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EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SYSTEMS

August 2022

SDGs:



Countries:

Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

Project Code:

TCP/RLA/3802

FAO Contribution:

USD 500 000

Duration:

15 May 2020 – 31 March 2022

Contact Info:

FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO-RLC@fao.org

Implementing Partners

Ministries of agriculture and Rural Development, Food Security Secretariats, Ministries of Education and Ministries of Social Development of the countries involved.

Beneficiaries

Family farmers, rural population, women, Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

Strategic objectives

SO5: Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

Regional Initiatives

RI3: Sustainable and resilient agriculture.

Priority Areas

PA2: Generate evidence for decision-making.

PA5: Promote the resilience of smallholder farmers for recovery.

Effects

At least 17 countries in the region use tools, instruments and mechanisms to ensure food availability and access, stabilize incomes of the most vulnerable groups and mitigate the impact of COVID 19 on the supply chain, with a resilience-based approach.

This crisis has prompted a series of demands for support from governments in the region, mainly through their ministries of agriculture, to provide an effective response to the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods and food systems, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) requested a study on the impact of the pandemic on food security, with a particular emphasis on family farmers and the most vulnerable rural populations, as well as recommendations for mitigating its impact. For millions of smallholders in the Latin America and the Caribbean region with low coping capacity and who are highly vulnerable to multiple natural hazards and/or socioeconomic shocks, the pandemic has led to increased levels of food insecurity. Furthermore, if the situation is not effectively addressed, it could compromise progress achieved in terms of poverty alleviation, food security and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given the magnitude of these impacts, countries need assistance to develop short- and medium-term Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) plans to address the immediate effects of the pandemic on food availability and access, and to restore food systems with a focus on livelihood resilience.

IMPACT

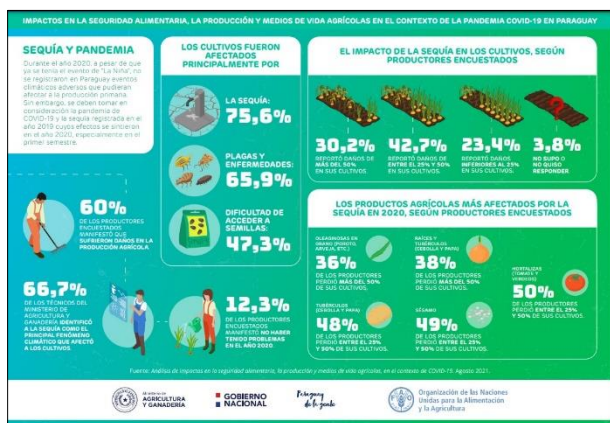
The countries in Latin America and the Caribbean ensure the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods and food systems in the context of the COVID-19 crises (SDGs 1, 2, 11, and 12).

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Participating countries focused their actions mainly on the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data to formulate recovery recommendations and develop investment and resource mobilization proposals.

The project enabled the adaptation of new FAO methodologies and tools to the different countries to carry out COVID-19 impact assessment exercises on FNS, agricultural households' livelihoods and agrifood systems, in response to the need expressed by governments to generate evidence in the sector and its subsectors. The project also made it possible to support a sustained process of awareness-raising and capacity building among FAO technical teams, positioning the Organization as a relevant actor in the generation of evidence for response and recovery in the agricultural sector in the region.

Countries drafted recommendations and supported their ministries of agriculture to formulate sectoral plans and programmes for agricultural livelihood response and recovery, including measures to ensure access and availability of food, and with special attention to vulnerable groups, such as women and Indigenous Peoples.



BACKGROUND

The pandemic generated by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which causes respiratory disease, has resulted in millions of cases worldwide and an exponential increase in cases in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. The health measures taken to contain it are directly affecting food systems because of its impacts on food supply and demand, as well as indirectly through reduced purchasing power and the capacity to produce and distribute food and the need for additional care in the execution of activities. This has led to different levels of impact among the population and affected the poor and vulnerable population to a greater extent.

A total of 14 proposals and concept notes for donor resource mobilization were also developed.

Most of the impact assessments included recommendations related to strengthening the link between Family Farming (FF) and the provision of school feeding programmes and public procurement systems.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

The project design was appropriate at the time of formulation, but the evolving and worsening pandemic made it difficult to implement some outputs in time and in the originally foreseen manner, which meant that non-cost extensions and the reformulation of some activities were needed in order to support governments' short-term needs.

Activities experienced multiple delays as a result of a combination of complexities associated with new waves of the pandemic and increased instability, especially with regard to the economy. All activities were implemented within the planned budget and others were added to enhance project results, especially regarding gender, age and indigenous populations in Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The regional workplan and country workplans were constantly monitored and adjusted, reformulating actions where necessary and reallocating resources as needed. At the same time, due to an over-supply of virtual training and webinars, government counterparts preferred specific, hybrid learning or closer proximity training tools and activities rather than the originally foreseen regional virtual course on COVID-19 response and recovery.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

Public policy measures need to be identified and planned to ensure availability and access to food, improve the nutritional status of the most vulnerable populations and protect essential livelihoods.

It is also crucial that countries are supported in identifying measures and designing programmes to ensure future production, the availability of agricultural inputs for the coming production seasons and the capacity for rural households to produce food in a sustainable and resilient manner by means of home gardens or small livestock rearing, among others.

Furthermore, it is important to provide support for the redesign of school feeding programmes, public procurement systems in a way that promotes greater sourcing from, and in connection with, local, small-scale producers, as well as guidelines for adjusting and scaling up social protection programmes and protecting and restoring incomes and productive capacity.

Countries need assistance to ensure the continuity or rapid recovery of critical food supply chains for the most vulnerable populations and in areas that are crucial for food systems. Recovery plans with a multi-hazard and resilience approach will be required. These plans should consider, among others, access to markets (post-harvest activities, marketing, e-commerce) and the strengthening of local value chains for small-scale producers, artisanal fishers, fish farmers and livestock farmers.

To help ensure the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods and food systems in Latin America and the Caribbean countries, investment processes, public policy reforms and paradigm shifts around disaster risk are required. While these were promoted by the project, the effects of them will only materialize in the future. Going forward, the incorporation of evidence generation and monitoring systems for food security and agricultural livelihood will also be a strategic factor in anticipating crises and mitigating their impact in advance, as well as for designing better targeted responses.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

Countries in the region have legal frameworks that define roles and responsibilities and acknowledge rights regarding FNS, humanitarian assistance and disaster risk management in the agricultural sector as well as more broadly.

The project directly strengthened partnerships that are crucial to ensuring its sustainability, especially with the countries' ministries of agriculture. The level of commitment from partners was higher than expected.

2. Gender equality

The issues addressed by the project responded to the needs and priorities of the most vulnerable women and men in rural areas, whose livelihoods and food security depends mainly on agriculture. The project was always aimed at identifying their issues and developing inclusive and transformative response strategies. The project was able to reach the most vulnerable households in order to identify and highlight their gaps and support informed and evidence-based decision-making. Differential analyses of the impact of COVID-19 on rural women's food security and livelihoods were also carried out, as in the case of Nicaragua and Paraguay.

3. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

The project aimed to support governments to ensure people's right to receive humanitarian assistance according to their needs, respect their dignity and restore their livelihoods through transformative and resilience-building strategies.

4. Technological sustainability

Considering the context presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related difficulties in accessing communities, the project relied on computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Web-based interviews were conducted in some countries with better levels of connectivity, such as the Caribbean. In all cases, the relevance, accessibility and flexibility of these technologies were analysed before deciding on the best option. In some countries, this led to a bias that may have excluded highly vulnerable populations without access to telephone services in some way.

5. Economic sustainability

The outputs achieved by the project in each country were developed and designed in a participatory manner with government counterparts, who were actively involved as direct beneficiaries, as well as co leaders, in action implementation. This ensured that the products and services developed by the project were affordable and embedded within local institutional frameworks.



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DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

Colombia

- ❑ *Recommendations for the recovery of livelihoods and FNS affected by COVID-19.*
- ❑ *Communication and advocacy strategy for publicly circulating impact assessment results and recommendations for sectoral recovery in the face of COVID-19.*
- ❑ **FAO.** 2021. *Agricultural livelihoods and food security in the context of COVID-19.* Infographics.

Ecuador

- ❑ **FAO.** 2020. *Analysis of the impact on food security, agricultural production and livelihoods in the context of COVID-19. 07-08/2020.* Quito, Ecuador. 72 pp.
- ❑ *System for monitoring, anticipating and assessing COVID-19 impacts on food security, agricultural production and livelihoods:*
<http://geoportal.agricultura.gob.ec/index.php/faoCOVID>.
- ❑ **MAG and FAO.** 2022. *Survey and analysis of information on the final price configuration of 10 priority products from the provinces of Chimborazo and Manabí, from the perspective of the producer and the sales channels in the markets of Riobamba, Portoviejo and the Metropolitan District of Quito.* Technical study. 96 pp.

El Salvador

- ❑ *Technical guide for a resilience-based outreach strategy* (unpublished).

Guatemala

- ❑ *Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and tropical storms ETA and IOTA on family farming livelihoods.* Narrative report.
- ❑ *Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and tropical storms ETA and IOTA on family farming livelihoods.* The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) Report.
- ❑ *Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and tropical storms ETA and IOTA on family farming livelihoods.* Presentation of the main findings.

Honduras

- ❑ *People's labour status 2020. Food Insecurity Experience Scale FIES.* Household survey. Honduras. 6 pp.
https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/imagen/doc/2021/06/Reporte_FIES_HONDURAS_2020.pdf.
- ❑ **INE.** 2021. *Monitoring indicators related to the impact and implications of COVID-19, ETA and IOTA on agriculture, livelihoods and food security.* Household Survey.
- ❑ **UTSAN, FAO, WFP, INE.** *Monitoring study of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) indicators in the 18 departments of Honduras for 2022.* Household Survey.
<https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/estudio-de-monitoreo-de-indicadores-seguridad-alimentaria-y-nutricional-en-los-18-departamentos-de-honduras-para-el-ano-2022>.



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Nicaragua

- ❑ *Study analysing disruptions and their effects on the coffee value chain, with an emphasis on prices, employment, harvest, migration and key diseases faced by production in Nicaragua. Assessment of the vulnerability of rural families affected by COVID-19 and by hurricanes ETA and IOTA in Nicaragua's dry corridor.*
- ❑ *Assessment of the current situation of economic enterprises in the area covered by the RELEVA and Agriadapta projects in Nicaragua's dry corridor.*
- ❑ *Identification of digital and technological means and development of marketing for the promotion of rural enterprises, especially those led by women and young people.*
- ❑ *Study on nutrition education practices and assessment of macronutrient and calorie intake at household level and in women aged 15-49 years.*
- ❑ *Measurement of qualitative indicators of the RELEVA Project's Gender and Generational Action Plan.*
- ❑ *Design of the food and nutrition education campaign with the main slogan "Taking care of our health, our families' health and our planet's through healthy eating".*
- ❑ *Methodological guide for facilitation on the topics of sustainable food and healthy nutrition.*

Paraguay

- ❑ **Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay (MAG) and FAO.** 2021. *Analysis of impacts on food security, agricultural production and livelihoods in the context of COVID-19.* Paraguay. 81 pp.



- ❑ **Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay (MAG) and FAO.** 2022. *Rural women's perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and FNS in Paraguay.* Paraguay. 64 pp.
- ❑ **FAO.** The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock evaluates the impact of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods and the food system. FAO in Paraguay. <https://www.fao.org/paraguay/noticias/detail-events/es/c/1438136/>.
- ❑ Infographic on drought in pandemics.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected impact	Latin America and the Caribbean countries ensure the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods and food systems in the context of the COVID-19 crises (SDGs 1; 2; 11; 12)		
Outcomes	At least 17 countries in the region use tools, instruments and mechanisms to ensure food availability and access, stabilize incomes of the most vulnerable groups, and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the supply chain, with a resilience-based approach		
	Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of rapid assessments of COVID-19 impact on rural livelihoods that have been conducted by governments, using specific tools and methodologies, to inform national level planning and programming. – Number of response plans and programmes that have been adopted and implemented. – Number of recovery plans that have been approved. – Financial resources allocated by governments and resource partners for the implementation of plans and programmes. 	
	Baseline	0	
	Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 6 – 5 – 4 – USD 4 million 	
Comments and follow-up action to be taken	Sixteen countries in the region carried out assessments on the impact of COVID-19 on food security, production, and livelihoods. In all cases, the assessments were government-led, and the evidence and recommendations were incorporated into response and recovery plans. Seven countries in the region were able to mobilize more than USD 32 million to support the response and recovery of family farming from the impacts of COVID-19.		
Output 1			
Governments in the region conduct rapid assessments of the impact of COVID on rural livelihoods to guide decision-making and the generation of appropriate policies to safeguard FNS			
Output 1	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of new tools developed for rapid impact assessments of COVID-19. – Number of evaluations carried out. – Number of people trained in resilient rural livelihood recovery with a focus on the most vulnerable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1 – 6 – 120 	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	No new tools were developed, but each country adapted the COVID-19 rapid impact assessment methodology and tools developed by FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) to its own context. The training courses were delivered in the framework of data-collection and analysis processes (enumerators).		
Activity 1.1			
Review of existing tools that may be useful in determining the impact of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods and food security and short- and medium-term needs for recovery			
Activity 1.1	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Countries reviewed existing methodologies for assessing food security and agricultural livelihoods, including those generated by OER, and, in close collaboration with ministries of agriculture and national statistical offices, adapted them to their national realities and to the context of COVID-19. The FIES module was also adapted across the board.	

Activity 1.2	Development of methodological proposal and data-collection instrument for livelihood impact assessment	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In Ecuador, a province prioritization process was implemented for each of Ecuador’s regions and a stratified random sampling design was applied. The questionnaires for the telephone household survey and key informants were adjusted with the aid of 132 technicians from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG). – In Guatemala, the datasheet used included information on the effects of tropical storms ETA and IOTA, as well as information on household and agricultural livelihoods. The surveys were conducted by telephone and a simple random sample was drawn for a total of 8 049 households. – In Honduras, work was carried out with the technical unit for food and nutrition security, and with the National Institute of Statistics, and a proposed methodology and questionnaire for telephone interviews were developed within the framework of the Standing Multipurpose Household Survey (<i>Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples</i>). The sample design was two-stage, stratified, probability sampling. – In Paraguay, the instruments developed by the OER in coordination with the Directorate of Agricultural Outreach (DEAg) and with the guidance of the Directorate of Censuses and Statistics were adapted. The collection was carried out by DEAg technicians.
Activity 1.3	Conducting the Rapid Impact Assessment in five countries and analysing the results	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Primary data collection from agricultural outreach workers was conducted within OECS through web-based surveys. – A total of 4 777 key informant and household surveys were conducted in Ecuador. Two reports were developed, one assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on food security, crop and livestock production and livelihoods, and the other assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on food security and aquaculture livelihoods. – In Guatemala, data collection was conducted by telephone by two local NGOs, and the data were analysed by a local consultant whose report was reviewed and validated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA). – In Honduras, the data collection was carried out at the end of 2020. The results were validated with the government and included in the report titled “Monitoring indicators related to the impact and implications of COVID-19 on agriculture, livelihoods and food security”. – In Nicaragua, the vulnerability and productive potential of families affected by COVID-19 in the dry corridor was assessed, while quantitative FNS and qualitative gender indicators were gathered. Lastly, a study was carried out on the current status of economic enterprises in five municipalities in the dry corridor. – In Paraguay, nearly 2 000 rural household surveys were conducted in 14 departments in the eastern region. One hundred interviews were conducted with traders and MAG marketing technicians. – In Venezuela, 328 household surveys were conducted to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of households located in rural areas and indigenous Wayyú territory.

Output 2	Governments have tools to ensure food availability and access: a) drafting of FNS-focused response plans, b) adjustments to school feeding programmes or public procurement, c) adjustment of social protection programmes with an emphasis on FNS and protection of rural livelihoods of men and women, with a focus on Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent, and d) proposals for resource mobilization in support of rapid response in the agricultural sector		
	Indicators	End target	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of countries with strategies or plans for early response to COVID-19 in the agricultural sector and FNS aimed at ensuring availability and access to food and protecting agricultural livelihoods. – Number of special response plans for Indigenous Peoples. – Number of gender-sensitive School Feeding, Public Procurement and/or Social Protection Programmes adjusted, adapted, designed and/or scaled up. – Number of concept notes or proposals developed for the mobilization of funds from bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions (IFIs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 5 – 1 – 7 – 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Yes – Yes – Partially – Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	Countries drafted recommendations and helped ministries of agriculture to formulate sectoral plans and programmes for agricultural livelihood response and recovery, including measures to ensure food access and availability with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as women and Indigenous Peoples. Fourteen proposals and concept notes for mobilizing donor funds were also drawn up.		
Activity 2.1	Formulation of plans for COVID response in the agricultural sector and FNS aimed at protecting agricultural livelihoods and mitigating the impact on the most vulnerable populations (or their mainstreaming in national multisectoral plans) in five countries, including a special plan for indigenous groups		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – OECS drafted the Caribbean Community emergency response strategy and action plan. – In Bolivia, a monitoring and process automation system was designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Vice Ministry of Civil Defence preparedness, response and recovery actions. – In Colombia, discussion forums were held with government and international cooperation actors to formulate recommendations based on different impact analyses. A communication and advocacy strategy and workplan was designed for the response to COVID-19. – In Guatemala, support was provided for the drafting of MAGA’s institutional strategic plan 2021-2026, which included a food recovery and assistance pillar. The subsidy for post ETA and IOTA economic recovery actions, in support of family farming programme and the subsidies for actions for the care of families in food vulnerability programme were also designed. More recently, the subsidy for soil remediation and agro-input support programme was launched. All include Indigenous Peoples. – In Venezuela, a roadmap for the implementation of an early warning system for crop management in the face of droughts, extreme rains and floods was developed. Support was also provided for the drafting of a plan of action for the great agro venezuela mission indicator system, aimed at protecting agricultural livelihoods and mitigating the impact of various shocks on the most vulnerable people. 	
Activity 2.2	Design for the establishment or strengthening of School Feeding Programmes or Public Procurement from Family Farming supplied by small-scale producers in five countries		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	Most of the impact assessments included recommendations related to strengthening the link between family farming and the provision of school feeding programmes and public procurement systems. In Guatemala, support was provided to the design of a pilot project focused on strengthening the link between smallholders and school feeding/social protection programmes.	

Activity 2.3	Support to countries in designing or adjusting social protection programmes aimed at ensuring economic access to food and livelihood recovery by identifying and including marginalized rural groups in three countries		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	The activity was included as a recommendation in most COVID-19 impact assessments and resource mobilization proposals in Bolivia, Honduras and Peru. In Paraguay, a study was conducted on the effects of the pandemic on the economic autonomy and FNS of rural women, including an analysis of good practices for access to food, and a proposed solution involving outreach and financial services for rural women.	
Activity 2.4	Development of proposals for the mobilization of multihazard resilient response and recovery resources by bilateral, multilateral and IFI agencies based on eligibility in ten countries		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	More than USD 32 million was mobilized for response and recovery with a resilience approach in Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.	
Output 3	Governments deploy policy instruments to recover/adapt food systems following disruptions in supply chains, production, market and consumption with a multihazard resilience approach, with a focus on vulnerable groups, small-scale producers and rural microenterprises: value chain analysis, support for the development of recovery plans and support for product marketing.		
	Indicators	End target	Achieved
	– Number of countries conducting value chain analyses to develop alternatives.	– 4	Yes
	– Number of countries with policy instruments to support the recovery/adaptation of rural production and livelihoods.	– 4	
	– Number of countries seeing greater participation of small-scale producers in sales/marketing platforms to recover/adapt food systems.	– 3	
– Number of online training courses on resilient recovery.	– 1		
Baseline	0		
Comments	Value chain analyses were conducted in seven countries to design investment strategies for the recovery of rural livelihoods. Support was also given to small-scale producers in marketing processes and to market agents to ensure the continuity of their operations. Finally, support tools were developed to facilitate technical assistance and training for small-scale producers in the context of COVID-19.		
Activity 3.1	Value chain analysis and recommendations for the development of alternatives in five countries		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In Belize and OECS, value chains were selected to address key actions such as production structure, performance, organizational models, domestic consumption, imports, exports, storage and existing public policies. – In Ecuador, the price configuration of ten commodities of commercial interest to local producers in the provinces of Chimborazo and Manabí and the markets of Riobamba, Portoviejo and the Metropolitan District of Quito was analysed. – In Nicaragua, a coffee value chain analysis was carried out as part of the post-COVID-19 recovery strategy. The analysis was considered when drafting the national programme to support rural investments for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nicaragua. – In Venezuela, an Analysis of opportunities, strengths, and challenges of the agrifood sector for the improvement and promotion of inclusive markets in three prioritized productive regions of Venezuela was drawn up. 	
Activity 3.2	Development of rural livelihood and production recovery plans considering value chain alternatives and resilience investments in four countries		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In Belize and OECS, investment profile proposals were drawn up with key interventions required in prioritized value chains to promote food systems' recovery/transformation. – In Peru, the agrifood system status was characterized with an emphasis on the food market. A short-, medium- and long-term plan was drawn up within the framework of the programme to improve metropolitan markets and five prioritized markets. 	

Activity 3.3	Support for the implementation or extended use of agricultural product marketing information platforms for food system recovery in three countries	
	Achieved	Partially
	Comments	In Nicaragua, methodologies for the formulation of marketing plans were defined. Platforms and virtual media available for the commercialization and marketing of smallholders' products were identified. Lastly, a proposed training and tutoring plan was drawn up for the use of information and communication technologies in the commercial management of rural enterprises.
Activity 3.4	Online training for resilient recovery	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In El Salvador, an assessment of the outreach system was conducted. This led to updating of the operational manual, and an outreach guide with a resilience approach was built in a participatory manner. – In Peru, training was provided to people involved in markets and local governments to enable them to properly implement protocols and prevention measures in the event of a health emergency, guaranteeing continuity of supply and biosecurity. – At regional level, an online event was organized for the exchange of experiences and good practices. This was attended by a total of 12 countries and more than 40 participants.

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla

00153 Rome, Italy