



# COVID-19 and food security and nutrition: understanding impacts and developing effective policy responses

Jose Maria Sumpasi (UPM-CEIGRAM)

Steering Committee of HLPE

Committee on World Food Security

# Outline

1. Introduction
2. How COVID-19 is affecting food security
  - i. primary trends affecting food security and nutrition
  - ii. Implications for the six dimensions of food security
3. Policy recommendations

# Introduction

- Notes the fluid and dynamic nature of the situation
- SOFI 2020 estimates 83-132 million people will be added to the ranks of the world's hungry
- WHO estimates doubling of acute hunger; says worst is yet to come
- Urgent need to build more resilient food systems in face of this crisis

# How COVID-19 is affecting food security

## **i. Primary trends affecting FSN**

- supply chain disruptions due to lockdowns/illnesses
- global economic recession and associated income losses
- disruptions to social protection programs
- altered food environments
- localized food price increases
- change in production levels

*These trends overlap in complex ways, not always easy to disentangle*

# Impact of COVID-19 on FSN changes over time

## Immediate

Global and local disruptions to food supply chains due to lockdowns affects perishable food items leading to food waste

Massive job losses and income constraints lower purchasing power, affecting food access

School closures mean loss of school meals for millions of children

Fewer fresh foods available in markets (fruits, vegetables, dairy, etc), leading to poor diet quality

Early export restrictions by some countries on some food products causes supply and price disruption

## Medium term

Farm labor and input constraints affect production and prices

Food system worker illnesses contribute to continuation of supply chain disruptions

Global recession sends millions into extreme poverty, further diminishing their ability to access food

Uneven food price effects in local contexts impact food import dependent countries

Altered food environments affects access to healthy and nutritious foods

## Longer term

Loss of livelihoods and people's access to food, resulting in a massive increase in hunger

Loss of food system livelihoods threatens food system stability and resilience

Shift in diets to less nutritious foods impacts health and livelihood prospects

Ongoing uncertainty constrains long-term investment in the food and agriculture sector

Diminished attention to climate and biodiversity threatens food sustainability

## ii. Implications for the six dimensions of food security and nutrition

**Availability** – affecting availability of food in specific locations, as well as production

**Access** – collapse of livelihoods, purchasing power and weakening of safety nets

**Utilization** – income loss leads to less healthy diets; increases risks of contracting COVID-19

**Stability** – unstable and volatile markets in specific locations & due to export restrictions

**Agency** – the most marginalized food system participants, including food system workers, lack agency; reduced rights to organize, etc.

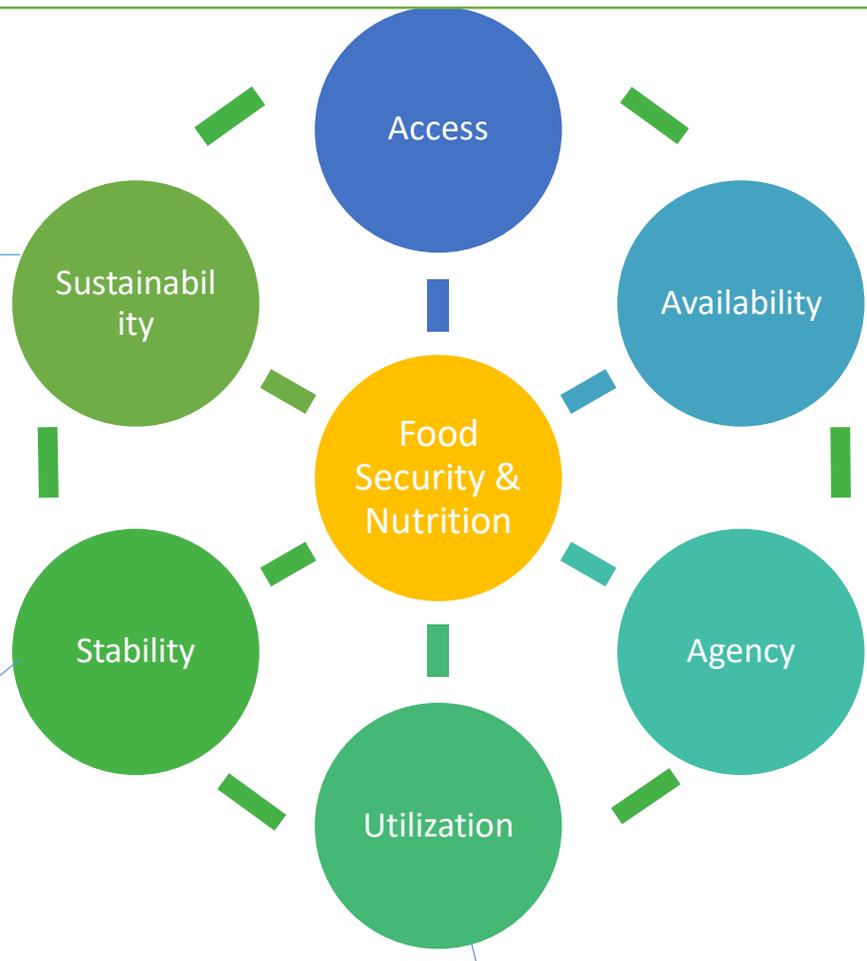
**Sustainability** – fragile ecosystems increase transmission of zoonoses; increase in food and plastic waste

- Loss of jobs & income
- Higher food prices
- Disruption of school meal programmes
- Curtailing of safety nets or diminished access to them
- Closure of proximity and informal markets
- Comorbidities

- Increase in food losses & waste
- Increase in packaging and plastic waste
- Decreased attention to climate change and environmental issues
- Social and economic losses affecting food system viability

- Supply chain disruptions
- Labour shortages
- Closure of high-risk processing plants
- Closure of restaurants and food stalls
- Shift to lower risk crops

- Supply chains disruptions
- Uncertainty on markets & inputs access
- Price volatility
- Export restrictions



- Loss of jobs & affiliation to unions
- Weakened power of farmers' and producers' organization
- Loss of economic and social empowerment
- Inability to meet and organize
- Inequality in ICT access
- Temporary restrictions of rights to demonstrate and organize

- Shift to cheaper / less healthy diets
- Shift towards processed and shelf stable food
- Link between malnutrition and COVID-19

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

# 1. Support more resilient food production systems based on sustainable agricultural methods and techniques

- Invest in sustainable agricultural techniques and practices research-action projects within the CGIAR system
- Support the development of sustainable agricultural methods and techniques in curriculum at schools of agriculture
- Given that the majority of agricultural development assistance projects support conventional agricultural approaches, work to support more projects that encourage sustainable agricultural techniques and practices

## 2. Support more diverse and resilient distribution systems, such as territorial markets

- Invest in enhanced territorial market infrastructure at the regional, national and local levels;
- Support local markets that provide points of connection between small producers and lower income consumers, including periodic rural markets and informal retailers or street vendors
- Consider adopting stronger regulation/competition policy to curb the power of large agro-food suppliers.

### 3. Implement more robust targeted social protection programmes to improve access to healthy and nutritious foods

- Provide adequate emergency food aid.
- Provide debt relief to governments struggling to maintain necessary social safety nets.
- Maintain robust social safety nets until the end of the COVID-19 crisis, recognising that household food expenditures rise and fall in relation to other expenditures (e.g., on housing, health care, education, etc.).
- Design food assistance programs that offer adequate access to healthy food, not just sufficient calories.

## 4. Ensure better protections for vulnerable and marginalized food system workers and farmers who are disproportionately affected by the crisis

- Ensure food system workers' rights are recognized in national legislation and guarantee compliance.
- Ensure food systems workers have access to full protection from hazards and risks (in terms of personal protective equipment, distancing measures, clear health and safety guidelines, paid sick leave, adequate sleeping, eating and sanitary facilities, quarantine shelters).
- Pay special attention to migrant workers in the food system to ensure they are protected from health risks, have access to health services and social protection.
- Implement mechanisms to protect farmers and small-agricultural producers from uncertainties and income losses, such as specific insurances or compensation.

## 5. Provide better protection for countries that depend on food imports

- Discourage food export restrictions to protect countries reliant on food imports (short run).
- Provide policy space and support to countries seeking to improve their domestic food production capacity (medium and long run)

## 6. Strengthen and coordinate policy responses to the COVID-19 impact on FSN including at international level

- Recognize of the role of the CFS as a lead body in coordinating an international governance response to the impact of COVID-19 on FSN.
- Establish a reporting system for CFS member states to share information and experiences with respect to the impact of COVID-19 on FSN and policy responses in local and national contexts.
- Include food system workers and agricultural producers organizations in COVID-19 decision processes at national and international levels.