National and local policy interventions to support trade, food markets and enterprises

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Food Security and Nutrition in the Context of COVID-19: Impacts and Interventions
Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic and related health policies increase food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition through

*Sickness disrupting the food chain*

“Social distancing” policies creating unemployment

“Barriers to movement“ of people in national and international food supply chains

Interventions must focus on keeping private food supply chains (FSCs) functioning i.e., ‘keeping markets open’

“Green channels” for movement of food and agricultural inputs

Protect the health of workers in FSCs

Relief programs

The crisis provides an opportunity policy institutes to build capacity for inclusive food policy making and evidenced-based decision making
How does COVID-19 sickness and related health policies reduce food security and incomes?

- **Sickness, fear of disease and social distancing policies** close food and input markets, restaurants and food processing plants creating unemployment and ruining small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

- **Barriers to international and internal movement** of people disrupt supply of inputs to farmers (labor, fertilizer, seed), food imports and food supplies to cities

- Reduced incomes and reduced food supplies lead to inadequate diets and reduced food security

- The burden falls hardest on women, children and members of marginalized groups
Why focus interventions on private food supply chains (FSCs)?

- **National private FSCs are the dominant source of food** (Reardon et al. 2020)
  - In Africa 80% of value of food consumed comes through markets that are dominated by SMEs
  - 20% of food consumed is produced and consumed on farm
  - Government supplies maximum 4% in any country

- **FSCs are a major source of employment** (Dolislager et al. 2020)
  - 65% of rural employment
    - Farmers account for 40%, 5% is hired labor on farm, 20% elsewhere in FSCs
  - 25% of urban employment are in FSCs
Interventions to keep FSCs open - 1

1. “Green channels” to mitigate the impacts of restrictions on internal and international movement
   • Have clear definitions and careful monitoring with input from key FSC players
   • Attend to health protection at blockage points (border crossings, internal movement)
   • Address financial resources to SMEs

2. Maintain food processing and informal and formal market operations with policies to keep workers and traders healthy through
   • training, social distancing, improved health services & market infrastructure
Interventions to keep open- 2

3. Ensure functioning of transportation infrastructure including maintenance of roads, rails, ports and communications

4. Target relief programs to sustain food-chain SMEs particularly those serving vulnerable groups such as women and minorities
How can policy systems in lower income countries develop effective and inclusive policies?

Policy systems have grown substantially since 2000 (see institutes in ReNAPRI.org) but still face important constraints

- Limited human capital
- Limited national data systems and financial resources
- Little input from women, farmers, engaged SMEs and larger agribusiness
- Limited influence on health and income distribution policies

This crisis and the rebuilding process an opportunity for the food and agricultural policy systems to prove their importance and to grow or at least not lose resources.
To strengthening the capacity of national food policy systems they must be:

**Included** in developing and *strengthening* COVID-19 policy response and rebuilding plans

- Usually food and ag policy group not include response plans which are led by the health and disaster management ministries according to IFPRI
- Investments in *data and analytics* to strengthen the evidence-based policies
- Open the planning, policy making and spending process to political interest groups, civil society and the press
- Develop more inclusive policy and decision-making processes based on *mutual accountability* among stakeholders

Donors must **support national food policy programs to be an important part of COVID response and rebuilding policies**

Support food policy centers to expand and adapt to the COVID-19 challenges
Support policy-related research programs at universities in U.S. and elsewhere that work on policy research capacity building in Global South.
Continue support for international research centers that are strengthening national policy research capacity