



Quality Assurance in COVID-19 Crisis Response: Food and Nutrition Security

What are the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis for food and nutrition security?

In developing countries, up to 80% of the population relies on farming for their food and income. Production is mostly labour intensive and relies heavily on temporary or seasonal workers particularly during planting, weeding, harvesting, but also for food processing or transporting to markets. Rising levels of food insecurity – either because of movement restrictions, strained health systems or falling incomes – are likely to increase malnutrition rates, particularly among children, pregnant and lactating women and the elderly. Children of poor families that rely on school feeding are affected due to closing of schools and/or movement restriction, leading to increased malnutrition.

Impact on food availability: Movement restriction will disrupt the transport and processing of food and other critical goods, increasing delivery times and reducing availability of even the most basic food items. For households' dependent on food production and livestock rearing, any disruption in the supply chain of agricultural inputs, reduced access to farmland or the inability to access livestock markets, will likely lead to declines in crop and livestock production and sales. Livestock death or distress sale will reduce long-term resilience.

Impact on food access: Rising unemployment and under-employment is likely to severely reduce people's purchasing power. Urban populations, particularly daily wage earners in the informal economies and service sector employees, are particularly at risk of losing their income sources.

Impact on food prices: Movement restrictions (and illness) are likely to limit the availability of agricultural labor, which will contribute to rising food prices. Protectionism policies, such as tariffs and export bans, could also drive up food prices. Limited availability and access to food as well as rising food prices will impact consumption patterns, especially for low-income households in countries with high commodity-import dependence.

What measures can we take to ensure adequate consideration of food and nutrition security into response efforts?

- Encourage promoting social protection programmes for food insecure households, possibly through digital cash transfers but also through in-kind food where food availability is jeopardised, or inflation risk elevated.
- Ensure that critical food supply chains are maintained, including between rural, peri-urban and urban areas, focusing on vulnerable smallholder farmers and food workers.
- Promote awareness among stakeholder about food safety and health regulations as well the rights and responsibilities of workers. People along the food supply chain must be protected from the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Encourage supporting access to agricultural inputs, extension and financial services for smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fishermen, and promoting local food processing and transport to local/national markets in order to improve production, secure purchasing power and avoid food losses due to movement restrictions.
- Promote continuous monitoring of market prices, up-to-date information on the impacts of crisis (COVID-19, desert locusts etc.) and natural disasters on food security and livelihoods
- Facilitate participation of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, landless people, farm workers etc. in decision-making processes to better understand their specific risks, and to provide the best possible solutions and responses.

Some key resources:

[COVID-19 and the crisis in food systems: Symptoms, causes, and potential solutions, Communiqué by IPES-Food, April 2020](#)

[Will COVID-19 cause another food crisis? An early review. IFPRI 2020](#)

[Interim issues paper on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition \(FSN\) by the High-Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition \(HLPE\)](#)

[Global report on food crisis, FSIN 2020](#)