

COVID-19 Impacts on Food Security in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS

a virtual briefing

7 May 2020 | 15:00-16:30 New York time

The COVID-19 pandemic and its enormous impacts – on a scale we have never seen before – have drawn attention to the deep and fragile interconnections between people, planet and prosperity.

In the past three years, the number of people who suffer from hunger has slowly increased, with more than 820 million people in the world hungry in 2018. Another disturbing fact is that about 2 billion people in the world experience moderate or severe food insecurity. These malnourished are the people most vulnerable to pandemic and economic dislocation. In the LDCs, the estimated prevalence of undernourishment was 23.6% of the population. Thus 28% of undernourished people in the world live in LDCs. For LLDCs and SIDS, the prevalence of undernourishment was 21.9% and 17.6% respectively.

COVID-19 has added another layer of complexity to the state of agri-food systems. Measures to contain the pandemic threaten to disrupt supply chains and bring about an increase in food insecurity.

Even though food quantities and food prices are not general problems today, as they were in 2008, there are many other ways in which food value chains can become problematic and many reasons to be especially vigilant.

As the pandemic and the accompanying economic shocks spread southward, they will inevitably come to the rural areas, where the vast majority of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people live and where the public resources and institutional supports of public health and social protection are much weaker.

LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS often are highly dependent on food imports, rely on international markets to secure food and other essential needs, are dependent on high-value agricultural exports and have a large share of the population involved in agriculture and food production, processing, transportation, and distribution, making them especially vulnerable to the pandemic. Food prices remain a concern in countries that are dependent on food imports that are further inflated by higher transport and transit costs such as LLDCs. The introduction of export restrictions and prohibitions on foodstuffs further increases the vulnerability of these countries. Preserving and improving the food economy must be an essential part of the socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis.

As governments develop longer-term economic stimulus packages to recover from the crisis, they must be designed around the core principle of building a more inclusive and sustainable economy. More resilient and sustainable food systems can help tackle climate change and reverse the loss of biodiversity. Accelerated investment in food and agricultural transformation can help keep food systems alive in the coming 12-18 months and be a powerful driver of progress towards achievement of the SDGs. Food systems must become more sustainable, inclusive and resilient, so that people around the world are able to live in healthy, safe environments, and eat and live well. The UN System has united behind the UN Secretary-General's COVID 19 pandemic response plan to (1) end the pandemic, (2) tackle the social and economic dimensions of this crisis and (3) build back better. This has sparked an unprecedented mobilization of the global community in a truly unprecedented fashion to control and end the pandemic; to mitigate its impacts on the most vulnerable populations through humanitarian action and social and economic support initiatives and stimulus spending; to assess the post-crisis needs and to launch an ambitious and cohesive recovery plan.

Actions to make our food systems more sustainable, inclusive and resilient must become a central part of local, regional and national level interventions, with a specific focus on investment and partnerships. It is essential that safe, nutritious, affordable food continue to get to people who need it, when and where they need it. To achieve this in the face of COVID-19 disruption we will require innovation, resources, and new levels of local, regional and global collaboration and information sharing.

Against this backdrop, a virtual conversation is being organized on 7 May 2020 to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 emergency on food systems and to identify urgent and coordinated actions to avoid the most disruptive consequences. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to look at the prospects of international action on food security and nutrition in the recovery phase and how to deliver in the framework of the Decade for Action in preparation of the 2021 UN Food System Summit.

To participate, please register [here](#).



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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

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Organized by the Chairs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), the Alliance of Small Island States (SIDS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Office of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS).

To participate, please register [here](#).

Agenda

- 15:00 Welcoming remarks**
H.E. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- 15:08 Keynote presentation**
Mr Máximo Torero, FAO Chief Economist
- 15:30 Lead Discussants**
Chair of Group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs): H.E. Mr. Perks Master Ligoya, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malawi to the United Nations

Chair of Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs): H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): H.E. Ms. Lois Michele Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations
- 15:45 Open dialogue**
Questions and Answers

Moderated by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, OHRLLS Director



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