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FOOD CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

In Myanmar, the fact that many women working in the garment sector have lost their jobs due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic has reflected on food security, because women workers are often the breadwinners in the country: as evidence of this, the percentage of mothers that suffer from malnutrition has increased from 30% to 53% last month. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, the National Pig Association has warned the government that the Environment Bill (whose objective is to reduce the country's contribution to deforestation, especially in South America) could have a negative effect on the UK's pig sector, given that soybeans (which are normally sourced from Latin America) are the main raw material used to produce feed.

Pandemic-related disruptions in Myanmar cause increase in food insecurity

The supply chain disruptions and panic buying (both prompted by the coronavirus pandemic) are still driving up food prices in Myanmar, where thousands of people have lost their jobs: as a consequence, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute, food insecurity has risen in the Yangon Region. For example, since female workers are often the primary breadwinners in the country and there have been many layoffs in the garment sector, the proportion of mothers with inadequate diets has increased from 30% in July, to 53% in October.

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UK pig sector raises soya concerns after new deforestation laws

The Environment Bill made it illegal for UK businesses to source key commodities from producers that do not comply with local laws protecting forests, in line with the country's efforts to stop contributing to deforestation. However, according to the National Pig Association, forcing this change through legislation could be particularly disruptive for the UK's pig sector, where soybeans (mainly sourced from South America) are widely used for feed.

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IMPACT ON COMMODITIES AND FOOD PRICES

The increasing prices of beef and rice in Brazil (driven by the reduction in the domestic supply of such commodities) have recently reflected on the country's annual inflation rate, which has risen to 4.22% through mid-November. In the United States, on the other hand, the prices of turkey have been steadily increasing ever since the beginning of 2020, as producers have reduced the production output with the objective of stabilizing prices, and as the coronavirus pandemic has determined generalized disruptions to the country's poultry sector. Finally, wheat and sugar prices seem to be on a downward trend in Pakistan, while the prices of tomatoes have slightly increased due to seasonal factors.

Brazil's annual inflation rate increases in November, driven by rising food prices

In November, Brazil's annual inflation rate has accelerated due to the increase in beef and rice prices: food prices have been surging over the recent months due to the fact that a strong demand from abroad and a weaker real have encouraged farmers to export more of their produce, thus reducing the domestic supply, and rice and beef have been the most affected by the price increase in the last two months. However, according to the country's central bank, such rise in food prices is only temporary.

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Turkey prices have increased in the US since early 2020

Prices for frozen turkey in the United States have increased by 30% since the start of the year. The first reason is that, at the beginning of 2020, the prices were too low, which brought producers to reduce the production output. The second one is that the coronavirus pandemic has determined supply chain issues that affected the whole poultry sector in the US, including the production of turkey.

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Provincial governments in Pakistan urged to ensure the availability of essential commodities

Pakistan's National Price Monitoring Committee has recently reviewed the price trends for several essential commodities at the beginning of the current week, and urged the provincial governments to ensure the availability of kitchen items at affordable prices. More in particular, the Committee found that there is a decline in the prices of wheat flour, sugar and onions, while the prices of tomatoes, potatoes and chicken have slightly increased.

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COUNTRIES' RESPONSE

In Kenya, a new Coffee Bill proposed by the Cabinet Secretary of the country's Ministry of Agriculture would streamline coffee sale and payment processes for farmers, who would be paid directly right after they sell their products, without the mediation of the marketing agents. In Nigeria, on the other hand, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture has recently launched an agribusiness training programme whose objective is to provide 40,000 young Nigerians with marketing skills and market linkages. Finally, the Islamic Organization for Food Security has developed a set of projects that aim at improving food security in the Muslim world and promoting the export of halal products.

Kenyan Agriculture Cabinet Secretary proposes bill that would support coffee farmers

The Coffee Bill was fronted by Kenya's Agriculture Cabinet Secretary and aims at reviving the country's coffee sector. More in particular, the objective of the proposed law is to improve the coffee farmers' incomes through the streamlining of production, processing, sale and payment through the establishment of a direct settlement scheme, which will provide for a direct payment to the farmers' accounts right after the sale of their produce, thus reducing the mediation of marketing agents.

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IITA targets 40,000 young Nigerians for a training program focused on agribusiness

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has recently launched a project training program that aims at providing 40,000 young Nigerians with training on agribusiness development and modern farming: through this project, they will be exposed to agriculture, product marketing skills, market linkages and career orientation. The project also seeks to apply a gender-based approach to address some of the challenges faced by young women in the agribusiness sector.

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IOFS develops set of programs that target food security and the promotion of halal products

The Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) has developed a set of programs and projects to ensure sustainable food security in the long term for the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. One of these is a program for food safety and halal food development that aims at preventing or reducing food risks, providing expertise on food chain production, organization and storage, and promoting halal food standards and the export of halal products.

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REGIONAL FOCUS

In Europe, the UK's and the EU's Brexit negotiation teams are currently trying to avoid a reciprocal ban on meat products between Ireland and the United Kingdom: in fact, since Northern Ireland will remain within the EU's Single Market for products after the Brexit transition period ends, it will continue operating EU food safety rules, meaning that meat products such as sausages and mince will not be exported from Great Britain to Northern Ireland anymore. In East Africa, on the other hand, Kenya keeps exporting livestock to Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania (and embryos to South Africa), but the country's meat production currently stands at 300,000 tons against a demand of 648,252 tons annually.

EUROPE – Last-minute Brexit talks are being conducted to prevent UK-Ireland meat product ban

The European Union's and the United Kingdom's officials are currently conducting last-minute talks to avoid a potential reciprocal ban on a wide range of food products. In fact, sausages, mince and prepared meals are prohibited from entering Northern Ireland (which will remain within the EU Single Market for products after the end of the Brexit transition period) from Great Britain; for this reason, the UK has indicated that it will, in turn, apply reciprocal restrictions on such food products coming from Ireland.

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AFRICA – Kenya exports beef breeding stock despite its low meat production output

Despite the fact that Kenya's meat demand outnumbers the national production capacity (forcing the country to heavily rely on imports), it still exports beef breeding stock to Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa. The director of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization attributes the low production to low budgetary allocation, high disease prevalence and recurrent droughts, especially in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country.

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