



# Africa Food Security

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Africa faces several issues among which foreign states intrusion, education, food security....and more. With the covid-19 pandemic some of those problems have worsened. Therefore, I have decided to expose on the Food security issues in Africa.

## FOOD SECURITY POST COVID-19

From alarming to critical state? What are the food security implications of the COVID-19 pandemic? Which approach for a better state of global food security post COVID-19?



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## From alarming to critical state?

### Context

In an article of 21 April 2020, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned “the COVID-19 pandemic could almost double the number of people suffering acute hunger, pushing it to more than a quarter of a billion by the end of 2020. Food security is defined as the availability of food and one's access to it. A household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. Stages of food insecurity range from food secure situations to full-scale famine. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life".

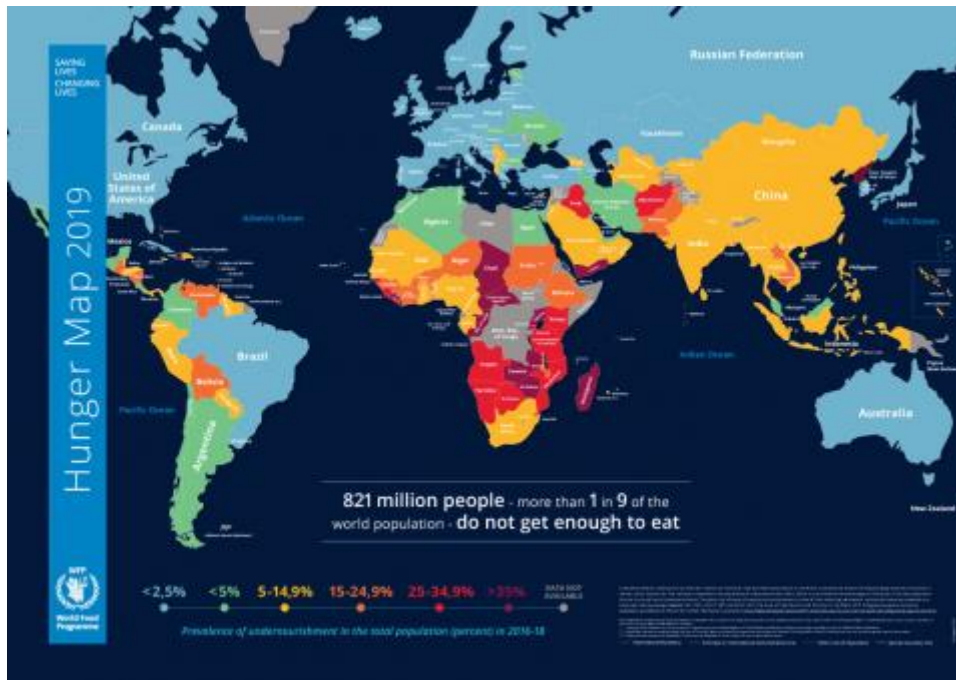


Figure 1 Hunger Map

As illustrated on the figure above developing and under developed countries are the one facing food security crisis. It is imperative that we take proactive steps to ensure this health crisis does not morph into a food crisis. I anticipate that the most vulnerable segments of the global population will be the most negatively impacted by this crisis.

### What are the food security implications of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Below are several supply-side and demand-side risks to the food system that will require deeper consideration as the crisis unfolds.

#### Supply-Side Risks

##### 1) Trade Barriers

Trade is a key mechanism for allocating scarce resources efficiently. Global food systems rely on trade for access to key inputs as well as to move food from surplus areas to deficit areas. As border controls are being put in place to contain the spread of the virus, cross-border trade in critical inputs like seed, fertilizer, plant protection products and on-farm equipment could be constrained. These barriers to trade increase transaction costs, in turn reducing margins for smallholder farmers and potentially decreasing their on-farm

investments as well. Reduced on-farm investments could inhibit farmer's resilience to unrelated shocks such as droughts and pest and disease outbreaks and generally limit their productive capacity even further.

## **2) Labor Shortages**

Public health outcomes and restrictions on mobility could result in shortages of a critical factor of production for global food systems: labor. As operations within food systems in developing countries are highly labor intensive, border closures and domestic lockdowns could have the unintended consequence of limiting seasonal and casual labor availability. Additionally, increased morbidity and mortality from the virus could have a further impact on labor availability. The food systems in developing countries often rely on labor from two segments of the population that are reportedly more susceptible to severe complications from the virus elderly people and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Labor pressures from public health issues reduce on-farm productivity, limit processing capacity, and constrain food distribution, thereby reducing aggregate food availability and placing upward pressure on food prices. Identifying those food value chains in Feed the Future countries most susceptible to labor shortages in the coming months and seasons would be important for understanding the anticipated duration of the shock to the system and quantifying the potential effects on supply and price.

## **3) Informal Market Closures**

There is a growing outcry calling for the closure of all "wet" informal markets across developing countries. Vendors in wet markets sell fresh produce and meat, often including live animals. The objective of these calls is to reduce risks for zoonotic disease spillover from animals traded in high-risk markets to human consumers as COVID-19 may have originated in a wet market. However, informal food markets serve as an important source of food and income across the developing world. Blanket closure of all informal wet markets could therefore ultimately result in shocks to food availability and income sources in some developing countries.

Regulatory efforts that enforce basic food safety standards, support best practices of live animal husbandry and species separation at markets and slaughterhouses, and prevent illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade in informal markets can help to ensure food security, public health safety, and wildlife conservation. Over the longer term, market-led initiatives will be equally important, such as supporting additional safe and sustainable domestic animal food sources, raising consumer demand for safe foods and supporting small-scale value chains for emerging supermarkets to provide safe and sustainable food sourced from local producers. All people need safe and sustainable sources of food and income. Better law enforcement, improved biosafety policies, and stronger natural resource conservation can help prevent the spread of disease.

## **Demand-Side Risks**

### **1) Access to Nutritious Foods**

The poorest segments of the population in developing countries often depend on income from casual labor along food value chains, both on farms and in firms, that may be unavailable under lockdowns. A reduction in income is likely to result in reduced access to foods. Since nutritious, fresh foods are often more expensive than nonperishable staples, it is expected that the price of nutritious foods will rise faster and become less accessible for the more vulnerable segments of society. Further, since the desire to buy goods at a higher price due to increased demand is less common in poorer countries, if prices of nutritious foods rise faster

than nonperishable foods, and incomes decline, then lower overall spending on nutritious foods can be expected. Reduced access to nutritious foods could further impact immune response in populations already most vulnerable to COVID-19, including the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, and the already immune-compromised.

## **2) Global Industrial Capacity and Purchasing Power**

A sharp global economic slowdown appears unavoidable as a result of lockdown measures to control the virus, and the damage to developing country agriculture sectors is expected to follow. Unlike the 2008 food crisis, a significant threat to the global food system today is crashing commodity prices due to decreased global industrial capacity and international purchasing power.

In addition to slowing industrial capacity, a simultaneous decline in global aggregate demand could further exacerbate falling prices of export-oriented foods. As many developing countries are reliant on agricultural exports for foreign exchange, declines in food exports will not only impact export-oriented farms and firms, but will also influence broader macroeconomic performance that will have ripple effects through the agriculture sector.

## **3) Domestic Panic Buying**

While global commodity prices are falling, there is also anecdotal evidence emerging of domestic panic buying in developing countries that is driving food prices up. For instance,

### **Case of Ivory Coast and Ghana**

These 2 countries have their economy mainly based on agriculture. Together they produce more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world total cocoa supply.

Since months, Ivory coast and Ghana have closed their borders. As cross-border trade in food was restricted to ostensibly protect domestic consumers from rising prices, food producers and market actors could suffer severe economic hardship and their incentives to invest in the production, processing, and distribution of food could be dampened. The risks of these policy responses in the coming months should be watched closely, and evidence of the benefits of cross-border food trade should continue to be raised.

Today, as global industrial capacity shuts down, oil prices are cratering, and there are signs that food commodity prices are following suit. For instance, the Cornell Alliance for Science has noted that as cashew processing factories in India, China, and Vietnam shut down, the market price of cashews has fallen 63 percent since January. Many producers in cashew producing countries such as Ivory Coast and Ghana are now struggling to break even.

According to local news media, panic buying in domestic food markets has caused the price of certain staple foods to jump significantly. It is unknown how widespread this behavior has been or how long it can be expected to last, but rising domestic food prices along with a collapse of global commodity prices could have a devastating impact on food security in the least developed countries.

## Which approach for a better state of global food security post COVID-19?

### **Proposed solutions**

- 1) Use of technology, especially social media to support agribusinesses
- 2) Collaboration between health and agriculture sector
- 3) Better management of agriculture cooperatives
- 4) Home gardening
- 5) Intensification of agribusiness incubators actions
- 6) Government policies and subsidies

### **Conclusion**

We are in the midst of a global crisis, and while the number one priority of policymakers is to save lives, we must also understand the short- and long-term impacts on global food security. It remains important for governments grappling with the COVID-19 public health crisis to continue to prioritize food and nutritional security. Evidence is urgently needed to understand the severity and duration of these, and other potential impacts, on food systems in Feed the Future countries. Only then can policy and intervention responses be appropriately tailored to this unfolding crisis.

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