



FAO Armenia: Immediate response to Covid-19

ASSESSMENTS, SURVEYS AND MONITORING RESULTS

Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the FAO pilot beneficiaries in Lori and Shirak marzes

A rapid assessment conducted in March confirmed that the Cash+ pilot of an ongoing Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) project has strengthened the resilience of beneficiary households and will certainly contribute to early recovery and the mitigation of consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project “Developing Capacity for Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Selected Countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia,” funded by the Russian Federation, has helped 133 vulnerable rural households in Armenia by providing them agricultural input and knowledge. The rapid assessment, which aimed at understanding the impact of COVID-19 on these Cash+ pilot beneficiary families, included phone consultations with 28 randomly selected households (21 percent of the total). These households include 170 people in all, of which 42.7 percent are children 5 or younger. Read more [here](#)¹.

Rapid assessment of greenhouse farmers

In early May, agricultural producers owning greenhouses were questioned about the problems they face in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were asked whether they can continue working, how the lockdown has affected agricultural production and employment, and to what extent value chain linkages (from agricultural producers to consumers) have been damaged.

An analysis of the results shows that the majority (74 percent) of the respondents, who are from throughout the country, manage 0.5 ha of land or less. A further 9 percent of respondents manage 0.5 to 1 ha of land, and 17 percent manage 1 ha or more. The rapid assessment revealed that 48 percent of the respondents are having issues with access to markets (both domestic and external), with only 9 percent of the overall respondents considering these issues to be very serious. Hampered market accessibility arises from increases in transportation costs, border bans, and declines in consumption in both domestic and external markets.

Production volumes have not declined significantly, but a price decrease (due to export restrictions and lower consumption) was registered by more than half of the respondents. Despite the losses, 83 percent of respondents said they could keep the number of permanent workers unchanged. An additional 13 percent stated that the number of permanent workers had been decreased by 10 percent, while 4 percent of respondents reported a reduction of 20 to 30 percent.

The survey results also suggest that while economic actors can still bear the challenges and problems emerging from the crisis, they are on the edge, and they expect tangible measures from the government to help them address issues.

Rapid survey of food supply chains in Europe and Central Asia in the framework of COVID-19

As in many countries worldwide, the mandatory lockdown in Armenia resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted the movement of people, trade (export-import), the free crossing of borders by people and products, and the operation of markets, restaurants, food stalls and hotels. These restrictions, though inevitable, can negatively affect food supply chains.

Recognizing this risk, FAO has emphasized from the outset of the pandemic the need to closely monitor the functioning of food supply chains and to identify and flag problems that could compromise food security, notably food availability.

In the second half of April, 36 key informants of the food supply chain were surveyed in Armenia. More than half (58 percent) of the respondents were farmers, while 22 percent were food processors, 11 percent farm input producers and/or suppliers, and 8 percent retailers. The survey questionnaire was a tool for monitoring the situation and collecting the perceptions of actors in the food supply chain.

The sole objective was to learn directly from food supply actors and operators whether the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their work. This information is fundamental and provides first-hand knowledge of the problems in the country.

The survey results, which are already available, can be used as a first step to identify and flag problems, and, in turn, will help determine whether further in-depth research is necessary.

DISCUSSIONS AND MEETINGS

FAO Representative in Armenia and Deputy Minister of Economy discussed FAO priorities amid COVID-19 situation (23 March)

Raimund Jehle, the FAO Representative in Armenia, and Arman Khojoyan, the Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia, discussed the priorities of FAO's work in the country and shared views on how to continue the cooperation in the challenging environment caused by COVID-19. The meeting was held via video due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Many things have changed due to the current global situation. Governments in many countries, including Armenia, have temporarily shifted their priorities to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more [here](#)ⁱⁱ.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

FAO addresses agricultural land abandonment in Armenia (6 April)

Considering the situation caused by COVID-19, the issue of food security has become even more important for the country. Re-engaging abandoned agricultural land in food production has become imperative.

A joint team of experts from FAO and the Ministry of Economy of Armenia has prepared a draft law on the effective use of agricultural land. This draft was presented to the Ministry's Legal Working Group for review and comment.

The purpose of the law is to support sustainable agriculture and rural development, including the reduction of agricultural land abandonment and fragmentation, improved land use efficiency, the development of the agricultural land market, farm enlargement, and the development of smallholder farms into commercial farms. Read more [here](#)ⁱⁱⁱ.

The national digital agriculture strategy for Armenia is on its way, with FAO support (7 May)

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that those who have remained connected could continue working, to an extent, while those confronted with the rural digital divide have had difficulties maintaining their activities.

A joint online consultation between FAO and the Ministry of Economy, held on 7 May, marked another step in the development of a national digital agriculture strategy for Armenia.

The meeting served as a forum for the introduction of the digital agriculture framework, the sharing of key findings from the situational analysis, and the discussion and validation of the digital agriculture strategy's priorities. Read more [here](#)^{iv}.

DEDICATED GOVERNMENT WEBSITE

A webpage has been created to share government programmes addressing the economic impact of COVID-19 in Armenia. See more at www.gov.am/en/covid19/.

ⁱ <http://www.fao.org/armenia/news/detail-events/en/c/1273215/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.fao.org/armenia/news/detail-events/en/c/1269473/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail-news/en/c/1271778/>

^{iv} <http://www.fao.org/armenia/news/detail-events/en/c/1274214/>