



FAO requires
USD 17.9 million



to assist
513 000 people



18.8 million people
severely food insecure*



70 533 farmers and fisher folk
have been affected by the recent
Typhoon Vongfong



1.2% drop in agri-fishery
outputs in the first quarter of 2020,
amid losses in crops and fisheries
(Philippine Statistics Authority)

*Source: State of Food Security and
Nutrition in the World 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- The country's agriculture sector has been affected by pests and diseases such as African swine fever (ASF), avian influenza, and fall armyworm (FAW), as well as by natural disasters, the most recent being Typhoon Vongfong which hit the Philippines in mid-May at the height of the COVID-19 crisis. The Typhoon affected agricultural production, especially high-value crops, as well as rice, corn, assorted vegetables, livestock and fisheries including fish stock, facilities and equipment.
- Preliminary results of a rapid assessment conducted jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) indicate that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restriction measures have contributed to aggravating existing challenges in the Philippines' agri-food system – both short-term stresses (such as ASF, FAW and typhoons) as well as long term issues. The latter includes the weak growth and low income of producers, farm labour shortages, lack of producers' access to inputs and financing, high costs of logistics and storage, a disconnected value chain, high cost of nutritious food, vulnerability of the agriculture sector to environmental hazards, and reliance of the existing food system on concentrated distribution points such as urban centres.
- The effects of urgent and essential government restrictions related to COVID-19 also contributed to a substantial increase



in unemployment and underemployment rates, negatively affecting household incomes, particularly for smallholders and landless labourers, as well as causing food accessibility issues, especially for vulnerable populations in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The effects of COVID-19 containment measures also contributed to reduced productivity and disruptions in the flow of goods (including food products and other essential items) for small and medium enterprises in the food-manufacturing sector.

- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may have also triggered new challenges for the agri-food sector. Surveys conducted by the National Economic and Development Authority showed that the agriculture sector lost an estimated PHP 94.3 million (about USD 1.9 million) from unsold produce, with the regions of Calabarzon and Central Luzon accounting for 27.9 percent and 26.3 percent of the losses, respectively. About 39 percent of the total losses were in high-value crops. Overall, losses across agriculture, industry and service sectors amounted to PHP 1.1 billion (around USD 21.8 million), or about 5.6 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

Likely evolution of the impacts of COVID-19 on food security

The main anticipated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are the following:

- **Reduced agri-fishery production is foreseen.** While the Government continues to follow an approach aiming to allow agricultural production and value chains to operate despite strict COVID-19 quarantine measures, the agriculture sector continues to be affected, which will continue to impinge on food insecurity. For example, smallholder farmers in Mindanao reported to have reduced access to their fields as well as to markets. The fishing season for the Visayan Sea and North-East Palawan was closed due to COVID-19. Even though the fishing season opened, the most vulnerable smallholder agri-fishery communities may have adopted negative coping mechanisms, such as selling assets and borrowing money to pay-off earlier loans. Consequently, they are less equipped to generate income, which will further perpetuate their poverty status. In addition, they are facing the dim prospect of the recently started flood and typhoon season.
- **Food accessibility to remain limited for the most vulnerable.** The reduced purchasing power of households will likely affect the food security and nutrition of the already most vulnerable populations. Among others, women and girls will likely face disproportionate impacts.
- **The number of displaced people, especially in conflict areas in Mindanao, to continue to rise despite COVID-19-related quarantines and lockdowns, which will present challenges to deliver food to where it is required most.** Currently there are 370 000 people displaced by conflict and disasters in Mindanao. The number is growing despite the necessary movement restrictions, primarily because of the intermittent conflict including clan-feuds. If displaced people manage to find space in evacuation centres, physical distancing and hygiene rules become almost impossible to follow. Access to health services is now completely disrupted for them, in combination with reduced nutritious meals their vulnerability will likely increase as the pandemic as well as the conflict-situation evolves.
- **Credit to support agri-food production to become even more important, which will require the Government to update its registry system to help ensure access for all.** The Government has a credit system in place that allows marginalized small farmers and fishers as well as micro- and small enterprises to borrow limited funds with no interest, which are repayable in 5–10 years. However, to be able to access these funds, farmers need to be in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA). The latest RSBSA is based on surveys conducted in 2015 and would need to be updated to capture the most vulnerable in order to allow them to access credit during the next few critical months.

Anticipatory actions and response

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the proposed actions have been identified to meet the urgent short-term needs of the most vulnerable food-insecure populations and protect their assets. It also represents FAO's contribution to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

1) Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most food-insecure populations

FAO supports the Government on evidence-based policy, planning and programming to respond to the emerging food security needs through conducting rapid Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) assessments. This provides programmatic support to the Department of Agriculture on informed, timely, efficient, and practicable provision of assistance to smallholder farmers and fisherfolk affected by COVID-19.

A rapid assessment was conducted on the impact of COVID-19 on food security, rural livelihoods and agricultural market chains, focusing on the major cities in the most affected areas of the country, to understand how COVID-19 affects value chains of different commodities including rice, vegetables, fruits, meat and fish.

FAO has re-programmed funds from ongoing projects to support provision of emergency cash grants to supplement cash assistance made available by the Government and its partners through its Social Amelioration Program (SAP). The Government and its partners were only able to provide assistance to 474 000 households in need, about 76 percent of the total identified indigent families in BARMM affected by COVID-19. With re-programmed funds from the Sustainable Development Goal Fund, FAO will provide cash assistance to an additional 800 agricultural households, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Services and Development of BARMM.

2) Ensuring continuity of the food supply chain

Ensuring steady agricultural production and livelihoods is important to contribute to stable incomes and food accessibility. Providing support to the most vulnerable people in the agriculture sector such as smallholder

farmers and seasonal farm workers is essential to lessen the disruption in the food supply chain as well as ensure the availability of nutritious food. In this regard, FAO will implement the following interventions:

- linking markets through digital technology including e-commerce options and other delivery mechanisms to help farmers market their produce despite the COVID-19 restrictions;
- distribution of farm inputs such as seeds (rice, corn and vegetables) and fertilizer, complemented with capacity building for crop diversification and value-addition to 50 600 rice- and corn-producing households in BARMM and non-BARMM areas as well as to 20 000 households in coconut-based, rainfed areas for crop diversification;
- distribution of assorted vegetable seeds, home gardening kits and food storage equipment to 5 000 urban/peri-urban households in non-BARMM areas;
- distribution of livestock/poultry, feed and animal health supplies to 10 000 smallholder farmers and farm workers including women and youth in BARMM and non-BARMM areas;
- provision of cash-based assistance to scale-up social protection, especially targeting 5 000 farmer and fisherfolk families in BARMM areas; and
- provision of short-cycle technical training on the use of agricultural input packages and capacity-building on livelihood/enterprise-development along the value chain.

3) Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk transmission

In implementing interventions, FAO will make use of digital technology, including in establishing a reliable and credible registry of beneficiaries and price monitoring. Delivery channels and mechanisms for the distribution of cash and in-kind inputs will integrate government-approved safety protocols and measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission. This will include observance of physical distancing and distribution and use of personal protective equipment and hygiene kits (including face masks, face shields, gloves, soap, chlorine and alcohol) to beneficiaries and extension/training agents, to protect them against COVID-19.

Additionally, FAO will explore innovative ways to disseminate information, education and communication materials (primarily digital and broadcast) on food safety and health, best practices and technology guides in English and in the context-specific vernacular in various formats to help reduce the risk of virus transmission.

FAO will continue to raise public awareness on the relationship between COVID-19 and food security through various channels. As of the end of June, FAO has participated in at least three webinars on the topic that have been watched by more than 30 000 viewers. FAO will also continuously amplify and disseminate key COVID-19-related FSN messages through its social media platforms.

Funding



FAO requires
USD 17.9 million
under the Global Humanitarian
Response Plan for COVID-19

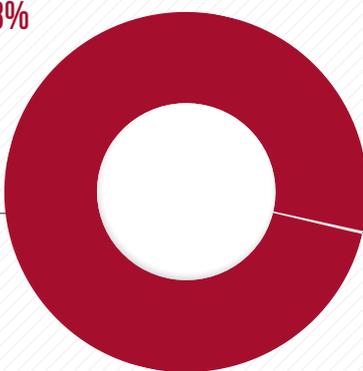


to assist
513 000 people

FUNDING GAP

USD 17.8 million

99.8%



0.2%

RECEIVED

USD 36 000

Resource partners

IFAD and FAO's own
resources

Coordination and partnerships

FAO is collaborating with the following:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Agrarian Reform
- Mindanao Development Authority
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform - BARMM
- Ministry of Social Services and Development - BARMM
- Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
- Inter-Cluster Coordination Group – Humanitarian Country Team
- Local non-governmental organizations

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RECOMMENDED CITATION:

FAO. 2020. *The Philippines | Humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0202en>