educated compared with the uneducated youth; 62 percent of Rwandan youth with university education were unemployed, compared to 52 percent of youth with primary education (Awiti, et al., 2016).
464. Agriculture and agribusiness have the potential to transform the agriculture-based economies in Africa and meet the continent’s outsized employment and food security challenges. The central role of agriculture in economic growth and development in Africa has long been widely recognized. Agriculture and agribusiness are the largest economic and fastest-growing sectors in Africa (World Bank, 2007) (Johnston, et al., 1961) (Schultz, 1964) (Ravallion, et al., 2004) (Delgado, et al., 1998).
465. While youth are willing to be part of the solution by creating jobs through entrepreneurship (Awiti, et al., 2016), there is a clear gap in providing relevant business skills for young women and men in the area of agribusiness and value chain development. For example, classroom-style courses meant to inculcate such skills do not succeed in getting trainees to practice what they have learned. In Togo, for instance, it was found that teaching business skills was less effective than showing students how to set goals and identify markets (World Bank, 2017). In addition, a World Bank study, jointly released with the National University of Singapore Business School, and Leuphana University reveals that psychology-based entrepreneur training programmes are outperforming traditional business trainings among entrepreneurs, translating into increased firm profits by 30 percent compared to 11 percent for traditional business training (World Bank, 2017).
466. While the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for youth to get physical access to much needed technical skills and capacity, it also provided an opportunity to use digital tools through the intensification of internet usage among young people and technical institutions alike. This

provided an opportunity for FAO to develop a sustainable and cost-effective way of providing capacity for the millions of youth who need support in the area of agripreneurship.

## **23.2 Rationale**

467. The intervention falls under the current FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31 component of a better life through decent employment in agrifood systems.
468. FAO's functions of promoting agricultural and rural development, along with its other areas of expertise, allow for a multiangle and multidisciplinary approach to creating opportunities for youth in the agricultural sector. FAO has already supported several member countries on youth employment and entrepreneurship. This includes designing large-scale youth employment in agriculture programmes. FAO also has long-standing expertise in providing support to agricultural and rural stakeholders.
469. In addition to its policy expertise, FAO's technical advantage in value chain development, coupled with best practices in entrepreneurship and personal initiative training, provides the organization with a comparative advantage in providing a cost-effective and sustainable platform for youth to gain access to relevant agripreneurship capacity.
470. For this intervention, in partnership with the African Union Commission and East Africa as a pilot, FAO is developing an online course that focuses on building the agripreneurship skills of youth and enhancing their skills in the space of agricultural value chain development. The course is about making use of digital penetration in urban areas. A supplementary track with information specifically for trainers and educators will be developed so that rural youth with no access to internet connection can be reached. The course is being tailored to the African context, implemented in partnership with incubators, evaluated, and then refined and scaled up in a demand-driven way.
471. Access to technical and entrepreneurial skills are the biggest obstacles for youth agripreneurs in Africa. It underlines their access to finance and markets which both require viable business planning. This reflects negatively on farmers and other actors in the value chain who rely on the push factor of food demand. Online training provides an opportunity for youth to safely access much needed skills, advice and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. It helps reduce transmission and provide a safe, cost-effective and sustainable alternative to physical training. It also provides a community in which youth agripreneurs can rely on for business and emotional support.

## **23.3 Contribution analysis**

472. The online course was piloted in partnership with RUFORUM in two rounds (from September to October 2021). The first round targeted a sample size of 247 youth agripreneurs in Uganda, Kenya

and Ghana. The pilot aimed at testing the course's impact on agripreneurial self-efficacy<sup>13</sup>, planning,<sup>14</sup> action<sup>15</sup> and business practices.<sup>16</sup>

473. A total of 247 applicants working on prioritized value chains were considered for the first round of the pilot. The applicants were randomly divided into two comparable groups: a training group (124) and a waiting control group (123). There are no statistically significant differences between the two groups with regard to age, gender and education. The training group received the training first and the waiting control group received the training immediately after. Both groups were surveyed before and immediately after the training.
474. Data was collected in two survey rounds shortly before the start of the training and immediately after the end of the last session of the training. All data were collected via an online questionnaire. In total, 45 training participants participated in the two survey rounds. In Ghana and Kenya, data was also collected from 41 individuals who were part of a waiting control group in these countries. There was no waiting control group in Uganda.
475. The design of the pilot pays special attention to peer-to-peer learning and exchange between the trainees from different countries. To this end, the training was conducted through ayaplatform.org (an initiative of FAO and EAFF), which provides the trainees with a platform to exchange experiences and solutions beyond the life of the pilot. The training also adopts an active learning approach where the trainers act as facilitators in the exchange between the trainees.
476. A second round of training is planned between May and July 2022, targeting over 1 000 participants from all African member states.
477. After necessary iterations, the course will be offered online as a Digital Global Public Good. A complimentary track for trainers and an impact evaluation with a statistically significant sample size are planned to scale up the training to reach rural youth with no access to the internet.

## 23.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

478. The results (pre-post) show positive trends for the training group regarding the measures of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, action, planning and business practices as well as an overall high satisfaction with the training, the content of which was, on average, found to be very useful for the trainees.
479. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has been shown to positively impact the transfer of training outcomes (e.g. Gielnik et al., 2017). Therefore, increases in entrepreneurial self-efficacy are expected to translate into long-term adaption of the learned behaviour, thereby increasing the likelihood of success.

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<sup>13</sup> This measures an individual's confidence in her or his ability to successfully perform entrepreneurial roles and tasks.

<sup>14</sup> "[Entrepreneurial] action planning moderates the effect of entrepreneurial goal intentions on entrepreneurial action.

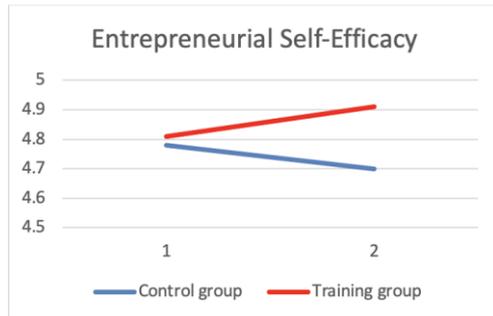
Entrepreneurs, who have the goal intentions to start a new business, are more likely to initiate and maintain entrepreneurial action when they complement their goal intentions with action plans (Frese, 2009; Frese & Zapf, 1994). It is important to note that action plans are distinct from business plans. Business plans are written documents that describe the economic viability of a business concept (Honig & Karlsson, 2004). Action plans are mental simulations of actions that specify the sub-steps (what to do) and the operational details (how to do it) relevant for goal attainment" Gielnik et al., (2015, p. 74).

<sup>15</sup> Entrepreneurial action is key for business creation.

<sup>16</sup> Better business practices predict higher survival rates and faster sales growth.

480. Increases in entrepreneurial action should increase the likelihood of maintaining a successful entrepreneurial career, as it has been shown to increase the likelihood of future entrepreneurial endeavours (Gielnik et al., 2015).

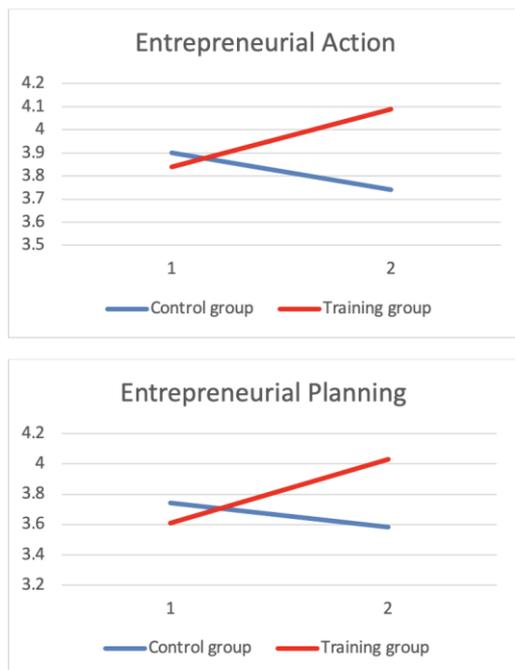
**Figure 2. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy**



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on project data.

481. Action planning has also been shown to increase entrepreneurial success (e.g. meta-analysis by Brinckmann et al., 2010) and the likelihood of creating new or additional ventures (e.g. Gielnik et al., 2014, 2015). In general, action planning as taught in the course, is a significant predictor of subsequent performance (Gollwitzer, 1999).

**Figure 3. Entrepreneurial action and planning**



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on project data.

482. The business practices that were included in the survey have been shown to positively affect sales, profits, labour productivity and total factor productivity as well as lead to higher rates of firm survival and higher rates of sales growth (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2017).

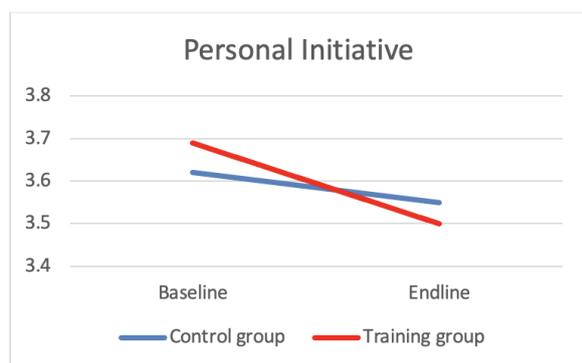
**Figure 4. Business practices**



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on project data.

- 483. With the trends being quite stable for the control group regarding the measure of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, action and planning, it was quite a surprise to see that the use of business practices increased similarly to the training group. However, it needs to be pointed out that more than one-third of the initial 45 respondents did not answer the questions regarding business practices at endline and hence, the results need to be treated cautiously. It is recommended to include the measure of business practices in future survey rounds to see if the results hold true in the future.
- 484. Regarding the measures of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, action and planning, it would also be interesting to see if the positive trends of the results for the training group can be confirmed and become statistically significant with an increased sample size.
- 485. With personal initiative as a core element of the training course and taking into account the overall positive trends for the training group regarding the measures of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, action and planning as well as business practices, the observed decrease of the personal initiative measure for this group might be because trainees realized during the course of the training that their level of personal initiative was not as high as they initially thought.

**Figure 5. Personal initiative**



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on project data.

- 486. Overall, it appears that the training course has helped the trainees to draw a clearer picture of their actual levels of personal initiative while increasing their confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities. It appears that the training has further led trainees to become more entrepreneurially active, adopt valuable business practices and increase their planning activities for their businesses.

In order to see if the positive trends can be confirmed, it will be necessary to conduct further training rounds with larger sample sizes.

**Figure 6. Satisfaction with training**



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on project data.

## 23.5 Good practices & lessons learned

487. The greatest factor for the success of this pilot has been the support of the SFE Agribusiness Officer and SFE Sub-Regional Coordinator. While it is easy for managers to maintain the status quo, SFE colleagues have been pushing the boundaries and stepping out of their comfort zone. The results of the pilot has been very encouraging and support the importance of institutional learning and experimentation.
488. The pilot has also shown the great demand for online products and agripreneurship training in Africa. When published this year, it will be the only publicly available agripreneurship course designed for African youth.
489. The pilot demonstrated where and what type of capacity youth need. The surveys administered helped the team understand the exact needs of young people when it comes to agripreneurship skills. It also showed how youth access the internet.<sup>17</sup> This will help the team design demand-driven products.
490. More work is needed in the future to understand the impact of this intervention vis-à-vis other prioritized interventions such as access to finance and mentorship. The insights on the cost/impact relationship between these interventions is essential in developing evidence-based policies for African governments, incubators and other clients.

<sup>17</sup> For 1 000 youth agripreneurs surveyed, 32 percent of them own their own computer and use it as their main device to access the course. Sixty-five percent of the youth agripreneurs used a mobile phone to access the course, either as primary or secondary device. This shaped the development of the online course, which is suitable for both laptops and smart phones.

## 24. Vegetable market corridors in Sierra Leone

<b>Priority Area(s) covered</b>	PA1 - Global Humanitarian Appeal, component 3 - Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Sierra Leone
<b>Author(s)</b>	FAO Sierra Leone
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO Sierra Leone

### 24.1 Introduction

491. Sierra Leone had already been challenged with food insecurity before the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. The number of acutely food insecure people (Cadre Harmonisé: CH Phase 3-Criss, 4-Emergency and 5-Famine of The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) from March to May 2020 was 1 011 120 persons (of which 50 004 were in Phase 4 - Emergency). This was projected to reach 1 304 985 (73 523 in phase 4) during the lean season (from June to August 2020). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was anticipated to negatively affect market systems, food supply chains and food security. Measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the virus and economic meltdown affected the vulnerable population, and created challenges in food production, transportation and the supply of agricultural products to markets.
492. Sierra Leone recorded its first COVID-19 case on 30 March 2020. As of 28 February 2021, there were 3 890 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 79 deaths and 2 630 recoveries in Sierra Leone. The Government of Sierra Leone issued a 12-month state of health emergency on 24 March 2020, which resulted in the closure of neighbouring borders and weekly markets, as well as restrictions on international and interdistrict travel. In addition to these restrictions, the government also implemented two lockdowns for three days each restricted the movements of people and goods. The lockdown measures were mainly enforced to strengthen social mobilization and trace primary and secondary contacts. Interdistrict lockdowns were also implemented by the government, which restricted the movement of people and trade from one district to another.

### 24.2 Rationale

493. The project (OSRO/SIL/001/BEL) commenced on June 2020 and precedes the launch of the RRP. It is, however, aligned with Priority Area 1 - Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 (COVID-19 Umbrella: COVID/GLO/001/UMBR), in particular, component 3 - Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations.
494. The project was built on FAO's country experience in implementing previous and ongoing food security-related projects that target food insecure and vulnerable households. This was in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, as government counterparts, who brought extension support, on-the-ground experience and strong community relationships. This contributed to achieving the following outcome of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2020–2023), which forms the basis of the CPF 2020–2023.
495. The intervention targeted farming and vulnerable households affected by the COVID-19 outbreak in Bo, Kenema, Moyamba and the western rural districts in Sierra Leone. Due to market closures, and interdistrict and national lockdowns, vegetable farmers lost harvested crops due to the restrictions. Some farmers gave away their crops. They lost a lot of income, which put their

livelihoods at risk. The project supported farmers with critical agricultural inputs (vegetable seeds, fertilizers and tools) to produce, sell, consume surpluses, recover lost income and ensure household food insecurity. With the lead farmers' approach, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and implementing partners (Caritas Bo and the Cotton Tree Foundation) were able to reach target households, even during COVID-19.

### 24.3 Contribution analysis

496. FAO focused on protecting livelihoods and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the food and nutrition security of vulnerable households in Sierra Leone. This aligned with the FAO Global Response Programme and National Response Programme. In Sierra Leone, the FAO response implemented during June 2020 and January 2021 targeted vulnerable and poor farming households affected by the COVID-19 outbreak through livelihood diversification awareness raising and the provision of inputs and training to support the continued production, transformation and marketing of food products to affected farming households. FAO's contributions included:

- i. Time-critical inputs (assorted vegetable seeds, fertilizers and tools) to improve vegetable production to 2 070 beneficiaries across Bo, Kenema, Moyamba and the western rural districts were provided.
- ii. PPE and masks, including for animal health personnel, were delivered.
- iii. Livelihood opportunities to 80 lead farmers through fees for services to network of farmers were provided. With the fee for service, partners paid transportation and sustenance allowances to lead farmers, providing cascading training in Good Agricultural Practices of vegetable production to colleague farmers within the catchment communities.
- iv. Reliable data for decision-making by supporting the assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on household food security and agricultural livelihoods were provided.
- v. Dedicated awareness raising sessions among local farmers were conducted. Risk communication materials for the prevention of COVID-19 were produced and distributed among implementing communities. In addition, veronica buckets, liquid hand washing soap and hand sanitizers were stationed at training and distribution centres.
- vi. Training for targeted stakeholders:
  - Sierra Leone's Central Veterinary Laboratory at Teko, the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute, Njala University and the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology on COVID-19 testing.
  - The good agriculture practice training presented lead farmers with opportunities to identify and utilize innovations and practices that improved vegetable production and productivities.
  - The vegetable grower groups were trained in post-harvest loss management and marketing skills (November to December 2020) to support harvesting and the reduction of post-harvest losses (storage and processing). Through the project support, about 510 women vegetable farmers were trained.

### 24.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

497. Time-critical inputs: input support in the form of assorted vegetables seeds, tools and fertilizers contributed to household recovery from the COVID-19 shock through increased access to improved inputs and higher vegetable production for 87.54 percent of 1 940 households,

consequently improving their food and nutrition security. The inputs were distributed to about 2 070 farmers targeted by the project.

498. Livelihoods opportunities: From field observations and informal interviews with lead farmers, it was reported that stipends (to cover transportation and sustenance cascading the good agricultural practices training) received from the project were critical in improving household food security. From the 2 070 farmers supported by the project, 62.92 percent increased their income through sales of vegetables.
499. Training:
- i. The vegetable grower groups were trained in post-harvest loss management and marketing skills. This improved their skills and knowledge of processes that increase the shelf life of produce with minimum losses, maximum efficiency and returns on producers' income. It was observed that farmers made considerable progress in reducing post-harvest activities through proper vegetable harvesting methods, sorting, packaging and transportation to the market. This also contributed to increasing the income of 62.92 percent of target beneficiaries (760 households) through harvesting and vegetable sales. It was also observed that income derived from crop sales was used to respond to other household economic needs like paying loans, buying household assets and school materials for children, paying medical bills, and saving for emergencies. Further to this, the majority of households stated that part of the income from harvests and sales will be used to purchase inputs for the next cropping season.
  - ii. Feedback from farmers show that the innovative vegetable production skills acquired through the good agricultural practices training has improved lead farmers' local knowledge and capacity. This led to improved food and nutrition security for about 64.44 percent of targeted households.
500. Overall:
- i. With the vegetable and fruit support, 200 households under quarantine had access to diversified consumption, thereby improving their nutritional status during the quarantine period.
  - ii. Social cohesion was created among the supported farmers using a community-based approach to access extension services. This was done through the lead farmers' approach.

## **24.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

### **24.5.1 Good practices**

501. The community-based extension service provision during COVID-19 was very effective in achieving the project results. Government restriction measures made it challenging to reach beneficiaries. However, a cascaded training of trainers model or the farmer-to-farmer extension and input support made this possible. This approach also helped to break the transmission chain of COVID-19 within the communities.
502. Strengthening support to women vegetable farmers was also very effective. Women working together as a group promoted peer learning, the transfer of knowledge and facilitated easy access to productive natural resources like land for vegetable production.
503. Creating access to seeds, fertilizers, and tools was very effective and timely in improving the food production of poor and vulnerable farming households.

### **24.5.2 Lessons learned**

504. Limited or no access to climate information and appropriate extension service contributes to low agricultural production and increased food insecurity. With more climate change variation, farmers are unaware of the changes and information that may improve their resilience to such factors. Extension services to farmers are not encouraging, resulting in suboptimal service provision.

## 25. COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme on Agriculture and Food Systems in the United Republic of Tanzania

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA1- Global Humanitarian Response Plan: Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food-crisis contexts. PA2- Data for Decision-making: Ensuring quality data and analysis for effective policy support to food-systems and Zero Hunger. PA4- Trade and Food Safety Standards: Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond. PA6- Preventing the Next Zoonotic Pandemic: Strengthening and extending the One Health approach to avert animal-origin pandemics PA7- Food Systems Transformation: “Building to transform” during response and recovery
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	The United Republic of Tanzania
<b>Author(s)</b>	FRURT FAO Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania

### 25.1 Introduction

505. Agriculture and food systems worldwide faced a number of disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This raised concerns about the potential impact on the livelihood of farming households, jobs in the broader food economy, and access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly for the poorest and the most vulnerable segments of society.
506. The approach adopted by the Tanzanian Government in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic aimed at balancing public health concerns with the necessity to avoid dramatic disruptions of the national socioeconomic system. A series of containment measures were implemented by the Government: school closures; restrictions on international travels; restrictions on mass public events and gatherings, and the use of facial coverings.
507. During the 2019/20 cropping season, the United Republic of Tanzania experienced excessive rains of about 1 283.5 mm which is 25 percent above the long-term trend. As a result of floods and water logging, some areas of the country experienced food crop damage. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the negative effects of the floods, which further affected food availability and accessibility.

### 25.2 Rationale

508. FAO’s expertise in managing and analysing data and statistics on food, agriculture and nutrition to inform policy and programme development covers food and nutrition security assessments at household and community levels. For many years, FAO has been collaborating with the Tanzania Food Security and Nutrition Analysis System – Mfumo wa Uchambuzi wa Uhakika wa Chakula na Lishe (MUCHALI) in Swahili – and the Zanzibar Food Security and Nutrition Information and Early Warning System (Zanzibar FSNIIEWS) to support the government in data collection and analysis, as well as disseminate information on food and nutrition security.
509. As a result of COVID-19, the demand for Tanzanian agricultural products decreased in most countries that normally import them (e.g. fruit and vegetables to Asia, cereals to East Africa, coffee to Europe and Asia, livestock and meat to Kenya and fish to Asia, East Africa and Europe). These countries had implemented lockdowns and experienced economic slowdowns that had shrunk domestic demand. Some countries had also restricted cross-border trade (e.g. Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) and imposed import tariffs (e.g. Kenya).

510. FAO was particularly concerned about the potential impacts of COVID-19-related containment efforts on food security and livelihoods in contexts of high vulnerability and where populations had already been experiencing food crises.
511. Beyond the specific risks and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis also led government and policy practitioners to question the vulnerability of agriculture and food systems to hazards and shocks of various nature.
512. As the pandemic broke out, region-wide suspicions and stigma against Tanzanian traders – who were deemed likely carriers of the virus – arose as a consequence of the approach of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. Unilateral, uncoordinated control procedures at the borders, and COVID-19 testing that targeted Tanzanian traders were implemented by some countries. Such measures resulted in the disruption of normal trade.
513. On 13 May 2020 the government requested technical and financial support from FAO through its country office and the Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agriculture Policies (MAFAP) programme to conduct a detailed assessment of risks and vulnerabilities that were specific to agriculture and food systems in the country.
514. Upon request from the government, as represented by Ministry of Agriculture, FAO provided technical assistance through the TCP facility. FAO worked together with the WFP and other stakeholders (the President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), the Prime Minister's Office – Disaster Management Department (PMO-DMD), Higher Learning Institutes (Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and the University of Dodoma (UDOM), Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, the Ministry of Trade and Investment (MIT), the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Tanzania Meteorological Agency (TMA), the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC), regional and local government authorities and the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA).

### 25.3 Contribution analysis

515. Against this backdrop, and at the request from the government, the initiatives and interventions designed and implemented by FAO Tanzania were:
  - i. Support to three assessments:
    - *Impact of COVID-19 on Agriculture and Food Systems [December 2020]*: The government, with technical and financial support from the FAO and the WFP conducted a detailed assessment of risks and vulnerabilities that were specific to agriculture and food systems in the country between March and October 2020. The assessment covered all 26 regions of mainland Tanzania and five regions of Zanzibar. Interviews were conducted in December 2020 with key informants identified among managers of purposely selected relevant organizations representing operators engaged in crop, livestock and fish production, as well as input supply, processing and trade. The assessment revealed that the United Republic of Tanzania's food systems had been affected by a series of disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These were due to the government's mitigation measures, as well as other neighbours that are important sources of trade and tourism with the United Republic of Tanzania.
    - Findings on the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture and food systems in the United Republic of Tanzania revealed supply-side disruptions. This affected the availability and cost of key inputs (e.g. pesticides, fertilizers, veterinary products and fish feed) and labour. Demand-side disruptions affected the number and volume of client transactions. These were compounded

with market enabler disruptions that affected the availability and cost of transportation and storage services.

- The recommendations focused on addressing these disruptions through the facilitation of in-country and cross-border movement for key inputs and the agricultural workforce under strict health and sanitary protocols. This supported demand by leveraging public procurement and social protection mechanisms, and strengthening key enablers such as post-harvest management, transport logistics and market infrastructure to increase the resilience of food systems and nutrition.
- ii. Impact of COVID-19 on Cross-border Trade of Agricultural Commodities (January 2021): A survey was conducted to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on the cross-border trade of agricultural commodities in Tanzania for the period of March to October 2020. The survey involved the collection of export and import data from borders and customs officials, trader associations and traders (both formal and informal) for the periods of March to October 2019 and March to October 2020.
- Six border posts were selected that make a significant contribution to local/national food security and livelihoods (namely, Holili, Horohoro, Namanga and Sirari at the United Republic of Tanzania-Kenya border; Mutukula at the United Republic of Tanzania -Uganda border; and Tunduma at the United Republic of Tanzania -Zambia border) to assess whether and to what extent Tanzanian traders faced challenges and experienced disruptions due to the emergency measures implemented at the border. This addressed transit times, access to clients, volume of trade, revenues, and post-harvest losses of commodities. The assessment revealed that traders operating across almost all borders recorded smaller revenues during the pandemic compared to the pre-COVID-19 period, except for Mutukula. The spoilage of perishable crops (fruits and vegetables) has been largely reported due to lengthier border crossings.
- iii. Food Crop Production Forecast amid the Covid-19 pandemic (November 2020): This forecast was to establish a regional and national gap surplus analysis based on the 2019/2020 production season and 2020/21 national food security requirements during the pandemic. An overall National Sufficient Ration (SSR) was achieved for the 2020-2021 consumption year, as the nation recorded a food surplus in almost all major staples except for wheat and sorghum/millet. The forecast highlighted that in the 2020-2021 production year ending in June 2021, 17 district councils in eight regions were identified to have low production of food crops. This was one of the drivers exposing the vulnerable segment of the community to food and nutrition insecurity.
  - iv. Support the development of the National COVID-19 Response Plan (March– August 2020): The National COVID-19 Response Plan Versions 1 and 2 gave guidance on: coordination, epidemio-surveillance, point of entry management, risk communication and community engagement, laboratory services, case management and infection prevention and control, operational support and logistics, traditional medicine and research, psychosocial support and water supply, sanitation and hygiene. Version 2 addressed the challenges observed in the delivery of an effective response to COVID-19, reviewed the budget and reorganized the associated National Committees.
  - v. Support the review of relevant RCCE materials and Event-based Surveillance (EBS) guidelines for COVID-19: FAO supported the Ministry of Health to review the RCCE materials and EBS guidelines, which were developed to incorporate new developments, new interventions, messaging and other lessons learned during the pandemic. These activities involved the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, the Prime Minister's Office, the Disaster Management Department of the President's Office, regional administration and local government authorities, the WHO, UNICEF and the Benjamin

Mkapa Foundation. Through the “strengthening surveillance, coordination, and risk communication to respond to COVID-19 in hard-to-reach communities in Tanzania” project, FAO, with funding from USAID, is supporting the Government of Tanzania to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, particularly in rural communities.

## **25.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

### **25.4.1 Data for decision-making**

516. The findings and recommendations from the assessments of *COVID-19 on Agriculture and Food Systems* and on *Cross-border Trade of Agricultural Commodities* have expanded the evidence base to enable the government to make more informed decisions on how to counter the effect of COVID-19. For example, the government allowed markets to remain open by establishing strict physical distancing measures, limiting density and adopting high sanitary/containment protocols and positioning markets on larger premises. These measures mitigated the impact of the pandemic. Tanzania was less affected by COVID-19 than other countries where producers, traders and wholesalers continued to produce and sell under strict compliance with health and sanitary measures.
517. In response to the Food Crop Production Forecast amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided maize at subsidized prices to the vulnerable communities.

### **25.4.2 Planning for better response**

518. As a result of FAO support with the National COVID-19 Response Plan, the government has used the plan for COVID-19 risk management in the United Republic of Tanzania. It is currently supporting and guiding the subnational COVID-19 response and mitigation measures. In addition, the plan is coordinating local, regional, national and international stakeholders and partner's efforts towards the containment of COVID-19 in the country while ensuring essential health services are maintained.

### **25.4.3 Surveillance**

519. Guidelines enhanced the identification and reporting of health events by the community. The government follows up on the daily submission of a COVID-19 line-list. On average, 19 regions submit a line-list daily. This increased awareness on adhering to COVID-19 protocols/measures. This also helped to reduce the pressure of the communities regarding COVID-19 cases that had not been seriously reported by the country.

### **25.4.4 Risk communication and community engagement**

520. As a result of the RCCE work, together with other initiatives, the government is implementing country-wide community-based initiatives through community outreach programmes by engaging vaccinators, community health workers and other community influencers to promote and enable community uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.
521. The government, through the Ministry of Health, has engaged national faith-based leaders for orientation and is seeking their insight on how religious platforms can be further utilized to promote acceptance, trust and continued uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.
522. Rural women in the United Republic of Tanzania explained how the support they received from FAO has helped them understand the importance of vaccination.

523. Adeladia Joachim Malya from the Sigino village in the Manyara region has described how women are actively involved in agriculture but not the beneficiaries of their sweat stains. She added that COVID-19 had severely affected them while staying at home. *"Most of the rural women are entrepreneurs. They work for a living for the children to buy their necessities. Now Corona has made many mothers fail to go out to do business in the cities, and this has made it difficult for creditors to repay their loans."*
524. Her ideas have been supported by a villager from the Mbeya region, Sophia Mrwati, an entrepreneur who dealt with COVID-19 education and women's opportunities to own land added: *"We are grateful that when we are in women's groups we are given COVID-19 education. Now we know that although it is voluntary, it is very important, especially for adults to get vaccinated. All people are encouraged to get vaccinated for their safety. We are also educated on the intake of nutritious foods, not just to grow and sell. We need to eat nutritious potatoes and protein foods."*

## **25.5 Good practices and lessons learned**

525. The governmental commitment, stakeholder engagement and partnerships from civil society, the private sector and the media in the designing and implementing a plan and different activities (e.g. assessments, education) in response to COVID-19 is essential for success.
526. Digital provision has been a very important tool for stakeholder engagement in the context of the pandemic. Using virtual platforms has become significantly easier for people to access information about the pandemic. This helps foster multistakeholder engagement.

## 26. Data for decision-making and Building Back Better through climate.smart agriculture in Armenia

<b>Priority Area</b>	Data for Decision Making Food Systems Transformation
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Armenia
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	Pedro Arias, Economist
<b>Office or Division</b>	REU

### 26.1 Introduction

527. A number of measures were adopted by countries around the world to contain COVID-19. These, which have been referred to as a lockdown, included restrictions in the movement of people, export bans, import restrictions, burdensome border controls of people and merchandise, and the closure of wet markets, restaurants, food stalls and hotels. All of these measures had the primary objective of preventing infection. However, they could also disrupt food supply chains.
528. The speed in which the pandemic spread, the swiftness in which measures to contain the epidemic were in place, and pace in which anxiety grew were all equally matched. Lack of roadmaps for responding to the pandemic also contributed to the anxiety. Thus the Government of Armenia and UN country teams requested advice from FAO to ensure that what had started as a health crisis would not become a food crisis. Recognisant of this risk, FAO emphasized the need to closely monitor the functioning of food supply chains from the outset of the pandemic.
529. The greatest concern was the possibility of disruptions in the provision of food, which is a basic need. The collection and analysis of information in real time was thus essential, not only for understanding the impact of the measures that were being imposed, but also for formulating countervailing responses to the problems they generated.
530. As information collected by FAO was increasingly made available and analysed, it became clear that food supply chains were resilient to the pandemic. Food supply chains were not broken, but adapted to the situation. Food kept flowing, accommodating to difficulties with new working modalities.
531. As food and agriculture showed resilience, and the Government of Armenia saw no need for major interventions, it quickly became a target for Building Back Better. The analyses also showed that the weather was a key determinant of the performance of agriculture. In this sense, for agriculture to Build Back Better, it must first be resilient to weather changes or, more specifically, to climate change. With these considerations in mind, FAO and the government decided to explore the possibility of developing a national strategy for climate-smart agriculture.
532. This contribution showcases the flexible approach that FAO adopted during its work to support countries during the pandemic: In Armenia, what started under FAO's RRP Priority Area "Data for Decision-Making" shifted to "Food Systems Transformation" in light of novel information and analysis. Shifting priorities was not a unilateral decision made by FAO, but the result of full cooperation, understanding and support from the Government of Armenia, which accompanied FAO at all times during this process.

## 26.2 Rationale

533. The first difficulty that FAO faced in the region was pressure to urgently respond to the pandemic. Actually, all Governments in the region, including that of Armenia, and international organizations and donors were also bombarded by different constituencies with requests for urgent support to problems created by the pandemic. To respond to this pressure, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) set up a Task Force on COVID-19 (TF) that produced and distributed an *REU Country Package: How to approach and respond to the present COVID-19 crisis*.<sup>cii</sup> *Inter-Alia*, this package advised on a protocol for engagement that would strengthen a coordinated response, improve information flows, allow for the identification of needs and priorities, and facilitate the allocation of resources. The protocol was fully aligned with the UN Response Framework.<sup>ciii</sup>
534. In line with the UN Response Framework, FAO country offices were advised that when approached by a third party to engage, either from Governments, IFIs, UN agencies and FAO departments themselves, they should channel all requests through UN coordinated responses. First, they should inform the interested party that the request should be aligned to UN coordinated responses. Second, FAO and the partner should discuss the initiative and engagement modalities with UN country teams.
535. A second difficulty of FAO's work early in the pandemic consisted of understanding what was really happening. The tsunami of information that were being disseminated by the media was at times contradictory, and this compromised not only the possibility of making assessments of the potential cost benefits of interventions but also the decision to assign available resources to the problems being flagged. Telling truth from fake news was a real challenge.
536. FAO accepted the challenge of generating real-time information on food and agriculture. On 10 April 2020, the REU office launched a *Rapid Survey of Food Supply Chains in Europe and Central Asia in the framework of COVID-19 (Rapid Survey)*,<sup>civ</sup> which consisted of the systematic collection of information about the functioning of food supply chains. The survey took place every two weeks and was by no means expected to generate statistics. Rather, it identified critical problems that would require urgent action or more rigorous analyses. Special efforts were made to ensure that the problems identified in the survey were not systemic but directly created by the pandemic. Efforts were also made to avoid overlaps with other surveys. For example, the WFP built a questionnaire that focused on households, while FAO looked specifically into food supply chains. The intention, here again, was to fully align FAO's response in the region with Component 3 of the UN Framework (*Economic response and recovery: protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and vulnerable workers in the informal economy*) which, in the case of food and agriculture, prioritized the safeguarding of food supply chains through the crisis.<sup>18</sup>
537. In addition to the *Rapid Survey*, and based on requests from UN country teams to provide tools for analysing the impact of the situation, the task force, with contributions from various FAO departments at headquarters (notably the Investment Centre and Strategic Programme 4), developed *Methodological Guidelines for Socio-Economic Impact Assessments of COVID-19 in the Agrifood Sector (SEA Guidelines)*.<sup>cv</sup> The SEA Guidelines, fully aligned with Component 3 of the UN Framework, were launched on 8 May 2020 and aimed to support and guide FAO country offices as they engaged with UN country teams in the implementation of the UN Response Framework. They provided guidelines to carry out socioeconomic impact assessments of the Agrifood Sector,

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<sup>18</sup> The wording of the UN Framework made it clear that FAO was a key contributor to the drafting of the UN response strategy.

and were conceived within a larger set of sectoral analyses that contributed to UNCT coordinated responses to COVID-19.

538. The *Country Package*, the *Rapid Survey* and the *SEA Guidelines* targeted the “here and now”, the immediate response. Building Back Better, however, required a different approach, and FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme (RRP) provided the answers. The RRP, officially launched on 14 July 2020, had two priority areas of work that were highly relevant to the work that FAO was carrying out at the time in Armenia: Data for Decision-making and Food Systems Transformation.

## 26.3 Contribution analysis

### 26.3.1 Data for Decision-making

539. The network of key informants of the *Rapid Survey* grew with time, and counted 500 for the whole region in June 2020. In Armenia, the network was circa 50 informants, representing all the segments of the most important supply chains in the country, from input suppliers to farmers and traders. The information that was generated, bi-weekly, proved useful in understanding the problems that affected the functioning of food supply chains. As weeks progressed and information kept flowing, it became increasingly clear that the lockdowns indeed affected food and agriculture, but only temporarily and marginally compared to other sectors of the economy.
540. In Armenia, the information collected by the *Rapid Survey*, and later confirmed with official data, suggested that prices did not spike. Rather, logistical problems had disrupted cash flows. A few supporting measures were being enacted by the government to support the sector, which were mostly financial and aligned with this finding. Moreover, the information collected in the studies also noted that, as COVID-19 prevented Armenian seasonal migrant workers from going abroad, agriculture benefited from added labour, orchards were better cared for, and even an increase in the cultivation of abandoned lands was taking place. These data, coupled with favourable weather conditions for crop growth, completed the picture that was unfolding in the spring and early summer of 2020, i.e. that the agriculture sector would come out of the pandemic strong. As such, agriculture was a promising pillar for Building Back Better. This was certainly the picture in Armenia, at least until drought hampered its prospects.

### 26.3.2 Food Systems Transformation

541. Agriculture was thus positioned to become a pillar for Building Back Better until a drought in 2021 (which analysts now believe was due to “La Niña”) cast doubts on the potential of agriculture to do so. It was argued that while agriculture could indeed be one of the pillars, it must also increase its resilience to climate change. The Armenian Government, which itself had requested assessments on the impact of the pandemic from FAO, and that benefitted from FAO's findings on the performance of agriculture, requested FAO to develop a strategy for developing climate-smart agriculture. This was a novel approach for the country. FAO, in agreement with this position, refocused its work. A TCP that was originally meant to address the pandemic was repurposed for developing recommendations for putting climate-smart agriculture into practice. A discussion paper on climate-smart agriculture has now been delivered to the government.

## 26.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

542. The findings of the *Rapid Survey*, which had no statistical validity, were complemented by more rigorous in-depth studies. Some of these studies were at the request of Government, and others at the request of the *Senior Management Team* of the FAO regional office. The government

requested that FAO study the impact on greenhouse growers, whom at the time had requested urgent support from the government. In addition, a more systematic analysis of the agriculture sector was suggested by FAO and accepted by government, which sought to identify other value chains in need of attention, either as a matter of urgency or, at later stages, as problems are passed on to agriculture from other sectors of the economy. A TCP was developed for this purpose. It supported the government with data collection, quantitative and qualitative socioeconomic analyses of the collected data and the development of a report that included recommendations regarding affected value chains.

543. The work carried out at the request of REU's SMT targeted the agrifood sector of 13 out of the 16 countries in the region where FAO operates, with the use of one single methodology: the *SEA Guidelines*. Armenia was one of the countries studied. What these SEAs all found in common was a consistent lack of real-time data for immediate decision-making. Nevertheless, and despite data problems, all studies pointed in the direction of temporal and marginal impacts of COVID-19. These more rigorous studies from across the region reinforced the message that was coming from the *Rapid Survey*, i.e. that the agriculture sector was resilient.
544. All the surveys and studies helped to share a common understanding of FAO and the Government of Armenia on the impact of the pandemic. Externally, the findings of the *Rapid Survey* were also used to "set the scene" for webinars that FAO carried out on COVID-19 and at Ministerial Meetings. This served to upscale the rhetoric. Internally, information sharing and discussions on the impact of COVID-19 took place in weekly meetings of the *REU COVID-19 Working Group* with administrative and technical support from the REU task force. The working group was interdepartmental and cross-disciplinary, and proved instrumental in strengthening the understanding of the evolving situation at headquarters, decentralized and country offices. As many FAO responses in the region were in motion that preceded the RPP, the working group was also the ideal place for adapting and implementing FAO's RRP in the region. All focal points of its PAs were active members of the working group.<sup>19</sup>
545. Through extensive analyses, ongoing consultations with decentralized offices and bilateral discussions with resource partners, the RRP had identified seven key areas of action needed to ensure rapid and continued support to the most vulnerable, while anticipating the secondary repercussions of the virus and Building Back Better. As noted, Data for Decision Making and Food Systems Transformation were of high relevance to Armenia.
546. The tools that the task force developed required substantial technical expertise. The *Rapid Survey* housed in Microsoft Teams, where authorized interviewees located in country offices logged into a platform that gave them access to the questionnaire. Phone interviews were used to collect the information, which was entered directly into a centralized Excel database in Microsoft Teams, with open access to analysts in REU, SEC and country offices in the region. After each round of the *Rapid Survey* was completed, the task force compiled and analysed the data at the regional level, and produced a summary of the results that was distributed in the region. The task force also provided technical support to countries in the region to process and analyse the results. It became clear that many country offices lacked the technical ability to process the information.
547. A total of seven rounds of the *Rapid Survey* were carried out, from mid-April to the end of July 2020, when the decision was made to stop. The *Rapid Survey* started to reveal that agricultural input and output prices were relatively stable, that logistical problems were being resolved, and

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<sup>19</sup> The *REU COVID-19 Working Group* was awarded the *One FAO Team Award* by the FAO Director General in December 2021.

that the level of anxiety had decreased substantially. With these observations, and lack of “new developments,” anecdotes of questionnaire fatigue on the side of the key informants was beginning to pile up.

548. The *Rapid Survey* was fully aligned with Data for Decision-making of the RRP, notably in relation to data collection methods that needed to be urgently adapted and enhanced, as national data collection processes were disrupted by physical distancing measures to contain the pandemic. The use of this digital technology relied on the collaborative work of REU and SEC (decentralized) and country offices. The activity was carefully tailored to match data needs, analysis and policy processes that countries and UN Response Teams were requesting FAO to deliver. In Armenia, the *Rapid Survey*, plus the SEAs that were carried out by service providers, made significant contributions to the work that was to follow, i.e. Food Systems Transformation: building to transform during response and recovery.
549. The change achieved in Armenia by FAO involved turning the discourse from emergency response to sustainable solutions. The studies had found that, despite initial fears of catastrophic outcomes for agriculture, preliminary estimations of sown areas and production indicated that the weather was a key determinant of output. In this sense, the search for urgent problems and solutions for the “here and now” ended up with a search for solutions that strengthen the long-term sustainability of agrifood systems.

## 26.5 Good practices & lessons learned

550. Various lessons and good practices came out of REU's work on the pandemic. The *Rapid Survey* and the *SEA Guidelines* were effective for understanding and responding to the crisis, and the adoption of a flexible approach and breaking down of silos in FAO were also worth highlighting.
551. First, none of the work done could have been possible without digitalization and internet connectivity, but there is a long way to go before its potential can be fully used. Connectivity between the headquarters, and the decentralized and country offices was highly effective in shaping the *Rapid Survey*, and sharing real-time data, information and analysis. The *Rapid Survey* relied, to a large extent, on the technical capacities of the multidisciplinary task force, which developed a questionnaire (statisticians), in a manner that was feasible vis-à-vis resource limitations in country offices (operations) for the collection of a minimum amount of information that could be enough to assess the functioning of food value chains (economists). It should also be pointed out that expertise to use the tools in Microsoft Teams was available in the task force for setting up the digital platform. The only additional resources that were required to carry out this exercise were goodwill and solidarity, both of which were in abundance in the decentralized and the country offices.
552. Country offices welcomed the *Rapid Survey* in principle because it offered them a set of questions to help them understand the situation, plus the opportunity of forming networks of key informants. However, limitations in country offices hampered its full potential. Country offices were supposed to be a key recipient of findings. They would then feed this information to discussions that were taking place at the country level under the auspices of UN response teams. As the impact of the pandemic in food and agriculture was temporary and marginal, finding relevant information was hard and tedious. Substantial technical capacity was required to extract from the *Rapid Survey* that could inform policy decisions. Unfortunately, the country offices lacked useful details and technical expertise, and relied on REU for support. The simplest of tasks, like applying filters to Excel sheets, was already a difficult endeavour in many country offices.

Therefore, expectations of an optimal use of the *Rapid Survey* or similar digital tools would require that local technical and analytical capacities be improved at country level.

553. Second, it was clear that the requests for support that were arising from country offices mismatched those arriving from headquarters. Notably, the development of the *SEA Guidelines*, which was a direct request from the country offices that were involved in consultations as part of UN country teams. In preparing the *SEA Guidelines*, the task force took into consideration all the assessments on COVID-19 that were being developed elsewhere in FAO, but none of them targeted the UN Response Framework.
554. Third, the use of one single methodology, applied across the region, was pivotal for understanding the regional dimension of the crisis. The *SEA Guidelines* provided cross-country evidence that strengthened the views that were coming from the *Rapid Survey*, namely that food and agriculture was in general resilient. In this case, the country offices also lacked the technical capacity to carry out such a novel and complex analysis, and resources in the decentralized office were also too limited to do SEAs in all countries. Therefore, REU hired, through letters of agreements and using resources that were repurposed from the regular programme, technically qualified institutions working in the region.
555. Fourth, addressing the pandemic was akin to “the art of building a plane while flying it.” No architecture for collecting real-time information was available, no methodology existed to assess its socioeconomic impact, and no toolkit of policy options was readily available. Responding to the pandemic required a flexible approach, which indeed proved to be the case as new information pointed to the need to change strategy along the way, from attending to the impact of the pandemic to food systems transformation. Flexibility required collaboration, and the much needed refocusing of the work in Armenia could only be achieved by working closely with high ranking officials in the Ministry of Economy.
556. Finally, and as noted, the pandemic broke down some silos in FAO, notably for the development of the *SEA Guidelines* and as evidenced by the composition of the *Working Group on COVID-19*. Both benefitted both from multidisciplinary expertise and cross-departmental collaboration, which undoubtedly stemmed from the need to explore a globally unprecedented phenomenon that disrupted business continuity.

## 27. Policy dialogues

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA 4 - Trade and Food Safety Standards. Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond.
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	RLC
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO RLC
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO RLC, Office of ADG/RR (Julio Berdegúe)

### 27.1 Introduction

557. In LAC, the combined impacts of the global spread of COVID-19, prevention and control measures and global recessions disrupted the functioning of food systems and exposed their vulnerabilities given the heterogeneity of the region.
558. In the Caribbean, the projections of recovery are still to be faced with a long road. Caribbean countries are highly dependent on the travel and tourism sector, which were among the most affected. This resulted in a significant reduction of household incomes and employment. Also, the hurricanes during 2020 meant that countries had to divide their emergency responses. This produced inefficiencies and greater impacts. In addition, the high import dependence meant that disruptions to the food supply chain affected food prices and compromised food availability, increasing the risk of food insecurity.
559. On the other hand, Central American agriculture and food system are very closely related to those of the United States of America, which is the main market for their agricultural exports and the main source of cereals, for which the subregion is a net importer. Disruptions in the food supply chain with the United States of America would have a direct impact on the subregion's food security. Fortunately this impact was avoided by keeping intraregional trade channels open. Additionally, there is a high dependence of households in Central America's Dry Corridor and parts of Mexico on remittances, and these reductions meant a major impact.
560. Finally, the Southern Cone countries of South America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) are highly dependent on export markets, and any drop in demand could have meant a direct impact on their economies. Fortunately, as in the Central American region, the imports and exports remained stable, allowing for normal flow of the economy. The Andean countries are also vulnerable to disruptions in the food chain as their rugged geography limits their connectivity. They also have a large proportion of family farmers that are more vulnerable to poverty and undernourishment in the face of an economic crisis.
561. This crisis came at a time when food insecurity was already increasing in the region. The number of undernourished people in LAC rose from 45.9 million in 2019 to 59.7 million in 2020. Moderate or severe food insecurity increased from 31.7 percent in 2019 to 40.9 percent in 2020. The pandemic exposed the weaknesses of food systems, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations in all of the countries. Also, in that time, the Americas (including the United States of America and Canada) accounted for approximately 44 percent of the total cases of COVID-19 worldwide, and 48 percent of deaths associated with the pandemic, while representing only 13 percent of the world's population. Moreover, Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the largest impact on transmission of the health crisis to the economy, with an annual decline of GDP of -7.7 percent in 2020.

## 27.2 Rationale

562. The assistance provided by FAO is framed in the immediate response support (March 2020–June 2021) that addressed areas within the general mandate of the Organization and in response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis of COVID-19. The contribution example being presented is linked to PA4 - “Trade and food safety standards” and addressed the facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond.
563. In order to help lessen economic and trade consequences, strengthen multilateral support and generate regional agreements at the member state level, FAO RLC together with other agencies and stakeholders, supported a series of high-level policy dialogues with all governments of the region. This allowed countries to discuss and reach understandings for individual and joint actions on the main issues of interest: major disruptions to food supply chains, trade, and the availability of and accessibility to food.
564. FAO positioned itself within the member countries as a relevant and reliable actor to lead a multilateral dialogue process that could contribute to joint actions against COVID-19.

## 27.3 Contribution analysis

565. The intervention targeted all member states at a high governmental level (ministers and secretaries of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, food and rural development) and important regional stakeholders.
566. The policy dialogues served as a catalyst for several regional declarations that reaffirmed the willingness to take action at national, regional and hemispheric levels to support food security, trade and food safety, and battle the effects of the pandemic. The main contributions were the following:
- i. Ministerial declaration: On 3 April 2020, 26 LAC countries signed the declaration titled: “COVID-19 and the risks to Food Supply Chains.”<sup>cvi</sup> This declaration seeks to inform public opinion about the measures that countries have taken to ensure the supply of sufficient, safe and nutritious food for the 620 million consumers in the region. The declaration was facilitated by FAO and other multilateral organizations such as the IICA, the WFP, IFAD, the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE), the Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), and the International Regional Organization for Agricultural Health (OIRSA).
  - ii. Hemispheric meetings of ministers for and secretaries of agriculture: Ministers and secretaries of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, food and rural development of 34 countries of the Americas, including the United States and Canada, met to coordinate actions to guarantee food security against the pandemic. The happened on three different occasions. Each dialogue focused on specific topics. Twelve international organizations participated in these events as observers.<sup>20</sup> The initiative demonstrated by these meetings is

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<sup>20</sup> Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEL); Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI); Agricultural Health Agency and Caribbean Food Security (CAHFSA); Development Bank for Latin America (CAF); Inter-American Commission of Women (ICW); Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Caribbean Community (CARICOM); IFAD; World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE); International Regional Organization for Agricultural Health (OIRSA, in Spanish); WFP.

unprecedented, as is the degree of collaboration between FAO and the IICA in support of the Ministers' dialogue under the leadership of Members States.

- *First Hemispheric Meeting (15 April 2020)*: Open space for dialogue among the ministers to analyse and learn in detail the policies and actions carried out by countries to deliver food in a timely manner and at convenient prices to avoid food systems collapse. At this meeting, the ministers agreed to establish an interministerial committee of five<sup>21</sup> ministers representing the different subregions, tasked with defining priorities for future conferences.
  - *Second Hemispheric Meeting (13 July 2020)*: The objective was to share updated information about actions being taken to sustain international agrifood trade, food safety, commercial flows and supply chains that could help reactivate countries' economies in the post-pandemic period. The meeting issued a statement<sup>cvi</sup> regarding the post-pandemic reactivation of agriculture, where ministers stressed the importance of:
    - strengthening the production of agriculture, forestry, fishing and aquaculture products;
    - applying sanitary measures and risk analysis processes to evaluate, manage and communicate risks when necessary to protect human, animal and crop health and life, without creating restrictions or obstacles to international trade and the flow of food;
    - committing to improve transparency and predictability when establishing and adopting new national health measures and protocols; and
    - maintaining the proper functioning of national and international markets, as well as supply chains, through the timely exchange of information on food availability, demand and prices.
  - *Third Hemispheric Meeting (15 April, 2021)*: The objective was to update the diagnosis of the situation of agrifood systems, with special emphasis on smallholder producers; map successful experiences and lessons learned that can be shared at the regional level through South–South cooperation, with an emphasis on the recovery and transformation of agrifood systems; share information on policies, plans and actions in the containment phase of COVID-19; and identify public policies for the recovery of agrifood systems.
- iii. Presentation to the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC): In May 2020, FAO presented the COVID-19 response for LAC to the GRULAC. This included presentations on distribution and coordination of information flows, evidence generation, priority demand areas and the response mechanisms of FAO offices at both the country and regional level.

## 27.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

567. FAO's intervention contributed to strengthening governance and multilateral cooperation as the crisis showed the need to have Member States-driven non-bureaucratic mechanisms for regular and agile communication and dialogue with ministers, focused on practical and concrete needs and agendas. These mechanisms have been open to the participation of other UN and non-UN

<sup>21</sup> Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

agencies in order to foster collaboration and make use of the best capacities that each organization can offer.

568. Considering both Ministerial declaration (April 2020) and the Hemispheric Meetings, examples of particular outcomes are as follows.
- i. Mexico highlighted the importance of avoiding unilateral actions that could affect the flow of food. It implemented all the necessary sanitary measures for food markets and established international and interregional communication channels. FAO, in coordination with the World Bank, IICA and IFAD, provided technical assistance to the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development that led to defining a strategy for ensuring food production and supply in the short term and to contribute to strengthening the agriculture and rural sector.
  - ii. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stated in the July 2020 meeting that CARICOM was experiencing trade disruptions in basic commodities due to breaks in the food supply chain. To alleviate this situation, FAO implemented the Coronavirus Food Security and Impact Mitigation Plan, as a model for OECS Member States. This plan supported the government in enhancing marketing strategies to ensure market access and improve the development of sustainable livelihoods for family farmers and agroprocessors, and support the “Buy local campaign and virtual market place 2020” that linked local farmers with buyers. This facilitated access to fresh produce and markets, and promoted local food consumption.
  - iii. Peru and Ecuador emphasized the need for digitalization to facilitate international trade and marketing support strategies in domestic markets. In Ecuador, FAO implemented impact mitigation measures and an early response in accessing rural services and the economic inclusion of family farmers. This included innovation and supply chain resilience, as well as direct access of family farmers to markets.
569. Additionally, FAO’s intervention contributed to positioning the importance of accelerating the transformation of agrifood systems in the region, particularly through the agriculture ministries, to enhance the narrative of the FAO New Strategic Framework 2022–2031. This expression was reinforced during the participation in the Food System Summit, where more than 12 countries of the region dedicated part of their interventions to making an explicit call for the transformation of agrifood systems (considered “urgent” by the Presidents of Costa Rica and Cuba, and the First Lady of Colombia), and to discussing the content and purposes of this transformation. In most of the references to this process, the representatives emphasized that it should aim to make agrifood systems more inclusive, equitable, sustainable and resilient. Some countries, such as Antigua and Barbuda, which was represented by its Prime Minister, added that there is also a need for these systems to be “carbon neutral and healthy.” In many cases, as in the intervention of the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the need to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development was emphasized.

## **27.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

570. The policy dialogues were possible due to FAO’s prestige. It was poised as an organization capable of leading multilateral dialogues that delivered several declarations. It could also bring together all ministers of the hemisphere and region, as well as various international organizations, from the United Nations System and other institutions. FAO’s response was quick not only in providing evidence-based policymaking but also concrete support to countries that allowed the functioning of food systems and avoided food crisis.

571. One of the lessons learned in relation to the Hemispheric Meetings of Ministers was the adoption of a small committee that led the technical and political process. This gave continuity to the challenges posed so that they did not just stay in exchange and dialogue spaces. The support of international organizations was also very important as it strengthened the meetings and encounters, and enabled follow up on the agreements reached.

## 28. Food systems and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: analysing impacts and supporting country responses

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA 2 - Data for decision-making; PA 7 Food systems transformation
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Latin America and Caribbean
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAORLC

### 28.1 Introduction

572. At the onset of the pandemic, the measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 had secondary effects on food systems. FAO was approached by the LAC governments to provide recommendations on policies and programmes that strengthen the functioning of food supply circuits and food trade, increase social protection coverage and support rural employment. There was also a need to provide technical guides on biosecurity and operations of food markets in the context of the pandemic.
573. In response, FAO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) published a new set of newsletters<sup>cvi</sup> and webinars<sup>cix</sup> called *COVID-19 and Food Systems in LAC*. The newsletters and webinars provided information to the general population and especially to decision-makers in the public and private sector that design and implement measures to address and contain the effects of the pandemic in LAC. During 2020, FAO generated evidence and shared good practices in 18 newsletters in the *COVID-19 and Food Systems* series. In addition, two newsletters were produced in 2021 and one in 2022. These newsletters had a significant reach and were some of the most influential FAO publications on both the global and regional scale. They analysed the impacts of the pandemic on different dimensions of the LAC food systems, such as market behaviour, financing measures, digital transformation, the labour market, social protection measures, health risks, worker's security and safety.
574. FAO RLC also organized a webinar series of high-level conferences discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on the agrifood system, to exchange experiences across the continent. The conferences hosted 12 international organizations with presence in the region. This resulted in better coordination of actions and technical support to ministers and their cabinets. Among the discussed impacts of the pandemic on the food systems were social protection, investments in agriculture, recovery with climate and environmental transformation, digitalization in agriculture for inclusive rural transformation, multilateral action, family farming and its role in recovery with transformation.

### 28.2 Rationale

575. The two initiatives carried out by FAO, in cooperation with ECLAC and other partners, were fully aligned with the objectives of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and the priority areas of PA 2 Data for decision-making and PA 7 Food systems transformation. They sought to offer information and guidance to the countries on the most relevant issues associated with the pandemic and its impacts with a food systems approach.
576. At the beginning of the pandemic, FAO conducted a survey to gather technical and other needs in the LAC countries, which showed demand for newsletters and webinars. Moreover, governments and stakeholders required information on the response measures dealing with the

first effects of the pandemic. This allowed for the identification of good practices and policies that were subsequently shared in the newsletters and webinars.

577. Thanks to these timely and relevant actions, FAO was an important partner to the public and private sectors in the region, managing to gather and systematize important information and experiences on responses from the countries. This was one of the main advantages of FAO during this process.
578. FAO worked with ECLAC and other international organizations and representatives of the private, academic, scientific, political and civil society sectors in order to add strategic information and necessary evidence to guide the countries on the measures necessary to face the pandemic through all its dimensions.

### 28.3 Contribution analysis

579. Through the newsletters and webinars, FAO effectively contributed to the organization and dissemination of strategic information, evidence and good practices to thousands of people, not only in the region but also globally. Some newsletters managed to be among the most viewed FAO publications globally. Five of them were among the 50 most viewed publications and, in particular, No. 8 "The opportunity of digital transformation" received more than 2.7 million visits through FAO's Twitter. Each edition went directly to 12 000 mailboxes of decision-makers in LAC before being uploaded to the FAO website.
580. It is not possible to develop effective and efficient measures and policies without evidence, nor quantitative statistics. Unfortunately, countries do not always have the ideal data infrastructure to compare, project and anticipate events. In response to this difficulty, a specific newsletter was published on websites and platforms that disseminate statistical information. This newsletter listed 28 sources of information that allow countries to access data and carry out analyses to measure the magnitude of the pandemic, project and anticipate potential scenarios. More than 1 million people accessed this publication through the FAO Twitter.

**Table 2. Summary of the reach of the webinars in 2020 and 2021**

Year	Number of conferences	Total audience on all platforms (live)	Average audience on social media (live)	YouTube views
2020	21	17 070	813	110 942
2021	7	10 752	1 536	7 889
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27 822</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>118 831</b>

Source: Elaborated by the Communication Unit, FAO RLC.

581. As listed in the table, the significant reach of the webinars made FAO the leading organization in providing information and experiences for decision-makers in the region. It also provided the opportunity to exchange knowledge between governments, the private sector and civil society.

### 28.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative

582. One of the great concerns in FAO RLC during the publication of the newsletters and webinar series was to be clear about their reach and to know the impact on the audience, partners and decision-makers. FAO and ECLAC were not the only organizations to publish analytical documents on the pandemic or hold webinars to discuss its effects. These practices were adopted worldwide, because there was no other way to communicate due to quarantines and border closures.

583. The structural limitations in communications and digitalization in many countries with low or limited connectivity added to the economic difficulty in accessing internet and telephone services. This could have significantly reduced the reach of these two initiatives.
584. In June 2020, after the publication of newsletter No. 7, FAO RLC conducted a survey to 12 000 recipients with four questions about this publication. Very good responses were received, as described below:
- i. Have the newsletters been useful to learn about the impact of COVID-19 on the agrifood sector? 51 percent responded that they were sufficient and 37 percent that they were very useful.
  - ii. Have the newsletters been useful to learn about the most recommended measures and solutions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19? 58 percent responded that they were sufficient and 26 percent that they were very useful.
  - iii. What do you think about the length of the newsletter? 85 percent responded that it is appropriate.
  - iv. What is the most suitable frequency? Sixty-four percent confirmed that the fortnightly frequency is appropriate.
585. The responses confirmed the importance of the newsletters and their scope, and approved the format and periodicity of the publication.
586. The exchanges of virtual experiences allowed some of the governments that constantly participated in the seminars to carry out bilateral cooperation based on instruments developed during the pandemic as responses to its impacts. An example of this is the collaboration between the Governments of Paraguay and Chile, where the latter shared its experience in promoting agricultural loans at a 0 percent interest rate and other related actions. The Paraguayan Government requested the collaboration of Chile, specifically with the Credito Agrícola de Habilidadación (CAH – “Agricultural Credit for Habilitation”) of that country in order to provide a timely and pertinent response to the most affected farmers.
587. Another example was the response that countries like Peru and Panama presented through their extended social protection programmes. Here, the social protection systems of each country were linked to programmes of an agriproductive nature, allowing for a rapid response on social security issues and the inclusion in programmes for productive development and agricultural marketing.

## **28.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

588. Among good practices was the setup of the regional task force at FAO RLC with the presence of representatives from different thematic technical teams, subregional representatives and, eventually, representatives of the countries, who participated in the periodic meetings that were held every 15 days. The regional task force coordinated and organized FAO initiatives in response to COVID-19. Among them were a series of newsletters and webinars.
589. Another good practice was the creation of an editorial committee for the newsletters that was responsible for structuring each publication, reviewing its content and technical clearance. All newsletters were published in Spanish and English.
590. In relation to good practices for the launch of the webinars, a technical team was organized in collaboration with the FAO’s Núcleo de Capacitación (FAO Training Centre) and the ADG’s office, which proposed to hold a webinar every week to quickly provide information and experiences

available to all countries in the region. As a result, FAO RLC held webinars for 14 weeks in a row, with the attendance of ministers, deputy ministers and research professionals. The presence of representatives of civil society and various agricultural and fishery organizations also allowed for highlighting field experience. Although the weekly webinars represented a significant workload, the urgency in responding to the country needs allowed for all seminars to be carried out in close collaboration with the FAO national offices, which were a fundamental partner in the identification of relevant experiences to be shared.

591. It is important to consider that all this work was carried out in home-office modality by FAO technicians and professionals with scarce technological resources while facing the challenges of a total lockdown. Quick measures that facilitated the work, considering the technological resources available, were key in providing this technical support.
592. The importance of the internal organization of FAO RLC's technical teams was a lesson learned in the development of these two initiatives. The technical teams were coordinated according to decisions adopted by the regional task force to produce high-quality information, analysis and data for decision-makers. Sound internal organization was crucial to improve the use of financial resources and prioritize quality communications products. Internal coordination was also indispensable to form partnerships with other agencies and international organizations based on the decisions of the task force. A second lesson learned was that knowledge products, such as newsletters and webinars need constant updating with new topics and formats that are dynamic to keep the attention of the public.

## 29. Action sheets under the Response and Recovery Programme and the Regional Response Plan

<b>Priority Area</b>	N/A
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	NENA Region
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO RNE Technical Officers
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO RNE
<b>Comments (optional)</b>	Thirteen action sheets were drafted with contributions from technical staff across the region, subregions and headquarters.

### 29.1 Introduction

593. The economic and social disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted all aspects of food security. It has contributed to increased food insecurity, poverty and greater fragility in livelihoods and along food supply chains. As much as understanding the extent of the impacts is needed, developing targeted and contextualized responses is key for medium- and long-term response and recovery.

### 29.2 Rationale

594. The countries of the FAO Near East Region share a series of commonalities that distinguish them from the rest of the world. They include a heavy dependency on trade for food supply, extreme water scarcity, the impact of climate change and land degradation, and, unfortunately, a record number of countries in crisis or in conflict. This has led to an increase in the number of people suffering from hunger. They also share a series of assets, including a large share of young populations, and proximity with European markets.

595. The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme was designed through an extensive process of consultation with countries across the world, using the network of FAO country offices. Its seven priorities are widely shared by the majority of countries. While it offers a broad platform to craft country responses, it cannot reflect regional specificities. Translating the FAO COVID-19 response and recovery plan into regional priorities means identifying those areas of work that most correspond to the needs of the region.

596. Guided by the corporate FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan and informed by the context, priorities and feedback from dialogues with regional stakeholders, there emerged a set of regional priority action areas for the Near East and North Africa around which three different and interconnected timeframes were defined to cope with the COVID-19 impacts on food systems and food security:

- i. provide immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis (keeping the value chains alive; supporting those who lost their jobs);
- ii. support recovery (promoting the digitalization of agriculture, make value chains and agribusiness more competitive, investing in women and youth, address trade issues and zoonotic diseases); and
- iii. build back better (ensure sustainable use of water and management of natural resources; promote healthy diets and reduce food loss and waste).

597. FAO engaged in consultation with FAO Representatives, member countries and multistakeholder groups to arrive at a set of priorities tailored to regional specificities in relation to COVID-19 response and recovery. Namely, feedback was received at a Regional Consultative Technical

Meeting in July 2020, then again at NERC-35, which was held exceptionally in September 2020. FAO RNE used its staff resources at regional and subregional levels, with valuable inputs from headquarters, technical staff, to develop the response plan and action sheets, all aligned with the RRP.

### 29.3 Contribution analysis

598. To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, RNE prepared a regional portfolio, first by engaging in a series of consultations with countries in July 2020 to hear their priorities for immediate response, recovery and building back better. The result is a response plan, aligned to FAO's corporate response and recovery plan, with 12 priority action areas that represent a package of actions to be implemented in a coordinated way at country and regional levels. The action sheets are linked to the 6+1 corporate priorities defined under the FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan and highlight short- and medium-term actions to cope with the COVID-19 impacts on food systems and food security. The regional action areas and linkage with the corporate priorities are shown in Table 3.
599. The package of action sheets was released via the Food Coalition web hub, where members of the Coalition, a multi-stakeholder global alliance for a unified global action in response to COVID-19, can access the can easily access the action sheet's project-focused information and data, as well as the funding gap on the ground, the type of assistance that would be required and decide how they wish to contribute: through voluntary contributions, provision of experts and expertise, innovative solutions and an exchange of knowledge and experience.

**Table 3. Elements of the NENA Regional Response Plan**

FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan	Regional priority action areas for the Near East and North Africa
• Humanitarian Response Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping the value chain safe and alive</li> <li>• Social protection and safety nets, targeting farmers and the rural poor</li> </ul>
• Intra-Regional Trade and Food Safety Standards	• Enhancing trade resilience and food safety standards
• Poverty Reduction, Economic Inclusion and Social Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting rural institutions and finance</li> <li>• Promoting rural women's economic empowerment and youth employment</li> </ul>
• One Health and Preventing Zoonotic Pandemic	• Preventing future zoonotic pandemics and combatting pests and diseases
• Equipping Smallholders for Post-COVID Recovery and Building Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies for building the resilience of agricultural-based livelihoods</li> <li>• Digital innovation for smallholder producers</li> </ul>
• Data, Information and Analysis	• Data, analysis and policy support
• Food systems transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing competitive and inclusive value chains and agribusiness</li> <li>• Building sustainable production systems</li> <li>• Promoting healthier diets during and after the pandemic</li> <li>• Improving food safety along the value chain</li> </ul>

Source: Elaborated by FAO RNE management.

## **29.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

600. The Regional Response Plan, fully aligned with the FAO's RRP, allowed for a more tailored and comprehensive set of actions on issues of higher priority for the regional context, particularly around agrifood system transformation, sustainability, innovation and digitalization, and resilience-building or fragile contexts.
601. The exercise of developing the response plans and action sheets was highly aligned with ongoing work across the regional programme. It was also increasingly integrated with the COVID-19 response and recovery as the pandemic became prolonged. As such, the action sheets became useful tools and were often reused, adapted or formed the basis of project concept notes or intervention ideas at the regional or country level. Even though they represent COVID-19 impacts, they closely reflected potential responses to priority issues in NENA countries.

## 30. Regional policy and advocacy on addressing COVID-19 impacts

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA2: Data for decision-making
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	NENA Region
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO RNE Technical Officers
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO RNE
<b>Comments (optional)</b>	The RNE COVID-19 task force under the leadership of the RNE-ADG and RPL, with a wide group of technical officers who all contributed to the papers listed.

### 30.1 Introduction

602. From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and for the months that followed, there was fear among Member countries and international markets that measures to contain the spread of the disease could lead to major disruptions in trade and local supply chains which, ultimately, would lead to a new food crisis. The health crisis transmits directly and indirectly to food and agriculture through different channels. In the NENA region, it is via trade, tourism and the energy markets. Although the immediate concern was on food availability, the concern shifted to food access due to income loss and prolonged economic recession.

### 30.2 Rationale

603. Member countries and regional organizations initially looked to FAO for data, policy and thought leadership to weather the multiple risks to agrifood sectors and inform policy response. FAO's position among UN agencies, international organizations and Member countries – notably the channels by which support is requested and its governance structure – provide FAO the comparative advantage in terms of responding to food and agriculture-related risks emanating from the global crisis.

604. The first RNE policy brief and several governing body meetings were held prior to the corporate RRP. They can be attributed to the priority area of "data for decision-making," but eventually informed response and recovery planning for FAO through the RRP and RNE regional response plan. In order to produce the knowledge documents and discussion platforms on regional policy and advocacy on addressing COVID-19 impacts, FAO RNE dedicated technical staff resources via the regional task force and from among subject-matter specialists across the region.

### 30.3 Contribution analysis

605. FAO RNE produced a first regional policy brief (released in early May 2020) entitled "COVID-19 and its impact on food security in the Near East and North Africa: How to respond?" This mobilized expertise from across the region to comprehensively cover impacts and response options on the various facets of agrifood systems that can directly or indirectly be affected by COVID-19 response options. A series of policy briefs, notes and reports were later produced, covering thematic areas such as gender, fisheries, social protection, agribusiness and country reports (report links can be provided).

606. In terms of advocacy, FAO RNE's regular obligations to the Near East Regional Conference quickly shifted to incorporate the risks and impacts of COVID-19 on agrifood systems, and the options for response and recovery (NERC 35, originally planned for March 2020, was moved to a virtual conference in September 2020). Prior to the rescheduled NERC, a dedicated "Regional Consultative Technical Meeting" (RCTM) was held on an extraordinary basis inviting senior officials

from NERC countries to discuss key issues related to the new and ongoing COVID-19 crisis, on “Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Agriculture and Food Security in the Near East and North Africa Region.” Three thematic papers were tabled: “Managing trade as a key element of the region’s food security strategies”, “Protecting and enhancing agriculture and local value chains,” and “Building Resilience to Multiple Shocks – Addressing COVID-19 in Fragile Contexts.” A further paper was tabled as an information note for the re-scheduled NERC35 in September 2020: “COVID-19 in the Near East and North Africa Region Impacts and Responses.”

607. FAO RNE embarked on a process towards NERC 36 in 2021. A dedicated paper developed on “COVID-19 impact and response in the Near East and North Africa region: What do we know so far?” was presented in July 2021 at a Regional Stakeholder Dialogue, then tabled for the senior officers’ meeting in January 2022 for the purpose of NERC 36 in February 2022. Elements of COVID-19 impacts on agrifood systems were present in all NERC papers as at this stage the impacts were pervasive across the whole of the regional programme.
608. Of further note are briefings, presentations and information notes delivered by FAO RNE at the request of the Near East Group to apprise them of the COVID-19 situation from the regional perspective, for which the FAO RNE task force was mobilized to prepare inputs.

### **30.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

609. The policy tools produced by FAO RNE along with the platforms provided by the NERC process allowed for consistent dialogue and exchange of concerns, analysis, and recommendations with policymakers and regional experts. In addition to policy recommendations around COVID-19 impacts at the level of food security, these tools allowed for a greater spotlight on the functioning of agrifood systems for: healthy diets, consumption patterns, the livelihoods of smallholders and small-scale agribusiness along the food chain, gender empowerment, youth employment, food safety, and inefficiencies along supply chains and the need for greater resilience<sup>22,23</sup>. While natural resources scarcity was perhaps not an evident linkage with the disruptions caused by COVID-19, it often emerged as a priority in the dialogues. This reinforced the interlinkages of water scarcity with agrifood system transformation and the disruptions causes or highlighted by COVID-19.<sup>24,25</sup>

### **30.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

610. Prior to the pandemic, FAO RNE’s process around the Near East Regional Conference had included a technical meeting for senior officials separately ahead of the ministerial meeting as new and multiple channels for dialogue with member countries. This proved a useful platform to mobilize

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<sup>22</sup> See documentation related to the Regional Technical Consultation Meeting (RCTM) (for senior officials) held in July 2020, available at FAO, 2020. FAO launches first Virtual Regional Consultative Technical Meeting. In: *FAO*. Cited 4 November 2022. <https://www.fao.org/neareast/news/view/fr/c/1296312>

<sup>23</sup> This change came through in the dialogue and statements at NERC-36 in February 2020, the report for which can be found at: FAO, 2022. Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC). 36th Session. Senior Officers Meeting: 10 to 13 January 2022 Ministerial Session: Baghdad, Iraq, 7 and 8 February 2022. List of Documents. In: *FAO*. Cited 4 November 2022. <https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/nerc36/documents/en>

<sup>24</sup> An early iteration of the regional response plan (linked to the RRP) did not include a specific action on water. following the RCTM in July 2020 and THE feedback received, it was incorporated into an action area on “building sustainable production systems.”

<sup>25</sup> A side event to NERC-36 in February 2020 was held on climate change with a dynamic discussion that focused on the food system, natural resource scarcity and climate change interlinkages.

(in the case of the July 2020 RCTM) in light of the extraordinary occurrence of COVID-19, and provided multiple entry points to discuss the evolving and prolonged impact of the crisis.

611. While COVID-19 certainly impacted various facets of agrifood systems to lesser and larger degrees, the policy and advocacy tools and reaction via dialogues affirmed the regional priority areas identified as part of FAO RNE's regional programme with perhaps greater emphasis on some (i.e. social protection) and continued emphasis on others (i.e. water).

## 31. Regional task force and monitoring mechanism

<b>Priority Area</b>	PA2: Data for decision-making
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	NENA Region
<b>Author(s), Job Title</b>	FAO RNE
<b>Office or Division</b>	FAO RNE

### 31.1 Introduction

612. From the onset of COVID-19 pandemic and for the months that followed, there was fear among member countries and international markets that measures to contain the spread of the disease could lead to major disruptions in trade and local supply chains, which would lead to a new food crisis. The health crisis transmits directly and indirectly to food and agriculture through different channels. In the NENA region, it is via trade, tourism and the energy markets.
613. Most NENA countries are net food importers. This makes the NENA region is highly dependent on international markets particularly for staple cereals. Therefore, vulnerable to global market disruption. It was feared that the COVID-19 crisis may aggravate the vulnerabilities of the region to trade risks if disruptions occur in global supply chains. Disruptions in local food production, supply chains and retail, as well as job and income loss in non-food sectors, was a major concern for the food insecurity of vulnerable populations, such as women, the rural poor and precariat workers, especially when it comes to food access.

### 31.2 Rationale

614. Member countries and regional organizations looked to FAO for data, policy and thought leadership from the outset of COVID-19 to weather multiple risks to the agrifood sector and inform policy. FAO's position among UN agencies, international organizations, and Member countries, notably the channels by which support is requested and its governance structure, provide FAO with the comparative advantage in terms of responding to food and agriculture-related risks emanating from the global crisis.
615. It quickly became evident that quality data, analysis and monitoring would require a regional-level coordination mechanism linked to the country-level and regional COVID-19 response activities that would feed into corporate processes. FAO RNE's COVID-19 task force was established prior to the corporate RRP, but the core of its terms of reference relates to the eventual priority area on "data for decision-making" and this eventually informed response and recovery for FAO through the RRP and RNE regional response plan. FAO's engagement was to dedicate technical staff resources to the regional task force and monitoring mechanism, guided by the terms of reference and efforts of a core secretariat.

### 31.3 Contribution analysis

616. FAO RNE reacted swiftly to the events of March 2020. First, it established a regional COVID-19 task force composed of a core team and a wider group of experts spanning disciplines related to the immediate concern of "keeping supply chains alive." This also involved representation from subregional offices. Indeed, the task force later grew and took shape around the RRP and regional priority response areas. The task force worked immediately on data and information collection and consolidation to feed analysis at the outset of the crisis, and moved quickly thereafter into more structured monitoring and assessment activities.

617. In particular, this meant providing methodological guidance for country and thematic COVID-19 impact assessments, backstopping assessment activities and, as the crisis progressed, periodic consolidation of monitoring and assessment outcomes at country and regional levels and among thematic areas. Resources were put into place at the outset of the crisis to lead assessment activities and, in most cases, in partnership with the Rome-based agencies, UN country teams, and other international organizations. This was done in full coordination with the national authorities. FAO deployed its TCP resources on eight impact assessments (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). Representations in Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen used existing resources to work with national authorities and partners at country level to monitor the situation locally.

### **31.4 Significant change (outcome) narrative**

618. The FAO RNE monitoring mechanisms allowed the regional office to produce an informed situation analysis and provide policy recommendations to member countries aligned with country needs and concerns.
619. After two years of COVID-19, regional and global agrifood systems have withstood the economic shocks triggered by the pandemic and averted a food availability crisis. The lockdown measures, mainly in 2020, resulted in major disruptions to supply chains, although it was less pronounced in the NENA region. NENA Governments reacted in a timely manner to exempt agrifood sector actors from lockdown measures, allowing them to continue activities, even if measures in countries led to delays or time-bound disruptions. Global and local food availability and prices remained relatively stable, and local production and value chains have been more resilient than other sectors of the economy.
620. Government commitment to avoid restrictive or distortionary trade measures led not to change but to a consistency or robustness in global supply chains in line with calls from FAO. The NENA region, however, has a huge dependence on imported food. This made it vulnerable to any supply shocks in the global food markets and the need for continuous analysis of the situation. As of May 2022, concern has shifted to analysing the impacts of the Ukraine crisis on regional and NENA food security and nutrition.
621. The concern shifted from food availability to food access due to income loss and economic recession. For example, a strong social protection response was observed. All NENA countries had formally announced various social protection measures to cope with the COVID-19 impacts. This covered social assistance, social insurance and labour market programmes and interventions to support special populations, such as refugees, internally displaced persons and migrant workers. The measures were built upon existing social protection systems through either vertical or horizontal expansion. Despite the expansion, however, it is still not clear how effective it has been in preventing poverty and reaching the most vulnerable.
622. The monitoring activities carried out by FAO quickly materialized strong partnerships across many countries, namely with the Rome-based agencies, the UN country teams, the World Bank and other international organizations, while in full coordination with the national authorities. FAO has also supported member countries in their monitoring platforms. In Tunisia, it supported the establishment of a Crisis Management Team (ministerial decision No. 1464). In Sudan, FAO advised and advocated for an inter-Ministerial committee and provides staff to facilitate its work. In Iraq, FAO has been instrumental in advising the development of the national food security strategy with a component to address COVID-19.

## **31.5 Good practices & lessons learned**

623. Establishing a regional coordination mechanism was key in anticipating the variety of technical support and backstopping needs from countries, as well as requests from headquarters for information and for producing the data and analysis required by Member countries via the NERC and Near East Group for which regular and extraordinary meetings were called. A system of focal points was created between FAO RNE and the country offices on thematic areas; a repository of documents created on Sharepoint; meetings among the task force, FAO Representatives and wider FAO RNE professional staff on a frequency proportionate to the intensity of the crisis to allow for smoother flow of communication. The COVID-19 monitoring needs, however, came over and above the regular tasks and duties of the individuals on the task force and FAO Representatives. While monitoring and assessment activities were active on the ground, there was often need for communication flows between units around data, findings or status of activities to meet various reporting needs, which at times were heavy.

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- <sup>i</sup> FAO. *Agricultural livelihoods and food security in the context of COVID-19: Results from household surveys in 11 countries with high pre-existing levels of food insecurity – Cross-country monitoring report*, May 2021. Rome, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4747en>
- <sup>ii</sup> FAO, n.d. Afghanistan. In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. <https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/pages/countries>
- <sup>iii</sup> FAO, 2022. FAO helps safeguard Kuchi livestock. In: *FAO*. <https://www.fao.org/afghanistan/news/detail-events/en/c/1492054>
- <sup>iv</sup> FAO, 2021. 'Magical feed' and facemasks in times of need and pandemic. In: *FAO*. <https://www.fao.org/afghanistan/news/detail-events/en/c/1371666>
- <sup>v</sup> CERF funding project card Article: CERF supports FAO in preventing and responding to the impact of COVID-19 on food security; FAO Burkina Faso (@FAOBurkinaFaso). "La #FAO au Burkina a bénéficié d'un financement additionnel du Fonds #CERF d'1 million d'USD afin de renforcer l'appui au #Gouvernement pour prévenir et atténuer l'impact du #Covid19 sur la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle #FaimZéro." *Twitter*, 28 April 2020. <https://twitter.com/FAOBurkinaFaso/status/1255075884102569985>; FAO in Emergencies (@FAOemergencies). "A BIG thank you to @UNCERF for supporting @FAO in preventing and responding to #COVID19 outbreak, affecting food systems in #Afghanistan, #BurkinaFaso and #Haiti, already facing huge food crises ☹️ <https://bit.ly/2yL63Uc> #ZeroHunger #InvestInHumanity)." *Twitter*, 29 April 2020, 10:30. <https://twitter.com/FAOemergencies/status/1255414014852558848>; FAO Burkina Faso (@FAOBurkinaFaso). "Le financement additionnel du Fonds #CERF permettra à la #FAO de soutenir le #Gouvernement dans le cadre de son plan de réponse au #Covid19 pour la sensibilisation et la protection des moyens d'existence des ménages vulnérables touchés par la pandémie dans la région du Centre." *Twitter*, 29 April 2020, 11:10. <https://twitter.com/FAOBurkinaFaso/status/1255424225021775873>; FAO Burkina Faso (@FAOBurkinaFaso). "La #FAO pour renforcer son appui au #Gouvernement du Burkina Faso dans le cadre de sa réponse au #Covid19 a pu mobiliser 1 million d'USD du Fonds #CERF pour assister 29 400 personnes dans la région du Centre. #FaimZéro." *Twitter*, 29 April 2020, 11:29. <https://twitter.com/FAOBurkinaFaso/status/1255791263904927744>
- <sup>vi</sup> Ecodafrik, n.d. Riposte contre le COVID-19: Des volontaires en renfort. [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsKntfXCLxQ>
- <sup>vii</sup> FAO, 2020. *Guidance note: Risk communication and community engagement: Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0526en>
- <sup>viii</sup> FAO, 2020. *The effect of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture in Asia*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca9545en/CA9545EN.pdf>
- <sup>ix</sup> FAO, 2020. *Food safety in the time of COVID-19*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8623en>
- <sup>x</sup> FAO, n.d. KORE - Knowledge sharing platform on Emergencies and Resilience. In: *FAO*. [www.fao.org/in-action/kore](http://www.fao.org/in-action/kore)
- <sup>xi</sup> See the page "Helping Food Chain Heroes Stay Safe // Partners Board" on the Trello platform: <https://trello.com/b/Fqwsgbl4/helping-food-chain-heroes-stay-safe-partners-board>
- <sup>xii</sup> See the page "#ThankYouFoodHeroes, please #StaySafe" on the Trello platform: <https://trello.com/b/rP0Ovb7r/thankyoufoodheroes-please-staysafe>
- <sup>xiii</sup> FAO, n.d. KORE - Knowledge sharing platform on Emergencies and Resilience. In: *FAO*. [www.fao.org/in-action/kore](http://www.fao.org/in-action/kore)
- <sup>xiv</sup> FAO, 2021. Webinars on Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) for COVID-19 prevention along the food supply chain. In: *FAO*. <https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/webinar-series/webinar-series-details/en/c/1305321/>
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