



COVID-19 Response Program

Vital Supply Chains Project

Food Systems Security



RAPID RESPONSE PLATFORM • ACTION UPDATE & PRIORITIES • June 2020

Summary

- COVID-19 impacts on the food system are particularly acute in India and Sub-Saharan Africa, due in part to disrupted supply chains for perishable foods.
- India- and Africa-focused efforts, including many led by WBCSD members, are helping to mitigate supply chain disruptions, address increasing risks of hunger and nutrition insecurity, and offer strong platforms for greater collaboration.
- WBCSD has identified effective country and regional initiatives and organizations and aims to connect companies into these platforms to support and expand their impact.

Introduction & context

This document provides a progress update for the COVID-19 Vital Supply Chains Rapid Response Platform for Food Systems of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). Our focus in June, as requested by members, was to explore COVID-related needs in India and Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly relating to the production of perishables (fruits, vegetables, dairy, etc.) by smallholder farmers. Recognizing the urgent need for effective response, WBCSD recognizes member companies already leading proactive efforts and we are connecting additional companies to effective organizations to make an impact.

This work is a continuation of efforts underway since April 2020 in response to the impacts of COVID-19 on Food Systems. For information regarding [Priorities, Principles for a strong response](#), and publications on progress, please see [our website](#) for more information.



The challenge

COVID-19 compounded pre-existing challenges, inequalities and crises. In India, 120 million people lost jobs in April – of which over 90 million were small traders and laborers.¹ Migrant workers have returned to their hometowns, leading to labor shortages in the farming sector.² And lockdown-related closures has dramatically reduced demand, with significant implications for smallholder farmers.

Africa is facing multiple overlapping threats including the locust crisis, torrential rains and floods, and civil conflict in some nations.³ COVID-19 border policies and lockdowns have disrupted inter-regional trade,⁴ severely impacting economies and leading to several-month currency depreciations in major economies like South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya.⁵ These dynamics have compounded underlying vulnerabilities: AGRA estimates that over 25 million people were food insecure in May.⁶

Both regions face interrelated challenges including logistics disruptions, labor shortages, food loss, decreased demand at home and abroad, plunging farmgate prices, information gaps and falsehoods, and constrained credit among farmers for essential activities like machinery rentals and inputs.^{7,8,9}

Key areas for support include:

- **Reduce food loss and waste** through good agricultural practices and postharvest handling
- **Strengthen smallholder farmer resilience** by shortening supply chains, diversifying income sources and adding value through food processing
- **Improve cash flow** to smallholder farmers, such as through e-commerce platforms or digital cash payments, and develop financial tools that extend credit terms and finance supply chains

- **Support digital tools for farmers** such as extension services, weather and market information. Expand access to digital technologies and use them to enable civic participation and influence
- **Ensure access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene** for all actors across the supply chain. See [WBCSD and WASH4Work's updated Pledge for access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene](#).
- **Support farmers' operations** by providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and means to ensure social distancing; enabling access to labor, farm inputs and machinery; addressing supply chain disruptions in transportation and retail; and working with local authorities on context-appropriate COVID-19 responses.

Solutions & business actions

WBCSD member companies in action

WBCSD members are demonstrating impactful leadership in these regions. Examples include:

- [Yara International](#) launched an initiative called Action Africa: Thriving Farms, Thriving Future that includes provision of 40,000 metric tons of high-quality fertilizers with zinc for improved nutrition. Yara's contributions are expected to triple maize production and feed more than one million people for one year.¹⁰
- The [Farm to Market Alliance](#), a public-private partnership comprising **Syngenta, Yara, Bayer, Rabobank**, AGRA and the UN World Food Programme, enabling smallholder farmers' access to predictable markets, affordable finance, technologies and quality inputs, and handling and storage solutions. Amid COVID-19 they are increasing

liquidity to farmers and value chains.

- [OCP](#) has offered financial contribution to national solidarity funds in East and West African countries and scaled up its Agribooster program that supports smallholder farmers to increase yields and incomes.
- [ITC](#) leveraged its digital advisory application called e-Choupal to facilitate the procurement of agriculture produce and improve supply chain efficiencies in India.

These responses – and [many additional efforts among WBCSD businesses](#) – build on [trusted action and knowledge platforms](#) that WBCSD is tracking.

Opportunities to get involved

To complement these efforts, WBCSD has identified initiatives and organizations to which WBCSD companies can connect to boost

food systems rapid response. These platforms offer strong value and impact potential for companies who wish to take collective action. Examples include:

- [Farm to Market Alliance](#) is a public-private partnership comprising Syngenta, Yara, Bayer, Rabobank, AGRA and the World Food Program (see previous section).
- The [Hand-in-Hand Initiative](#) is an FAO initiative to reduce extreme poverty, eliminate hunger, improve nutrition, increase agricultural productivity and rural living standards, and contribute to global economic growth. Hand-in-Hand adopts a market-oriented food systems approach to increasing the quantity, quality, diversity and accessibility of nutritious foods available in local, regional and national food markets.

- [IFAD COVID-19 Rural Poor Stimulus Facility](#) seeks to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the context of the crisis by ensuring timely access to inputs, information, markets and liquidity. IFAD will initiate the facility with USD \$40 million of seed funding from grant resources and expects to mobilize at least USD \$200 million from member states and other donors to scale up support.
- [World Economic Forum's COVID Action for Food Systems in Africa](#) is working on financing, data and information platforms, and policy. Among other priorities the initiative is working on digital finance and how it could enhance the distribution of inputs.
- [ICA](#) (Indians for Collective Action) listed Indian foundations and organizations that are directly supporting the population (education, food relief, etc.). [Goonj](#) for instance is working in 23 Indian states, they have created a COVID-19 project and have [listed their needs](#) for immediate response on the ground. Among other actions, they have distributed over 72 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables, directly sourced from farmers, to people in need.
- [One Acre Fund](#) provides over a million smallholder farmers across six countries in East and Southern Africa with financing and training to improve their resilience. Their COVID response is multifaceted, including accelerated delivery of key farming supplies, digital support and extension services to farmers, and health support such as supplies and practical guidance.

We encourage all businesses to step up, providing relief and working together on long-term solutions in collaboration with local organizations. WBCSD will help link you into these initiatives – and many more – where members together can help make an impact.

COVID-19 Response Program

WBCSD has initiated a special call to action for our members, leveraging our combined business expertise to address the COVID-19 crisis and support the critical role of business. As part of this [program](#), three new projects – vital supply chains, return to “normal” scenarios and long-term impacts – are underway with regular updates provided through our channels.

About the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

WBCSD is a global, CEO-led organization of over 200 leading businesses working together to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world. We help make our member companies more successful and sustainable by focusing on the maximum positive impact for shareholders, the environment and societies. Our member companies come from all business sectors and all major economies, representing a combined revenue of more than USD \$8.5 trillion and 19 million employees. Our Global Network of almost 70 national business councils gives our members unparalleled reach across the globe. Since 1995, WBCSD has been uniquely positioned to work with member companies along and across value chains to deliver impactful business solutions to the most challenging sustainability issues. Together, we are the leading voice of business for sustainability: united by our vision of a world where more than nine billion people are all living well and within the boundaries of our planet, by 2050.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
www.wbcd.org

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/world/asia/india-coronavirus-women-economy.html>

² <https://www.ft.com/content/f9eb67f3-5cf8-42c4-be97-8dd36a7f1671>

³ <https://globalvoices.org/2020/05/04/covid-19-locusts-and-floods-east-africas-triple-dilemma/>

⁴ <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/covid-19-border-policies-create-problems-african-trade-and-economic-pain-communities>

⁵ <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/covid-19-lockdowns-are-imposing-substantial-economic-costs-countries-africa>

⁶ https://agra.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sit_Rep-May_RW-15-may-Final.pdf

⁷ <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/impacts-covid-19-crisis-vegetable-value-chains-ethiopia>

⁸ <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/blog/asset/41913297>

⁹ <http://tools.foodsecurityportal.org/COVID-19-food-price-monitoring>

¹⁰ <https://www.yara.com/corporate-releases/yara-takes-action-to-avert-hunger-crisis-in-the-wake-of-covid-19/>