

Food Security During COVID-19

The Challenge:

[According to the World Bank](#), global markets for food staples are well supplied and prices are generally stable. Global production levels for the three most widely consumed staples (rice, wheat and maize) are at or near all-time highs. However, the prices of certain cash crops have been depressed by the slowing of global demand, which particularly affects rural areas.

Given the status of global food supplies, export restrictions are unwarranted and could hurt food security in importing countries. Agriculture Ministers from the [G20](#), African Union, [ASEAN](#) countries and [Latin American and Caribbean](#) agree on the need to keep global food markets open and refrain from imposing new trade barriers so that food is not lacking. Advocating for this is important. However, as the coronavirus crisis unfolds, disruptions in domestic food supply chains and other shocks affecting food production, and loss of incomes and remittances are creating strong tensions and food security risks in many countries.

Labor shortages (due to morbidity, movement restrictions, social distancing rules) are starting to impact producers, processors, traders and trucking/logistics companies in food supply chains – particularly for food products that require workers to be in proximity. At the same time, loss of income and remittances is reducing people's ability to buy food and compensate farmers for their production. The United Nations World Food Program [has warned that](#) an estimated 265 million people could face acute food insecurity by the end of 2020, up from 135 million people before the crisis.

[FAO Global Report on Food Security at close of 2019](#) shows that Africa was hardest region hit by food security crises.

Food security “hot spots” include:

- fragile and conflict-affected states, where logistics and distribution are difficult even without morbidity and social distancing.
- countries affected by multiple crises resulting from more frequent extreme weather events and pests such as the current locusts plague – the worst in decades— impacting food production in 23 countries.
- the poor and vulnerable, including the more than 820 million people who were already chronically food insecure before the COVID-19 crisis impacted movement and incomes.
- countries with significant currency depreciation, (driving up the cost of food imports) and countries seeing other commodity prices collapse (reducing their capacity to import food).

The CDP Countries

Our CDOs work in an eclectic grouping of countries, and so we have collected country-specific information regarding the current food security situation in every CDP country. The resources listed below provide country-specific descriptions, situations, reports, or projections of food security challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic:

Burkina Faso: [Pressure on Sahel Food Security](#)

Ethiopia: [Affecting Vegetable Value Chains](#)

Guatemala: [Country Report and Projections](#)

Kenya: [COVID Exacerbating Locust Crisis](#)

Liberia: [43 Million at Risk in West Africa](#)

Madagascar: [Deteriorating Food Security in Southern Madagascar](#)

Malawi: [Food Security high risk in Malawi](#)

Mexico: [Food Insecurity and Causes](#)

Paraguay: [Lack of State Support in Paraguay](#)

Peru: [Food Systems in Peru and Bolivia](#)

Philippines: [Importing Rice at Risk](#)

Rwanda: [Impact of COVID in East Africa](#)

Senegal: [The need for food imports](#)

South Africa: [Begins to Reopen Country](#)

Sri Lanka: [COVID Affects the Maha Season](#)

Tanzania: [Mitigate Food Shortages](#)

Uganda: [Call for National Task Force](#)

The Program

[WFP has identified their programming](#) to strengthen food security during COVID-19 as focusing primarily on areas of emergency response, logistics and supply chain, emergency telecommunications, and nutrition. The organization is also deploying activities of data collection and analysis, policy and advocacy support, and service provision at the service of governments' strategies to address the medium-term consequences of the pandemic.

This includes working with governments to: strengthen and expand social protection programs to address poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition; sustain food production, trade, distribution and consumption; support national health systems through improved supply chains, data collection and targeted nutrition services for the most vulnerable; and provide alternatives to school feeding where educational activities have been suspended in the wake of the pandemic.

DEVEX Identifies [7 action areas](#) needed in the development community in response to COVID-19 food insecurity:

1. Increase assessments of the impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture and food systems
2. Support farmers to continue producing and marketing food
3. Accelerate the deployment of relevant agricultural technologies and digital agriculture solutions
4. Support small, medium, and large agribusinesses
5. Innovate in supply chains and markets
6. Support regional policy dialogues to help countries address food shortages
7. Assess the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture-based livelihoods and food security using a [gender lens](#)

[What should the United States do?](#) CSIS report offers policy suggestions along with calls for private sector support.