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CELAC
Comunidad de Estados
Latinoamericanos y Caribeños

Food security under the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus will result in increased hunger and poverty in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). The region has seen its food security worsen in recent years, and this new crisis may have a particularly severe impact on certain countries and territories.

The Latin American and Caribbean region produces and has sufficient reserves to adequately feed its inhabitants in the coming months.

The main risk in the short term is not being able to guarantee access to food for the population that is complying with sanitary security measures to prevent the spread of the virus, and that in many cases has lost its main source of income. In addition, it is essential to keep the food system alive in order to ensure supply to consumers.

CELAC governments are implementing policies to face the crisis. However, budgetary constraints, logistical challenges, and the urgency of the situation call for high-impact initiatives that are feasible in each of the national contexts.

The region must initiate “post-COVID-19” strategies as soon as possible with the aim of resuming the path of sustainable and inclusive growth allowing it to achieve the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

FAO makes available to CELAC countries its technical capacity and global experience related to the identification of policy instruments that are proving successful in the sustainability of food systems and food security in the context of COVID-19.

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1. COVID-19, a threat to food security in Latin America and the Caribbean

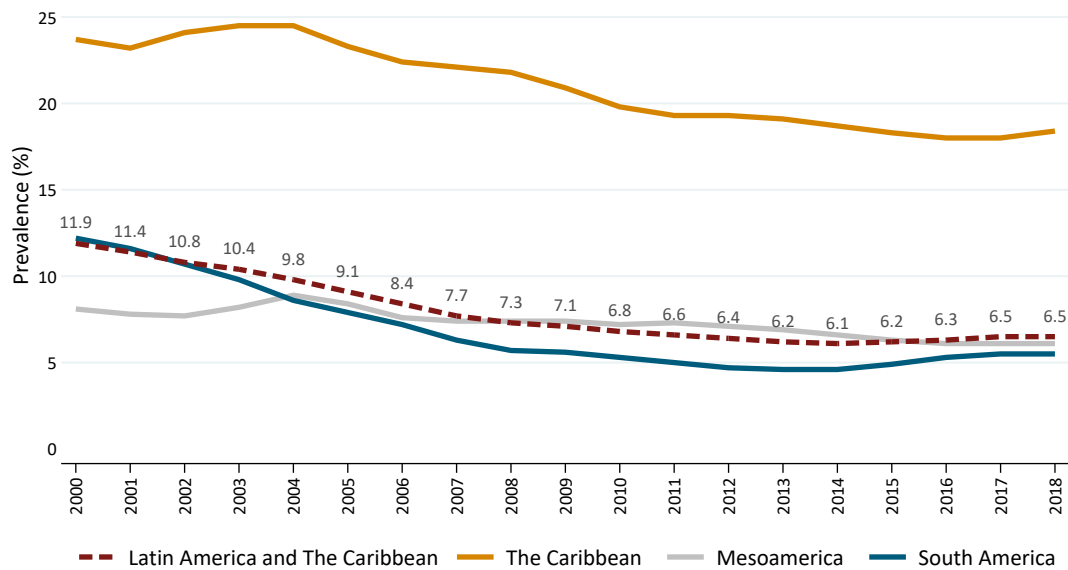
It is highly likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will result in increased hunger and poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. The sanitary measures implemented to prevent the spread of the virus have direct consequences on the functioning of food systems. Hence, complementary actions are required so that the fight against the pandemic does not compromise the food security of the population.

A person is food-insecure when they lack physical, social and economic access to enough safe and nutritious food to meet their nutritional needs and food preferences and lead an active and healthy life (FAO *et al*, 2019). The extreme expression of food insecurity is hunger, affecting 42.5 million people in the region in 2018. We should also consider the population facing uncertainties about their ability to obtain food, therefore forced to reduce the quality or quantity of the food they consume. In this context we find that, in that same year, 188 million people, a third of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean, were facing food insecurity before the first cases of COVID-19.

The region and CELAC face this new threat to their food security from different contexts. At the regional level in recent years, undernourishment¹ has been on the rise, reaching a prevalence of 6.5 percent in 2018 (an indicator used to monitor Sustainable Development Goals hunger goals), following a significant reduction between 2000 and 2014 (from 62.6 million people, or 11.9 percent of the population to 38 million people, or 6.1 percent of the population). That was the situation when in 2015, the III Summit of Latin American and Caribbean States adopted the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and the Eradication of Hunger 2025 (CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication).

Undernourishment dropped in Mesoamerica and came to a standstill in the Caribbean over the last few years. Therefore, the rise in undernourishment in the region is explained by the increase in South America, where it rose from 19 to 23.7 million people, or from 4.6 percent to 5.5 percent of the population between 2014 and 2018. Of the three subregions, South America concentrates 55 percent of undernourished people in the region.

¹ This report includes the analysis of three of the four indicators associated with monitoring Sustainable Development 2 on Zero Hunger, which are: undernourishment, food insecurity and childhood malnutrition.

Figure 1. Evolution of the prevalence of undernourishment in Latin America and the Caribbean in percentages, 2000-2018

Source: FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2019.

The countries showing the greatest prevalence of people suffering from hunger in 2018 were Haiti (49.3 percent), Guatemala (15.2 percent), Nicaragua (17 percent), the Plurinational State of Bolivia (17.1 percent) and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (21.2 percent). As for the number of people suffering from hunger (in millions), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (6.8), Haiti (5.4), Mexico (4.7), Peru (3.1), and Guatemala (2.6) concentrated over half of undernourished people in the region.

On the other hand, low-height-for-age or stunting characterizes food security in children under five. On this front, CELAC countries have made significant progress in the last 30 years, by reducing the prevalence of stunting to less than half, from 22.8 percent to 9 percent of the population, between 1990 and 2018. Mesoamerica shows the most marked declines, dropping from 32 percent to 13 percent in the same period, while the Caribbean and South America both went from levels of around 20 percent down to 8 percent. It is important to highlight that this indicator reflects the accumulated effects of prolonged nutritional deprivation, recurrent infections, and the lack of water and sanitation infrastructure.

Finally, it should be noted that the prevalence of overweight is increasing in all age groups in LAC, but in the context of the current crisis, the high incidence of obesity in adults raises even greater concern, because this condition increases the risk of death in people who become infected with the coronavirus (Arthur *et al*, 2020; Lighter *et al*, 2020; Petrilli *et al*, 2020).

This is especially relevant in a region where one out of four adults - 105 million people - live with obesity. Countries like Argentina, the Bahamas, Chile, Dominica and Mexico double the obesity rate worldwide.

COVID-19, countries and territories of special concern

There are countries and territories where the impacts of COVID-19 can be especially serious. This severe and even sudden manifestation of hunger can be monitored by means of the acute food insecurity indicator ².

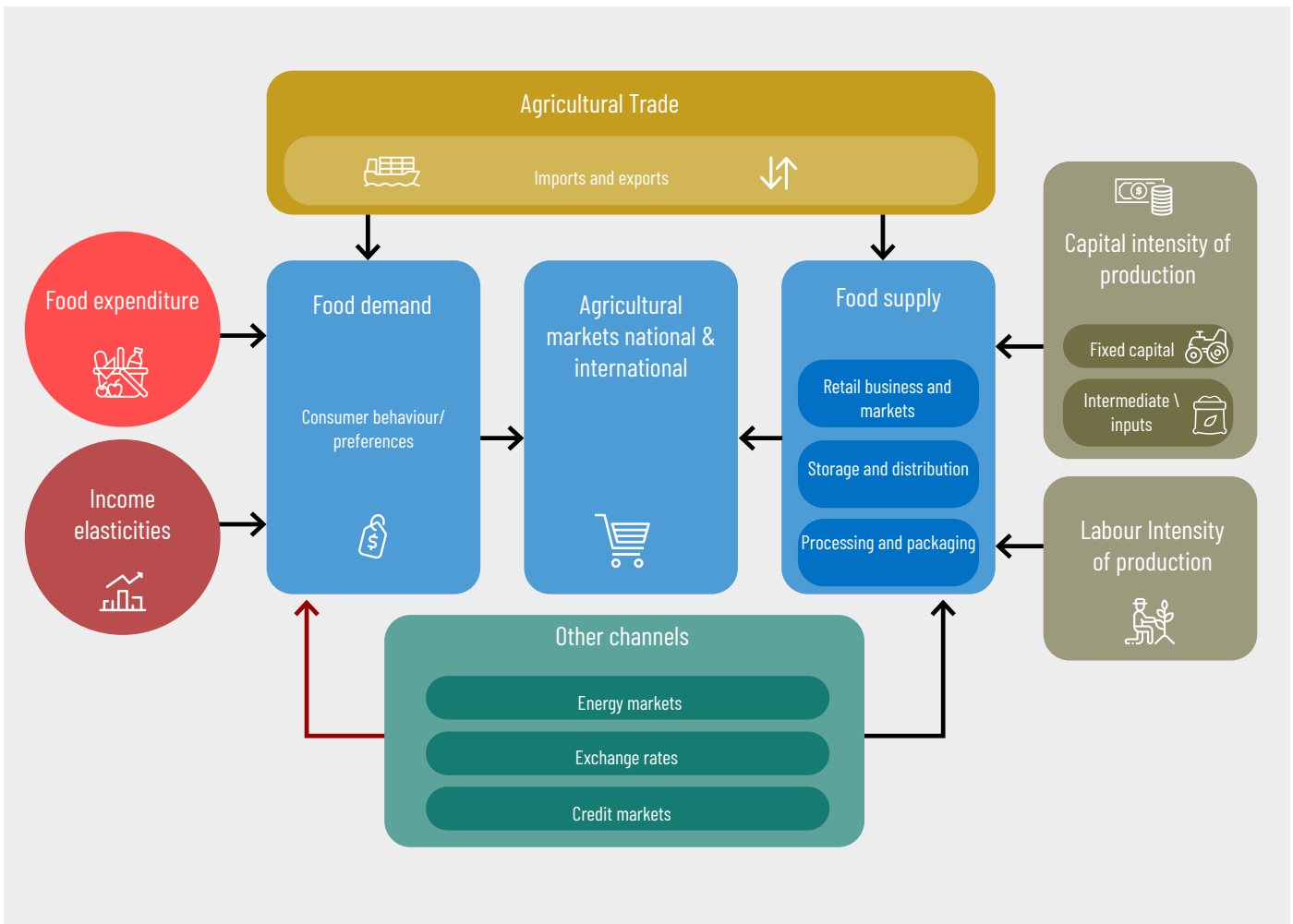
In 2019, the region registered 18.5 million people in acute food insecurity caused by economic and climate related factors (Food Security Information Network, 2020). This population group was concentrated in eight countries. More than half was associated with the deterioration of food security inside and outside the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It is estimated that 9.3 million Venezuelans suffered from acute food insecurity in the country, just like 1.2 million Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Ecuador. The remaining regional population suffering from acute food insecurity is concentrated in Central American countries, particularly in the Dry Corridor area (4.4 million in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua), and in Haiti (3.7 million).

The manifestation of hunger and different forms of malnutrition can be particularly severe in some territories within countries. For example, in Belize, Colombia, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Peru, there are territories where child malnutrition is more than double the national average. And in rural areas the stunting figures are considerably higher than in urban areas, reaching differences of more than 50 percent in Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Suriname.

2. Possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security

The effects of COVID-19 on food systems and food security in CELAC countries will vary, primarily, according to the health strategies developed in each of the countries, and such effects will become more profound as the virus spreads over time, in the absence of complementary policies. Additionally, the impacts on food supply and demand will depend on the productive and commercial structures of the countries, their levels and degree of income inequality, and on external factors related to energy and credit markets, or exchange rates.

² This indicator is complementary to those mentioned earlier and due to its nature, it allows the assessment of the current or expected severity of food security at a specific moment in time. Specifically, acute or transitory food insecurity is defined as the inability to meet minimum food needs in the short term or on a temporary basis. As a general rule, short periods of food insecurity related to sporadic crises are considered transitory. For more information consult: the IPC Global Partners. 2012. Version 2.0 of the Technical Manual of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Information and standards ensuring better decisions regarding food security. FAO. Rome.

Figure 2. Main channels of transmission of COVID-19 effects to food and agriculture

Source: Adapted from Schmidhuber, Pound, Qiao. 2020. COVID-19: Channels of transmission to food and agriculture. Rome, FAO.

Channels of transmission of COVID-19 impacts to food systems

Figure 2 summarizes the main transmission channels of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts to food and agriculture. The main pathways through which the effects of the pandemic are expected to spread are discussed below: food demand, food supply, and international food trade.

Effects on food demand

On the demand side, the effect that the pandemic could have through variations in the purchasing power of families is emphasized. To this end, the role of food spending on total consumption (which implicitly includes food prices) and the sensitivity of demand to changes in income and consumer behavior or preferences are highlighted.

The health crisis compromises the sustainability of companies, the level of employment, along with family income and food security. These effects will grow in magnitude as periods of economic inactivity continue. ECLAC has forecast a 5.3 percent contraction of the regional economy for 2020, with declines of 5.2 percent for South America, 5.5 percent for Mesoamerica, and 2.5 percent for the Ca-

ibbean. At the country level, it is projected that Argentina will decrease by 6.5 percent, Brazil by 5.2 percent and Mexico by 6.5 percent (CEPAL, 2020b). Recent estimates by the International Monetary Fund point in the same direction.³

The economic downturn will lead to increased unemployment –currently standing at 8.1 percent at the regional level– which ECLAC estimates could reach a rate of 11.5 percent, entailing an increase of 11.6 million, compared to 2019 (CEPAL, 2020b).⁴ This will broadly affect the population whose daily income is key to procuring basic goods and services on a daily basis. This is relevant because many of the most exposed sectors⁵ This will broadly affect the population whose daily income is key to procuring basic goods and services on a daily basis. This is relevant because many of the most exposed sectors to this crisis account for 64 percent of formal employment (CEPAL, 2020a).

Furthermore, precarious employment makes households more vulnerable when it comes to facing a crisis such as the current one, because people lack social security or enough savings to mitigate the negative effects involved, regardless of how long the crisis lasts.

In the region, informal employment accounts for 53 percent of employment, ranging from 24 percent in Uruguay to 79 percent in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Rising unemployment in the formal sector is likely to increase informal employment, which, in turn, will lead to greater job instability and job insecurity.

In addition, 40 percent of the population is still not covered by any type of social protection, despite the expansion of coverage registered in the last decade, especially by social assistance programmes (FAO, 2019). This proportion is even greater in rural areas, mainly due to administrative, financial and physical barriers.

This is discouraging news because it suggests that poverty problems in the region will increase. In fact, ECLAC estimates that in 2020 the number of poor in the region will rise from 186 to 214 million people, while the number of people in extreme poverty could increase from 67.5 to 83.4 million (CEPAL, 2020b). This means that between 2019 and 2020 the regional poverty rate is expected to climb from 30.3 percent to 34.7 percent and the extreme poverty rate from 11.0 percent to 13.5 percent.

Poverty and inequality limit access to essential goods and services, such as food and healthcare. In this regard, the negative effects of the health crisis, such as the decrease in consumption or the quality of food, are expected to be greater in the population belonging to the first income quintiles of countries with a high degree of inequality⁶, high poverty levels⁷ or a high number of infections caused by the new coronavirus.⁸

Effects on food supply

On the food supply side, mobility restriction or social isolation measures can have impacts along the supply chain. This includes effects on the labor force employed and the capital used in the production process and the other links in the rest of the chain that include international or domestic transport, processing, packaging, storage, distribution, large supply markets, and retail outlets including shops, supermarkets, restaurants, and street food stalls. We believe that these effects may be especially important in the markets or points of sale of perishable products such as fruits and vegetables.

³ In its report “World Economic Outlook” published in April, the IMF estimates that the regional economy could contract by 5,2 percent, with drops of over 6 percent in Mexico, 5 percent in South America, 3 percent in Central America and 2.8 percent in the Caribbean.

⁴ ECLAC, 2020b. *Special Report COVID-19 No 2: Measuring the impact of COVID-19 with a view to reactivation.*

⁵ Trade, transport, business services and social services.

⁶ For example, in countries with a Gini Index greater than 0.4, which represents the world average. In the region, this includes Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Paraguay.

⁷ In countries such as Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala, exhibiting poverty rates that exceed 15 percent of the population.

⁸ For example, 25 percent of the countries in the region reporting the highest number of infections as of April 14 are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru. In these countries the number of infections range between 2,200 and 10,300 cases.

Disruptions in supply can lead to volatility or sudden changes in food prices paid by consumers and received by producers, especially if these effects are maintained in the medium or long term. At the moment, a decrease in international food prices is observed in the short term (the FAO Food Price Index showed a decrease of 4.3 percent between February and March of this year), which resulted from a drop in the prices of all food groups (cereals, sugar, vegetable oils, meat and dairy) due to reductions in demand as a consequence of COVID-19.

It is worth noting that amid these declines, only the international price of rice increased due to concerns stemming mainly from the temporary freeze on Vietnam's export contracts. Likewise, the international price of pork also showed a rise related to a sudden increase in internal and external demand, added to logistical problems and restrictions on workers who process pork. Despite these price movements, CELAC countries have so far shown no movement or widespread volatility in domestic food prices.

Effect on international food trade

The food trade could also be affected by the pandemic. A plausible hypothesis is that the country-level effects will depend on the relative position of each country with respect to the agri-food balance of trade. In addition to this disruption in the food trade there are other impacts that are relevant for the CELAC countries: trade in other raw materials and depreciation of exchange rates. Expectations of a downturn in global economic activity, a high oil supply and uncertainty in financial markets have led to historic declines in the prices of oil and other raw materials, as well as hikes in the exchange rate.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that are net exporters of agricultural products, such as those of the Southern Cone, will experience different impacts with respect to the net importing countries of agricultural products, such as those of the Caribbean. Similarly, exporting countries of labor-intensive agricultural products, such as Chile, Mexico, and Peru that are important producers of fruits and vegetables, will experience different impacts compared to countries that are relatively more dependent on capital for their productive process, as are the cases of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The analysis of the possible effects that COVID-19 can transmit through international trade has been separated based on the balance of trade of the agri-food sector and the energy sector.⁹ Table 1 contains a series of observations on each of the cases:

⁹ To this end, we considered the classification proposed by Schmidhuber, Pound, Qiao. 2020.

Table 1. COVID-19 pandemic channels of transmission through agri-food and energy trade, depending on each country's trade position

	Net food exporter	Net food importer
Net energy exporter	<p>Bolivia (Plurinational State of) , Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay</p> <p>This group of countries will be affected by lower export prices, both for energy and agricultural products. An increased flow of food exports can affect the supply and domestic prices of food, which may provide incentives to establish export barriers to satisfy the domestic demand for food. In the medium term, these restrictions may lead to higher international food prices. Another effect could be that reductions in international prices and exports may contribute to reducing the collection of tax revenues.</p>	<p>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)</p> <p>Countries in this category can benefit from lower agricultural import prices. However, lower international energy prices could adversely affect them by reducing their energy export earnings, thereby undermining their ability to import enough food from international markets. Also, substantial depreciations in their currencies could lead to increases in domestic prices of imported food.</p>
Net energy importer	<p>Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay.</p> <p>This group includes the countries that are affected by lower international agricultural prices and benefit from lower international energy prices. It is important to note that the drop in foreign exchange inflows due to a decline in exports puts pressure on the exchange rate and thus leads to an increase in the competitiveness of these countries' agricultural products. Although this can help boost the economy, it can also pose a risk by encouraging domestic shortages of those products that are preferably destined for export.</p>	<p>Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Suriname.</p> <p>This group of countries benefits from lower international prices for energy and agricultural products. However, they are subject to possible disruptions in the commercial flow, due to interruptions in exports from countries which have a surplus in these products, or disruptions in the transport chain of external or internal commodities.</p>

Note: To classify countries, the averages of each trade balance for the 2016-2018 period were used.

Source: Own creation based on information from Schmidhuber, Pound, Qiao. 2020. COVID-19: Channels of transmission to food and agriculture. Rome, FAO.

3. Policy recommendations and priority programmes to ensure the functioning of food systems and food security

An analysis of risks and vulnerabilities in each of the countries' food systems can help pinpoint priority areas for developing policies, programmes and investments. Some of these initiatives could be promoted more effectively if carried out jointly by two or more countries or, even within the framework of integration bodies such as CELAC.

Recognizing the differences between countries, the following analysis identifies the main risks faced by the food systems of CELAC countries, and they are classified according to their different degrees of exposure to risk and impact. For each of the possible impacts, a series of policy instruments that could be developed according to the capacities and resources of the countries is proposed. Finally, in Annex I, these measures are specified in greater detail, and some of the initiatives that are being implemented in the region are included.

Initially, FAO recommends an essential measure that establishes the basis for all the above, which is the official declaration by each government expressing that, in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic, actions related to food and agriculture are strategic activities of national public interest, requiring special attention and support from all bodies of the State, as well as the support of the general population.

Table 2. Risks of the COVID-19 pandemic for food systems. Degree of exposure to risk and impact and main policy measures¹⁰

		COUNTRIES BY DEGREE OF EXPOSURE TO RISK AND IMPACT ¹¹				POLICY MEASURES
RISK		Low	Medium Low	Medium High	High	
FOOD DEMAND	Reduction in purchasing power to access food ¹²	Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Chile, Dominica, Granada, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis	Barbados, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay	Argentina, ¹³ Honduras, Jamaica, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Mexico, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela ¹⁴ (Bolivarian Republic of)	Guaranteeing the operation of nutritional support programmes for mothers of childbearing age and children under five
						Ensuring continuity of meals for students participating in school feeding programmes
						Expanding social protection programmes to facilitate access to food and protect the incomes of the most vulnerable population groups
						Promoting healthy eating habits
FOOD SUPPLY	Limitations in the access to intermediate inputs for food production	The Bahamas, Dominica, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia	Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Granada, Guatemala, El Salvador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname	Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Chile, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago	Facilitating transport and economic access to intermediate inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, vaccines, feed, material and fuel used for planting, harvesting or fishing, etc.)
	Limitations in access to fixed capital for food production	Haiti, Nicaragua	Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago	Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Dominica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Granada, Panama, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Uruguay	Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Facilitating the transport and economic access to machinery and infrastructure that allow farming, animal husbandry and fishing operations (spare parts and materials for warehouses, stables, greenhouses, tractors, fishing boats, etc.)
	Reduction or lack of agricultural labor	Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Granada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname	Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago	Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis	Ensuring the operation of farms (focusing on family farms or smallholders, but without excluding larger ones) to maintain the availability of basic and high-value food.
	Disruption in food distribution and marketing	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Granada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)				Supporting the transport, processing and packaging of agricultural and fishery products
					Solving key logistical problems (storage and distribution) that allow the proper functioning of food value chains	
					Facilitating the operation of retail outlets, markets and supermarkets	

	RISK	COUNTRIES BY DEGREE OF EXPOSURE TO RISK AND IMPACT				POLICY MEASURES
INTERNATIONAL FOOD TRADE		Low	Medium Low	Medium High	High	
	Changes in domestic food prices due to disruptions in food import flows	Argentina, the Bahamas, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia	Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Dominica, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru	Antigua and Barbuda, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Uruguay	Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Grenada, Haiti, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Developing trade and fiscal policies that keep world trade open
	Reduction in national food supply due to sudden increases in export flows and decreased income due to drops in export prices	The Bahamas, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Suriname,	Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guyana, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia	Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Granada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay	Developing trade and fiscal policies that keep world trade open

¹⁰ Risks were defined according to the variables set forth in the document by Schmidhuber, Pound, Qiao. 2020. COVID-19: Channels of transmission to food and agriculture. Rome, FAO. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8430en/CA8430EN.pdf>; for the “Limitations in the access to intermediate inputs for food production” the exposure variable used was “Share of intermediate inputs”, for “Limitations in access to fixed capital for food production” the exposure variable used was that of “consumption of fixed capital per agricultural worker”, for “Reduction or lack of agricultural labor” the exposure variable used was “share of gross output per agricultural worker”, for “Reduction in income and purchasing power to access food” the exposure variable used was “share of food expenditures per capita”, for “Changes in domestic food prices due to disruptions in food import flows” the exposure variable used was “share of agricultural imports”, for “Reduction in national food supply due to sudden increases in export flows and decreased income due to drops in export prices” the exposure variable used was “share of agricultural exports”. The country risk level in each variable was determined by grouping world countries by quartiles and creating 4 groups High, Medium High, Medium Low and Low. Besides, another risk variable was added in this document: “Disruption in food distribution and marketing”.

¹¹ The greater the exposure, the greater the vulnerability and the greater the impact in the event that the risk materializes.

¹² Does not include Cuba and Guyana, because there is no available information.

¹³ In the document by Schmidhuber, Pound, Qiao. 2020. COVID-19: Channels of transmission to food and agriculture. Rome, FAO <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8430en/CA8430EN.pdf> Argentina is not classified under this category. To add it to one of the groups, the result of the National Expenditure Survey was used. <https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Institucional-GacetillaCompleta-270>

¹⁴ In the document by Schmidhuber, Pound, Qiao. 2020. COVID-19: Channels of transmission to food and agriculture. Rome, FAO <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8430en/CA8430EN.pdf> the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is classified under low risk. However, as the Price index in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has registered important increases in recent years (food inflation as at December 2019 is nearly 8.000 percent, according to data from the Central Bank of Venezuela <http://www.bcv.org.ve/estadisticas/consumidor>) it was reclassified among the countries with high risk.

Policy measures to address the reduction of purchasing power to access food

The main risk in the short term is not being able to guarantee access to food for the population that is complying with health security measures to prevent the spread of the virus, and that in many cases have lost their sources of income due to the cessation of non-essential economic activities.

This situation is especially serious for the food security of the countries with the highest poverty levels, since their population allocates a greater share of income to the purchase of food, and as the situation lengthens, their ability to save will decrease and the quantity and quality of their diets will be affected. Hence, problems caused by deficiencies in essential nutrients from fresh foods, and an increase in consumption patterns that are highly caloric but of low nutritional value may arise, aggravating issues of overweight, obesity, and non-communicable diseases. Possible phenomena of rising food prices, not significant to date, are also a threat to the purchasing power of families, especially in food importing countries whose currencies have been devalued.

There are other population groups whose food security is especially threatened in the current situation, particularly in rural areas: mothers of childbearing age, newborns, children and young people who have stopped participating in school feeding programmes, older adults with difficulties of physical access to food points of sale, or informal and temporary workers who due to the situation have not been able to generate income and do not have any safety nets or the ability to save.

Countries such as Guatemala, Haiti and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have the highest exposure to this risk, while it is lower in countries such as Belize, Chile, Granada, Antigua and Barbuda, Panama, the Bahamas, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The policy measures that can be developed to address the reduction of purchasing power to access food are diverse, and a large part of them are being implemented by the countries of the region. Table 2 identifies the following:

- Nutritional support programmes for mothers of childbearing age and children under five.
- Continuity of meals for students participating in school feeding programmes.
- Expanding social protection programmes to facilitate access to food and protect the incomes of the most vulnerable population groups.
- Promoting healthy eating habits.

Annex I provides details of the specific measures and examples of countries that are carrying them out.

Policy measures to ensure domestic food supply (production, distribution and marketing)

One of the risks that all the countries of the region have contemplated after the application of sanitary measures to face the spread of the coronavirus, has been the possible disruptions to the proper functioning of the food supply. The initial priority has been focused on maintaining the agricultural and fishing production capacity (fundamentally of fresh products requiring the greater use of inputs and labor), and the proper functioning of the food distribution and marketing chain.

The degree of exposure of countries to the risk of disruption in the domestic food supply will depend mainly on the characteristics of the countries when facing limited access to:

- Intermediate inputs for food production.
- Fixed capital for food production.
- Agricultural labour.
- Operational food distribution and marketing channels (including loading and unloading, transport, processing, packaging, transport and distribution at points of sale).

Given each of these possible limitations, the following is a classification of countries by level of exposure to risk and impact, and possible policy measures to mitigate their impact.

Costa Rica, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, followed by Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Uruguay, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, are the countries with the highest exposure to the risk of having limited access to intermediate inputs for production. For them, different measures are recommended to ensure availability or credit to access production inputs such as seeds, fertilizers or work material.

On the other hand, the production characteristics of Argentina, Barbados, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Bahamas increase their exposure to the risk of disruptions in access to fixed capital (harvesting machinery, warehouses and storage and transport infrastructure, etc.) for food production, in comparison to the rest of the countries of the region.

The availability of labor to carry out agricultural, livestock farming or fishing activities is a fundamental element to ensure the domestic supply of food, but especially for countries whose production activity is less technified. Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis in first place, followed by Honduras, Guatemala, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Peru, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago are the countries with the greatest exposure to this risk, and where a major disruption in the availability of labor would have a greater impact on their food systems. Different policy measures are proposed, in connection with the regularization of the workforce, provision of permits for the mobility of workers, and health security measures to protect them from possible infection with the coronavirus.

Finally, another one of the most important limitations that are present in the first weeks of the current crisis is related to disruptions in food distribution and marketing. It includes all the activities contemplated from the farm or fishing operations, to the consumer's table (including the tasks of transport, storage, processing, packaging, sale, etc.).

In this analysis, this limitation is considered to affect all the countries of the region similarly, regardless of whether the main source of food that makes up the basic basket is sourced

locally or from international production. Policy measures in this area are diverse. However, their main focus should be on ensuring access of producers and products to markets, speeding up the transport of goods by means of special permits, and providing sanitary protective equipment to safeguard the people involved in the chain (on farms, agribusinesses, wholesale markets, in stores and supermarkets, etc.), implementing safety and sanitizing measures at storage and sale points, providing flexibility for the operation of supermarket chains and other sale outlets such as supply centers, or facilitating the operation of fishing ports and other essential infrastructure to ensure the transport of fresh products. Promoting e-commerce and door-to-door delivery for the distribution of food is an important strategy. Annex I offers details on specific instruments and examples of countries that are implementing policy measures in this area.

Policy measures to ensure intraregional and international food trade and food reserves

Projections of food production and reserves worldwide and at the regional level are favorable. However, the disruption of international food trade is a particularly serious risk for CELAC countries. In the region there is a group of countries whose economies depend significantly on the revenues from agri-food exports, and other countries, whose food supply is based on imports from the international market.

The analysis of the possible effects that COVID-19 can transmit through international trade has been separated based on the balance of trade of the agri-food sector and the energy sector (see Table 1). There are other equally important factors directly affecting the food trade, such as the contraction of demand for agri-food products at the international level, decreased production in exporting countries (due to a reduction in the workforce, or the lack of some production input), some export restriction measures applied in countries that produce commodities, or those that affect the operation and logistics in ports, flights (for fresh products), customs and roads. The level of food reserves, especially commodities (corn, cereals, rice, etc.), will also be an element to consider in each of the countries to determine their degree of exposure to this risk, and the ensuing impacts on food security.

There are countries in the region that are especially vulnerable to the risk of possible changes in domestic food prices due to disruptions in food import flows, such as Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Granada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Haiti. Similarly, the countries that could suffer changes in domestic food prices due to disruptions in food export flows are Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Granada, Guatemala, Jamaica, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Paraguay. In both cases, the main policy focus lies in developing commercial and fiscal initiatives that keep world trade open. The integration space offered by CELAC could provide an opportunity for coordination and convergence for such purpose. Further details on specific instruments and examples of countries that are implementing them can be found in Annex I.

4. Recommendations for CELAC

The policy decisions made by countries will define the aggregate impact of the pandemic on food security in the region. However, CELAC can contribute by adopting the following decisions:

- 1) Reactivating the CELAC Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (CELAC Plan), adopted at the III Summit of Heads of State and Government, adapting it to the new context created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This CELAC Plan for Food and Nutrition Security 2, should focus on supporting member countries to accelerate the recovery and full functioning of their agriculture and food systems, so as not to hinder their ambition to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger, by 2030.
- 2) Recommending to countries that have not yet done so, that they consider declaring food and agriculture as essential or strategic activities of public interest, in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3) Strengthening political agreements to promote food trade among CELAC countries, within the framework of existing trade integration organizations, by facilitating the exchange of information and technical cooperation, among other actions.

ANNEX I: Examples of policy measures in the region

FAO keeps a permanently updated database, which records the national policies of countries around the world and offers more examples than those included in this Annex.¹⁵

Measure: Institutional declaration that includes food production and distribution sectors as essential or strategic services within the COVID-19

Examples in the region

- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Ministers and secretaries of agriculture, livestock production, fishing, food and rural development from 26 countries signed a declaration detailing measures to coordinate the supply of sufficient, safe and nutritious food for the 620 million inhabitants of the region during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶
- **Argentina:** In its COVID-19 Catalog of Rights and Services, the country indicates that the food industries, as well as their production chain and inputs are essential activities.
- **Chile:** In its guidelines to define Essential Services, it indicates that the following sectors are essential: supermarkets; neighborhood grocery stores and farmers markets, including their critical suppliers and distribution chains, food storage and distribution centers, food delivery services, among others.
- **El Salvador:** In its declaration of State of National Emergency, State of Public Calamity and Natural Disaster, it establishes measures of social isolation, with the exception of sectors of food production and distribution and beverages, water services, agriculture, bakery, among others.
- **Mexico:** After the Declaration of Sanitary Emergency for the COVID-19, Mexico declared the following sectors as essential for the fundamental functioning of the economy: drinking water generation and distribution, food and the non-alcoholic beverage industry, food markets, supermarkets, self-service stores, grocery stores and sale of prepared food, agricultural production, fishing, livestock farming, and agroindustry.

¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Policy Decision Analysis (FAPDA): <http://www.fao.org/in-action/fapda/fapda-home/en/>

¹⁶ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/rlc/docs/covid19/declaracion_26paises.pdf

DEMAND

RISK: Reduction in purchasing power to access food

Measures

Examples in the region

Guaranteeing the operation of nutritional support programmes for mothers of childbearing age and children under five

- Promoting breastfeeding, as a safe and essential nutritional practice for children under 2 years of age. Always considering preventive hygiene measures.
- Including women of childbearing age, pregnant women, infants and children under five, directly or indirectly affected by COVID-19 in food and health emergency response plans.
- Encouraging, as far as possible, the inclusion of food sources of vitamins and minerals, such as vegetables and fruits, in the food emergency response plans (rations or bags of food) provided by the countries to these population groups.

• **Argentina.** The Food Card of the “Argentina Against Hunger” Plan has been reinforced considering the emergence of COVID-19, to ensure food for beneficiaries (children under 6 years of age, pregnant women and people with disabilities). The plan set out to deliver more than 1,500,000 cards, which will reach more than 2,800,000 recipients, with ARS \$ 4,000 for families with one child up to six years of age, ARS\$ 6,000 in the case of families that have more than one child in the same age group.

• **Colombia:** Food baskets for early childhood, delivered through the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), for children between 0 and 5 years of age as the main recipients. In addition, the coverage of the 11 departments that are part of the *Ni 1+* malnutrition work plan is expanded due to the COVID-19 situation. This covers 1,732,107 children who are ICBF users.

• **Costa Rica:** Home-delivered food, to continue with the feeding service during the national emergency due to COVID-19, for children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, registered with the Child Care and Protection Services (API), and meals served at the Centers for Education, Nutrition and Comprehensive Child Care (CEN-CINAI) in the country.

• **Panama:** The Ministry of Health, through the Directorate of Health Services Provision and the Nutritional Health Department, issued the “Dietary recommendations for the Panamanian population in the COVID-19 emergency.” These guidelines are used to promote healthy eating in the population, as well as the reinforcement of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

Ensuring continuity of meals for students participating in school feeding programmes

- Distributing food baskets to the most vulnerable families, establishing delivery times in schools, or through mobile units, following PAHO / WHO guidelines in the context of the emergency.
- Increasing economic allocation of social protection programmes (such as income transfer programmes) in an amount corresponding to the cost of food rations delivered by school feeding programmes.
- Delivering emergency food rations to the most vulnerable communities and territories in coordination with authorized government agencies or international cooperation.
- Providing tax exemptions on basic food to families with school-age children, especially workers in the most affected economic sectors.
- Providing home delivery of fresh food, if possible sourced from family farming operations.
- Redistributing food from school feeding programmes through donations to entities responsible for providing food assistance (such as food banks, social organizations, non-governmental organizations, churches, etc.)
- Using digital instruments (geo-referenced applications), to improve communication about food delivery access points, distribution times, and recommendations for good use of food, as well as measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Guaranteeing one minimum wage for school feeding programmes staff (cooks, suppliers, nutritionists and most vulnerable food producers, etc.) who are unemployed until the return of the school period.

• **The Bahamas:** The Ministry of Education distributes lunch vouchers to students enrolled in the National School Feeding Programme. Parents or guardians must collect the vouchers at the schools or at the Ministry.

• **Brazil:** Public school students and beneficiaries of the *Bolsa Família* programme receive the replacement value of the food supply of BRL \$3.98 which will be transferred to families according to the situation of each student listed in the registry of the Department of Education, that is, in three ranges: students who receive a meal at school will be entitled to the amount of BRL \$59.70, for the 15-day suspension; students who receive two meals will be entitled to the amount of BRL \$119.40; and those who receive three meals will be entitled to BRL \$179.10. The money will be available through the School Material Card (*Cartão Material Escolar*). In total, around 70 thousand families will receive the benefit.

• **Chile:** The Ministry of Education delivers individual school food baskets to 1,600,000 students benefiting from the School Feeding Programme and the Junji-Integra Nursery School Feeding Programme. The basket can be collected by students or by their legal guardians in schools. For pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, breakfast will consist of milk, cereal, eggs; and lunch, with vegetables, meat in pre-prepared format, tuna fish, eggs, rice, noodles, fruit puree, among other foods.

• **Costa Rica:** The Ministry of Public Education (MEP) carries out the delivery of food packages to the beneficiaries of the student cafeteria service. To this end, the Ministry published a general Protocol for the distribution of food at public schools due to the suspension of classes, resulting from the national emergency caused by COVID-19. The measure seeks to ensure that families in situations of greater vulnerability continue to have the support offered by this food service, which includes more than 800,000 students every day.

• **Dominican Republic:** The National Institute of Student Welfare began the distribution of one million eight hundred thousand food kits to the parents and guardians of students of the Extended School Day and other modalities of the School Lunch Programme, equal to the rations served during the week, in replacement of the rations they receive daily. For this purpose, they amended the contracts with their vendors. Therefore, the food kits are now delivered door to door, to prevent crowds.



Expanding social protection programmes to facilitate access to food and protect the incomes of the most vulnerable population groups

- Extending coverage of social protection systems. This can be done by increasing the amount of transfers (e.g., one-time payment, increasing the monthly amount of the transfer), expanding existing programmes to new beneficiaries, or implementing new programmes created specifically in response to the current crisis.
- Including adjustments in the operating mechanisms of social protection programmes (withdrawal of conditionalities, use of bank transfers, greater protection measures for personnel in charge of in-kind delivery of food).
- Focusing on preventing episodes of corruption, extortion or violence, particularly against women and children, who are especially vulnerable during the emergency.
- Providing adequate social protection to family farming operations and smallholders, herders, fisherfolk, people who live from the sustainable use of forests, and those involved along the food chain, to protect their income, avoid survival strategies that harm their social and economic capital in the medium term, and reduce shortages or supply interruptions that may cause logistical problems, panic and price volatility.
- Promoting the articulation of social protection programmes with productive and economic interventions. This is especially relevant in rural areas to support small farmers to continue their production during and after the crisis, ensuring food security for their family and for others. Articulating with public procurement programmes and inclusive value chains can guarantee access to markets.
- Including measures for protecting livelihoods and ensuring the stability of demand, while programmes to stimulate food supply are launched.
- Placing special focus on rural families where the coverage and quality of social protection systems is more precarious, through the use of administrative records or existing instruments to identify and deliver products (their use of electricity, telephone services, or participation in agricultural, health or education programmes, for example). Likewise, it is important to strengthen the logistics of transfer delivery to reach these populations quickly (registration, payment system, programme administration, information management, etc.).
- Also, focusing particularly on informal workers, who are in a highly vulnerable situation as they do not have access to social security systems that protect them against an adverse effect or shock. Because of this, it is essential that social protection programmes also cover this sector of the population, especially those near the poverty line.

• **Argentina:** Vertical expansion of social assistance programmes, through which 9 million people will receive a single payment of USD 47, or an amount equivalent to the monthly non-contributory benefit. In particular, people who receive the Universal Pension for the Elderly (1.5 million people as of April), children who receive the Universal Child Allowance (4.3 million minors and other beneficiaries with disabilities) and women who receive the Universal Benefit for Maternity. In addition, a new “Emergency Family Income” voucher has been created, which consists of a one-time payment of USD 150 to families of self-employed informal workers who are under the Simplified Tax Regime for Small Taxpayers (3.5 million families).

• **Barbados:** The Household Survival Programme was established for people who have lost their jobs and people who have seen their livelihoods affected by the health crisis. Families will receive approximately USD\$300 per month.

• **Bolivia (Plurinational State of):** Horizontal expansion of the “Family Bond” for 1.5 million low-income parents with children in early education (in public schools). The bonus consists of a one-time payment of USD \$70 to cover health care, transportation and food expenses.

• **Brazil:** Horizontal expansion of the *Bolsa Familia* Programme through the integration of 1 million families. Likewise, a new bonus of USD \$38 has been created for informal workers who do not receive the *Bolsa Familia* and *Prestacao Continuada* benefits. This bonus will be distributed monthly for three months.

• **Jamaica:** Delivery of cash transfers to people in any sector who have lost their jobs as of March 2020. Through the “Supporting Employees with Transfer of Cash” (SET Cash) Programme, participants will receive a monthly amount of approximately USD \$65 for a period of three months.

• **Panama:** Through its “*Panama Solidario*” programme, the Government delivers more than 100,000 basic groceries every fifteen days to vulnerable families who lack income due to quarantine measures.

• **Trinidad and Tobago:** The Ministry of Education and Family Services provides a bonus of approximately USD\$ 75 to families with children registered in the School Feeding Programme through a Food Support Card.

Promoting healthy eating habits

- Facilitating consumer access to healthy foods by promoting points of sale of these products at local food markets, following the necessary sanitary measures.
- Promoting the inclusion of food and nutrition education initiatives (through television, e-learning or radio educational programs) that foster eating habits in the population.
- Strengthening social protection programmes so that they can cover the cost of a healthy diet.

• **Costa Rica:** With the aim of continuing to offer fresh products, the Farmers Markets have reinforced their mitigation and prevention measures to avoid the spreading of COVID-19, in coordination with the health authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

• **Ecuador:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, in coordination with the district directorates, created the *Agro Tienda* Ecuador programme, through which farmers can sell their products directly to consumers. Through a phone call, consumers order and receive agricultural baskets at their homes, which meet due biosecurity and safety measures. Agricultural baskets contain vegetables, eggs, dairy, flour, and fruit, among other items.

• **Peru:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, in coordination with the regional governments, has arranged resources for the organization of itinerant markets throughout the country to ensure the population’s access to a balanced diet and boost the businesses of rural farmers. With this measure, it will be possible to transfer farm products to urban and urban-rural areas, which will facilitate the sale of fresh and healthy products from small family farmers.

SUPPLY

RISK: Limitations in the access to intermediate inputs for food production

Measures	Examples in the region
<p>Facilitating transport and economic access to intermediate inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, vaccines, feed, material and fuel used for planting, harvesting or fishing, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling "green corridors" so that essential inputs are available to producers, in order not to paralyze production and ensure that there are no delays. Facilitating credits and aid to procure production capital (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, vaccines, feed, equipment, and fuel for tractors, harvesting machinery, boats or fishing vessels) that support the sustainability of livestock farming activities and the preparation of the next planting season (this is especially important, for example, for planting corn and other essential commodities that begins with the next rains in many countries such as those of Central America - April and May-). Enabling provision of the necessary supplies (fuel and ice) to artisanal vessels and the working capital required by industrial fishing vessels, to take advantage of the fishing seasons for species such as lobster, on which thousands of families depend and whose season opens in June. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colombia: The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has launched the "Colombia Agro Produce" Credit Line which allows rural farmers to obtain resources to continue their productive activities. The interest rate for smallholders is DTF -1 percent, equivalent to 3,5 percent, and for the medium and large producers it is 4,5 percent. This line of credit can be accessed through the Agricultural Bank of Colombia, as well as from any other financial institution. The resources can be used to cover working capital needs for purchasing inputs, maintaining production, processing and adding value, and marketing agricultural production. Panama: The Ministry of Agricultural Development implemented a green line in order not to paralyze production and guarantee that farmers start the planting activities scheduled for this agricultural year without any setbacks. Through this instrument, producers will be able to transport agricultural inputs and their production to be sold at various distribution points.

RISK: Limitations in access to fixed capital for food production

Measures	Examples in the region
<p>Facilitating the transport and economic access to machinery and infrastructure that allow farming, animal husbandry and fishing operations (spare parts and materials for warehouses, stables, greenhouses, tractors, fishing boats, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating credits and financial aid for procuring and maintaining agricultural and fishing machinery and infrastructure Providing assistance to facilitate or reschedule credit payments used for the purchase of land, irrigation, machinery, fishing boats and vessels, construction of breeders of livestock species or farm infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costa Rica: The Rural Development Institute (Inder) declared a moratorium on the payment of interest and capital for all individuals and organizations that maintain credit operations with the Institute, through the Rural Credit programme, which provides financial support to producers and entrepreneurs of the country's rural territories. Dominican Republic: The High-Level Commission for the Prevention and Control of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Agricultural Bank agreed that the term of loans with maturities from March 18 to May 18 would be extended from 60 to 90 days. Likewise, the period granted to debtors for updating the appraisals of collateral to back loans is extended for 90 days. Panama: The National Assembly approved a bill that establishes, among other things, a special moratorium on agricultural credits for a period of one year.

RISK: Reduction or lack of agricultural labor

Measures	Examples in the region
<p>Ensuring the operation of farms (focusing on family farms or smallholders, but without excluding larger ones) to maintain the availability of basic and high-value food.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training local labor in specialized agricultural activities and facilitating the transport of specialized workers in the absence of trained personnel. Considering the possibility of including changes in public programmes to increase labor. • Facilitating the mobility of seasonal workers, ensuring that their wages consider the risk involved in the activities they carry out within the framework of the crisis, and offering recommendations on how to prevent potential spread of the virus to their families. • Looking into the working conditions of migrant and irregular workers, including, for example, the granting of work permits and the regulation of working conditions, so they may work appropriately as labor in the food sector • Distributing appropriate sanitary protective gear and information to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among people who handle fresh products, including the workers on farms, fisheries, or in farm infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuba: The Ministry of Agriculture put measures in place to monitor disruptions in the agricultural workforce. It recommended foreseeing the need for a workforce down to the level of the municipality and farms, to guarantee production and services. • Chile: The Institute of Agricultural Development (INDAP) produced a manual with specific recommendations for work on agricultural land under COVID-19, offering recommendations directed at farmers and their families. It suggests that smallholders should restrict visits to a minimum and keep exclusive clothing for field work. It also recommends to reinforce the cleaning of machinery, equipment and facilities, as well as the disinfection of doors and door handles. • Peru: The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation has designed a package to provide direct financing to smallholders in order to support productive projects (agricultural and livestock farming) at the national level. Also, in coordination with <i>Agrabanco</i>, farmers' debts have been rescheduled to 6 months without interest. Along the same lines, it was agreed to reschedule credits from the <i>Agroperu</i> Fund, whose resources are directed at smallholders. The measure indicates the rescheduling of the Fund's resources, without interest collection, for the payment of agreed installments with maturity between February 15, 2020 and August 15, 2020. It also establishes that the loans will directly benefit the small agricultural farmers of hard yellow corn, cotton, sugar cane, rice, milk, pomegranate, tangerine, among others.

RISK: Disruption in food distribution and marketing

Measures	Examples in the region
<p>Supporting the transport, processing and packaging of agricultural and fishery products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of essential information to implement measures, in dialogue with the stakeholders in the chain, to facilitate the logistical adjustments necessary for the efficient transport of food products, including those destined for processing. • Expediting the movement of transport workers (special permits, passes, exemption of tolls, etc.) from farms to processing and packaging plants. • Identifying logistics platforms to facilitate the delivery and concentration of supply, and reduce the frequency of transport to the main supply centers. • Facilitating food transport to allow agricultural, fishery and livestock products to be available in distribution and / or processing plants as soon as possible, avoiding situations of less access to fuel. • Assisting processors, especially small and medium-scale processors, facilitating agreements to ensure the collection and transport of products under quality, freshness and safety standards. Making storage facilities (public and private) available to them, including cold chain infrastructure, which can be used in an emergency. • Facilitating physical spaces so that producer organizations or cooperatives can comply with the health regulations imposing physical distance between workers during food processing and packaging. • Implementing public purchasing programmes, streamlining administrative processes, to compensate for the loss of the market due to the closure of restaurants, company canteens, schools and others, for small and medium-sized organizations and farmer cooperatives. Facilitating the participation of this type of organizations in the business of direct sale of food at home. • Facilitating the mobility and adequate sanitary measures of transporters and personnel working at food processing and packaging plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mexico: The National Aquaculture and Fisheries Commission made digital formats of the Arrival and / or Harvest Notices available to the sector to guarantee the registration of production and mobilization of products, ensuring the continuity of the productive activities of national fisheries and aquaculture. • Uruguay: The General Directorate of Agricultural Services, in coordination with stakeholders in each sector, published security protocols against COVID-19, to coordinate actions and minimize the risks of contagion. In particular, safety protocols for the collection and harvesting, reception and transport of grain were published. • Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of): The Superintendence of Agri-Food Management has designed a Contingency Plan to guarantee the operation of the Integrated Agri-Food System during the quarantine period. Within this framework, a series of actions have been implemented to maintain the supply rates of the 12 priority items that are part of the food basket, guaranteeing the existence of the distribution and marketing chain.
<p>Solving key logistical problems (storage and distribution) that allow the proper functioning of food value chains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering port workers of the main warehouses of products for marketing and transport among the essential personnel allowed to work. Ensuring adequate working conditions and that the necessary sanitary materials and training are available for them, to reduce the chances of infection by COVID-19. • Facilitating the operation of ports and the main means of food transport, including extended working hours (under the appropriate working conditions), greater agility in customs procedures, loading and unloading of products and sanitary controls. • Enabling “green corridors” or “food channels” to make essential products, such as fruits and vegetables urgently available to consumers (including rapid checks of safety and quality characteristics). • Maximizing the use of transport by optimizing the available space in trucks, trains and ships, and facilitating the coordination of participants involved, to gain efficiency. • Using information technologies that keep the supply logistics channels running. For example, by promoting applications that coordinate and bring together the supply and demand of fresh products, the organization of more efficient collection and distribution mechanisms (in terms of utilization of means of transport and reduction of losses, for example), or that include employment opportunities according to the needs of young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chile: The ports of Chile have adopted a series of measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic, which include the temperature checks and registration for transporters, workers and users who enter to carry out tasks or procedures inside the premises, as well as informative talks and sanitizing measures. • Cuba: The Ministry of Agriculture ordered measures so that the Collection System facilitates the conditions of the state agricultural markets and points of sale for agricultural products, in provinces and municipalities, with the objective of deconcentrating people who shop at such places. • Panama: The Executive Directorate of Agricultural Quarantine of the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MIDA), has Inspectors of Agricultural Quarantine, who carry out the verification of documents and physical inspection of products, to ensure that the products that arrive in the country meet all the sanitary conditions required. • Peru: The Ministry of Production approved the Guide for the establishment, implementation and reinforcement of preventive measures in fishing and aquaculture infrastructures against the spread of COVID-19. These include increasing the frequency of disinfection of common facilities as well as the usual contact surfaces.



Facilitating the operation of retail outlets, markets and supermarkets

- Greater flexibility in the hours allowed for food transport, reduction of food transport costs (reduction of the price of fuels, customs and tolls) and provision of sanitary materials to reduce the probability of contagion.
- Wages, tax reductions and provision of sanitary materials for self-employed workers to reduce the probability of contagion to personnel working in the food processing, packaging, distribution and retail industry.
- Flexibility in the opening of shops, home deliveries, supermarkets, supply and distribution centers to promote the supply of food to all citizens, including support measures to adhere to the recommended sanitary procedures.
- Enabling fish and seafood collection centers and markets at strategic points, accessible to the population where they can find fresh, safe and affordable seafood.
- Assisting the operation of local markets under strict measures to ensure the physical distancing requirements inside and outside. Limiting the number of people per square meter, the length of shopping time, and the number of essential workers to allow proper operation.
- Developing initiatives that allow the delivery of food, especially fresh food, to lower-income people with greater difficulties in reaching points of sale (due to lack of transportation or distance from their place of residence).
- Including legal reforms and investment to support the expansion of digital platforms that facilitate home delivery of food (especially relevant for the elderly and people at risk), which include measures to protect the consumer and guarantee food quality and safety, including fresh food.
- Promoting sanitary measures that make it possible to increase food safety and raise awareness of the importance of using hygiene measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 between workers and consumers.

- **Belize:** The Ministry of Food and Agriculture has created the Working Group for Raising Awareness, which aims to disseminate information on prevention and contagion measures in the sector to ensure continuity in the food supply and sale chain.

- **Ecuador:** The Ministry of Transport and Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock have implemented four logistics corridors with 90 disinfection points, which have personnel equipped with motorized pumps, vehicle disinfection arches and footbaths in order to maintain the supply chain. Also, the logistics corridors remain operational on a 24/7 basis, to guarantee continuous and timely supply throughout the national territory.

- **Guyana:** Public handwashing stations were installed in the main food retail outlets. The measure was implemented to increase awareness about the importance of maintaining sanitary measures to decrease the transmission of COVID-19 in food handling and sale activities.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

RISK: Changes in domestic food prices due to disruptions in food import flows

Measures	Examples in the region
<p>Developing trade and fiscal policies that keep world trade open</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing import tariffs to avoid eventual shortage phenomena. • Reviewing food trade and tax policies, and their possible impacts. • Reducing restrictions on the use of food reserves, limiting the use of strategic grain reserves, eliminating VAT and other taxes temporarily to help stabilize the international food market. • Promoting a better functioning of food markets through, for example, greater economic and commercial integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antigua and Barbuda: The government announced a suspension of the common external tariff on food imports. • El Salvador: The government temporarily removed import tariffs on essential medical products and food (flour, rice, beans).

RISK: Reduction in national food supply due to sudden increases in export flows and decreased income due to drops in export prices

Measures	Examples in the region
<p>Developing trade and fiscal policies that keep world trade open</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applying, or at least minimizing, taxes or restrictions on food exports, to avoid disproportionate price increases, hoarding, risk of food losses, and negatively affecting productivity in the long term. • Reviewing food trade and tax policies, and their possible impacts. • Reducing restrictions on the use of food reserves, limiting the use of strategic grain reserves, eliminating VAT and other taxes temporarily to help stabilize the international food market. • Promoting a better functioning of food markets through, for example, greater economic and commercial integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicaragua and Honduras: The governments of both countries agreed that the transit of goods, including food, between the two territories will not be interrupted and that "the transit of international means of transportation, taking all the required and indicated sanitary protection measures, will be allowed."

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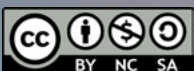
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