



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Thirty-sixth session

19-21 October 2020¹

**COVID-19 update and adjustments to FAO's regional priorities to
address impact on food security and nutrition, and food systems**

Executive summary

- The combined impacts of the global spread of COVID-19, pandemic prevention and control measures and global economic recession are likely to disrupt the functioning of food systems and will expose their vulnerabilities. The crisis is hitting the Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC) hard: estimates show a potential drop of between 9.1 and 9.4 percent in economic growth for countries in the region in 2020; poverty is expected to increase to its highest levels in two decades, reaching up to 230.9 million people including 96.2 million in extreme poverty, with millions of job losses. Given the heterogeneity and the inequalities within and among LAC countries, the impact on food systems will be felt differently across the region.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has supported countries in responding to the COVID-19 crisis concentrating on the following key areas: (i) understanding and mitigating the pandemic's impact on food and agriculture in order to provide decision-makers in the region with sound information and evidence on policy measures to keep food systems alive; (ii) safeguarding the food security, nutrition and livelihoods of the most vulnerable, supporting people's purchasing power and working with governments to scale up social protection systems; (iii) safeguarding the functioning of supply systems through technical support to governments at different levels; and (iv) promoting knowledge exchanges of policy responses across countries.
- The current challenges require a response from FAO that is timely, effective, and adapted to the new circumstances. To accomplish this, FAO has developed a global COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and revised its regional programme, resulting in an update of the Regional Initiatives (RIs).
- **RI1 Transforming food systems for healthy diets for all:** The pandemic has strained food systems as never before; keeping them functioning efficiently and guaranteeing access to healthy diets for all is of critical importance, as is fixing the shortcomings made evident

¹ Rescheduled from 27-29 April 2020, Managua, Nicaragua.

during the crisis. Agrifood systems will make a significant contribution to the recovery, particularly by creating jobs and stimulating economic activity through efficient local markets and exports.

- **RI2 Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies:** In order to meet the immediate needs of rural inhabitants and improve their resilience in the long term, FAO aims to support Members in strengthening family farming and smallholder farmers by increasing their production and productivity, shortening food value chains, providing market access, expanding social protection systems, reducing the gender gap, improving social infrastructure, increasing participation of the most vulnerable groups and individuals as well as accountability towards their entitlements, and reforming rural institutions through a Hand-in-Hand approach.
- **RI3 Sustainable and climate resilient agriculture:** The effects of climate change coupled with the accelerated depletion of natural resources continue to increase amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Sustainable agrifood systems can be an engine for socioeconomic recovery, and the efficient use of natural resources, preservation of biodiversity and enhancement of eco-systems must remain at the centre of action, in order not to fall behind on the sustainable development agenda.

Recommendations for the Regional Conference

- Acknowledge the actions taken so far by FAO in the region to assist Members in their response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on agrifood systems, food security, nutrition as well as the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions.
- Endorse the adjusted emphases proposed to support Members in their efforts to recover from the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the pandemic, while continuing to pursue the agenda outlined in the regional priority documents submitted to the Regional Conference.

Please send any questions about this document to:

Regional Conference Secretariat
RLC-Conferencia@fao.org

I. Introduction

1. About six months after the COVID-19 pandemic began, the virus continues to spread in the region. The effects of the pandemic on the LAC region are significant and pose unprecedented challenges to its health and food systems and its already strained economies.
2. Specialized agencies forecast the deepest global recession since the Second World War. As of September 2020, the estimates for the regional economic contraction in 2020 range from 9.1 percent from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)² to 9.4 percent from the International Monetary Fund (IMF),³ the highest drop among developing regions.
3. The combined impacts of the global spread of COVID-19, prevention and control measures and global recession are disrupting the functioning of food systems and exposing their vulnerabilities. Given the heterogeneity of LAC countries, the impact on food systems will be felt differently across the region.
4. The spread of the virus and its impact have been exacerbated by inequalities along class, race/ethnicity, age and gender lines⁴. The impact on indigenous communities is of special concern as they are already a vulnerable group in the region due to poverty, lack in access to health services and specific immunity vulnerabilities⁵.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting heavily the Caribbean region and countries are projected to be faced with a long road to recovery. Caribbean countries are highly dependent on the travel and tourism sector, which is among the most affected, resulting in a significant reduction of household incomes and employment. An increase in hurricane activity in 2020 could produce further devastating impacts on some countries in the region. Additionally, high import dependence means that any disruption to the food supply chains can affect food prices and compromise food availability, increasing the risk of food insecurity.
6. Central American agriculture and food systems are 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. Any disruption in the food supply chain with the United States of America would have a direct impact on the subregion's food security. Additionally, there is a high dependence of households in Central America's Dry Corridor and parts of Mexico on remittances, and a reduction in these will have a major impact, increasing poverty and hunger.
7. The agriculture of the Southern Cone countries of South America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) is highly dependent on export markets, and any drop in demand will affect their economies. 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.
8. The current crisis comes at a time when food insecurity was already increasing in the region. The number of undernourished people in LAC rose in 2019, for the fifth year in a row, to 47.7 million. Estimates project that by 2030 the number of undernourished people may reach 66.9 million, putting the region off track to achieve SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Moderate or severe food insecurity increased from 22.9 percent of the region's population in 2014 to 31.7 percent in 2019, reaching a total of 205.3 million people⁶. Furthermore, in just one year, the number of people in countries experiencing

² <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/contraccion-la-actividad-economica-la-region-se-profundiza-causa-la-pandemia-caera-91>.

³ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>.

⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>.

⁵ <https://www.latinamerica.unep.org/content/rblac/en/home/blog/2020/impacto-y-situacion-de-la-poblacion-indigena-latinoamericana-ant.html>.

⁶ The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020) <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/CA9692EN.pdf>

acute food crisis (IPC Phase 3 or above⁷) has also risen from 4.2 million people in 2019 to an alarming 18.5 million in 2020.⁸ ECLAC has estimated that the number of people living below the poverty line in LAC could reach 230.9 million in 2020, an increase of 45.4 million. The population living in extreme poverty is also expected to increase by around 28.5 million people, reaching a total of 96.2 million, the highest level in two decades.⁹ For rural areas, this would mean around 30 million people living in extreme poverty.¹⁰

9. Recent estimates suggest that, because of the pandemic and associated decreases in GNI per capita and disruptions in food systems, there could be a 14.3 increase in the prevalence of moderate or severe wasting in children under five.

10. The pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of food systems, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in all the countries. LAC countries have responded relatively fast in order to keep the food systems running and avoid disruptions, but there is still a long way through the recovery and FAO needs to adjust its priorities in relation to what had been proposed before the pandemic, in line with countries' responses.

II. FAO's Response to COVID-19

11. In addition to the work done by FAO as part of its global response to the pandemic, FAO in Latin America and the Caribbean has carried out several initiatives:

A. The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme

12. FAO in the region has contributed to, and is part of, the Organization's global COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme. This programme provides a coherent approach to engaging with FAO resource partners, based on identified priorities and evidence-based solutions underpinned by the Organization's comparative advantage to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. The programme encompasses seven key responses and is designed to present to resource partners:

- a) A Global Humanitarian Response Plan: Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food-crisis contexts.
- b) Data for Decision-making: Ensuring quality data and analysis for effective policy support to food-systems and Zero Hunger.
- c) Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery.
- d) Trade and Food Safety Standards: Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond.
- e) Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities.
- f) Preventing the Next Zoonotic Pandemic: Strengthening and extending the One Health approach to avert animal-origin pandemics.
- g) Food Systems Transformation: Building back better during response and recovery.

⁷ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification has five phases for classifying food insecurity (1= None/minimal; 2= Stressed; 3= Crisis; 4= Emergency; 5= Famine). IPC Phase 3 and above are deemed to be those in need of urgent food, livelihood and nutrition assistance.

⁸ GRFC 2020: https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC_2020_ONLINE_200420.pdf.

⁹ https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45782/1/S2000471_es.pdf.

¹⁰ https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45726/1/S2000392_en.pdf.

B. Policy Dialogues

14. In order to address major disruptions to food supply chains, trade, availability of and accessibility to food, and to share best practices on policy responses and collaboration among countries, FAO facilitated a series of high-level policy dialogues with all governments in the region, built on a shared approach with other agencies.

- **Ministerial Declaration:** On 3 April 2020, the Ministers for and Secretaries of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Food and Rural Development of 26 LAC countries signed the Declaration: “COVID-19 and the risks to food supply chains”, facilitated by FAO, whereby they agreed to keep the public informed as to the measures they have taken and continue to take to ensure the supply of sufficient, safe and nutritious food for the 620 million consumers in the region.
- **Hemispheric Meetings of Ministers for and Secretaries of Agriculture:** Ministers for and Secretaries of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Food and Rural Development of 34 countries of the Americas met to coordinate actions to guarantee food security against the pandemic in April and July 2020. The initiative demonstrated by these meetings is unprecedented, as is the degree of collaboration between FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in support of the Ministers’ dialogue under the leadership of Members. Ministers stressed the importance of: (i) strengthening the production of agriculture, forestry, fishing and aquaculture products; (ii) 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; (iii) committing to improve transparency and predictability when establishing and adopting new national health measures and protocols; and (iv) 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. A Working Group of Ministers representing five subregions (North America, Central America, the Caribbean Community [CARICOM], Andes, and Southern Cone) was established, with FAO and IICA as Secretariat.
- **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 country and regional level.

C. Briefs for evidence-based policymaking

15. **Impact analysis report for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC):** FAO developed an impact analysis for the identification of successful policy instruments in relation to the sustainability of food systems and food security in the context of COVID-19 to CELAC countries. The report highlights that guaranteeing access to food, especially for those who have lost their source of income, is a main challenge in the short term. It also recommends that CELAC reactivates its Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Eradication of Hunger (SAN CELAC Plan), adapting it to the new COVID-19 context; and strengthen political agreements to boost food trade among CELAC countries.

16. **Regional COVID-19 Newsletter and Webinar Series:** FAO launched a weekly newsletter that provides decision-makers in governments, the private sector and civil society with useful information, tools, and resources to support the design and implementation of actions against the effects of the pandemic in LAC. The newsletter is prepared in collaboration with ECLAC. Likewise, a weekly webinar series engages government authorities, private sector and civil society in matters related to

Food Systems and COVID-19. The newsletter is distributed to 12 000 readers, and the webinars have reached over 75 000 participants as of the end of July 2020.

17. **ECLAC-FAO Report:** A joint ECLAC-FAO report was published, entitled “Preventing the COVID-19 crisis from becoming a food crisis: Urgent measures against hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean”. This report proposes ten policy measures to ensure that: (a) all households, and especially those living in extreme poverty and with severe food insecurity have access to nutritious food in adequate quantities; (b) all businesses and actors in the food system can perform their work without interruption; and (c) countries have enough food to guarantee supply at reasonable prices.

18. **Microanalyses:** short data analyses were published weekly on the effects of the pandemic in LAC. These analyses informed on issues including intraregional and international trade, rural poverty impacts, and food inflation, among others.

19. **DataLab:** an open-access tool that organizes and analyses daily information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and agriculture, value chains, food prices, food security and measures undertaken. Its ultimate aim is to provide countries with necessary information and data and strengthen their decision-making. An alert system based on twitter accounts in LAC was created to monitor disruptions in real time.

D. Support to countries’ responses

20. **Rapid assessments:** FAO supports governments in the region to carry out rapid assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods, which can guide decision-making and the generation of appropriate policies to safeguard food security and nutrition. The aim is for governments to have policy instruments to recover/adapt food systems from disruptions in supply, production, market and consumption chains with a focus on resilience to multiple risks, with emphasis on vulnerable groups, small producers and rural microenterprises. There are two types of rapid assessments: primary data collection (agricultural livelihoods impact assessment), and secondary data analysis (socio-economic food system impact assessment).

21. **High-level expert team:** An *ad hoc* COVID-19 task force comprised of former Ministers for Agriculture and former (retired) Senior Officers of FAO has been set up to improve FAO’s response capacity in support of 15 member countries: Belize, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and the six Small Island Developing States (SIDS) members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). The task force helps formulate tangible COVID-19 recovery proposals that can be submitted to financial institutions for possible investment support.

22. **Country-level examples:** FAO quickly reacted to countries’ COVID-19 response needs to guarantee the functioning of food systems and to avoid a food crisis. Examples of support provided to 25 countries are presented in Annex 1.

E. Interagency coordinated approach

23. In April 2020, FAO facilitated a meeting with different United Nations (UN) agencies in the region to coordinate actions and efforts to better assist the governments of LAC countries in their response to secure agrifood systems and maintain agriculture and food trade during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 13 international organizations agreed to promote a collaborative and coordinated approach: Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), CARICOM, ECLAC, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Regional International Organization for Plant and

Animal Health (OIRSA), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and FAO.

III. FAO's Regional Programme Emphasis to support the COVID-19 response and recovery. Building back better.

24. There are two objectives to FAO's response:

- a) Prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis¹¹, and
- b) Promote and support recovery with transformative strategies, policies, programmes and investments.

The programmatic emphases are presented in the following sections.

A. Transforming food systems for healthy diets for all

25. Keeping food systems functioning efficiently is of critical importance, as is fixing the shortcomings made evident during the crisis. Agriculture and food systems will make a significant contribution to the recovery, particularly by ensuring food availability and accessibility, creating jobs and stimulating economic activity through exports.

26. The affordability of healthy diets is especially relevant to fight the consequences of the pandemic in the context of the growing epidemic of overweight and obesity in the region. According to SOFI 2020¹², 26.5 percent of the 104 million people in LAC cannot afford a healthy diet due to its higher costs and COVID-19 will make this situation worse. This not only affects hunger (PoU/FIES), but also to higher levels of overweight and obesity, as people opt for cheaper, less nutritious foods.

27. COVID-19 is unique in that it is delivering a dual shock to both supply and demand. On the supply side, there are widely different views on how long the shocks will last, how they will affect the international and domestic markets, and what remedial actions could best soften the impact of shocks. On the demand side, there is a general agreement that agricultural demand and trade will slow down due to contraction in economic activity and rising unemployment.¹³ Evidence is also emerging that confinement measures (lockdowns and movement restrictions) could be changing dietary habits and exacerbating unhealthy behaviours¹⁴. Continuing to invest in transforming food systems to meet the dietary needs according to local consumption patterns of a growing population, while taking care of human health and the planet, and leaving no one behind represents not only an opportunity for agriculture, fisheries and forestry to move towards new forms of sustainable production, but is also vital to recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

28. In order to support this, FAO in the region will prioritize:

- Promoting food trade: for LAC in 2018 food exports represented 24 percent of total goods exported, reaching USD 283 214 million, which represents 5 percent of regional GDP and generates millions of jobs. Ministers have highlighted an urgent need for (a) better information and communication to avoid unilateral measures; (b) harmonized biosecurity standards and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS); and (c) greater attention to intraregional trade opportunities.

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/americas/noticias/ver/en/c/1287949/>.

¹² . The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020) <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/CA9692EN.pdf>

¹³ SOFI 2020 <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/CA9692EN.pdf>.

¹⁴ Covid-19 Confinement and Changes of Adolescent's Dietary Trends in Italy, Spain, Chile, Colombia and Brazil <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/6/1807>; Changes of Physical Activity and Ultra-Processed Food Consumption in Adolescents from Different Countries during Covid-19 Pandemic: An Observational Study <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/8/2289>.

- Promoting new employment opportunities by improving the infrastructure, safety and digitalization of food and wholesale markets to facilitate physical and economic access to healthy foods for consumers.
- Monitoring food security and nutrition with a focus both on hunger and the quality of diets (due to the lower purchasing power of households).
- Strengthening the capacity to enhance food safety and nutritional quality across food systems, rethinking and expanding food-safety infrastructure, regulations and technologies, including general public health and pandemic-inducing causes, and promoting nutrition-sensitive approaches along supply chains from production to consumption.
- The One Health approach: building alliances with animal and plant health, public health and rural development services to promote health and safety in food production, including supporting family farmers, women, youth and indigenous peoples, and facilitating their access to formal markets, while protecting people's health and safeguarding local agricultural heritage and preventing other foodborne diseases.

B. Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies

29. Due to a lack of infrastructure, services and social protection, rural areas are less prepared for tackling the socio-economic effects of the crisis. In a short period of time, the region risks losing the progress of two decades in the reduction of rural poverty and extreme rural poverty.¹⁵ FAO proposes to support the recovery in particular for the most vulnerable people by:

- Targeted territorial development programmes and investments in support of 15.1 million people living in 89 rural territories characterized by very high levels of poverty and food insecurity.
- Agricultural investments, integrating infrastructure and services to stimulate food production by 16 million small-scale family farmers and 2 million artisanal fishers. This includes programmes to ensure sufficient liquidity, access to technology, and access to markets. Fostering digitalization of small-scale producers is a major objective.
- One out of every four rural households living in extreme poverty in the region does not have access to non-contributory social protection policies. When the total rural population is considered, one out of every three rural households is not covered by social protection policies. FAO will work with governments to support shock responsive and adaptive social protection systems to meet the immediate needs of the rural population, encouraging the consolidation and expansion of current levels of coverage to prevent the rise of rural poverty and the integration of social protection into a broader set of development objectives, such as the resilience of livelihoods in rural areas.
- In LAC, 86.2 percent of rural workers work in low-productivity sectors, with higher levels of informality and vulnerability. During the first month of the pandemic, estimates suggest that informal workers lost an average of 81 per cent of their incomes in Latin America, and women are prominent as informal workers¹⁶. FAO will work with governments to reduce the informality of rural employment in the region through matching subsidized contributions to access to health and unemployment insurance and the implementation of decent employment standards and practices.

¹⁵ https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45726/1/S2000392_en.pdf.

¹⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142>.

C. Sustainable and climate resilient agriculture

30. The effects of climate change coupled with the depletion of natural resources continue to be on the rise amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Agriculture will be an engine for economic recovery, and the efficient use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystems must remain at the centre, in order not to fall behind on the sustainable development agenda. Recovery must not be at the expense of the environment.

31. A green recovery could tackle interrelated socioeconomic goals, including economic development and poverty reduction, job creation, decarbonisation, and improvements in public health. This also highlights the concern of “recovery rather than rescue” where investments in green industrialization for development could be the way for countries in Latin America to recover now, avoiding the need to be “rescued” later. A green recovery based on a sustainable and resilient agriculture would also position the region towards the Green New Deal proposals from developing countries, facilitating adaptation of trade agreements with sustainability standards. Continuing business as usual is going to increase climate change impacts and therefore, increase the vulnerability of those depending on natural resources for their livelihoods.

32. The One Health approach prevents and mitigates health threats at the animal-human-plant-environment interface:

- Diverse and healthy ecosystems can act as buffers and slow down the activation and spread of zoonotic diseases. This emphasizes the sustainable use of biodiversity, reducing the pressure on natural ecosystems.
- FAO is currently working on the creation of a regional One Health platform, for developing phyto and zoosanitary programmes in a holistic and coordinated manner, including the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

33. Promoting environmental and climate change technologies and nature-based solutions that contribute to job creation and economic recovery:

- Meeting the Paris Agreement’s objectives must remain central to COVID-19 recovery policies in order to deliver both economic and climate goals. Investing in sustainable agriculture, ecosystem regeneration, or accelerating clean energy investments in rural areas, stimulate economic recovery and are sources of new green jobs.¹⁷
- Nature-based adaptation measures can generate co-benefits in terms of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increasing ecosystem services and fostering sustainable development alternatives, as well as in job creation and economic recovery. Investing in nature restoration can bring quick results because the worker-training requirements are low, and most facets of the work meet social distancing norms¹⁸. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) support has proven to be not only effective for climate change action, but also for supporting job creation and livelihoods rehabilitation¹⁹.
- FAO’s experience with participatory approaches for forest and marine ecosystems and fisheries monitoring and management will inform policy decisions for linking the restoration efforts with socio-economic benefits.

¹⁷ Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment (2020) Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change? <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>.

¹⁸ Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment (2020) Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change? <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>.

¹⁹ Institute for Environment and Development (2015) REDD+ for profit or for good? Review of private sector and NGO experience in REDD+ projects. https://reddplusbusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/redd_for_profit_or_for_good.pdf

34. Investing in early action to mitigate the impact of threats and crises:
- This public health crisis has highlighted the critical need to increase the resilience of food systems and the livelihoods that rely on them, against multiple interconnected and mutually aggravating risks (including pandemics, climate change and extreme events, plant pests and animal diseases, and socio-economic crises). Advancing integrated multi-risk management measures is a foundation for efforts to build back better in agriculture and food systems. It includes taking action before a crisis escalates into an emergency.
35. Supporting countries to access environmental and climate financing:
- Countries in the region will face severe fiscal restrictions in the coming years, which might hinder their capacity to maintain the momentum of climate and environmental action for meeting environmental commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mobilizing green financing from public and private sources will be more necessary than ever. FAO in LAC will increase its green financing and investment efforts, working with multilateral and bilateral donors, with International Financing Institutions (IFI), and with private sector investors. FAO will also provide environmental and climate action data and analysis that will support the dialogue of Ministers for Agriculture with their counterparts in the Ministries of Finance, as well as in IFIs and in the private sector.

D. Innovation and digital agriculture

36. Innovation and digitalization are essential for an effective response to the COVID-19 crisis. Countries with better digital services are coping better with the responses and the recovery²⁰. Digitalization of food and agriculture has advanced at great speed during the crisis, and this momentum must be supported and sustained. The future of agri-food systems will depend, to a large extent, on how agricultural stakeholders take advantage of the digital transformation to improve inclusiveness, efficiency and environmental impacts.²¹

37. During the COVID-19 crisis, FAO LAC has developed a 2020-24 Framework for Action for Innovation and Digitalization with two main objectives: (i) identifying and developing substantive technical and institutional innovations to be incorporated in FAO's interventions in the region; and (ii) developing a shared vision on agricultural innovation with key partners, strengthening the Organization's capacity to successfully support Members.

E. Improving FAO's Capacities to Serve Members in LAC

38. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that FAO needs to be even more responsive to government priorities, while also maintaining its capacity to promote and support emerging opportunities. To achieve this, FAO will:

- Accelerate the Organization's shift from a prevalently single project-based approach to a programmatic approach that encompasses policy, investment, and normative work, as well as technical operational assistance. This will enhance efficiency, quality and impact. FAO LAC has made significant progress in 2019-20 and will accelerate this transition. At the centre of the programmatic approach will be the Regional Initiatives, a tested and effective instrument for prioritizing FAO's work, and a platform for partnerships that encourage programmatic collaboration across strategic programmes and technical areas of expertise.

²⁰ https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45360/4/OportDigitalizaCovid-19_es.pdf.

²¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9508en/CA9508EN.pdf>.

-
- Carry forward changes towards a more modular and agile structure in the region. This will result in greater efficiency, transparency, accountability and responsiveness to Members' needs and priorities.
 - Increase resource mobilization, with a stronger emphasis on promoting investment for COVID-19 recovery. FAO LAC is committed to meeting its target of USD 415 million mobilized in 2020-21, plus a pipeline of USD 600 million by the end of 2021. In coordination with the FAO Investment Centre, FAO LAC also aims to establish a solid and effective mechanism to support investment in food, agriculture and rural areas.
 - Strengthen governance. The ongoing crisis has shown the need to have member-driven, non-bureaucratic mechanisms for regular and agile communication and dialogue with ministers, focused on practical and concrete needs and agendas, complementing the formal Regional Conferences. These mechanisms should be open to the participation of other UN and non-UN agencies, in order to foster collaboration and to make use of the best capacities that each organization can offer.

Annex 1

Examples of FAO's support to Countries' Responses to COVID-19

FAO in South America

Argentina

The group of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, including FAO, in Argentina has developed a preliminary analysis of the socio-economic and environmental impact of COVID-19 in the country, recommending a multidimensional and coordinated response to combat the effects of the pandemic.

The analysis estimates the impact the COVID-19 crisis may have on human rights, the socio-economic situation and food security, and provides a design for coordinated responses to this complex situation. Recovery processes that emphasize sustainable development and the protection of human rights, particularly of vulnerable populations whose livelihoods have been most affected by the pandemic, will be key. In this scenario, the food system and its implications have been positioned as strategic to achieving this end.

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

FAO's assistance in the Plurinational State of Bolivia has ranged from emergency relief to recovery planning for the agricultural sector, with an emphasis on sustainable reconstruction. An analysis of agricultural production, food security and nutrition (FSN) was carried out with the Ministry of Rural Development and Land to support the formulation of the National Plan for the Rehabilitation of the Agricultural Sector, with a specific plan for indigenous peoples being developed with the Office of the Vice-President, in support of localized departmental plans.

Strategic programmatic and operational partnerships were established with various stakeholders, including Bolivia's Association of Ecological Producers Organizations (AOPEB), IFAD and IICA, and additional resources were sought from Canada, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), Italy, Sweden and the World Bank, which are catalysts for the use of resources from TCPs to support the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assistance is also provided to vulnerable populations and urban centres in the emergency provision of food, promoting family farming in mobile markets and home distribution.

Colombia

Three weeks after the announcement of the lockdown, FAO Colombia developed a tool for the collection of primary information from across the food system to help ascertain the food supply situation; this included inputs from producers, shopkeepers, retailers and transporters from 340 municipalities in 20 departments. The results rapidly demonstrated problems related to crop transportation, agricultural price increases and the closure of traditional markets (tourism, restaurants, hotels), particularly in remote regions. FAO consequently supported several municipal initiatives for social protection and short supply circuits, promoting new market opportunities and support to the most vulnerable populations. FAO also promoted communication strategies to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, through the radio reaching even remote rural areas of Colombia. FAO has also provided support to campaigns for agroecological diversification; strengthened its virtual education platforms, including through virtual meetings promoting the exchange of experiences of the country's ethnic groups, in relation to their management of COVID-19, based on their worldview and traditions; and FAO has supported vulnerable families for self-consumption production.

Ecuador

FAO Ecuador has prioritized its intervention in three pillars: (i) Evaluation of the Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods, Agricultural Production and Food Security – in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries, involving the agricultural, livestock and artisanal fisheries sectors, through at least 3 500 surveys targeting agricultural extension workers and households, nationwide and remotely. The evaluation aims at becoming a system for monitoring risk factors arising from the COVID-19 health crisis, generating information of high value for the identification of impact and the design of appropriate responses. The analyses coming from the evaluation will facilitate the strengthening of policy instruments adapted to an early recovery of the sector and to contribute to the mobilization of resources and promotion of technical and financial cooperation partnerships with other international donors; (ii) Implementation of impact mitigation measures and early response in access to rural services and economic inclusion of family farmers; including innovation, inclusion and resilience of supply chains, facilitating direct access of family farmers to markets; and assistance in strengthening the school feeding model in the context of COVID-19; and (iii) Contribution to response planning instruments, such as the UN Humanitarian Response Plan and the Socio-Economic Response Plan. At the sectoral level, a proposal has been drawn up for the 2020-2021 Reactivation Plan for agriculture, in the context of Hand-in-Hand Ecuador.

Paraguay

Paraguay has launched its COVID-19 Recovery Plan for an investment of USD 2 513 million. This includes a market access programme for small farmers and indigenous communities and the capitalization of the Livestock Fund and the Agricultural Habilitation Credit. To articulate these initiatives to the benefit of 100 000 family farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) designed a National Economic and Social Development Program for Family Agriculture (2020-2025). FAO provided technical cooperation in the design, analysis and financial estimates for investment. FAO has also collaborated with MAG in the design and implementation of post-COVID-19 development and investment plans in 15 indigenous communities; a socio-economic evaluation of the impact of COVID-19; the establishment of sanitary protocols for food markets; and the strengthening of extension workers for horticultural production and the regulation of imports.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

FAO is supporting agricultural production during the main growing season to ensure food availability and access from September 2020, through the emergency distribution of inputs (short-cycle seeds, biofertilizers, cereals and pulses) to almost 2 000 farmers. It also provides technical support to about 500 households in the Lara and Portuguesa region, whose livelihoods depend mainly on livestock, and is distributing emergency animal feed. FAO is working with producers to supply legumes, vegetables and cereals to food baskets for 6 500 families with children in the School Feeding Programme (PAE) in the regions of Miranda, Falcón, Lara and Portuguesa. FAO contributed to the development of the Socio-Economic Response Plan at the UN Country Team (UNCT). Considering the evolution of COVID-19, the FAO response will be adapted to support the provision of unconditional cash transfers and vouchers/fresh food baskets (locally produced) to migrants in quarantine centres.

FAO in Mesoamerica

Dominican Republic

FAO in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Dominican Agribusiness Board (JAD), IDB, and the Propagas Foundation, developed the “Protect Your Farming Family” project to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in rural areas. This initiative was developed within the Hunger-Free Mesoamerica Project (“*Mesoamérica sin Hambre*”), financed by the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID). It consists of the purchase and delivery of hygiene and protection materials against COVID-19 to rural families, as well as an education and awareness campaign. Among the inputs, a video was prepared and is being disseminated for the prevention of the disease and the promotion of good practices for productive farms. This initiative directly benefits a total of 3 500 women and men in the provinces of Duarte, Espaillat, La Romana, La Vega, Monseñor Nouel, Puerto Plata, San Cristóbal, Sánchez Ramírez, Santiago and Monte Plata. It is expected that the digital awareness campaign will reach at least 50 percent of all producers in the country.

El Salvador

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a fall in economic activity, with losses in both formal and informal employment; this has had a strong impact on the food supply chain and the livelihoods of urban and rural families, accentuating conditions of poverty and food insecurity. FAO has consequently worked to establish synergies in the management of financial resources for agriculture and FSN with the Presidency, different Ministries, local governments, civil society, UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes and others. Field actions in food production have been reoriented towards family and collective plots and urban gardens, improving access and diversifying family diets. Work with municipal governments has been strengthened through their Agriculture and Food Security Units, the National Centre for Agricultural and Forestry Technology (CENTA), civil society and the active participation of community leaders in the promotion of production processes that improve FSN.

Haiti

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report released in October 2019, 40 percent of the Haitian population (4.10 million people), need urgent food assistance. With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the preventive measures taken by the Government of Haiti, FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR) to revive domestic farming activities. During May 2020, while raising awareness among heads of households on preventing the spread of COVID-19, FAO also distributed 130 tonnes of cereals and legume seeds, as well as 8 million sweet potato and cassava cuttings to 50 000 people experiencing severe and chronic food insecurity. These agricultural inputs will facilitate the sowing of 3 500 hectares and the production of 8 700 tonnes of food products to improve food and nutrition security for vulnerable households.

Honduras

FAO has adapted most of its projects currently underway, to include the COVID-19 response. Principal actions include the provision of technical cooperation to support implementation of the Assurance of Food Sovereignty and Security Programme (PASSA). This aims to strengthen the Public System for Agricultural Innovation and Extension for small-scale agriculture, facilitating coordination between various suppliers, both public and private, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). FAO has also proposed the formulation of a Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF), for the Integrated Rural Development and Productivity Programme, readjusted to the COVID-19 emergency response.

Mexico

Led by FAO, in conjunction with the World Bank, IICA and IFAD, technical assistance is being provided to the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER) to define a strategy for ensuring food production and supply in the short term and to contribute to strengthening the agricultural and rural sector. This work includes: strengthening systems for information, monitoring and analysis; a rapid diagnosis for priority agricultural chains; strengthening the agricultural sector as an instrument of public policy; strengthening the Mexican Food Security (SEGALMEX) strategy and food bank in the context of COVID-19, ensuring financial inclusion of small and medium-sized producers; and an evaluation of public investment scenarios in agriculture and agroindustry, towards a post-pandemic economic recovery with the reduction of rural poverty.

A prospective analysis will be made of productive public investment scenarios in Mexican agriculture and agroindustry, taking into account existing and future fiscal restrictions; the effects on national and sectoral economic growth, as well as on employment, consumption, income and poverty, mainly at the rural level. This analysis will also explore financing options (reallocation of public spending, tax collection, domestic debt, and foreign debt), to promote productive public investment in the agri-food sector.

Panama

The World Bank made a USD 500 million loan to the national government to support the implementation of various programmes to alleviate the socio-economic crisis due to COVID-19. Under the terms of the loan, FAO prepared a concept note for the Bank and the Government on the use of some of these resources for regulation and rapid implementation of the Family Farming Registry, under the new Family Farming Law (Law 127, approved in November 2019 and elaborated with FAO technical assistance). The registration of 100 000 family farmers is planned for the next nine months to facilitate implementation of differentiated policies and programmes to ensure the domestic food supply. It is agreed between the Bank and the Government that this registration will allow for defining “routes” for additional contributions of various policies and programmes to reduce social inequality in rural Panama.

FAO in the Caribbean

FAO has been working in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, OECS Member States and key stakeholders on assessing the threat and impact of COVID-19 to food security and nutrition, in order to provide evidence-based advice to Members and to facilitate targeted support and assistance in COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plans.

Antigua and Barbuda

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has recognized the devastating socio-economic impact on livelihoods and employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Antigua Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs is planning to refocus its efforts to ensure food sovereignty and food security by enhancing agricultural production and supply to local and export markets. FAO’s support includes strengthening the capacity of vulnerable communities to respond to the effects of natural disasters including the impact of climate change. In addition, focus is being placed on improving production and productivity of prioritized agri-food systems through resilience building and the introduction of innovative climate smart technologies along the value chain, such as water harvesting, renewable energy, protected structures and hydroponic cultivation systems.

Bahamas

Many family farmers in the Bahamas do not have adequate access to technology and knowledge to develop economic enterprises for national and regional food markets while supporting sustainable livelihoods. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, FAO is providing technical assistance supporting the development of inclusive, sustainable and resilient food systems in response to COVID-19. Focus is placed on vulnerable groups such as youth and women farmers and fishers of Grand Bahamas and Abaco Islands, particularly affected by low income and lack of employment opportunities. Interventions linked with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative will address critical gaps in technologies, knowledge, entrepreneurial and organizational skills and financial services relevant for the conception, development and implementation of sustainable and climate smart practices and models.

Barbados

Unemployment rates in Barbados are projected to increase to 40 percent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, facing above-normal forecasted activity for the 2020 hurricane season, Caribbean countries must rapidly implement the necessary buffers and mechanisms to reduce the multidimensional impact of COVID-19. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has developed the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for Preserving National Food and Nutrition Security to ensure that Barbados has access to adequate quantities of fresh nutritious foods at a reasonable price during the crisis, given that the country imports an estimated 80 percent of its food requirements. FAO is supporting interventions on adapting, optimizing and improving protective cultivation systems to enhance local agricultural production and productivity to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Belize

Vulnerable groups such as youth and indigenous women living in rural areas of Belize are disproportionately affected by unemployment. The broader economic crisis emerging due to the COVID-19 outbreak further threatens their already fragile situation. In collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and Immigration, FAO is providing technical assistance for inclusive, sustainable and resilient food systems in rural and peri-urban areas of Cayo District, in response to COVID-19. Specifically, FAO will support activities under the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, to implement an integrated mechanism using business incubator services and technological tools and approaches to match business opportunities presented in the agri-food system with special attention to income-generating and employment opportunities for the most vulnerable groups.

Dominica

With 90 percent of Dominica's crops damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Maria in 2017, the agricultural sector's resilience became a cross-sectoral national priority. In support of the Government of Dominica's 'Coronavirus Response Plan – Food Production and Availability', the Ministry of Blue and Green Economy, Agriculture and National Food Security conceived a plan of actions to prepare, mitigate and respond to the anticipated changes in the food supply chain. Collaborating with local authorities and key stakeholders, FAO focuses on supporting vulnerable communities impacted by Hurricane Maria, by strengthening their ability to respond to potential disasters such as COVID-19 and climate change impacts. Resiliency building of agricultural and fisheries-related livelihoods will be enhanced through implementation of climate smart technologies in prioritized agrifood systems.

Grenada

Grenada has the highest poverty rate in the Eastern Caribbean, where rates are likely to increase further with the COVID-19 pandemic, given that the level of unemployment is projected to increase to 48 percent with COVID-19 impacts. Additionally, facing above-normal forecasted activity for the 2020 hurricane season, Caribbean countries must rapidly implement the necessary buffers and mechanisms to reduce the multidimensional impact of COVID-19. Grenada's COVID-19 National Food Security Mitigation and Response Plan will focus on three main areas: (1) backyard gardening, (2) farm labour support, and (3) protective agriculture technology. In collaboration with local authorities, FAO provides relief for smallholder farmers and fishers for lost revenue due to inability to export, and is improving the capacity of producers to meet increased local demand for their products.

Guyana

In Guyana, those most impacted by the COVID-19 socio-economic fallout includes dependents of the informal sector, construction workers, small businesses and vulnerable groups such as women, youth and indigenous peoples. In collaboration with the UNCT, FAO supported a review of the draft national COVID-19 socio-economic recovery plan prepared by the Government of Guyana, and led the inclusion of the food systems initiatives in the UN socio-economic response plan for Guyana, identifying key actions to support agricultural production. These include public purchasing initiatives to stimulate production and introduce fresh produce to packages distributed to vulnerable households. With FAO's Rapid Risk Analysis Tools, the Ministry of Agriculture strengthened its ability to systematically identify, prioritize and track food security and nutrition risks and identify gaps requiring attention.

Jamaica

Through the UN Secretary General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, UN Jamaica is working on specific interventions to reduce the social impact and promote the economic response to COVID-19. Specifically, FAO and UNICEF Jamaica are collaborating on Safeguarding and Protecting the Most Vulnerable: Enhancing Jamaica's Shock Responsive Social Protection Mechanisms in Support of Vulnerable Groups including Children. FAO will focus on supporting local agricultural supply chains, placing emphasis on female farmers, heads of households, through purchase of their produce to include in social relief food care packages distributed to vulnerable families. Proposed interventions will strengthen livelihoods of smallholder farmers, reduce unemployment, contribute to food security and nutrition, diversify supply chains and market access, and stimulate economic activities to restart rural economies.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis has announced a multi-million COVID-19 stimulus package, which includes East Caribbean Dollars (XCD) 10 million to boost agricultural production and ensure food security. The water-scarce country has also announced a waiver of payments for the consumption of water by farmers for a six-month period, while the country attempts to enhance agricultural production. In collaboration with the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, FAO is supporting interventions on optimizing and building capacity in protective cultivation and aquaculture systems to enhance local agricultural production and the adoption of innovative climate smart technologies. FAO has also supported the implementation of an aquaponics demonstration farm and will be training school teachers in the use of mobile aquaponics teaching units.

Saint Lucia

The Government of Saint Lucia has announced its Social Stabilization Programme in response to COVID-19 impact. With the tourism industry on hold and businesses on lockdown due to COVID-19, unemployment in Saint Lucia is projected to increase to 44 percent. Measures under the economic stimulus seek to provide direct support to farmers and fishers increasing productivity and inputs to supply local and regional markets. In support of the country's agriculture response to COVID-19, FAO is providing support to increase the capacity of vulnerable groups and communities to plan mitigation measures and respond effectively to natural disasters, including the impact of climate change. Interventions will focus on improving production and productivity of prioritized agri-food systems through resilience building and the introduction of innovative climate smart technologies.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been at the forefront of COVID-19 response efforts, implementing a Coronavirus Food Security and Impact Mitigation Plan, as a model plan for OECS Member States. FAO is supporting the government's efforts in implementing the COVID-19 mitigation plan. Specifically, support will be provided to enhance marketing strategies to ensure market access and improve the development of sustainable livelihoods for family farmers and agroprocessors. FAO will support capacity building efforts for collection and analysis of agricultural marketing information for enhanced sector planning and an improved national market information system. FAO is also supporting the 'Buy Local Campaign and Virtual Market Place 2020' launch, linking farmers with buyers facilitating access to fresh produce and markets and promoting consumption of locally grown food.

Suriname

Intensifying local agricultural production of key commodities, particularly vegetables, to meet consumer demand and reduce food supply chain disruption caused by COVID-19, is a priority for Suriname. FAO supports efforts to enhance food security, by improving local food supply access. Specifically, planned interventions will stimulate and support local production, by providing assistance to smallholder farmers through the use of resilient technologies and approaches to selected crops along the value chain, including improved access to hydroponic greenhouse technology. Farmers' strengthened capacity to use climate smart technologies will improve their resilience to external shocks and increase food production. In addition, the Suriname Agriculture Market Access Project provides support to strengthen certification mechanisms facilitating exports of agricultural commodities and developing digital animations and videos promoting food safety awareness.

Trinidad and Tobago

In collaboration with the Prime Ministerial Committee on Agriculture COVID-19 response and recovery plans, FAO supports interventions strengthening the food supply chain from producers to markets and consumers. Specifically, FAO is joining forces with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and local authorities to address immediate needs to develop and implement a social safety net ensuring food security for vulnerable groups. This joint initiative includes conducting a socio-economic assessment of COVID-19 impacts on food systems, food supply logistics and trade, contributing to the process of developing strategic response plans for financing under the United Nations Social Economic and Social Recovery Initiatives. A study will also be conducted determining pathways to engage private sector investment in food systems value chains to reduce the domestic food import bill and strengthen food security initiatives.