



Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities

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The issue

About 41 percent of the Near East and North Africa region (about 403 million people) live in rural areas, which host the majority of the region's poor and food insecure. The region is the most land and water scarce in the world, with 0.3 ha of agricultural land per capita and per capita water availability at 10 percent of the global average. On top of structural fragility exhibited by water and land scarcities, the region is experiencing many complex and intersecting shocks, including conflict; transboundary plant pests; transboundary animal diseases; climate shocks and stresses (such as drought, floods and sand and dust storms); and economic crises. These shocks and hazards against a backdrop of decades of conflict remain contributing factors to the region's food and nutrition security.

In 2019, nearly 13 percent of the region's population (around 55 million people) suffered from hunger,¹ mostly driven by conflicts. Food insecurity accounts for about 36 percent and 25 percent, respectively, of the refugees and people internally displaced by conflict and violence globally.² Malnutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases are significant concerns, with nearly half of the countries in the region presenting high or very high prevalence of stunting in children under five years of age.³

The COVID-19 outbreak comes on the heels of other serious shocks and stresses that have strained the resilience of the population and further exacerbates multiple risks, including food insecurity and malnutrition. Agriculture and food sectors are suffering across the region despite being exempted by most countries from the lockdown. Smallholders are the most affected in many ways, including disruptions in labor supply along the entire food value chain, shortage and high prices of agriculture inputs, disruptions to the food supply chain and hampered consumption of healthy diets, and compounded impacts from multiple shocks and crisis.

The action

FAO supports countries to plan and implement inclusive COVID-19 recovery programmes that enhance the resilience of smallholders, with particular focus on the most vulnerable groups, including the victims of multiple shocks, women, youth and returning migrants and their families. The programme contributes to a shift towards COVID-19 sensitive, resilient and sustainable food systems that ensure healthy diets by applying measures that emphasize transformative green (managing natural resources wisely), clean (low carbon), resilient (reducing multiple risks), inclusive (leaving no one behind), sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Budget

USD 125 million

Time frame

2021–2025



Related FAO Policy Briefs

- ▶ [COVID-19 and smallholder producers' access to markets](#)
- ▶ [Sustainable crop production and COVID-19](#)

¹ FAO. 2019. *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa*. Rome.

² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. 2020. *Internal Displacement Global Report*. Geneva.

³ FAO. 2019. *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa*. Rome.



The programme has three interrelated components: (1) safeguarding the most vulnerable in rural and urban settings, (2) promoting transformative economic recovery and (3) building capacities and institutions for resilience against multiple hazards.

- 1 Safeguarding the most vulnerable in rural and urban settings by supporting shock-responsive social protection and credit schemes, and promoting forecast-based crop and livestock insurance against multiple shocks and stresses.
- 2 Promoting transformative economic recovery through promotion of inclusive nature-based solutions, and provision of inputs and technical support to enhance COVID-19 sensitive, resilient and sustainable food production, processing, storage and marketing along the food value chains.
- 3 Building institutions and resilience capacities by strengthening multi-risks monitoring and early warning systems for agriculture and food systems, supporting inclusive local and gender-sensitive capacity building on measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission along the food value chain and building institutional capacities for anticipatory action and management of systemic multiple hazard risks.

Expected results

- 1 Vulnerable populations, including displaced people host communities and returnees, dependent on agriculture and food-based livelihoods recover from the effects of COVID-19 and are more resilient to future impacts of multiple hazards.
- 2 Smallholders have improved access to technical and financial resources, markets and livelihood diversification, rural employment opportunities, and healthy diets.
- 3 Smallholders and communities adopt climate-smart, resilient and sustainable farming systems and practices.
- 4 Institutional capacities are improved for holistic and effective agriculture and food system risk reduction and management (including risk governance; monitoring, early warning and anticipatory action; preventions; preparedness and response).

Programme links

The programme is aligned with national policies and strategies, particularly COVID-19 recovery plans, green recovery plans and stimulus packages. The programme is in line with Country Programming Frameworks of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in focus countries and its COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programmes at global and regional levels and reinforces other pillars of these programmes. The programme also contributes to the Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa. It connects with FAO's components of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

Partnerships

The programme will work with ministries of agriculture (including livestock and fisheries), forestry and natural resources and environment; Disaster Risk Management and climate change agencies; ministries of social welfare and development; ministry of labor; regional intergovernmental bodies (e.g. League of Arab States); United Nations agencies; international financial institutions; development partners; farmers and producers organizations; non-governmental organizations; local authorities, community-based organizations and private sector.

Country focus

Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. At regional level the focus will be on transboundary issues, knowledge management, policy and advocacy.

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