

## CGIAR Contribution to the ‘options paper’ for the informal WG meeting on 15 June.

I. A key guidance document for the CFS is the **UN SG’s policy brief ‘the impact of COVID19 on FSN (June 2020)**. This notes in the executive summary:

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a health and human crisis threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world. Hundreds of millions of people were already suffering from hunger and malnutrition before the virus hit and, unless immediate action is taken, we could see a global food emergency. In the longer term, the combined effects of COVID-19 itself, as well as corresponding mitigation measures and the emerging global recession could, without large-scale coordinated action, disrupt the functioning of food systems. Such disruption can result in consequences for health and nutrition of a severity and scale unseen for more than half a century.”

Focusing on food systems the policy brief observes:

“The COVID-19 pandemic also raises the alarm on the urgent need to transform the world’s food systems. Globally, food systems remain a driver of climate change and the planet’s unfolding environmental crisis. Food systems contribute up to nearly a third of all greenhouse gas emissions and have contributed to substantial biodiversity loss. There is an urgent need to rethink rapidly how we produce, process, market, consume our food and dispose of waste. This crisis can serve as a turning point to rebalance and transform our food systems, making them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

Investments in COVID-19 response and recovery needs to be leveraged to deliver on that longer-term goal of a more inclusive and sustainable world, including by:

- > **TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS** so they work better with nature and for the climate.
- > **LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE, GREEN, AND RESILIENT RECOVERY** by ensuring COVID-19 dedicated resources are used in a “build to transform” approach and are evidence-based.
- > **USING THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL HOSTED FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT IN 2021**, and the preparatory process, for inclusive dialogues and mobilizing multi-stakeholder action necessary to end hunger, and improve the health and well-being of people and planet.”

These statements chime with the CFS Chair’s summary of our 19 March COVID meeting: ‘*Never before has it been so important for all of us to focus our collective energy and efforts on promoting resilient, sustainable food systems. In addition to saving lives and meeting immediate needs through emergency responses, we need to start planning for longer-term solutions to support recovery, strengthen preparedness, build resilience, and promote sustainable socio-economic development.*’

## II. Responding to COVID-19: CGIAR’s contribution to global response, recovery and resilience .

The CGIAR has re-examined its programmes in the context of COVID; an outline follows.

### II.1 The role of innovation and research: Food Systems under threat.

The COVID-19 pandemic – itself the result of unsustainable food, land and water systems – is exposing weaknesses in food systems, societies and economies around the world. The health risks of the pandemic, combined with the social and economic impacts of measures to stop the spread of the disease — such as social isolation directives, travel bans and border closures — are posing threats to food, nutrition and water security, as well as continued progress on global goals to end poverty and hunger, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Without substantial emergency relief, 140 million people could fall into extreme poverty, potentially increasing hunger and malnutrition for millions. Women, youth, migrant workers and poor urban populations are among those most significantly impacted.

The global response to the pandemic must be swift and science-based, harnessing new and existing knowledge. Solutions need to be coordinated across sectors to provide immediate **response** and assistance for those most in need, ongoing and inclusive support in **recovery** and – perhaps most importantly – future **resilience** to all shocks – including climate extremes. Only highly collaborative work is likely to ensure comprehensive, effective and efficient responses.

Various CGIAR funders and expert sources have urgently called for knowledge and evidence to inform coordinated asks and responses, both in the short-term crisis phase and as we move toward longer-term resilience and preparedness. These funders include the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and the United States Agency for International Development, and expert sources include the European Centre for Development Policy Management, Food and Land Use Coalition, Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems and Nutrition, Overseas Development Institute and World Farmers' Organization. They have called for knowledge and evidence to inform coordinated asks and responses, ensuring that expertise is leveraged from all corners and efforts are not duplicated. While short-term crisis (and then recovery) responses are essential, it will also be vital to consider countries' longer-term resilience and preparedness as we continue to work toward meeting the United Nations 17 SDGs.

The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented opportunity for humanity to 'build back better' – particularly in the food systems at the root of the pandemic. The crisis has demonstrated how quickly society can fail – but also that collective positive change in human behaviour is possible at scale and speed. CGIAR will join its network of partners to co-lead global debate and action on what 'building back better' looks like for food, water and land systems.

CGIAR, in coordination with national and local partners, has responded by actively sharing its existing and emerging knowledge and experience to address the challenges posed by COVID-19. At the global level, CGIAR is working together with UN agencies and other development partners.

## **II.2 Stepping up CGIAR's global contribution**

Here we outline the research challenges in this work to identify roles that CGIAR can and should play in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Around two-thirds of the current CGIAR research portfolio has immediate relevance to the COVID-19 response, and all CGIAR research is relevant to global efforts to build back better. The work of most immediate relevance encompasses four research pillars: (1) Food systems; (2) One Health (the human, animal and environmental health interface); (3) Inclusive public programs for food security and nutrition; and (4) Policies and investments for crisis response, economic recovery and improved future resilience.

By immediately pivoting the current CGIAR program of work, CGIAR can leverage its sets of tools and evidence to help countries cope with the effects of the pandemic. For example, CGIAR is deploying economic models to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on poverty and food security, livestock data analytics to support efforts to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, assessments of the risks and benefits of wet markets and monitoring of the effectiveness of nutrition programs during the pandemic.

CGIAR aims to establish a "CGIAR COVID-19 Hub" for the coordination, across CGIAR and key partners, of major streams of relevant research, engagement and communications (see II.3). The Hub will be run in partnership with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

The CGIAR response is configured in terms of short-term response, medium-term recovery and long-term resilience. In the short term (up to 12 months), CGIAR research will deliver research across the four pillars to support crisis response, providing evidence and tools for immediate decision-making and action to support food availability and access, One Health interventions and public programs, policies and investments at scale. High-frequency, on-the-ground monitoring data and scientific evidence will help policy makers and implementers assess the underlying preparedness and resilience of societies to provide adequate and diverse food for, and to protect, different segments of their communities.

For the medium term (up to 18 months), innovations will target crisis recovery, contributing to a better understanding of the impacts and trade-offs of the crisis response. Research evidence is critical to determining and prioritizing effective, gender-sensitive and socially inclusive action to ensure food and nutrition security. Country "deep dives" with COVID-19 impact modelling and analyses will assist governments with reassessing policy priorities under COVID-19. One Health risk-based approaches to agriculture-environmental management and emerging zoonoses, as well as anti-microbial resistance, will be essential.

For the long term (up to 24 months and beyond), CGIAR will widen its focus to build greater resilience into food, land and water systems. CGIAR science will generate evidence and tools to prevent and respond both to emerging disease threats and to comparable food system shocks. The aim to 'build back better' – not return to business as usual following the COVID-19 crisis – is a priority for a united CGIAR in its efforts to transform food systems to meet global goals on food security, sustainable development and climate change.

**II.3 “CGIAR COVID-19 Hub” A Mechanism for coordinating CGIAR’s research response to COVID-19.**  
*Key aims :*

- The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub will provide high-level coordination and a ‘one-stop shop’ for CGIAR funders and major partners seeking to engage with CGIAR on COVID-19 research and responses.
- To provide swift support to global and country efforts during crisis response and recovery, the CGIAR COVID-19 Hub will invest its efforts in the highest priority areas where research results and enhanced coordination are most critical; these areas include surveillance and modelling.
- The CGIAR COVID-Hub will promote a system-wide strategic research response, drawing from expertise across the system for a multidisciplinary response.

A set of strategic opportunities stand out for CGIAR to scale up research with the greatest relevance for COVID- 19. The first is enhanced surveillance and assessment of food availability and access in key markets and by different population groups. This work will provide a reliable and detailed picture of the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on poor people and the best ways to address these. Other critical areas for near-term attention are management of zoonotic disease risks and scenario analyses on epidemiology, poverty and food security to support national and global policy. These research areas correspond to CGIAR responses to COVID-19 in the short and medium terms.

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