

COVID-19: Agriculture & Food Security responses

Going to the supermarket and finding half-empty shelves, has been a reality for the majority of the world's population, but the spread of COVID-19 has led to the same pictures in European and even Swiss markets. Suddenly, staple foods such as flour, rice or milk became scarce goods overnight. However, producers and distributors ramped up the production and given the economic power of Western countries, most employees are still receiving some form of regular income and are able to purchase their daily meals.

For the less privileged, the spread of COVID-19 possess an immediate threat to their lives, which goes beyond the potential infection with the virus. Already before the crisis, many families in low and middle-income countries spent a lot of time and money to put food on the table. The outbreak of COVID-19 and governmental mitigation procedures have already affected the food system significantly and these impacts will grow if processing enterprises cannot restart production in a near future. In particular, production of staple food crops such as wheat and rice, and vegetables will be affected if the outbreak continues into critical planting periods, [as GAIN pointed out](#).

Both, the demand and supply side of food in developing countries is likely to be hit hard: The amount of time, energy and money spent for food is very likely to increase. It is doubtful, if supply can cope with soaring demand, thus production systems might be disrupted. Either way, food prices are expected to rise, which will again affect the most vulnerable, as they already spend a significant portion of their income on food.

But COVID19 also has the potential to cause indirect, but significant harm towards food security: [the FAO warned](#), that trade barriers leading to domestic and international trade disruptions may trigger food price panics and have a strong negative impact on the income of low and middle-income countries, which account for around a third of the world's food trade.

As you know, agriculture and food production are highly globalized and interlinked sectors, which are main sources of income for a vast part of the global south's population. Therefore, governments around the world should also dedicate resources to secure and stabilize food systems, and keep national and international food trade open, as restriction of movements and road closures curb farmers' access to markets both to buy inputs and sell products. It goes without saying, that all people working in food systems from field to fork are critical to keep food systems moving. Therefore, it is critical to ramp up work force health efforts for supply chains and guarantee safe and sound working environments.

The SDC Agriculture & Food Security Network has set up a [dedicated page on COVID-19](#), where we collect external research and insights regarding the impact of COVID-19 on food systems, as well as sharing best practices from our network colleagues on the ground. Please have a look and make use of the internal know-how we have!