



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Global Hunger in the Time of COVID-19

The World Food Program projects that, without urgent action, the number of people facing food crises could double by the end of the year due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 will increase hunger and food insecurity

- COVID-19 is expected to drive up hunger, especially in countries already suffering from food crises – meaning they don't have enough food and there are higher levels of acute malnutrition. For example, people in Angola, South Sudan, Yemen, and the drought-affected parts of Pakistan, as well as Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Ecuador, are [already acutely food insecure](#) and at higher risk of starvation from COVID-19.
 - Across the [29 countries](#) that the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) monitors, **nearly 100 million people will require humanitarian food assistance** in 2020—a 25 percent increase from 2019.
- COVID-19 also particularly threatens nations with [high burdens of poverty](#) and weak public health systems. Most of the world's hungry people live in these countries, and **hunger is expected to increase** in countries that already have high hunger rates.
 - **Global poverty rates are expected to worsen.** Based on economic projections, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) estimates that [an additional 140 million people](#) – including 80 million in Africa and 42 million in South Asia - will fall into poverty this year. Economic decline, poverty, and food insecurity often accompany one another.
- As in the United States, the people who will be most affected come from the poorest and most vulnerable populations. In developing countries, these include **displaced people, migrants, people who live in fragile states, and populations affected by conflict.**
- **Loss of employment and income** will be the main reason for the expected rise in hunger.
- Closed borders and national lockdowns are [disrupting food supply chains](#) and therefore food access and availability.
 - Just as the main agricultural season is beginning, restrictions may prevent [seasonal laborers](#) from migrating to work on farms. This could cause **crop shortages and rising food prices.**
 - Pastoralists may not be able to move about freely to find pasture or water, which **could threaten their livestock** and cause conflict with farming communities.ⁱ



Food assistance recipients in Mozambique are divided into smaller groups and asked to stay 1.5 metres or almost 5 feet apart while in line.

WFP/Rafael Campos

Hunger is already a major global problem

- Despite progress against global hunger since 1990, [the number of people living with hunger has increased](#) since 2015

because of conflict, climate change, and economic downturns. Approximately **2 billion people are food insecure**.

- In low- and middle-income countries, many households spend **half of their income** on food.
- In 2020, East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and portions of western and Southwest Asia have already suffered the **worst locust infestation in 70 years**, which destroyed crops and dramatically increased food insecurity. The United Nations estimates that this swarm is capable of **consuming enough food to feed 34 million people**. A **second wave of locusts** is expected to further increase hunger in East Africa, Yemen, and Iran.

Current COVID-19 impacts on food security

- Key **food security programs have been disrupted** by quarantine measures, including restrictions on movement and gatherings.
 - Nearly 1.6 billion children are out of school. Children who had relied on **school meals can no longer count on that food**.
 - **Community nutrition and food assistance** programs cannot continue as usual.
- Delivery of agricultural inputs and nutrition commodities **faces delays and is more expensive** due to **less availability of air, sea, and ground transportation**.
- Farmers do not have access to the accurate and timely information they need to plant and harvest their crops. Crops and fresh produce are **being left in fields**, causing both **loss of income for farmers and food waste**.
 - **Closure of markets** means **farmers have nowhere to sell** their produce, and consumers have **limited places to purchase** their food.
- The poorest households are most vulnerable to increases in hunger. In rural China, for example, COVID-19 **reduced the purchasing power** of these households, including their ability to buy food.
- **Food prices are showing signs of increasing**, although higher prices are not yet widespread. Based on reports from Sudan, Rwanda, China, and Vietnam,ⁱⁱ fresh produce prices have been most significantly affected.

The U.S. government should increase supplemental funding in forthcoming stimulus bills by \$2 billion to address the unprecedented rise in global hunger and nutrition needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Endnotes

ⁱ Action Against Hunger (2020). Risk of rising death toll in West Africa: COVID-19 meets hunger.

ⁱⁱ Presentation by Chase Sova, WFP USA, April 2020.