

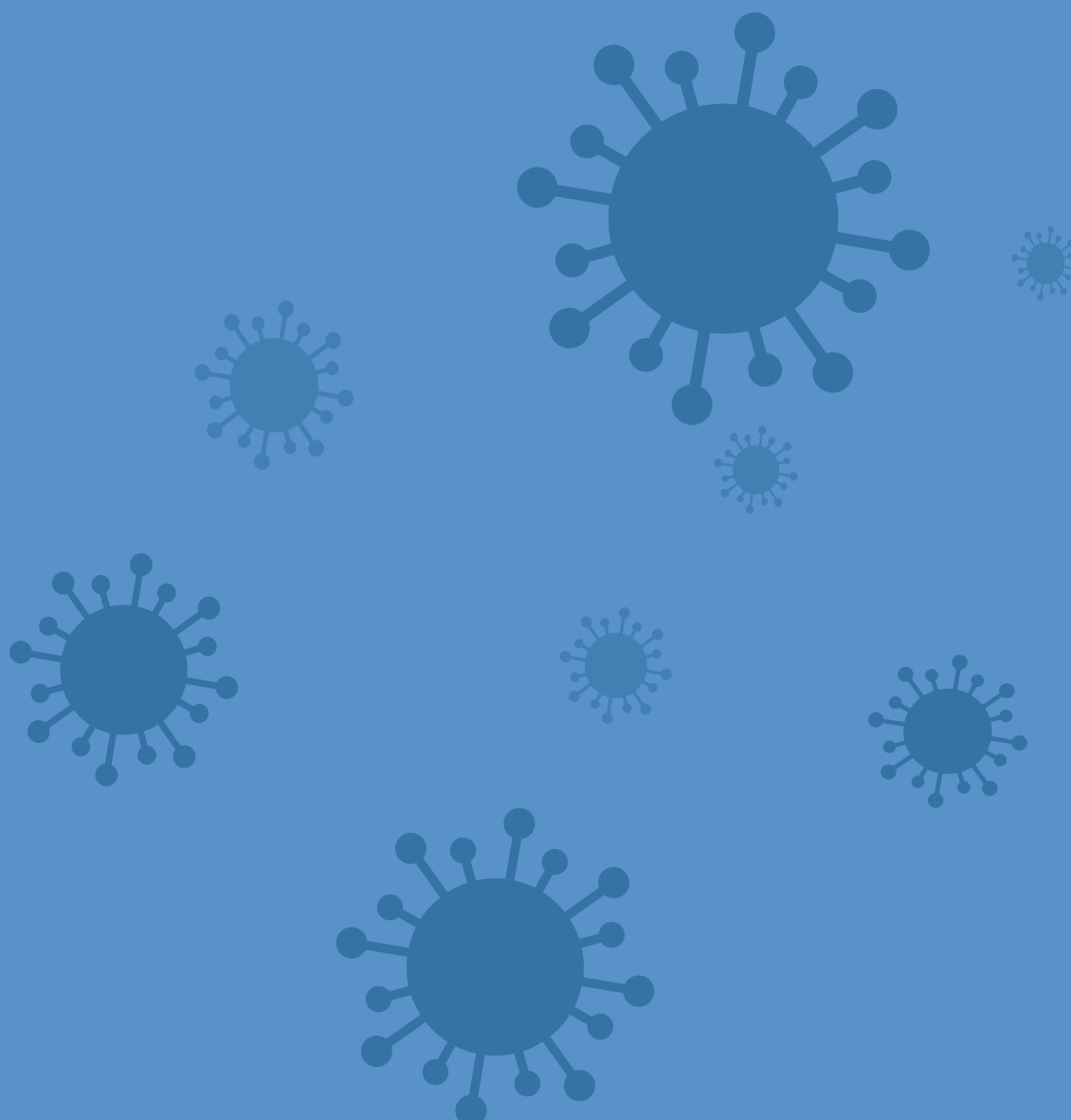


Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Somalia

Effects, policy responses and long-term implications



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Rome, 2021

Required citation:

FAO. 2021. *National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Somalia: Effects, policy responses and long term implications*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3720en>

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ISBN 978-92-5-134083-7

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This country profile covers responses and effects up to December 2020

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has put significant pressure on health systems all around the world. The drastic measures established to contain its spread are creating serious impediments to economic activity (including agrifood systems) and, consequently, to livelihoods and food security and nutrition.

The COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates both how health and food systems are linked to one another, and how local food systems are linked to global systems. High rates of urbanization and the globalization of trade and travel have contributed to the spread of the virus across countries. Lockdowns and movement restrictions within countries and across borders have disrupted national and local food and agricultural output and input markets and have caused sharp reductions in overall economic activity globally. In poorer countries, disruptions have further exacerbated the fragility of systems (including agrifood systems) and livelihoods.

The Global Report on Food Crises 2020 found that 135 million people in 55 countries and territories are facing acute food insecurity at “crisis” level or higher – a situation that requires urgent action. The report further concluded that over 183 million people were experiencing a “stressed” level of acute food insecurity and bore a high risk of sliding into a “crisis” level if confronted by with additional shocks (FSIN, 2020). The situation is particularly worrisome in light of the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the situation evolves, the question arises as to how, or whether, food, health and financial and economic systems could become better prepared to prevent similar outbreaks from escalating into a full-blown economic and social crisis.

This report is part of a series of country profiles that describe: (i) policy measures enacted by governments to contain the spread of the virus; (ii) policies and measures to stabilize the functioning of agri-food systems; (iii) potential effects of policies on agri-food systems and vulnerable groups. Finally, the profiles also assess longer-term options for agri-food system policies and investments so as to make them more resilient.

POLICY MEASURES TO CONTAIN COVID-19

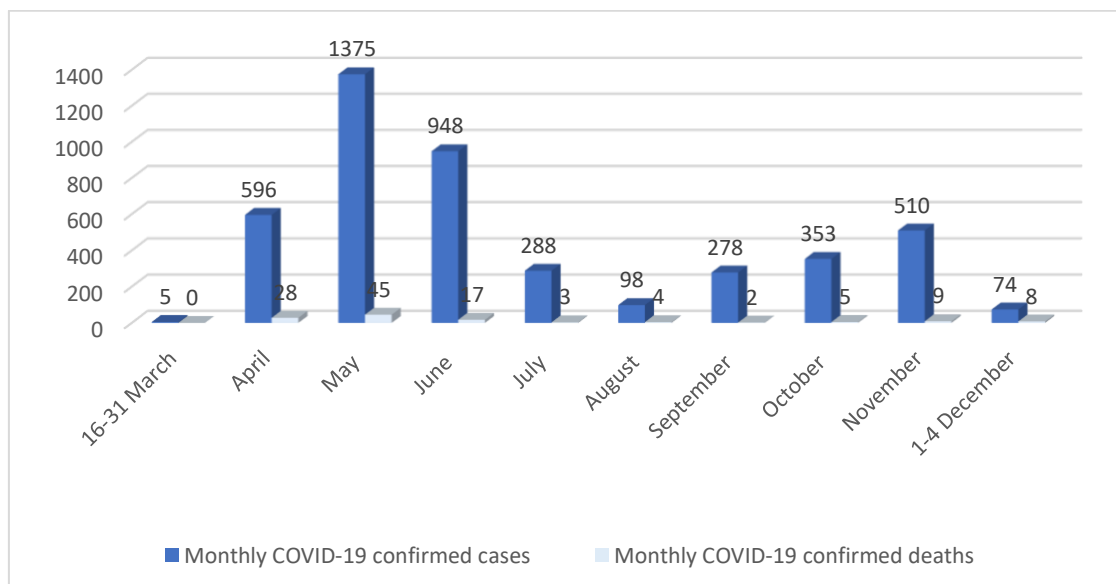
What major measures have been taken to contain the spread of the virus? How are they evolving?

Lockdown at home

The first reported case of COVID-19 in the Federal Republic of Somalia was confirmed on 16 March 2020 (MoH, 2020a; WHO, 2020). Subsequently the disease appears to have spread swiftly throughout the country, mainly in large cities, reaching its peak at the end of May, as shown in Figure 1. The rate of both disease transmission and mortality gradually declined from that point until the time of writing this report. Overall, Somalia has registered 4 525 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 924 active cases, 3 480 recoveries and 121 deaths (MoH, 2020b). According to the Ministry of Health (MoH), 26 percent of the cases were female, while 74 percent were male; about 88 percent of the deaths involved people over sixty years of age. It should nevertheless be stressed that given the low testing capacity – only 23 932 people had been tested by 10 October 2020 (WHO Somalia, 2020) and the minimal compliance with protection and containment measures, the actual number of cases is expected to be much higher than the official data suggests.

According to the latest Global Health Security Index (GHS Index, 2019), Somalia is the world's second least prepared country (out of 195 countries) for health emergencies and crises. Given its weak health system and institutional capacity, as well as serious security, socio-economic and environmental challenges, Somalia faced severe and devastating health impacts and socio-economic threats during the crisis.

Figure 1. COVID-19 incidence in Somalia from 16 March to 4 December 2020



Source: MoH, 2020b.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government of Somalia has emphasized public awareness and engagement and has encouraged the adoption of public health protection measures and compliance with health authority guidelines. To ensure coordination and implementation of the

entire COVID-19 response, a national committee/task force was set up under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Public awareness messages were disseminated through local radio, posters, TV and social media including a free call centre for COVID-19 enquiries, which received up to 4 000 daily calls (OPM, 2020c). To prevent further spread of the virus, particularly among vulnerable people and those with no access to healthcare services, the government introduced and advocated for a series of containment measures, summarized in Table 1.

Implementation of policy measures

- The most consistently enforced government containment measures were air travel restrictions and school closings. Others such as curfews and workplace and public gathering restrictions, were not fully enforced and widespread non-compliance was the norm. Due to the weak institutional capacity, the enforcement of containment measures was relatively low and largely confined to the main cities with limited enforcement in small cities/towns and rural areas; and efforts by the Government were augmented by humanitarian and development partner efforts as highlighted later in this profile.
- Although the borders with Ethiopia and Kenya were officially closed during the early months of the pandemic, the movement of both people and goods between countries was common.
- Despite these restrictions, markets, shops, companies, industries, and local trade activities remained relatively undisturbed, particularly during daylight hours.
- In general, public compliance with containment measures was limited due to overriding household income and livelihoods needs.
- The challenge of enforcing local restrictions led to a loosening and technical waiver of all measures over time. At the current time, the government has no plans to double down on existing containment measures or to introduce new ones.

Restrictions in the operation of food market outlets and open-air markets

- With the gradual decline of the number of reported COVID-19 cases starting in May and June, the government took bold steps to relax the lockdown and other restrictive measures described in Table 1.
- The government ensured that food transport channels and supply chains were not disturbed by permitting necessary cargo flights and maintaining the functions of seaports and local roads, even during the peak of the pandemic.
- The government did not impose any specific measures and guidelines for agrifood workers. A number of humanitarian and development agencies provided agrifood firms with protective gear and awareness sessions to ensure the safe return of their workers.
- No significant measures were taken to directly support local farmers and facilitate their access to input and output markets.
- Although the agrifood and supply chain industries have resumed, their operations and functions will need time to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. A swift recovery depends on the absence of further shocks – which is unlikely in the Somali context where recurrent droughts and floods are the norm – and/or a second wave of the pandemic.
- Following the *de facto* easing of containment measures, the government and its partners are monitoring the impacts of the pandemic, including on the agrifood system, food supply and food prices.

Table 1. Government measures to contain the spread of COVID-19

| Policy measure | Entry into effect | Enforcing body | Coverage | Comments |
|---|-------------------|---|--|--|
| Restriction of movements of goods and people | | | | |
| Suspension of international flights | 19 March | Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MOTCA) and Somali Civil Aviation Authority (SCAA) | Nationwide | Humanitarian and necessary cargo flights (food, medicines) were exempted. Flights returning citizens stranded abroad arrived regularly, particularly at Mogadishu and Hargeisa airports. This was demand-based and approved on a case-by-case basis (OCHA, 2020h). International flights resumed on 3 August. Passengers are required to follow strict rules, such as obtaining a negative COVID-19 PCR certificate from an accredited laboratory, observing social distancing, and wearing protective masks and gloves. |
| Suspension of local flights | 29 March | MOTCA and SCAA | Nationwide | Local flights resumed on 5 July. Social distancing and protective masks and gloves are required for all travellers. |
| Night curfew | 15 April | Police authorities | Mogadishu (regional authorities set their own curfews with different levels of enforcement). | On 15 April, a night curfew was announced from 20.00 to 05.00 hours (OPM, 2020a). On 23 April, the curfew was advanced to 19.00 hours and shortly thereafter returned to 20.00 hours due to public complaints (OPM, 2020d). Violations of curfew and social distancing guidelines were common particularly during the holy month of Ramadan (late April to late May) and following Eid festivals. The curfew was not strictly enforced and loosened over time. Surprisingly, despite the loosening of the curfew, the government has not officially cancelled the measure. |
| Border movement restrictions | 19 March | MOTCA and SCAA | Nationwide | The national government closed the borders with neighbouring countries except for food, medicines, and necessary goods. However, regional administrations with borders to these countries produced their own orders and measures. On 25 March, Somaliland closed its borders with Djibouti and Ethiopia, allowing only the movement of food, medicine, and fuel products (Radio Dalsan, 2020). Similarly, the Puntland administration closed its borders with Ethiopia and neighbouring regions, particularly Somaliland, on 28 March (Ibrahim, 2020). The Gedo (on 8 April) and Hirshabelle (on 14 April) administrations closed their borders with Kenya and Ethiopia respectively to prevent virus transmission between the countries (Yuusuf, I.C. 2020; Deeq, 2020). The official government exemption for food, medicine, and fuel products also applied in Puntland, Gedo, Galmudug, Jubbaland and Hirshabelle; however, there were some movement restrictions in |

| Policy measure | Entry into effect | Enforcing body | Coverage | Comments |
|--|--|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Restrictions on public gatherings | 22 April | Police authorities | Mogadishu | early April for the Gedo region border with both Kenya (Eiwak and Bula/Beled Hawo) and Ethiopia (Doolow) triggered by insecurity, tensions, and conflicts in this region (Radio Ergo, 2020; OCHA, 2020f). |
| Inter-/intra-State movement restrictions | The Government imposed restrictions on domestic road movement for both people and goods. Some voluntary movement disruption was noted, particularly in Bay and Bakol where some of the truck drivers from Baido to Wajid route suspended their travels due to pandemic concerns (SGSWG, 2020). At the same time, there have been reports that local road transportation increased during the pandemic to fill the gaps left by restrictions in domestic air travel, with little or no interference from local authorities. | | | The authorities in Mogadishu restricted gatherings in mosques, hotels and restaurants and announced the closure of beaches, rest areas and public gathering places. Firms and workplaces were advised to apply health guidelines and measures to protect their staff and the community. While restrictions on public gatherings in Mogadishu started on 22 April, most of the other states set their own restrictions at a later date and with different levels of enforcement. |
| Workplace and industry restrictions | The government did not impose any significant restrictions on workplaces, except for those specifically cited in the containment measures (the travel, hospitality, leisure, and catering industries). Major markets, wholesalers and shops remained open even during the peak of the pandemic. However, considerable disruption was reported by some industries in the supply chain and reduction in staff numbers (due to fear of the pandemic or inability to reach work in flooded areas ¹). For example, decreased manpower was reported in flooded areas, after a significant number of labourers and their families temporarily moved away. This affected both farmers – who suffered from labour shortages and a subsequent reduction of output – and the casual labourers themselves who lost their source of income. | | | |
| School and university closings | 18 March | Ministry of Education (MoE) | Nationwide (however, both Somaliland and Puntland announced their own closing, exam, and reopening dates) | <p>Although initially projected to last two weeks, school closings were extended to the rest of the 2019/2020 academic year (MoE, 2020a).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 23 April, the government developed the Education Sector COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the education sector, minimize the disruption of the learning process and ensure the safe resumption of education after the pandemic (OPM, 2020e). The school closings disrupted school feeding programmes (SFPS) implemented by various partners (World Food Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, Save the Children, etc.). |

¹ Flash and riverine floods started in Somalia as the result of Gu' rains (April to June 2020) and were reported continuously throughout the Hoggal season (July–September 2020) as a result of heavy rains during this period (OCHA, 2020j; FAO, 2020c).

| Policy measure | Entry into effect | Enforcing body | Coverage | Comments |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|--|
| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts were made to ensure that pupils enrolled in the SFPs were able to access the food during school closings. For example, WFP developed an E-shop application platform, which allowed the parents of beneficiary children could request food for delivery to their doorstep by local retailers free of charge (Gordon, 2020; Stabilein, 2020). • National guidelines for reopening schools emphasised the urgent need to continue the SFPs to enable schoolchildren (particularly vulnerable children) to access regular and balanced nutritional foods (MoE, 2020c). • Lessons were broadcast through local audio-visual media and the internet for school and university students (OCHA, 2020b). Exams for grades 8 and 12 students were held during the weeks of 11 and 18 July weeks respectively, while Somaliland and Puntland held their exams during the weeks of 27 June and 4 July, respectively. • Schools and universities reopened on 15 August and 5 September respectively (MoE, 2020b). The school closings added another layer of challenges to Somalia's already weak educational system and blocked pupils from reaching their full learning potential. This was clear the performance of students in the national secondary exams, which more than 25 percent of the grade 12 students (33 727) failed to pass (MoE, 2020d). |

AGRIFOOD POLICY MEASURES TO RESPOND TO THE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS

What major policy measures are in place or anticipated that target the food system directly?

Establishment of a task team on the movements of agrifood actors, inputs and produce

The Government implemented a number of measures to protect agrifood markets and ensure that COVID-19 protective measures would not have a significant negative impact on food and nutrition security. Most of the measures guaranteed that supply and transportation channels would remain open and unrestricted for food products throughout the country. Nevertheless, factors such as floods and insecurity triggered movement challenges in some areas (particularly in the southern part of the country), just as in pre-COVID-19 times. This disrupted access to services, transport, and supply chains, which resulted in increased transportation costs, postharvest losses and hiked food and agricultural input prices. It also risked the lives of people in these areas, who are very vulnerable to the slightest supply chain disruptions in terms of access, adequacy and availability to food, thereby impacting their food and nutrition security.

Tax exemptions on food imports

In the early days of the pandemic, some rice-producing countries imposed export restrictions to ensure sufficient availability for domestic consumption (Sulser and Dunston, 2020). However, the impact of these measures appears to have been effectively 'balanced out' by the government's 100 percent tax exemption on rice imports (for three months starting from 15 April 2020), with the result that the increased price of rice on international markets was not passed on to domestic markets. A similar measure was taken for dates and a 50 percent tax exemption was declared for vegetable cooking oil and wheat flour (OPM, 2020b).

Import license facilitation measures on food imports and agriculture inputs

On 19 March 2020 and subsequently on 14 April, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) announced that the government will support domestic food production and agrifood systems to overcome possible food supply chain disruptions by making it easier to obtain licenses for importing food and agricultural inputs.

Food prices

- On 19 March, the government announced that strict legal actions (including fines and penalties) would be taken against traders who increased food prices in the face of the tax exemption initiative (OCHA, 2020d; Somali Dispatch, 2020).
- The government monitored the price of staple foods such as wheat flour, vegetable oil, rice, and dates to prevent any unjustified price hikes by traders.
- Traders were also encouraged to get involved and invest in domestic food and agriculture production instead of overreliance on imported products to cushion them in the event of the possible food import and global supply chain disruptions.

Support to local food production

Based on the government's call to support local food production and avert supply chain disruptions brought about by the combined effects of COVID-19, flood and desert locust invasions, a number of humanitarian and development agencies provided support to Somalia (further information can be found in the annex). This included the following:

- Agriculture, planting and harvesting inputs, i.e., seeds, biopesticides, fertilizers, packaging facilities, and equipment, were provided to agricultural production (mainly riverine) and locust-affected areas.
- Cash-for-work initiatives (rehabilitation of irrigation channels, water catchments and productive infrastructure), flood prevention inputs (sandbags) and activities such as vector control received support.
- Livestock feed, fodder seeds, and fodder processing machines, livestock cash plus as well as animal vaccination and treatment support were provided to pastoralists and agropastoralists throughout the country.
- Most of these interventions existed before COVID-19 as emergency support to domestic production and local producers to enable them cope with shocks and build their resilience. It is expected that these interventions will continue after the pandemic elapses.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were provided to domestic food-producing firms, including the fishing industry.
- Diesel fuel for fishing boats was provided to overcome the fuel supply chain disruption.
- Information, education, and awareness campaigns on health and hygiene were mounted, targeting domestic producers.

Credit or financial packages to smallholder farmers and small and medium enterprises

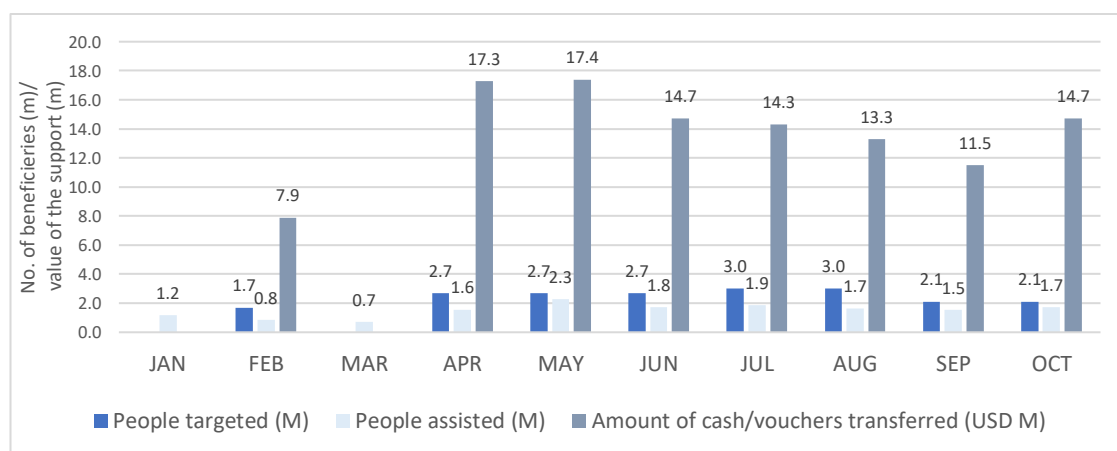
- Smallholder farmers benefited from various direct conditional/unconditional cash transfer initiatives to help meet their immediate needs, including food and nutrition demands. Most of this support was provided by humanitarian/development partners; however, government support and coordination (both at federal and state levels) were crucial in delivering those interventions to beneficiary communities.
- Loans and grants were provided by some government and humanitarian/development agencies through a range of financing schemes. Targeted businesses included small and medium size food-producing firms, agrotechnology companies, entrepreneurs, businesses led by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returning migrants, and the producers of COVID-19-related products (OCHA, 2020k).
- The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in collaboration with the MoCI, partnered with the International Bank of Somalia to provide USD 500 to 5 000 and USD 5 000 to 100 000 loans to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (OCHA, 2020l).
- Further cash-based support was provided to microbusinesses to enable them to continue functioning during and after the crisis and to cope with the negative impact of the pandemic (OCHA, 2020l).
- It should be noted that most of these initiatives were supported by existing funds and programmes, which were restructured to the COVID-19 context and targeted farmers and businesses.

What measures are in place or anticipated that aim to mitigate the effects of the crisis on vulnerable groups?

In collaboration with government agencies, humanitarian and development agencies implemented the following social protection, food, and nutrition measures to assist the most vulnerable people:

- On 19 April 2020, with a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, the government launched a USD 65 million national safety net programme called Baxnaano ('uplifting') to provide unconditional nutrition-linked cash transfers (CT) to the vulnerable, malnourished (particularly children, pregnant and lactating women, and girls), people living with disabilities, socially or economically marginalized households and those facing chronic food insecurity (World Bank, 2019a; World Bank, 2019b). The project will support around 200 000 families with children under five years (around 1.2million individuals), who will receive USD 80 on a quarterly basis for up to one year (USD 240 per household annually) (MoLSA, 2019).
- In June, the World Bank approved USD 40 million for 'Shock Responsive Safety Net for Locust Response (SNLRP)', a project to support the livelihoods of 100 000 poor and vulnerable households (600 000 individuals) affected by locust infestations and suffering from the consequences of COVID-19. The project will provide USD 60 per month to each family for a period of six months (USD 360 per household). The programme will provide a 'top-up' of USD 40 per month to the beneficiaries of Baxnaano, while the 'irregular' beneficiaries¹ of the programme will access the full amount of USD 60 per month for the same period (World Bank, 2020b).
- In-kind food assistance, food and nutrition packages, and conditional/unconditional cash transfers for returnees and IDPs who lost their jobs due to the crisis, have also been given priority by some agencies (OCHA, 2020g; OCHA, 2020j) to prevent the deterioration of the situation for those already suffering from or risking food insecurity. Figure 2 below depicts beneficiaries that have been targeted or assisted with cash, vouchers, and in-kind support from January to October 2020.

Figure 2. Number of targeted vs number of assisted people with food access initiatives



Source: Somali food security cluster (FSC, 2020).

¹ The beneficiaries who do not receive support for the planned period (one year) or the full amount (USD 240).

- According to the Somali nutrition cluster, in the period between January and December 2020, around 748 000 children under five years of age (93 percent of the target) benefited from health, nutrition, feeding and supplementary feeding programmes (Somalia Nutrition Cluster, 2020c).
- Due to the continuing emergency and the food and nutrition insecurity situation in Somalia, these measures and assistance programmes are expected to continue after the COVID-19 crisis has subsided.

Public works programmes and employment opportunities for vulnerable groups

- In collaboration with the government and local authorities, some development partners provided employment opportunities for casual daily workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic (OCHA 2020). In addition, some development partners supported new business opportunities emerging from the crisis response. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Growth, Enterprise, Employment, and Livelihoods (GEEL) project, provided support for around 300 young people to produce 500 000 facemasks for the Ministry of Health (US Embassy in Somalia, 2020b).
- A few women and young entrepreneurs were trained in key skills (agriculture and pest management, mask production, tailoring, electricity, programming) to enhance their employment and business opportunities.
- Many of these programmes existed before COVID-19 and were realigned to respond to more effectively to needs emerging from the pandemic. Going forward, it will be important to monitor their effectiveness in improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups, overcoming their dependence on aid, and improving their resilience to shocks.

How is the government funding COVID-19 related measures?

The On 18 March, the Government of Somalia allocated USD 5 million to respond to the pandemic and mitigate its negative impact throughout the country (Xinhua, 2020). This is on top of the significant funding (up to USD 827.2 million) that was mobilized by humanitarian and development partners for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). In addition, a number of non-traditional donors including Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are known to have provided direct support to Somalia outside the context of the HRP, although precise details of this support are not currently available.

Some COVID-19-related measures taken by the government, whilst undoubtedly beneficial, have had the side effect of limiting the capacity for additional government funded response measures. Most notably, the waiver of taxes on some imported food items has led to a significant contraction in government revenues. On 23 April 2020, the Minister of Finance estimated that government income would likely contract by 40 percent due to the pandemic.

What initiatives have been taken by the humanitarian and development community to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on food security, nutrition, agriculture, water and sanitation and health?

The humanitarian and development communities have contributed significantly to efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, particularly on vulnerable communities.

Somalia's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) was launched in April 2020 to respond to the immediate humanitarian, public health, and socio-economic consequences of the pandemic (OCHA, 2020c). The CPRP extended until the end of 2020 and directed humanitarian and development agencies to orient their interventions to mitigating the impact of the pandemic and improving the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable communities.

The priorities of the development and humanitarian communities have included saving the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable groups and enabling them cope with the COVID-19 crisis. Providing healthcare and essential health services to needy people, particularly pregnant and lactating women, children under five years and IDPs, has also been a priority. The response to parallel crises (floods and locust infestations) has focused on protecting domestic production, livelihoods, and food and nutrition security. Development and humanitarian agencies have supported initiatives around water, sanitation and health, education, food assistance, cash transfers, input provision and support for small and medium enterprises. Above all, humanitarian and development partners have aimed to enhance the resilience of communities throughout Somalia to cope with current and future crises. The annex to this paper provides a summary of the plans, priorities and initiatives of some humanitarian and development partners.

The pandemic delayed the delivery of many activities – most of which remain underfunded. Travel and movement restrictions (due to both COVID-19 and flooding) has made it difficult for agency staff to reach needy people. According to a survey by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in April 2020, over one-third of Somalia's development partners have been unable to deliver assistance, while 40 percent had reduced their field activities (OCHA, 2020e). As most of these activities were concerned with providing basic and life-saving support to vulnerable groups, a deterioration of their food and nutrition security is highly likely. However, most organizations are now adjusting and reformulating their programmes and activities to be more aligned to the COVID-19 context and to ensure delivery under the current circumstances.

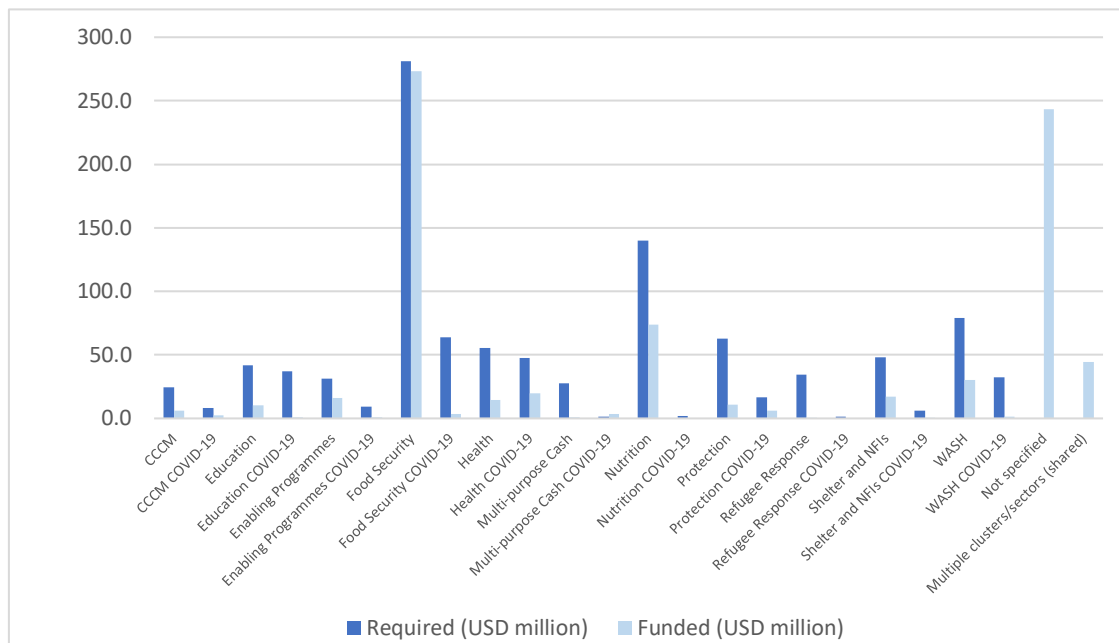
How are the humanitarian and development communities funding the COVID-19 response?

- According to the revised HRP, USD 1.01 billion is required to cover Somalia's humanitarian and emergency needs, including the responses to the triple crises of COVID-19, floods, and locusts.
- The latest (January 2021) information from the OCHA's Financial Tracking Services (FTS) indicates that approximately 82 percent of the HRP's funding requirements (USD 827.2 million) have now been met, with USD 182.7 million yet unfunded (18.1 percent) (OCHA, 2020a).
- Of the 1.01 billion dollars required for Somalia's humanitarian and emergency needs, USD 225.6 million is earmarked for the COVID-19 response, of which 38.4 percent (USD 86.6 million) (OCHA, 2020a) is currently funded (see Figure 3 below).
- COVID-19 came at a time when Somalia was already struggling with a desert locust invasion and floods that affected local production as well as food and nutrition security. According to the July HRP report, apart from the food security cluster, which was funded at around 76 percent, most clusters were significantly underfunded at less than twenty percent (UNDCO,

2020)². The health cluster, including the COVID-19 response, has experienced a significant shortage in funding (see Figure 3).

- As mentioned earlier, many humanitarian and aid agencies have repurposed and restructured their existing projects, funds, and priorities to overcome the shortage of COVID-19 funding, enabling them to deliver necessary interventions at the field level.
- The CPRP provides a framework for the agencies to restructure existing programmes and funds to respond to the challenges arising from the crises in Somalia (OCHA, 2020c). The United Nations Development Coordination office estimates that the repurposed funds amount to USD 400 million (UNDCO, 2020).

Figure 3. Fund requirements and gaps for COVID and non-COVID responses in the HRP



Source: OCHA, 2020a.

IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

Food security and nutrition: latest data and projections

January to March 2020

In the first quarter of 2020 (January to March), people facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) decreased to 1.15 million, as compared to late 2019 (October to December) when around 2.1 million people had the same status. In the same period, the number of stressed people (IPC Phase 2) declined from 4.2 to 2.8 million (FAO, 2020b). The Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) level was slightly above 13 percent in late 2019 and early 2020, compared to 12.6 percent in late 2018 and early 2019 (Somalia Nutrition Cluster 2020e).

² A cluster is a group of agencies or humanitarian organizations (both UN and non-UN) that gather to work together towards common objectives within a particular sector of emergency response. Example of the sectors is food security, health, education etc.

Above-average national cereal crop and livestock production following the favourable 2019 *Deyr*³ (October to December) rainy season may have contributed to reductions in food insecurity and malnutrition. Sustained and large-scale humanitarian assistance during this period also contributed to improved outcomes in many areas. Additionally, desert locust damages pasture and the 2019 *Deyr* harvest were limited and localized to a few regions

April to June 2020

The number of people in crisis and emergency situations (Phase 3 and above) increased significantly in the second quarter of 2020 to around 2.7 million (April to June). This number was also significantly higher than during the same period in 2019, when around 1.7 million people were in IPC 3 and above. Around 2.9 million people were in IPC Phase 2 – a slight increase from the first quarter of 2020. The prevalence of GAM in the period between March to June 2020 (*Gu* season) remained serious although slightly lower at 11.8 percent (compared to 13.8 percent in 2019 *Gu* season) (Somalia Nutrition Cluster 2020e).

The main factors contributing to the deterioration of food security were the triple crises facing Somalia during this period (floods,⁴ COVID-19 and the desert locust upsurge (FAO, 2019)). Severe floods commenced in late April and early May, coupled with an early end to the *Gu* season. COVID-19 affected income sources and hard currency (livestock exports and remittances). This was on top of job losses and supply chain disruptions, mainly due to floods, insecurity, and effects of COVID-19 containment measures. These factors significantly reduced the income of families, particularly poor households, affecting their purchasing capacity, food security and nutrition.

July to September 2020

The food security situation improved in this quarter as the people in IPC Phase 3 and above shrank from 2.7 million (April to June 2020) to 1.3 million (FSNAU, 2020a). This figure is comparable to the same period in 2019 when 1.3 million people faced Phase 3 or higher outcomes; however, such comparison may not be comprehensive considering the different conditions (1.3 million figure includes impact of humanitarian assistance while the April-June figure does not), context and challenges as well as the existence of the triple crises in this year unlike 2019.

The main factors contributing to improvements in this period were good *Haggai* rains from July to September; higher pasture availability and good harvests in areas that survived the floods; a gradual decrease in inundated areas during the *Gu* season despite the continuation of floods in some zones; the relaxation of COVID-19 restriction measures; and scaled-up locust control operations, which, along with the rains, facilitated quicker regeneration of pastures.

October to December 2020

According to the Somalia Food Security Outlook, malnutrition levels and food security status are both expected to deteriorate based on current trends and risk factors. The food security situation of vulnerable groups (i.e. IDPs, rural households, elderly, women – particularly pregnant and lactating – and children under five years) who cannot meet their minimum food needs without external assistance is expected to worsen if humanitarian assistance is not scaled up. The number of people in IPC Phase 3 and above is expected to increase to 2.1 million in late 2020, with about 850 000 children under the age of five facing acute malnutrition (FSNAU and FEWSNET, 2020d;

³ Somalia has four main seasons: dry and sunny *Jilaal* (December-mid-March), rainy *Gu* (mid-March-June), cool, dry and cloudy *Haggai* (July-mid-September), and secondary rainy *Deyr* (mid-September-November).

⁴ Flash and riverine floods started in Somalia as the result of *Gu'* rains (April to June 2020) and were reported continuously throughout the *Haggai* season (July-September 2020) as a result of heavy rains during this period (OCHA, 2020; FAO, 2020c).

FSNAU, 2020a; OCHA, 2020 23-8; FSNAU and FEWSNET, 2020d) due to the ongoing crises and projected low rainfall during the 2020 *Deyr* season.

How have the pandemic and associated measures affected agrifood systems?

Together with flooding and locust infestations, COVID-19 containment measures taken inside Somalia and outside its borders have had a significant impact on Somalia's agrifood industry, resulting in disruptions in input supply and production, processing, and marketing activities. Such measures stopped the import of seeds, fertilizers, and animal feed as well as some food items, and interrupted services inside Somalia as well as those provided for and by neighbouring and overseas countries. For example, Saudi Arabia restricted participation in the Hajj pilgrimage to a limited number of people from inside the country. This led to the cancellation of the export of almost one and a half million live animals to Saudi Arabia (although Somalia exported approximately half a million animals to cover local demand and consumption in Saudi Arabia).

Food price variations and key drivers

Variation in food prices has been a common phenomenon in Somalia due to changes in border restriction status, inter-regional movement, flood status, local markets, and consumer behaviour.

January to March 2020 (SWCG, 2020a)

- Somalia's agrifood market was relatively stable in late 2019 and early 2020 due to the availability of locally-produced food products following an above-average *Deyr* season and the absence of global supply chain disruptions.
- During this period, food prices were relatively low, with the prices of local crops (i.e., cowpeas, white and red sorghum) the lowest compared to the 5-year average (SCWG, 2020a).
- The overall price of imported foods in this period decreased, despite unusual price spikes of some imported food in certain locations (SCWG, 2020a).
- With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, food markets and consumer behaviour experienced significant disturbances triggered by food supply chain disruptions (due to international travel restrictions, closure of borders and floods), stockpiling of essential food items and increased demand due to Ramadan and the Eid festivals.

April to June 2020 (SCWG, 2020c)

- The heavy Gu rains damaged critical transport infrastructure, blocking supply corridors from the main markets to remote areas in several areas across the country. Maritime transportation was limited due to COVID-19.
- Maize and sorghum prices increased by 15 to 35 percent in several southern markets in April, as seasonal patterns were compounded by trade disruptions due to floods and by panic buying in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In April, sorghum prices were close to their April 2019 levels in several markets due to adequate domestic availability, while maize prices were generally higher than in the previous year as the result of below-average yields in 2019.
- The price of imported rice increased by 10 to 30 percent in April due to higher prices on the international market, panic buying, and flood-related trade disruptions.

- Imported food commodities had atypical price increases for vegetable oil in Jowhar and red rice in Hargeisa. This could be partly due to the effect of COVID-19 on international supply chains and the impact of heavy *Gu* rains on key supply corridors.
- A scarcity of fruits and vegetables such as bananas, tomatoes, onions, watermelons, mangoes – attributed to the from the heavy *Gu* rains – drove prices up in most parts of the country (FSNAU, 2020b).
- The increase in the price of locally-produced food products (cereals and vegetables) in riverine areas can be attributed to the floods that damaged farmlands and reduced access to fields. The increased food prices in some insecure and flooded areas could be due to the inability of goods to reach these locations.
- Livestock prices have gradually increased since late 2019 as the result of improved animal health following above-average rain seasons (the 2019 *Deyr* and 2020 *Gu*), which enhanced pasture and water availability.⁵
- Voluntary movement restrictions in some areas, particularly during the onset of the pandemic, reduced market access to both locally-produced and imported foods. For example, the Somali Cash and Markets Update reported that truck drivers operating between Baidoa (Bay region) and Wajid (Bakol region) voluntarily withdrew their services due to their fear of the pandemic; this disrupted the trade in the area (SCWG, 2020b).
- Following the decrease in the *Gu* rain level and the gradual reopening of the borders by the end of May, ground transportation and supply chains resumed around the country; this stabilized food prices in most regions (SCWG, 2020c), supported by government measures to control food prices through VAT exemptions (FSNAU, 2020c).

July to September 2020

- As the result of the relaxation of most measures and the receding of floodwaters, food markets continued to stabilize.
- The Somali Cash and Market Update for July-September 2020 reported a decrease in the average recorded price of the main cereals (red sorghum, white maize, or red rice, depending on the location) with the exception of a few districts still facing floods and/or insecurity situations, while prices for imported food commodities remained relatively stable (SCWG, 2020c).
- Heavy rain and floods in southern riverine areas and strong monsoon winds in coastal areas of Somaliland were reported to affected road transport (SCWG, 2020c). This disrupted the supply chain, causing sporadic and localized price fluctuations, and impacting the livelihoods of people in these areas.

Disruption of school feeding programmes

School feeding programmes (SFPs) aim to increase and improve student enrolment, attendance and feeding (MoE, 2020a). The World Food Programme feeds 165 000 children through its SFPs in Somali schools (Gordon, 2020). Other partners, including UNICEF and the Save Children, implement similar programmes. Food is also given to the most vulnerable households as part of humanitarian aid. As the result of school closures, many schoolchildren risked losing access to their only nutritious and regular food source.

⁵ Cereal process increased in April amid flood-related trade disruption and panic-buying due to COVID-19 pandemic (FAO, 2020a)

Coping mechanisms and consumption patterns

Different coping mechanisms and strategies have been adopted by households to cope with the pandemic and accompanying crises. The level and the type of coping mechanisms varies between livelihood zones. According to a recent household survey (August to October 2020) conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), they include selling households' goods, animals, and productive assets. Migration of households to preferred locations and eating seeds meant for planting were among the strategies identified in different livelihood zones.

What have been the short-term effects of the COVID-19-related health and economic crises and associated measures on livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition, and future prospects?

According COVID-19 has had a particularly severe impact on poor people who are vulnerable to the slightest supply chain disruption and food price increase. The poor were at a higher risk of contracting the virus and had less access to healthcare services and facilities. Most poor people work in the sectors that were forced to slow down or stop their activities during the pandemic and they live in conditions that increase their exposure to the virus. As the price of goods and services rose during the crisis, poor households were driven to spend a larger share of their income on food.

Impact on food insecurity and malnutrition

The above-average rainfall during the 2019 *Deyr* season (September to November/December) was adequate to support agricultural production. Between January and March 2020, improvements in household purchasing power, particularly for agriculture-dependent households, were reported as result of good harvests in the areas not affected by floods (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020a). These factors, together with pasture availability and improved livestock health may have contributed to a drop in the number of people facing severe food insecurity in early 2020 (January to March) as compared to late 2019, when a large number of poor households were unable to meet their food needs. Although floods damaged the crops and irrigation infrastructure, the impact of floods and locusts was largely localized during this period (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020a).

The effect of the triple crises became clear in the second quarter of 2020 (April to June). The containment measures taken to slow the progress of COVID-19 caused a decline in foreign exchange earnings from remittances and exports of livestock and other products. Floods caused by heavy Gu season rains (April to June 2020) reduced domestic cereal production, particularly in south-central Somalia, with the expectation of a 30-40 percent reduction in the national harvest below the long-term average (FSNAU and FEWS Net, 2020c). While locusts damaged a large area of pasture and farmlands, the floods inundated and damaged crops and prevented access to inputs, supplies, and transportation, which prevented the transport of crops that survived to markets, resulting in greater postharvest losses and reduced incomes. More than 400 000 people were thought to have been displaced by floods during this period.

A slight improvement in the GAM level in this period – despite the overall deterioration of the food security situation – can be attributed to the significant increase in the number of malnourished children that were reached by humanitarian assistance (MAM/SAM treatment), the numbers ranging from around 105 000 children at the beginning of March to more than 331 000 children in late June (Somalia Nutrition Cluster, 2020a; Somalia Nutrition Cluster, 2020b).

Improvements in the food security situation during the third quarter of 2020 may be due to a number of factors. Favourable rainfall during the *Hagaa* season (July to September) in pastoral and agropastoral areas enhanced water and pasture availability thus improving livestock health and productivity; increased the harvest in areas not affected by the floods; and reduced the overall impact of the locust infestation in these areas – on top of the control operations (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020d). Better access to humanitarian and safety net programmes is also considered a major contributor to this outcome. The Post-Gu 2020 Technical Release also considered the tax exemption policy adopted by the government and the relaxation of the movement and supply chain restrictions (both locally and globally) as key factors in the improvement of the food security status of the country.

Between July and August, surveys by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) for Somalia reported some improvement in the overall nutrition situation of rural and urban populations with the exception of IDPs (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020b). This is likely due to the factors mentioned above, which contributed to the overall improvement of the country's food security and nutrition situation. The gradual increase of the number of children reached by humanitarian assistance may also have contributed to this outcome since more than 200 000 children received food and nutrition aid between July and September 2020 (Somalia Nutrition Cluster, 2020d).

The projected increase in the number of people facing crisis outcomes (IPC Phase 3 and above) in the fourth quarter of the year was based on the fact that the impact of the triple crises is expected to continue, despite the gradual decline of the floods. Desert locusts continue to spread throughout the country, reaching southern agricultural areas. Locust swarms were reported to have reached the vicinity of Mogadishu, the capital city, during early November despite ongoing control operations (Gregory, 2020; VOA, 2020). The projected below-average rainfall in late 2020 (October to December) is expected to have a negative impact on food and nutrition security. Humanitarian assistance, livelihood support, and urgent treatment and nutrition support will be critical if this occurs (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020b).

Impact at household level

According to a household survey conducted by FAO between August and October 2020, more than half (52 percent) of agriculture-dependent households have faced difficulties in accessing seeds while almost half (48 percent) either could not plant at all this season or reduced their planting areas by half. Similarly, crop-producing households reported reduction in their sales in 2020 compared to 2019. For example, more than two-thirds of crop-producing households faced challenges in selling their products, while around four-fifths reported that they had fully or partly destroyed their crops between May and July due to their inability to access to the markets and poor storage capacity. Most livestock-keeping households reported a reduction in their livestock sales during May to July compared to the same period in 2019. The survey indicated an overall reduction in the main income sources of most of the participating households (73 percent). This was more significant for households that depend on non-farming related activities as their main income source.

Which groups are most likely to be severely impacted by COVID-19 and associated measures?

COVID-19 and the protective measures taken to contain it has had a significantly negative impact on the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, such as IDPs, daily casual workers, low-income, rural, marginalized, minority, and women-led households. Most of these groups depend on activities

that are sensitive to the protective measures (e.g., hospitality, restaurants, airport workers, taxi drivers, livestock and livestock products – milk and meat – markets) and potentially have more limited access to means and facilities to ensure good hygiene practices (i.e., regular access to water, soap, drainage facilities, feminine hygiene products etc.). Perhaps, groups such as IDPs who mainly live in crowded shelters and slums with less hygiene facilities are considered to be at a higher risk of virus exposure.

Households dependent on remittances

Remittance from the Somali diaspora is crucial for the country's economy and livelihoods and is a major source of financing for food and medicines. With an annual volume of USD 1.4 to 2 billion, remittances contribute 23-32 percent of GDP (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020c). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 40 percent of Somali households depend on remittances as a key source of income, using them to cover not only food expenses but also education, health, and household needs (IOM, 2020).

Most observers agree that remittances declined significantly in the early months of the pandemic due to the income challenges faced by the diaspora as a result of the wider global economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. However, there is some ambiguity surrounding subsequent developments. FSNAU monitoring data indicates that most urban and IDP households reported a ten to thirty percent drop in remittances during April-June as compared to the norm (FSNAU and NEWS NET, 2020b) and that rural households reported a similar drop in remittances during May-July (FSNAU and NEWS NET, 2020b). This affected the livelihoods and purchasing power of dependent households as well as the liquidity of the banks.

World Bank data derived from the Somalia Central Bank, by contrast, indicates that whilst household remittance income declined during month of April 2020, it rebounded during May and increased marginally (by comparison to equivalent 2019 data) during June. Meanwhile remittances to business declined during April and May but recovered in June and remittances to NGOs increased in all three months. It is currently unclear whether these late increases reflect a once off 'compensation' for remittances withheld during previous months or a more enduring response to the crisis.

Unemployed workers

Many major businesses closed or reduced their activities during the pandemic due to the fear of COVID-19 and/or imposed restrictions, in particularly representing the travel, hospitality, logistic, trade (especially khat/miraa) and education sectors. Although most are now operating normally, a large number of households continue to have no source of income, while people that have returned to work need time to recover and repay debts incurred during the crises. According to a survey conducted in June and July 2020 by the Ministry of Health and Nexus,⁶ around 66 percent of the population remain unemployed or underemployed (Nexus, 2020).

Net food buyers

Market behaviours and price fluctuations during the pandemic period are summarized above.

It is expected that low-income households shifted to local products and ate less preferred foods as a strategy to cope with price increases and limited access to imported products. However, clear evidence and data related to such shifts are not yet available.

⁶ Nexus is an umbrella for nine Somali NGOs and two INGOs (Oxfam and Save the Children International) which aims to break down the silos between humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding interventions.

Gender inequalities

The access of women to employment and income opportunities was highly restricted in Somalia, even before the pandemic. Women work more and earn less than men. Women were expected to be the first to lose their jobs during the pandemic. Women also had to cope with increased childcare responsibilities due to school closings.

Internally displaced people

Somalia's 2.6 million IDPs are the country's most fragile and vulnerable group.

In late 2019, around one-third of the total IDP population faced stress (IPC Phase 2), while 18 percent were in crisis (IPC Phase 3) or emergency (IPC Phase 4) circumstances (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020b). Following the outbreak of the pandemic, more than 70 percent of the IDP population faced acute food insecurity, around 35 percent faced stressed (IPC Phase 2), 30 percent faced crisis, and 6 percent faced crisis (IPC Phase 3) and emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes respectively in the period between April and June (FSNAU, 2020a). As time passed, the percentage of the population facing stress and crisis outcomes remained relatively constant, while the percentage of those facing emergency outcomes increased to 9 percent.

IDPs are the group most affected by COVID-19 for several reasons. First, most IDPs depend on humanitarian assistance, which was disrupted by the pandemic (see 2.d.). Second, they undertake daily casual jobs, which were also interrupted by the crisis and the accompanying containment measures. Third, they live in crowded camps and slums with poor hygiene and have no or limited access to health and sanitation facilities and services. These factors, plus their lack of awareness and education about COVID-19 puts them at high risk of contracting and transmitting the virus in communities that are already suffering from serious illnesses, acute malnutrition and a lack of health services. Given the fact that IDPs heavily depend on purchased food, the fluctuation and instability of food markets greatly increased their vulnerability and inability to withstand and recover from shocks.

According to the latest projections, further deterioration of IDP livelihoods, food security and nutrition is expected if external humanitarian assistances are not scaled up and extended to these vulnerable groups (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020b).

Rural populations

Many rural households have not been able to sell their animals due to disruptions in both local and export markets. Others experienced a significant reduction in sales capacity. This deprived pastoralists and rural communities of a valuable source of income and reduced their purchasing power during the crises.

Rural and pastoral communities mostly lack healthcare and sanitation facilities. Their regular interaction at water, range, and market points increases the risk of virus infection and transmission.

FOOD FOR REFLECTION: LONG-TERM POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Structural factors exacerbating the impacts of crises such as COVID-19

Somalia is highly vulnerable to shocks due to its fragile political and environmental circumstances. This vulnerability is aggravated by structural weaknesses that intensify the impact of the recurrent shocks and hinder recovery. The pandemic exposed pre-existing structural factors that challenge the capacity of SMEs, livestock exporters, hospitality, logistics and supply chain sectors to manage the food system in times of crisis. A number of these are described below.

Security

Somalia has struggled with civil war and instability since the collapse of its central government in 1991. Years of insecurity destroyed Somalia's infrastructure and basic services, caused the collapse of the economy, displaced millions, and damaged central and local administrations. It also impeded access to fertile lands and compromised domestic production. Although the security situation has improved, over time it has contributed to creating a long list of intractable structural weaknesses that makes the country more vulnerable to shocks.

Recurrent natural shocks

Somalia has faced a number of natural disasters over the past decade, from a famine in 2011-12 to severe drought in 2017, to regular flooding and the recent locust invasions in 2019 and 2020. These events have caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, killed millions of animals and wrecked the national economy and the livelihoods of millions of vulnerable households.

The National Development Plan (NDP) (2020-24) identified frequent water shortages and floods as key constraints to the development of the agriculture sector. This was attributed to a dilapidated irrigation and flood control infrastructure, particularly around productive riverine areas (MoP, 2020). Along with poor pest and disease management systems and limited mechanization, the inadequate road and transportation system is another bottleneck that hinders access to markets (MoP, 2020). The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Somalia (2021-2025) has prioritised *inter alia* climate-smart strategies for sustainably managing natural resources, addressing key challenges and constraints in productive sector value chains and enhancing the productivity and value addition to ensure the sector contributes to job creation and poverty reduction goals (UN, 2020).

Poverty, displacement, unemployment and food insecurity

According to the Government of Somalia, more than two thirds (69 percent) of the population lives under the poverty line (USD 1.90 daily) (MoP, 2020). Also, more than one-fifth of the population (2.6 million out of 12.3 million people) is internally displaced, on top of more than half (51.7 percent) who are food insecure (FSNAU, 2020a). This adds another layer of fragility, aggravating the impact of any shock and making the Somali population sensitive to the slightest disruption in its food supply.

Dependency on remittances and imported food

Somalia is highly dependent on both remittances and imported food. According to the latest data, the volume of remittances is around USD 2 billion per year; remittances are mostly received by low- and middle-income households and used for food and other necessary services (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2020c). Remittance-dependent households need support if they are to survive during a reduction in remittance flows. This could be done through different financing programmes that support such households to start new small businesses as alternative income sources.

The extent of food import dependency in Somalia is also significant: imports of agricultural products (mainly food) cost Somalia USD 1.5 billion in 2015 compared to USD 82 million in the late 1980s, with local crop production meeting only 22 percent of per capital cereal needs (World Bank, 2018).

Overdependence on imported food – most of which can be produced locally – clearly impedes economic progress and investment in domestic agrifood system. Public and private partnerships can be useful for securing investment in local products that can effectively compete with imported goods, cutting down on import costs and improving community employment, income and livelihoods. Nevertheless, more studies are needed to understand the complex root causes of Somalia’s dependency on imported food and to identify appropriate policies and strategies to reduce it.

Export markets and products

Somalia currently exports livestock, crops (banana, sesame, lemon, etc.), and a limited quantity of fish. Most exports go to a small number of Gulf countries. Any market disturbances in these countries can swiftly and negatively affect domestic production and trade, as was seen during the pandemic when Saudi Arabia officially cancelled the 2020 Hajj season, causing a sharp decline in Somali livestock exports since August 2020.

Somalia needs to expand and diversify into new export markets, thus reducing the impact of bans and market disturbances in client countries. This will require improving product quality, as well as adding value to the products to meet the demand and expectations of new markets. Value addition might focus on investing in processed, chilled and frozen meat and fish; hides, bones, and skin; as well as on marketing crops that are highly sought after in many parts of the world such as banana, sesame, and lemon. The adoption and application of strict quality assurance and food safety measures should be a priority.

Most of the vulnerabilities and structural weaknesses described above seemed to have external sources (e.g. remittances, food import and export markets). Nevertheless, some key policies and strategies should be adopted to ensure the agrifood system is more resilient to current and subsequent recurrent crises and shocks.

How did the roles of markets and the private sector change during the pandemic?

Role of markets and supermarkets

- Purchasing from larger businesses and supermarkets increased during the pandemic (for those who could afford them). This could be due to their higher commitment to COVID-19 precautions, health guidelines and the relative ease of maintaining physical distance in a greater space. The supermarkets faced the same supply chain disruptions as smaller markets; however, they were in better position to overcome such challenges through sophisticated and large capacity logistic arrangements and the ability of their wealthier customers to handle price increases.
- Due to a ban by major importing countries, animals were redirected to nearby local markets, as were crops and fish. Although it negatively affected some transporters, traders, and brokers, the shorter supply chains enhanced local trade and helped prevent price spikes in domestic products, which prevented further food security deterioration. As the crisis recedes some suppliers are expected to stick with these ‘new’ markets, while others are likely to return to their pre-pandemic markets.

- A significant number of small businesses either collapsed or faced significant income reduction due to their inability to cope with supply chain disruptions and movement restrictions.
- As conditions improve, many are expected to return to their previous buying behaviour; however, others are also expected to stick with the newly developed attitudes and shopping modalities.

Role of private sector

- The private sector made a significant contribution to the pandemic response through resource mobilization for charity, providing inputs and facilities the hospitals, supporting vulnerable households and raising public awareness.
- A possible shift in the role of the private sector may include more focus on the establishment of food reserves or stocks to respond to supply chain disruptions. However, this is expected to be business-oriented and may not significantly contribute to food assistance programmes during future crises.
- Further coordination, collaboration, and stronger public and private partnerships to leverage growth inducing investments are an important priority, particularly during crises. Putting the necessary policies and legislative instruments in place to guide and enable active private sector participation in building the resilience of the country is also paramount.

Are there discussions about ‘building food systems back better’ based on current experiences or on how to handle the crisis better if another round of the pandemic or similar events occur?

Current discussions focus on addressing Somalia’s vulnerabilities and structural weaknesses to enable the food system to avoid or reduce the impacts of recurrent expected shocks and crises. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI), with support from FAO and the European Union and in consultation with relevant stakeholders prepared and validated the National Food Security and Nutrition Policy. Currently, the MoAI is in the process of producing the final policy document (both in the Somali and English versions) to be published officially.

Improving domestic food production

Somalia has long used traditional production systems for its crop, livestock, and fisheries activities. Initiatives to transform farming systems and increase productivity will not only enable a more resilient food industry, but also improve employment and income-generation opportunities as well as reducing high pre- and postharvest losses. Production systems with scope for improvement include:

- **Horticulture and greenhouse farming.** Due to the availability and affordability of renewable energy and water sources, horticulture and greenhouse farming systems could be expanded to meet the growing demand for vegetables and fruits in urban areas. A number of small businesses invested in greenhouse farming during the pandemic, with significant returns.
- **Peri-urban intensive and household level farming.** Urban and peri-urban production facilities are expected to be less affected by the disruptions of the supply chain and restrictive measures caused by the pandemic. The shorter value and supply chains enable producers to access their inputs and markets easily and swiftly. It also enables them to

access basic services (health, education, water, sanitation, and health, etc.) that are not readily available in rural and remote production areas.

- **Fisheries.** The fish sector was little affected by the pandemic, due to its short value and supply chains. Nor did recent recurrent droughts and floods have much of an impact on the fish industry. This indicates that increasing support for the fish industry, dependent coastal communities, and the entire fish value chain could facilitate resilient and more productive food systems. Such support might include enhancing fishing capacity, developing landing sites, improving cold-chain facilities, and adopting technologies and advanced equipment. In order to realise the full potential of Somalia's fisheries, it will be vital to address the continuing problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). Illegal fishing currently deprives the country of a significant volume of fish resources and negatively impact the ocean and sea ecosystems. Moreover, recurrent cyclones in coastal areas represent a significant threat to fishing and coastal households.

Using digital technologies

- Somalia has one of the highest rates of mobile money penetration in Africa, reaching 80 percent and 55 percent in urban and rural areas, respectively (Yusuf, A.M., 2020). About three-quarters of Somali people over the age of 16 have access to mobile money.
- During the pandemic, mobile payments were widely used by government agencies to transfer cash to beneficiaries after their registration and verification.
- The requirement for biometric registration by beneficiaries was replaced with GPS-enabled photos during the registration and verification. The adoption of voice and facial recognition is also expected (FAO, 2020b).
- Hawala companies have established platforms where people can send and receive money without going to their offices. This has enabled people to receive money without contracting the virus.
- While there is potential for digital technologies to improve agrifood systems, Somalia's capacity to utilize them, at least in the near future, is limited due to structural constraints and weaknesses.

E-agriculture, drones or robotics, vertical agriculture

Helicopters and drones have been used successfully to assess and control locust infestations and floods. There is an opportunity to expand the use of such tools for the same and related purposes.

What are the challenges for the humanitarian and development communities in the medium-term?

- The National Development Plan (NDP-9 2020-2024) will guide the interventions and plans of the humanitarian and development communities in the medium-term. Most of the medium and long-term priorities in NDP-9 are similar to those identified in the previous plan (NDP 2017-2019).
- Humanitarian agencies will continue to respond to immediate needs on the ground; however, addressing the vulnerabilities and structural weakness in the food systems is a key priority for both the medium- and long-term.

- No significant changes have been noted in the medium- and long-term priorities of humanitarian and development partners. According to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP 2020), IDPs, education, food security, health, nutrition, social protection, shelter, and water, sanitation and health remain central.
- The UNCF has emphasized support for emerging small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Ensuring the access of marginalized people to basic social services, enhancing their market-based skills, reducing their vulnerability to climate change and environmental shocks, and building their resilience are also at the centre of the cooperation framework described below (UN, 2020).

INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

The pandemic has made it clear that significant improvements and reforms in the in Somalia's governance and enabling systems are needed to enhance the resilience of the country and ability to cope with recurrent shocks and crises.

Nascent local administration structures have limited capacity to facilitate efforts to reach vulnerable people local administration structures to reach vulnerable people in some regions/districts, rural, and remote areas. This is compounded by floods and insecurity in some areas which makes it a challenge to reach those in need. Decentralized and competent local administrations will not only facilitate the smooth response to COVID-19 and similar crises but also will be crucial for the implementation of all humanitarian, resilience, and development initiatives in future.

Effective coordination at all levels is essential. This includes intergovernmental coordination at federal, state, and district levels as well as coordination with humanitarian and development partners. Such coordination will ensure a better and faster response to crises and a more effective use of resources.

Coordination of the COVID-19 responses

A national COVID-19 taskforce was established to coordinate crisis response. The taskforce is led by the Prime Minister with representatives from the Ministries of Health (federal and state level), Planning, Interior, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Endowments and Religious Affairs as well as health professionals, scholars, businessmen, and civil society (OCHA, 2020d). Regions have their own COVID-19 committees to coordinate the response plans in their respective areas. At the local level, public awareness campaigns were started and disseminated through local radios, posters, TVs, and social media. The government also established a free call-centre in April for COVID-19 enquiries, which received up to 4 000 daily calls.

Implication of the crises and related policies for conflict and social tensions

- On 25 April, public unrest was triggered in Mogadishu after the killing of two civilians by a police officer due to an argument on the implementation of curfew rules (OCHA, 2020d). The government took quick and bold action to ensure the safety of citizens and initiate further cooperation between the public and authorities.
- Nevertheless, the pandemic and the adopted measures triggered disputes between the federal and some state administrations, especially policies around the suspension of flights and closure of borders.

- COVID-19 came at a time when the country was preparing for an election. Somalia committed to conducting timely elections at both regional and federal levels.
- However, on 27 June, the chairman of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) announced that the One Person One Vote (1P1V) election should be postponed due to technical, security, financial and logistic issues on top of the COVID-19 pandemic threat.
- The NIEC requested a postponement of 13 months (from July 2020 to August 2021) or 9 months (July 2020 to April 2021) depending on the modality of the election, whether biometric or election-day manual registration of the voters respectively (BBC, 2020). This move initiated a political dispute concerning a term extension for the current government.
- On 17 September following a series of consultations, both federal and state leaders agreed to cancel the long awaited 1P1V election in favour of an indirect election (Dhaysane, 2020).
- Although COVID-19 was not the only reason for not implementing the planned election model, it was a significant contributing factor. Other factors included security challenges and lack of prior coordination and planning by political stakeholders.
- While the decision to not go ahead with the 1P1V election could be considered a loss for Somali democracy, the fact that it was possible for Somali political elites to reach a peaceful, timely and inclusive agreement was a major achievement.

Government capacity to implement new policies and programmes

- The government was able to enforce key policies and measures to respond to the pandemic and reduce its overall impact on the country.
- There was weak enforcement of local measures because of the limited capacity of relevant federal and state bodies as well as the low level of public compliance on top of the other structural factors (i.e., insecurity).
- Inadequate fiscal space and capacities constrained the Government's ability to carry out large-scale responses throughout the country, particularly for vulnerable communities and households.

Information, assessment, and policy dialogue

A number of assessments have been undertaken to examine the impact of the pandemic on Somalia, particularly socio-economic, food security, and nutrition status.

- FAO is monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and food security through call centre interviews by GeoPoll. The first phase of data collection took place in July; the second and third rounds will take place during the planting season in October and at the end of the *Deyr* harvest season in December and January. This task is a collaboration between FAO's Somalia Office and the Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER).
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is leading Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) of COVID-19 in partnership with the government, World Bank, UNIDO, IOM, and other donors and implementing agencies. The assessment aims to provide an evidence-based multisectoral response to the pandemic, in line with the country's NDP. It is expected that the first draft of the assessment will be completed in last quarter of 2020 (OCHA, 23-8).
- UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to assess the primary and secondary impacts of COVID-19 to identify households at risk of falling below (or 'deeply under') the poverty line as a result the pandemic.

- UNIDO collaborated with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) to analyse the impact of the pandemic on the country's economy. A survey on the impact of the pandemic on SME operations is also being conducted by UNIDO, the World Bank, and IFC. The findings of the study and survey will be incorporated in the next updates when they become available.
- With support from UNDP, the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development assessed the impact of COVID-19 on women-led small-scale businesses (MWHRD, 2020). The report found that most of the businesswomen lost their source of income during the pandemic. The report also recommended urgent support to these vulnerable groups and outlined a few recommendations on the way forward.
- UN-Habitat conducted a rapid assessment of the impact of the pandemic on local governments and recommended bold and immediate solutions to ensure the continuity of their functions and services (OCHA, 23-8).
- Multiple ongoing discussions and dialogue focus on taking urgent steps to enhance the overall agrifood system and improve resilience to current and future crises. Most of the discussions focus on improving domestic production, reducing dependence on imported food, single export markets and remittances as detailed above.

ANNEX – SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES BY THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITIES TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The table does not include all of the agencies working on COVID-19 mitigation in Somalia nor all of the activities undertaken by the agencies listed below. This information will be updated regularly accordingly to developments on the ground and updates from partners.

| Agency | Measures/ response plans/ priorities | Coverage | Comments |
|--------|--------------------------------------|------------|---|
| OCHA | Coordination and reporting | Nationwide | OCHA started regular COVID-19 updates to provide overall situational analysis as well as briefings on the pandemic's impact on the humanitarian response, food security, water, sanitation and health, and social services. The briefs also summarize implemented and planned activities by different agencies and organizations. |
| UNDP | Assessment | Nationwide | The COVID-19 Socio Economic Impact Assessment in Somalia is launched with support from the World Bank and UNIDO. |
| FAO | Assessment | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIRST initiative assesses the policy response to the pandemic and considers its implications. Primary data collection to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and food security |
| | Field support | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash and voucher programme expanded to over 100 000 households. Vaccination of 14.5 million goats against contagious caprine pleuropneumonia (CCPP) Supportive treatment provided to 3.5 million animals in Somaliland and Puntland Cash and livelihoods assistance given to 6 880 pastoral households classified under IPC 3 and 4 with aid planned for another 8 520 households during 2020. Deworming, mineral blocks, milk storage and cash transfers for six months were provided to identified households to safeguard their assets and improve their food security and livelihoods. Unconditional cash transfers with agriculture inputs were provided to 600 households in Jowhar, Middle Shabelle region. 414 000 households were registered to benefit from the cash assistance programme through the Mobile Money Platform (OCHA, 2020k). Personal protective equipment (PPE) and facilities (i.e., masks, gloves, gowns, disinfectants and washing stations) were provided to main fishing landings and markets in Mogadishu. Fuel subsidies (12 000 litres) were provided to fishermen to overcome the fuel supply |

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|------------------------|--|----------------|---|
| | | | <p>chain disruptions and to support the sector's bounce back following the COVID-19 peak.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of agricultural seeds (sorghum, maize, cowpeas, and beans) to 1300 vulnerable smallholder farmers affected by COVID-19 in Merka district of Lower Shabelle region. • 70 Community Health Workers (CHWs) were trained on Covid-19 prevention and mitigation measures. Furthermore, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), sanitizers, N95 masks, soaps, gowns/goggles were provided to Health Workers in isolation centers and at main entry checkpoints in Southwest State. • Printed and distributed 7,000 copies of leaflets on COVID-19 prevention key messages (both in Somali and English versions) and also disseminated the same messages through bill boards and radio talk (for 3 months) in Merka and Baidoa districts in Southwest State. In addition, hygiene kits (hand sanitizers, soaps and shampoos) were distributed to 65 IDP camps targeting elderly persons, schools and health centers and also hand washing facilities were installed at key locations in Southwest State. |
| WFP | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since April, monthly assistance (food and vouchers) has been provided to more than 300 000 beneficiaries. • Social protection safety nets and resilience building-interventions • Food assistance to women (including pregnant and lactating women), children under 5 years and take-home food rations provided to children at primary schools • Cash-based assistance |
| WHO | Vaccination | Benadir region | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccinations against polio and measles provided to improve the health status of the children during the crises. |
| UNICEF (UNICEF, 2020a) | Communication | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 3 million people reached directly and 10 million anticipated to be reached indirectly (by radio spots) through risk communication and community engagement initiatives. |
| | Health, nutrition, WASH and child protection | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of PPE to 1 177 healthcare facilities • Provision of essential healthcare services (vaccinations, pre/postnatal care, HIV and gender-based violence care) to 479 192 children and women • 1 877 healthcare providers trained on COVID-19 detection, referral, and cash-management • Therapeutic care for 132 955 children under 5 years with severe malnutrition • Community-based mental health and psychosocial support provided to 22 881 children |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WASH supplies and hygiene kits provided to 772 966 people |
| | Education | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary education through different channels, including distance learning, provided to 116 612 children. Supported the Ministry of Education in Puntland with Learning Passport digital platform, a UNICEF-Microsoft supported initiative that enables students to access their lessons (online/offline) and allows teachers as well as parents to monitor their progress (UNICEF, 2020b). |
| USAID (USAID, 2020) | Mitigate the overall impact of COVID-19 | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 1 April, USAID announced USD 7 million support to Somalia as part of a USD 274 million global emergency health and humanitarian assistance to combat the pandemic (U.S. Embassy in Somalia, 2020a). On 18 June, the U.S. government announced additional USD 17.1 million in support to mitigate the impact of the crises and enable Somalia to better respond to COVID-19 (U.S. Embassy in Somalia, 2020d; U.S. Embassy in Somalia, 2020b). Supports the prevention of the pandemic and responds to its impact on economy and livelihoods Provided hospital equipment and facilities for quarantine stations, isolation centres, hospitals, and laboratories (U.S. Embassy in Somalia, 2020c). Provided technical support and training for women and young people. Facilitated lessons broadcasting through local audiovisual and social media. USD 3 millions of micro and small loans (maximum of USD 50 000 each) for women and youth-led businesses to cope with the challenges of the pandemic and maintain their employees. Supported the export-oriented agribusinesses to mitigate the impact of pandemic on their value and supply chains. |
| United Kingdom (Government of the United Kingdom, 2020) | Locust outbreak | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 23 July, the UK government announced EUR 18 million in response to the locust outbreak in Somalia. This followed another EUR 8 million provided earlier this year to FAO to control the locust outbreak in East Africa and Pakistan. |
| World Bank | Social protection Livelihood support Locust COVID-19 response | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 19 April, with a grant from International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, the government announced a nationwide social safety net programme (Baxnaano) to protect and support poor and vulnerable households and family members during the pandemic (MoLSA, 2020). In June, the World Bank approved USD 40 million for a Shock Responsive Safety Net for Locust Response (SNLRP) programme to support the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable households affected by locust infestation and suffering from the |

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|---------------------------|--|------------|---|
| | | | <p>consequences of COVID-19 (World Bank, 2020c).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World Bank also approved a grant of USD 13.7 million to support Somalia to better respond to and recover from multiple, ongoing, and overlapping crises. Also, based on the government request, the World Bank provided additional USD 20.5 million for the Somali Crises Recovery Project for the COVID-19 emergency response (World Bank, 2020a). |
| European Union (EU, 2020) | Food, shelter, access to clean water and basic health services, protection, and education. | Nationwide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous humanitarian cargo flights have carried humanitarian and medical supplies as part of the pandemic response • The Team Europe supported Somalia with EUR 55 million to fight against the pandemic. • Out of this funding, EUR 5.85 million was allocated for improving the preparedness, response, and mitigation of the pandemic on the IDPs and other vulnerable groups in Mogadishu. • The EU provided EUR 51.2 million in 2020 to support humanitarian initiatives and projects throughout the country • Furthermore, the EU provided EUR 11 million (to FAO) and EUR 1.4 million for locust response and emergency assistance for the immediate needs, respectively. |

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The **Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme (FIRST)** is a strategic partnership between the European Union and FAO. Through a network of policy officers embedded in government bodies, it works hand in hand with over 22 countries on setting the right conditions to promote both public and private investments in sustainable agriculture and creating an enabling environment for these investments to contribute to achieving food security and nutrition.

Launched by the European Union, FAO and the World Food Programme at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the **Global Network against Food Crises** is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors united by the commitment to tackle the root causes of food crises and promote sustainable solutions to eradicate hunger and malnutrition through leveraging analysis and knowledge sharing, strengthened coordination in supporting evidence-based policy responses and collective efforts across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus.

A joint effort between FIRST with the Global Network has produced assessments on policy responses related to COVID-19 and their impact on agrifood systems in 13 countries. In particular, FIRST brought policy analysis capacities to support the programming priorities of FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) and the Global Network in these countries; FAO's OER and the Global Network provided quantitative assessments of the impacts of the pandemic on food security and nutrition.

This document was produced by the FAO representation in Somalia. The process was led by **Ali Mohamed Ali**, FIRST policy officer in Somalia, with contributions from **Jonathan Brooks** and other members of the country programme team, the FIRST management team and the Technical Support Unit of the Global Network against Food Crisis.



CO-FUNDED BY THE
EUROPEAN UNION

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