



FAO requires
USD 13.45 million



to assist
676 000 people



10.1 million people

(40% of the country's population)
in severe acute food insecurity



374 246 tonnes

estimated food supply deficit
in 2019/20 (in milled cereal
equivalent)

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

- Food insecurity is widespread in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea due to insufficient agricultural production, households' inability to access diverse food, poor food utilization and a limited capacity to cope with recurrent natural disasters, including droughts and floods.
- Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in China in December 2019, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea took early measures in January 2020, including restrictions on the movement of people, goods and supplies across the country. These measures have prevented an outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, with no reported cases. In early April 2020, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea started a phased relaxation of COVID-19-related restrictions and cautiously reopened limited cross-border trade with China along the Dandong-Shinju border. However, some COVID-19 containment measures remain in place, such as strict rules in economic activities and travel, as well as imports and fishing in border and coastal areas; and public health measures, including educational and awareness-raising campaigns.



- The outbreak of COVID-19 in neighbouring countries has added another layer of uncertainty and vulnerability on the fragile food security situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On top of a food deficit and additional food insecurity caused by recurrent droughts and floods, the effects of COVID-19 containment measures has caused a new unprecedented stress element to the economic and livelihood activities which are vital for sustaining the country's food security. Early closing of the country's border and suspension of trade with China might have protected the country from an outbreak, but it led to an inability to import foods, thereby causing a faster depletion of domestic food stocks built on the previous year's harvest. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, apart from the Government-run Public Distribution System, people also access food directly from markets to a certain extent, which stopped functioning because of a complete ban on informal cross-border trade with China and strict enforcement along the maritime border.
- The agricultural supply chains and cooperative farms in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea may have also faced delays in the procurement of vital inputs for spring planting activities such as fertilizer, seeds, irrigation pumps and spare parts for farm machineries. Cooperative farms should have completed spring planting in May, although it is not known whether they succeeded in procuring necessary inputs and planted in time, amid the tight supply situation. Nonetheless, early crops account for only around 8 percent of the total annual crop production. Therefore, much would depend on the performance of the main season staple crops (rice, maize and soybeans) which are usually harvested in September and October.
- Under these circumstances, it is highly likely that there are shortages in domestic food supplies. Furthermore, significant barriers continue to exist for humanitarian agencies to provide assistance to target populations, with increasing risks for already vulnerable groups including children, pregnant and lactating women, and the disabled.

Likely evolution of the impacts of COVID-19 on food security

Since it is estimated that there will be a food supply deficit between November 2019 and October 2020, food rations from the public distribution system will subsequently become reduced, affecting food consumption levels and the nutrition intake of vulnerable households below the recommended level of dietary needs.

The food security situation may worsen if COVID-19 containment measures (border closures, quarantines and restrictions on the movement of people and cargo) affect the agricultural supply chain. This may also impact early season crop production or the main cropping season, which should have already started in May.

As COVID-19 containment measures are relaxed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as well as in China, it is expected to take a while for border traffic to normalize. However, given the overall COVID-19 situation, the likelihood of re-imposing the lockdown with all its consequences for the economy should be taken into consideration. In relation to trade

between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China, further COVID-19 containment measures could lead to extra layers of constraints and increased amounts of time in moving supplies. This will increase the risk of not being able to import seeds and fertilizer into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in time for the main planting season.

A Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on food and agricultural systems worldwide by examining possible degrees of exposure of countries and regions. In this study, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's exposure to the share of agricultural imports was rated as "intermediate high".

Anticipatory actions and response

FAO's response to humanitarian needs focuses on activities that strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change, while improving their short-term food security needs. These activities specifically focus on the provision of agricultural inputs and rehabilitation of assets for both agricultural productive purposes, as well as to expand availability and access to food for vulnerable populations.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO is expanding the scope of its humanitarian assistance, taking anticipated disruptions to livelihoods and the food supply chain into consideration. To respond to the new specific needs following the impact of COVID-19 on food security and rural livelihoods, FAO will implement the following:

1) Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most acute food-insecure populations

- Provide agricultural and livestock inputs (seeds, tools, animal feed and animal medication) to vulnerable cooperative farms, to support food production, protect small livestock and generate-income in rural areas.
- Support livelihoods diversification and home-based food production to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural outputs and food availability (including through the distribution of small livestock, namely rabbits and goats).
- Build potato storage units for cooperative farms as soon as cross-border trading resumes, to store seed potatoes from the 2020 harvest.
- Support communities with restoring existing food processing facilities to reduce food loss and enhance agricultural productivity.
- Support "food assistance for assets" as an anticipatory action, to improve/rehabilitate productive assets such as small-scale irrigation schemes, community water reservoirs, post-harvest equipment, storage fishponds and sloping land cultivation.

2) Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission

- Implement national communication campaigns to promote food safety and recommended hygiene practices including washing hands, washing food, wearing a mask and physical distancing when grocery shopping.
- Organize capacity-building programmes to strengthen the response to adverse impacts on the food chain (including on- and off- farm biosecurity practices; post-harvest good storage practices; digital solutions; and nutrition-sensitive approaches).
- Raise awareness among food producers (targeting livestock, dairy and poultry farmers, and fisher folk) on COVID-19 transmission risks and good hygiene practices.
- Support the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases, including through regulating meat, seafood and wildlife markets.
- Support the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases.
- Raise awareness among various stakeholders along the food chain on COVID-19 health regulations, including the roles and responsibilities of workers, in close coordination with national authorities and the World Health Organization.
- Assess the potential for decentralized market opportunities within the consumption zones, particularly for perishable food items including fresh vegetables, fruit, fish and meat, to minimize the transportation of food.



Funding



FAO requires
USD 13.45 million

- **USD 3.25 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 10.2 million** under the 2020 Needs and Priorities document

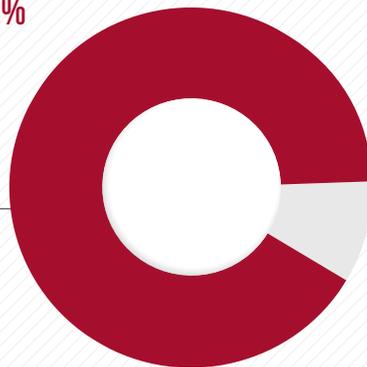


to assist
676 000 people

FUNDING GAP

USD 12.3 million

91.1%



8.9%

RECEIVED

USD 1.2 million

Resource partners

the Central Emergency Response Fund and
FAO's own resources

Coordination and partnerships

FAO is co-leading the Food Security and Agriculture Sector Working Group with the World Food Programme and the *Deutsche Welthunger Hilfe*. The Sector focuses on strengthening national capacity of food production and food systems; building and rehabilitating productive assets; and strengthening household and community resilience. The Food Security and Agriculture Sector works closely with the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries, Foreign Affairs, and Land and Environment Protection; along with the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the Forest Management Research Institute and the Pyongyang University of Agriculture.

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