



Expanding access to social protection for rural populations



Meeting the challenge

Social protection is a human right and a commitment in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is an effective policy instrument to address the multiple crises we currently face like a changing climate, conflict and their links with poverty, hunger and inequality.

While progress has been made in **expanding access to social protection**, there are still massive gaps in coverage. This is especially worrying in **rural areas** where there is a concentration of **poor and vulnerable people** with **limited access to financial and social services**, and **informal employment** is widespread. Consequently, poor and vulnerable rural households face colossal challenges in beneficially participating in **economic opportunities**, such as those in agrifood systems. Without access to adequate and comprehensive social protection, rural populations risk being left behind, blocking progress on reducing poverty and inequality.

In action

By framing social protection as an investment, FAO **advocates for increasing finance** to expand the coverage of social protection in rural areas. This includes **climate finance**.

FAO provides **technical support** and delivers training to enable governments to tailor social protection systems to the needs of rural populations.

FAO develops the capacities of civil society and producer organizations to participate in **policy dialogue** on social protection and to claim their rights.

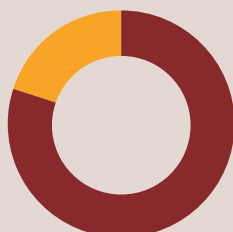
The Organization also generates **evidence** to influence thinking on the importance of social protection to enable rural households to take part in economic development, and to bridge the humanitarian-development divide.

Looking at the evidence

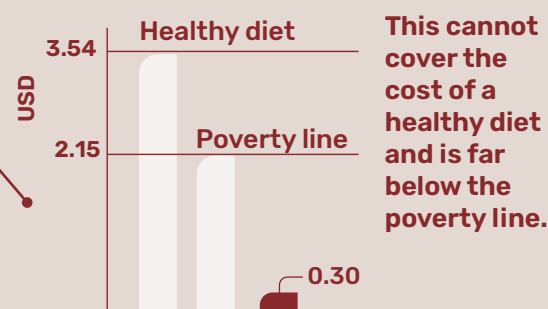
80% of the extreme poor live in rural areas.¹



80% of the poorest rural households in low-income countries have **no access** to social protection.²



The value of **transfers** of social protection in rural areas of low-income countries is **USD 30 cents** per person/day.³



Comparative advantage

FAO has an established **understanding of rural livelihoods** and the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus**. This includes comprehension of the processes of rural and food systems transformations, as well as the interaction between these and national social protection. It brings together expertise on social protection, gender, fisheries, forestry, pastoralism, climate action, nutrition, rights-based approaches and emergency responses in supporting the national social protection systems.

FAO's focus on social protection is an integral entry point for a more **inclusive and gender-responsive rural agrifood transformation** which leaves no one behind. This helps to overcome deeply rooted inequalities that are still hindering sustainable development, poverty reduction and getting the 2030 Agenda back on track.

FAO works with state and non-state actors in rural areas, fostering dialogue between stakeholders involved in providing adequate social protection for rural populations.

Best practices and results

1

FAO advised the formulation of **Paraguay's National Social Protection Strategy**, focusing on rural development, food security and agriculture. In support of its implementation, FAO is piloting a sub-national coordination mechanism that engages the Ministry of Agriculture and representatives of rural populations.

2

FAO assisted the **Philippines** in conducting a policy dialogue leading to the Roadmap to Establishing an **Adaptive and Shock-Responsive Social Protection System**. FAO is further piloting digital payment modalities to better deliver **cash support to remote rural populations**.

3

FAO supported the governments of **Lebanon and Jordan** to design the **farmer registries**, including socio-economic criteria, which are used to extending social protection and agricultural services to small-scale farmers. Likewise, FAO helped **Zambia** to develop a methodology for targeting the Food Security Pack to poor farmers.

Expected results

- National social protection systems **expanding adequate coverage to rural populations** (farmers, fishers, foresters and pastoralists) and rural populations are able to claim this right.
- **National social protection systems are more gender-responsive**, and support adaptation to climate change, helping to manage shocks, improving food security and nutrition, and enabling women to fulfil their potential.
- **Climate finance is further directed towards** expanding the coverage of adequate **social protection** to rural populations, increasing household capabilities to adapt their livelihoods to the changing climate.

Contact

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Contribution to the SDGs



Partnerships to scale up impact

- ministries of agriculture, the environment, gender, health and social development, as well as disaster management authorities;
- members of global-level coordination mechanisms (Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition, Social Protection Inter Agency Cooperation Board, Universal Social Protection 2030, the Cash Learning Partnership Network, the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership, Interagency social protection assessments);
- civil society organizations in rural areas, including community-based organizations and self-help groups;
- government agencies for development cooperation;
- cooperatives and producer organizations; and
- academia and research institutions.



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