

Perspective

Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods

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ABOUT THE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant loss of human life around the world and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems, and the world of work. Hundreds of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic, and the number of undernourished people, which is currently estimated at nearly 690 million dollars, could rise by up to 132 million by the end of the year. The pandemic has affected the entire food system, affecting its vulnerability. Border closures, trade restrictions, and confinement measures have made it difficult for farmers to access markets, including to acquire inputs and sell their produce, as well as for agricultural workers to harvest crops, disrupting domestic and international food supply chains and lowering access to healthy, safe, and diverse diets. The pandemic has decimated jobs and put millions of people's livelihoods in danger. While producing food, millions of agricultural workers – both waged and self-employed – face high levels of working poverty, malnutrition, and poor health, as well as a lack of safety and labour safeguard, as well as other forms of abuse. With low and irregular incomes and a lack of social support, many of them are compelled to continue working, often in hazardous conditions, endangering themselves and their families. Moreover, when faced with income loss, they may resort to negative coping strategies such as distressed asset sales, predatory loans, or child labour. Migrant agricultural workers are particularly vulnerable because they face risks in their transportation, working, and living conditions and struggle to access government-provided services. Agriculture, population health, and employment and labour issues, particularly

worker health and safety, all intersect in the COVID-19 crisis. Adhering to workplace safety and health methods, as well as ensuring access to decent work and the protection of labour rights across all industries, will be critical in addressing the crisis's social component. Immediate and concentrated action to save lives and reputations should include expanding social protection to include universal healthcare and income support for the most vulnerable. Workers in the informal economy, as well as those in poorly protected and low-paying jobs, include youth, older workers, and migrants. Women, who are over-represented in low-wage trades and care responsibilities, must be given special consideration. Cash transfers, child allowances and healthy school meals, shelter and food relief programmes, employment retention and recovery assistance, and financial relief for businesses, including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, are all critical. It is critical that governments collaborate closely with employers and workers when creating and planning such initiatives. Now is the time for global solidarity and support, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our societies, especially those in the emerging and developing world. Only by collaborating together can we overcome the pandemic's intertwined health, social, and economic impacts and prevent it from increasing into a protracted humanitarian and food security catastrophe, possible wiping out previously achieved development gains. Humans should reconsider our environment's future and resolve climate change and environmental degradation with ambition and urgency. Only then can we prevent all people's health, livelihoods, food security, and nutrition, and ensure that our 'new normal' is a better one.

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