

global Food Security Cluster

COVID 19 Working Group

Terms of Reference

As a result of discussions with the gFSC-SAG on 31st March 2020, based on request from gFSC members, it was decided to establish an ad hoc COVID 19 Working Group (C19-WG) within the gFSC.

Purpose/Objective

The purpose of the C19WG is to strengthen the coordination of gFSC partners in their preparedness and humanitarian response to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 on the food security of all vulnerable and affected populations.

Background

As of today (31 March 2020), there are over 921,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in at least 178 countries and territories, and the situation is quickly evolving with more than 46,000 deaths¹. Significantly, the pandemic is spreading quickly in areas previously unaffected by humanitarian crises.

Confirmed cases are currently not numerous in areas with elevated levels of acute food insecurity. In the entire African continent for instance, there were less than 6,000 confirmed cases to date². In the Middle East, Iran (Islamic Republic of) accounted for over 44,000 confirmed cases. The majority of the other countries in the region reporting COVID-19 are not affected by elevated levels of acute food insecurity, with the exception of Palestine and Iraq.

However, COVID-19 cases are increasing both in spread and in numbers, as suggested by recent trends – such as the appearance of the virus in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. In February, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that their greatest concern is the potential for the virus to spread to countries with weaker health systems. No one knows today how to predict the spread of the virus and the associated mortality, which depend, beyond the strict application of hospital management measures and capacities, on multiple factors including climatic variables, the age pyramid, etc.

From a food security and agriculture perspective, it is to be expected that a pandemic would affect disproportionately livelihoods in countries which lack the capacity to cope with a pandemic in terms of health systems, access to social protection, infrastructure and government capacity;

- with already elevated levels of acute food insecurity;
- which are experiencing multiple stressors, such as below average agricultural production, recent or ongoing natural hazards, chronic poverty, economic crises or outbreaks of pests;

¹ <https://www.google.com/covid19-map/>

² <https://africanarguments.org/2020/03/31/coronavirus-in-africa-tracker-how-many-cases-and-where-latest/>

- which are affected by conflict and elevated levels of political instability;
- which heavily rely on imports to meet their basic food consumption needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic will have devastating socioeconomic impacts on people's livelihoods and employment, especially

These impacts include the shortages of labour curbing production and processing of food, Income losses, limited access of farmers to markets following the quarantine measures, less access to food caused by supply chain disruption and the decrease of purchase power at households level and plummeting in food prices affecting the export earning for poor countries that depend mostly on exports

In light of all above mentioned impacts, the crisis impact is likely to be more devastating than the pandemic itself leading to instability in both local and global markets (food and commodity markets), causing a disruption to food supply and availability.

- Reduced Food Availability (local food production, food supply, dysfunctional markets)
- Reduced Food Access (increased food prices, reduced production, reduced and/or more expensive imports, reduced livelihoods/income sources, reduced access to markets, reduced social protection programmes and safety net initiatives)
- Reduced Stability as the markets themselves are highly unstable and implementation of movement restrictions continue to evolve leading to a great degree of uncertainty;
- Nutrition is likely to be affected as people shift diets to more shelf-stable and pre-packaged foods and malnutrition as a result of food insecurity may increase

The most affected will be the poorest, those most at risk and most vulnerable segments of the population, including the displaced and those living in refugee camps, settlements and urban areas, those with no or limited access to safety nets initiatives, those in protracted crises.

Working Group Results

- **Result 1:** A joint monitoring system is established to:
 - follow the evolution of the risks and impacts to food systems and food security
 - capture global food security partners responses trends
- **Result 2:**
 - Specific guidance for existing activities to be implemented under COVID19 risk is identified and/or developed/adapted (when needed), e.g. on training, food assistance, distribution of agricultural inputs, etc. for FSC teams and gFSC partners. This result will be done in close collaboration with the other gFSC-TWGs (Cash & Market, Inter cluster Nutrition, Preparedness & Resilience and Programme Quality)
 - Knowledge management products (lesson learned, best practices, etc.) are developed and shared.
- **Result 3:** Joint Advocacy messages are developed with the gFSC partners as well as other clusters
- **Result 4:** National, WHO and Health Cluster strategy to mitigate Covid 19 impacts are supported by FSC partners' efforts.
- **Result 5:** Information from the wider industry on key issues that may inform response plan scope and focus over time (e.g., economic analysis of impacts on workforce depletion, market price fluctuations on staple food commodities, impact on SMEs and small holder farms in COVID affected countries) is analysed and information shared.

Working Group Structure

A focal person in the gFSC support team will support the working group chair(s) to manage and ensure the communications with the working group through:

- Regular e-mail correspondence, including updates on partners' activities, events, knowledge sharing and learning activities;
- Webinars on specific thematic areas of interest;
- Teleconferences on demand;
- WG in the next bi-annual meeting in May 2020
- Meeting minutes circulated to all WG members.

Representation

All gFSC partner institutions can join this group at any time. They will be requested to send their Letter of Intent to the Chair **XXXX** and to the gFSC focal point **XXX**.

Name	contact

Work Plan

To be developed by the C19WG. This TWG will be deactivated by the SAG, under proposition by the TWG members.

Activities	Outputs	Focal Points	Deadline
ToRs reviewed and finalised	ToRs are agreed by gFSC - SAG members	Damien	2 nd April 2020