



# Food systems and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: The role of social protection measures

Bulletin 7

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## 1. Editorial



As the pandemic has progressed, governments have had to face new challenges. While countries initially focused on mitigating the effects of severe health restrictions, over the weeks, their attention has shifted to a particularly serious threat: the economic and social crisis. Unfortunately, the outlook is not encouraging.

Resources must be directed to those most affected by this crisis, the vulnerable population, in this case, people without sources of income (the unemployed, the elderly, children and dependents) and informal workers, a group composed mainly of young people, women, migrants and indigenous people. It should be noted that the proportion of vulnerable population is even higher in rural areas.

Social protection programmes, among mitigation measures, are a fundamental right. Therefore, in this edition of the bulletin, we analyse the existing protection alternatives, with special attention to rural areas, which we cannot neglect.

## 2. Key messages



- Social protection measures have a dual function in the context of COVID-19: mitigating the immediate economic impact, and rebuilding the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.
- Rural areas are particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 due to their high level of informality, a higher concentration of poverty, lower social protection coverage and high seasonality of agricultural work. These characteristics will make the recovery process even more difficult in these areas.
- The particular characteristics of rural areas require differentiated responses.
- As an immediate response, it is essential to rapidly expand social assistance measures to vulnerable sectors in rural areas. It is recommended to start with cash transfers.
- *Cash+* (transfer + training + inputs) is a measure that, in addition to cash, provides tools to support small-scale agriculture.
- Food baskets are another way to respond immediately to a shock. Although important, it is a complementary measure. It is necessary to be concerned about the quality of the diet and to maintain a level of food intake that is as nutritionally adequate as possible.
- Special attention needs to be paid to childcare, and it is strongly recommended to continue with school feeding programs.
- As a recovery measure, it is recommended to articulate social assistance instruments with broader strategies of productive and economic inclusion.
- In the long-term reconstruction process, dynamic models must be generated, integrating social protection programs with emergency and climate change adaptation systems. It is also critical to strengthen social registration systems and their interoperability with productive and environmental registries.
- In the region, countries have mainly opted for vertical or horizontal extension of pre-existing measures, although a few have created special measures for rural families.



### 3. The role of social protection in the pandemic



Social protection is the "set of policies and programmes that address the economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting and livelihoods" (FAO, 2017). According to its typology, this set of interventions can be classified into three groups of measures:

- social care
- social security
- labour market interventions

The objectives and types of programmes that can be carried out for each of these groups of measures are listed and described below (see Table 1).

**Table 1/** Areas of social protection and labour market intervention

Social protection and labour programmes	Objectives	Types of programs
Social security networks/social assistance (non-contributory)	Reducing poverty and inequality	Conditional cash transfers
		Unconditional cash transfers
		Social pensions
		Food and in-kind transfers
		School feeding programs
		Public works
		Dues exemptions and targeted subsidies
Social Security (Contributory)	Ensuring adequate living standards in the face of normal changes of status and shocks	Other interventions (social services)
		Contributory old-age insurance and disability pensions
		Health Insurance
		Maternity/Paternity Benefits
		Health Insurance Coverage
Labour market programmes (contributory and non-contributory)	Improve employment and earnings opportunities	Other types of insurance
		Active labour market programmes (training, labour intermediation services, wage subsidies)
	Income supplement	Passive labour market programmes (unemployment insurance, early retirement incentives)

Source: FAO, based on World Bank (2018).

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean estimates that during this year, as a result of the current crisis, poverty will increase by at least 4.4 percent (28.7 million additional people) with respect to the previous year, affecting a total of 214.7 million people – more than a third of the regional population (34.7 percent) – which is expected to have a decisive impact on the deterioration of hunger and food insecurity levels (ECLAC, 2020a).

Focusing on poor households is, therefore, a matter of the utmost urgency, as they are much more exposed to the consequences and shocks associated with disasters (floods and droughts, among others) and social ones (economic crises and conflicts). Besides, their risk management capacity is limited. Therefore, crises and disasters can have devastating impacts on the incomes and livelihoods of the poor. In such situations they may be pushed to adopt coping strategies that are harmful to them, such as selling productive assets, reducing children's and adolescents' food intake and putting them out of school, and over-exploiting natural resources.

Social protection systems help reduce vulnerability to various hazards, improve risk management capacities, and rebuild agricultural livelihoods. They also help to maintain even levels of consumption (even in situations of shock and stress), minimizing the adoption of negative coping strategies (FAO et al, 2019).

In *The State of Food and Agriculture. Social protection and agriculture: breaking the cycle of rural poverty* (FAO, 2015), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) shows how social protection can help reduce poverty and food insecurity. For example, according to studies cited in that publication (FAO, 2015), in 2013 social protection lifted some 150 million people out of extreme poverty – people living on less than USD 1.25 a day. Given its historical success in the region, it is essential to analyse applications of social protection that help to mitigate the social crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the most vulnerable households.

It is important to note that households in which income is earned informally are the most vulnerable during this crisis (FAO and ECLAC, 2020b). Furthermore, this group is over-represented in rural areas, both in the agricultural sector and in the service and industry sectors (see Figure 3 of FAO and ECLAC, 2020).

FAO is currently providing technical, policy, programme and emergency assistance to countries in the region to address immediate short-term needs resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Such assistance seeks to find ways to protect rural livelihoods and functioning food systems – particularly in conflict situations – as well as to promote an inclusive process of medium and long-term economic recovery in which no one is left behind. To give one example, FAO assists small producers, youth, rural women, migrants, informal workers and indigenous peoples with interventions that aim to strengthen inclusive rural livelihoods and rural transformation. The organization also facilitates partnerships and international cooperation in all its forms, which play a key role in sharing experiences, good practices, knowledge, technologies and resources.

Within this emergency context, FAO has developed the Hand-in-Hand Initiative. Focusing on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 2 – the eradication of poverty and hunger in all its forms – the initiative promotes a territorial approach to agricultural development and the acceleration of agricultural and sustainable transformation. This approach is based on the coordination of efforts by government, development partners, the private sector and civil society. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative aims to promote coherence and coordination among international agencies to improve the effectiveness of investment in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, in the short and long term (FAO, 2020a).

In the following sections, we will analyse in depth the types of social protection measures and good practices in some countries of the region that can serve as a guide for others, considering their context and characteristics.

## 4. Social protection measures to address the pandemic



As the pandemic progresses, the health crisis has mutated into an economic crisis. We know this because the effects of the pandemic are becoming better known, which has made it possible to update projections on expected economic growth in the region for this year. According to ECLAC (2020a), the information available so far suggests that the economy of Latin America and the Caribbean will shrink by 5.3 percent in 2020, although the economic performance of the region's countries will vary considerably. Poverty is expected to increase by 4.4 percent in the region, equivalent to an additional 30 million people in poverty.

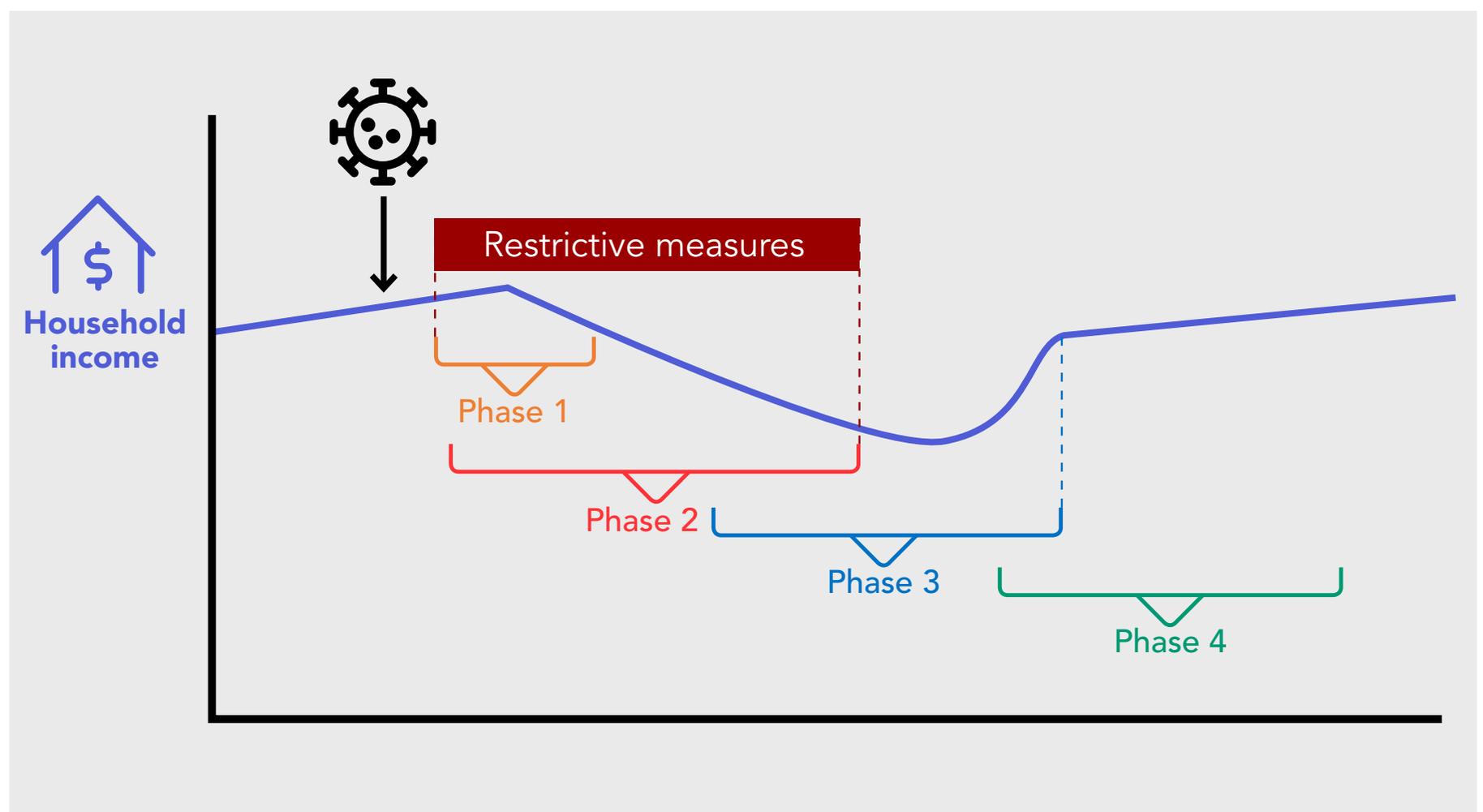
Therefore, the economic impact is expected to be greater and the recovery process more extensive than after the crisis of 2006 and 2007. Thus, the pandemic is expected to have an impact on family income generation, initially among the most vulnerable groups (informal, young people, women, indigenous people and migrants), and subsequently among groups of people with formal jobs but in productive sectors at risk. This is already happening in several small Caribbean island States in the tourism and catering sector (FAO and ECLAC, 2020c).

In short, the decline in income will increase the risk of food insecurity in the region.

The impact may be even greater in rural areas due to the comparatively high proportion of informality in the agricultural labour market, higher levels of poverty, the seasonality of production systems, and lower levels of social protection coverage. According to ECLAC data (2020d), the proportion of people living in poverty in rural areas is almost double that of those living in urban areas (45.1 percent and 26.4 percent, respectively).

This way, we build on the FAO and ECLAC proposal (2020a) to manage social protection measures, depending on the phase of the pandemic.

Figure 1/ Phases in managing COVID-19 impact



Source: FAO, based on FAO and ECLAC (2020a)

### Phase 1

Begins with the restrictive measures and ends a few days later, the necessary to carry out a projection of the possible affected people.

### Phase 2

Begins shortly after the first case is presented, and begins and ends with the sanitary restrictive measures. Its impact corresponds to the impossibility for people to move freely, which mainly affects informal workers, who generate their income according to what they have worked on during the day.

### Phase 3

Begins a little before the end of phase 2 and ends when the economic recovery process is complete. Its impact is due to the lack of economic dynamism caused by COVID-19. In this phase, a group of people that exceeds the informal workers begins to be affected. Their recovery process will be quite long.

### Phase 4

Starts during the economic recovery process. It is a long-term process, with no set end date. In this period, all the affected sectors begin their recovery process.

## Phase 1



Even though this phase has already concluded, considering the time when the virus appeared in the region, it is necessary to emphasize that countries must carry out in the short term (first weeks after the initial measures of confinement and physical distancing) a rapid assessment of the number of people who will potentially be affected as a result of the pandemic. However, it is still necessary to take appropriate measures in case of further outbreaks. Carrying out these actions is critical before the implementation of social protection measures and policies, as it allows for the quantification and dosage of resources.

- **Rapid assessment:** It is essential to collect data on the state of the most vulnerable populations (indigenous peoples, children, women, migrants, refugees, the sick and the elderly, among others) and informal workers, who depend on income generated during the working day and lack the basic protection that formal sector jobs often offer, such as social security coverage (ILO, 2020).

It is key to take into consideration that these populations may be underrepresented in the available statistics, as they do not appear in the social security databases (FAO and ECLAC, 2020b). In this regard, the region's agricultural sector is particularly important, with a rate of informal employment – considering wage earners and self-employed workers – of 82.6 percent, (ILO, 2020). This group includes women, young people, migrants and indigenous people (FAO and ECLAC, 2020b).

## Phase 2



In the region, social protection components and instruments must be activated and adapted to protect the most vulnerable. As mentioned earlier, the vulnerability rate is higher in rural areas because of, among other reasons, the high proportion of informal workers, who are mainly women, young people, indigenous people and migrants. This is the target population that social protection instruments should initially focus on during phase 2.

The most commonly used measures at this stage are **social assistance**. These are:

- **Cash transfer:** making cash transfers is FAO's first recommendation, as it empowers men and women by enabling them to prioritize and target resources according to their own needs. As an immediate response measure, the transfers are one-time or for the duration of the restrictive measures.

We also recommend that transfers be unconditional. If not, they should be conditional on the purchase of food at the local market, or of healthy food. In this way, the resources delivered can be used to invest

in agricultural inputs for family production, fostering the local economy by buying from small shops that belong to the community. It is estimated that for every dollar transferred, two dollars can be generated in the local economy (FAO, 2018).

Another notable aspect of transfers is their transparency, since in many cases they allow for the traceability of expenditure, especially when the transfer is electronic. Digital transfers also have lower implementation costs than other transfer modalities (between 25 and 30 percent cheaper) (FAO, 2018).

Therefore, bank transfers are recommended when local markets are functioning, basic goods and services are available, and the risk of inflation is limited.

However, flaws are observed when people do not have a bank account, which is not uncommon in rural areas, among people of a certain age and migrant or indigenous populations. In these cases, however, gifts or smart cards can be distributed, or transfers made through mobile devices.

- **Family baskets:** there is a need to generate coordinated responses and measures aimed at reducing disruptions in food supply chains, boosting capacity to improve emergency food aid, and strengthening safety nets for the most vulnerable population, through kits delivery with products from the basic food basket.

Deliveries are made to homes or locally available food delivery sites, with unrestricted adherence to sanitation protocols for such a pandemic.

This measure responds to total lack of supply or lack of purchasing power of a certain population group. It is important to mention that food delivery, as an immediate response, should be implemented only when cash cannot be delivered or there is a total lack of supply in typical places of purchase.

The lowest income quintiles can also be considered to normally spend between 40 and 90 percent of their income on food. If the crisis drags on, people will have no choice but to buy cheaper food of poorer nutritional quality. That is, highly processed food rich in fat, sugar and salt, which will have an impact on overweight and obesity rates, a risk factor for COVID-19. Therefore, the basket should consider having fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables, in order to encourage healthy eating.

If possible, public purchase mechanisms should be implemented that favour local family producers in order to generate income for more vulnerable farmers (FAO and ECLAC, 2020c).

- **School feeding programmes:** children in vulnerable situations are among the population sectors most affected by the closure of schools because they no longer receive their daily food through school feeding programmes.

It is strongly recommended to continue with the delivery of food, either at home or by allowing the withdrawal of food at the school, without neglecting, of course, health protection measures. There will undoubtedly be greater logistical problems in making the delivery in rural areas: many students live in isolated areas far from educational establishments.

It is necessary to maintain the diversity and nutritional value of the food delivered. If possible, it should not be all canned and non-perishable and should include fresh foods (at least fruits and vegetables).

Maintaining school feeding programs also allows maintaining the income of family farmers who are providers of the programs. The disruption of these programs further amplifies the economic effects of COVID-19 on farmers.

- **Subsidies, freezing or deferment of payment for basic services:** in general, the services considered as basic are electricity, water and Internet. However, in rural areas access to these services is rather limited, compared to urban areas.

Even so, some of the recommended measures are:

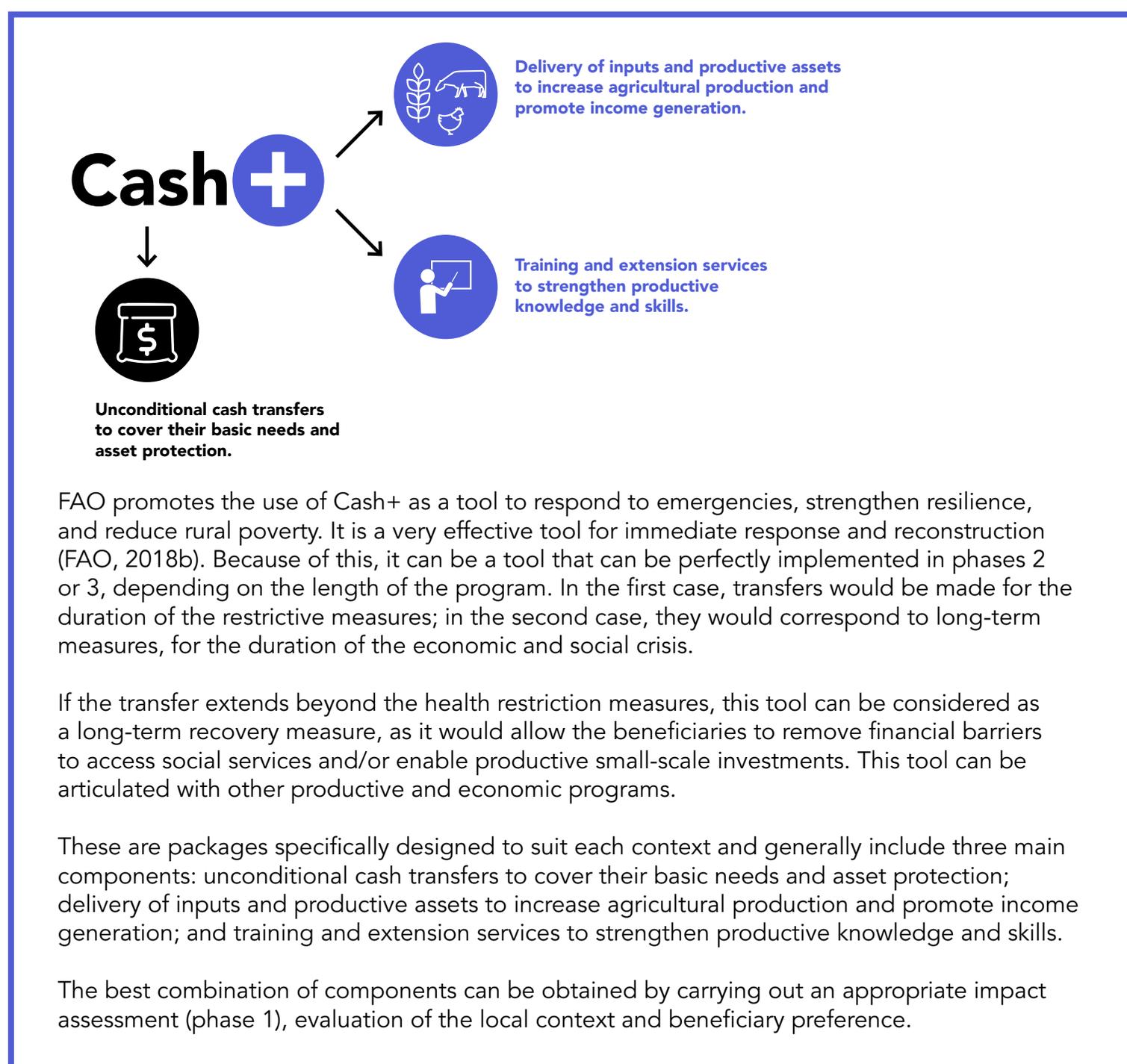
- subsidies, exemptions and extraordinary discounts on invoices;
- guaranteeing the continuity of services and the right to housing, prohibiting service outage and evictions for rentals; and
- temporary freezing of rents and services, postponing and making payments more flexible.

In rural areas, given its importance in the context of the current pandemic, access to water is critical.

According to WHO-UNICEF data (2017), 58.3 percent of rural households in the region do not have access to quality drinking water, compared to 17.7 percent in urban households. It is therefore essential to implement the necessary actions to maintain and improve access to drinking water in rural areas, in addition to prohibiting cuts, reconnecting services, and developing financial instruments to facilitate payment (UNICEF, 2020).

- **Family or psychosocial support:** These types of support are increasingly important in a context of growing vulnerability and risks that mainly affect women and children, such as situations of physical and emotional abuse, gender violence or psychosocial stress. In response to this growing concern, mental health care and psychosocial support services have been implemented, as well as prevention and control measures for vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities, and some specific measures for alternative protection services (UNICEF, 2020).

Generally, these measures coincide with complaints made by telephone and social networks. In rural areas, it would be necessary to conceive ways of implementing these measures to make them effective.





During phase 3, the impact of the economic crisis has increased and its duration is undetermined, so it is now necessary to implement protective measures for those formal workers who have become unemployed due to the economy's loss of dynamism. However, many of these measures can also be implemented among informal workers, small farmers and rural family farming, if the economic crisis extends beyond restrictive health measures.

Most often in these cases, it involves extending the coverage of existing programmes (horizontal growth) or the amounts of on-going measures (vertical growth).

**Social assistance** measures that can benefit not only formal workers but also informal workers, small farmers and rural family farming, for example:

- **Emergency basic income:** corresponds to monetary transfers, to ensure the material life of all individuals during the pandemic or while the consequences of the crisis do not abate. Therefore, the difference with cash transfer, described in phase 2, is the duration. This corresponds to a medium-term transfer. The dilemma is how long the crisis will last. It has been suggested that the Latin American and Caribbean countries should ensure a basic income for the duration of the emergency. It is proposed that an income equivalent to one poverty line for six months be provided to the entire population in poverty in 2020 (125 million people, or 34.7 percent of the population). This would imply an additional expenditure of 2.1 percent of GDP to cover all the people who will be in poverty this year (ECLAC, 2020a).

In rural areas, according to ILO data (2020), measures related to social security could benefit only 17.4 percent of workers. These are therefore measures with greater relevance and impact in urban areas (mainly favouring formal workers) (FAO and ECLAC, 2020b).

- **Health insurance:** the agrifood sector is one of the sectors that have been identified as a priority in most countries, namely they continue to operate despite restrictive measures. Consequently, workers in the agrifood sector are highly exposed to contracting COVID-19. Therefore, it is very important to implement actions to guarantee the continuity of insurance for workers who have lost their jobs or had their work contracts suspended. In the specific case of the pandemic, insurance coverage can be extended by requiring employers to assume the cost of treatment for COVID-19 infection (UNICEF, 2020).
- **Unemployment funds:** for formal workers, the most frequently used aid is flexible access to their savings through unemployment insurance (with a subsidy that only operates when individual savings run out). These measures allow income to be maintained and prevent the destruction of labour relations, which is key to reducing household food insecurity. However, the cost of the crisis will fall on workers, who will have a heavy loss of savings and thus be more vulnerable to future shocks. Therefore, it is recommended that the cost be shared with the state, which could assume (in part) the wage costs of companies strongly affected by the crisis.
- **Pension system adjustments:** this package of measures, together with unemployment funds, are the most frequently used in the region for the benefit of formal workers. Thus, measures such as the increase or advance payment to pensioners have been applied. In some countries, the extraordinary withdrawal of the pension fund from the individual capitalization account has been allowed, which allows for an immediate increase in liquidity on the account of the beneficiary, since it decreases his or her savings for a future pension.
- **Advance or use of paid holidays:** many companies, to avoid the disengagement of their workers, have decided to pay the pending holidays and advance the holidays of the current year.

**Labour market** measures, as they are focused on formal workers, would have little relevance in rural areas, such as:

- **Protection or employment generation measures:** there are programmes for partial payment of the salaries of persons with suspended or reduced contracts. In addition, governments have the possibility of making cash transfers in exchange for the completion of specific jobs or activities. In rural areas, for example, work can be carried out such as the rehabilitation of degraded land through reforestation, soil and water conservation activities, as well as the construction and rehabilitation of community infrastructures, such as irrigation channels, water harvesting, and rural roads. These measures provide vulnerable households with intensive and unskilled labour for a defined period (FAO, 2018a).

- **Measures to support MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises):** This is a measure that could have a greater impact in rural areas. These measures have focused on increasing liquidity, through monetary transfers to ensure payment of salaries, loans and tax discounts; also, the objective is to allow the reduction of some fixed costs, by adopting measures to reduce or suspend taxes for businesses or workers, and others, such as reduced working hours (UNICEF, 2020). In some cases, businesses have been allowed to stop their activities without paying wages and thus resort to severance funds.
- **Regulations related to teleworking:** in rural areas, very few jobs can be performed by teleworking, which is understood as when a worker provides his or her services, totally or partially, from his or her home or another place, other than the company's establishments, facilities or work, using technological, computer or telecommunications means. If the measures were not provided for by law, it will be necessary to make the relevant modifications, so that the workers enjoy all the individual and collective rights established by the labour law.





In the medium to long term, the government should increase the capacity to respond to multiple threats and systemic risks. Economic recovery should focus on resilience, promoting policies to shift to sustainable production systems that better address future risks, based on multi-sectoral strategies, with a strong focus on innovation. Besides, the emphasis should be on achieving an economic recovery that is as inclusive as possible. This requires explicit policies for small producers and small and medium-sized enterprises along the value chains of food systems, and to include their views and visions (FAO and ECLAC, 2020a).

This is why this crisis must be taken as an unprecedented opportunity to rethink the way our productive systems work and to take the recovery measures that will allow us to move towards more inclusive, sustainable and resilient agricultural economies in the long term.

In this context, the role of social protection in productive and economic inclusion is crucial, as it is articulated with other productive and economic programmes. Therefore, it is necessary to (FAO, 2020b):

- Maintain and protect the investment in social protection, even in periods of fiscal contraction.
- Invest in improving the digitization of payments, access to financial services, and capacity building for consumers and producers to reintegrate into the economy.
- Strengthen social registry systems and their interoperability with productive and environmental registries.
- Strengthen the response capacity of social protection systems in rural areas, as social protection programmes are focused on vulnerable people in cities. Hence, there is a need to diversify social programmes, taking into account the particularities of rural areas.
- Invest in reducing exclusion errors, and the adequacy of social protection programmes in rural areas.
- Continue to aim for better integration of social protection programmes into agricultural investment programmes, strengthening food systems, and as a key axis to inclusive climate adaptation programmes.
- Implement or strengthen public procurement programs for family farming, favouring those producers who are beneficiaries of social protection policies, and then expanding this process to other sectors of family and farmers.

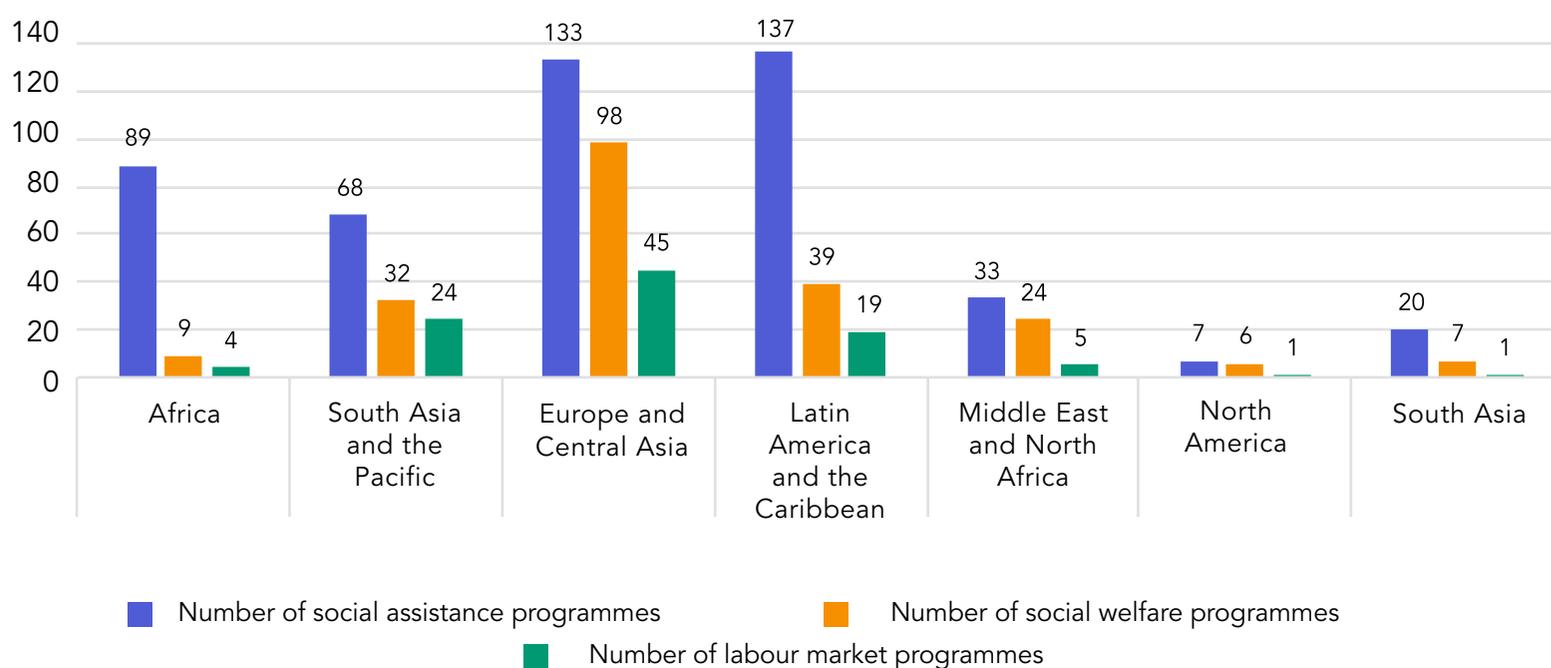
## 5. Best Practices



As of 8 May 2020, 171 countries had adopted or announced a total of 801 social protection measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures may be new, modified or expanded, in relation to pre-existing measures, and implemented as a specific response to COVID-19 (Gentilini, Almenfi, and Orton, 2020).

Most programmes are composed of social assistance measures (60.7 percent of the overall responses, or 487 of the measures) (see Figure 2).

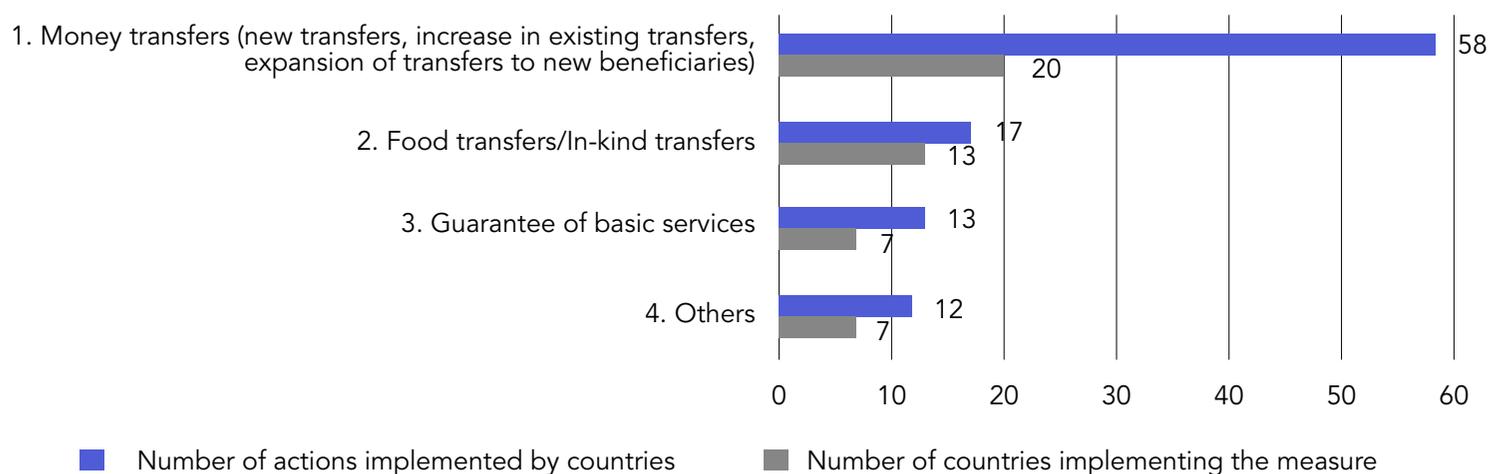
Figure 2/ Distribution of social protection measures by region of the world, 2020



Source: Based on Gentilini, Almenfi, and Orton (2020)

According to ECLAC (2020c), as of 27 May this year, 67 percent of the countries in the region have implemented social protection measures, most of which correspond to monetary transfers, implemented in 61 percent (20) of the countries in the region. These are delivered as new transfers, increases in existing transfers, and expansion of transfers to new beneficiaries or advance cash disbursements.

Figure 3/ Social protection measures implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean (number of actions and countries implementing the measures)



Note: information updated to 27 May  
Source: FAO, based on ECLAC (2020c)

Thirteen countries in the region have implemented food or in-kind transfer measures. Thirteen guarantee measures for basic services have also been implemented in seven countries of the region.

We would like to highlight, at the sub-regional level, some of the social protection measures implemented to date. Although it is not an exhaustive sample, it allows us to visualize the main measures that the countries have employed.

## Barbados

### Social assistance measures

Unconditional cash transfer (basically an increase in the amounts delivered to vulnerable families). Delivery of basic food and health items to vulnerable groups. Six-month payment exemptions for all loans and mortgages.

### Social security measures

Dismissed people keep 60 percent of their salary for 26 weeks. Employers who keep 75 percent of their employees are exempt from paying contributions.

### Labour market

Application for payment through the National Insurance Board

## Jamaica

### Social assistance measures

Unconditional transfers, extending payment per child, through the PATH program. Direct payment to workers who have lost their jobs between 10 March (when the first case appeared) and June 2020 One-time payment is also provided. Delivery of food baskets to people in quarantine, the elderly and the disabled. Cash transfers for children who benefit from feeding programs and whose schools have been closed.

### Labour market

Wage subsidies for companies in the tourism sector that retain their employees and one-off payments to small businesses.

## Saint Kitts and Nevis

### Social assistance measures

Unconditional cash transfers. School feeding programmes are continued. Six-month moratorium on credit payments. Payment for three months of water service for people who have been dismissed. Exemption from payment of property taxes

## Trinidad and Tobago

### Social assistance measures

Unconditional cash transfers. Food card delivery of a with recharge for three months, to be paid in April.

### Social security measures

Extension of sick leave benefits, and benefits for the unemployed through a fixed payment for three months (not applicable to Venezuelan migrants)

### Labour market

Labour market regulations regarding paid holidays and sick leave.



Source: UN World Map, February 2020, modified by the authors.

A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

## Costa Rica

### Social assistance measures

Student cash transfers will not be interrupted. Emergency payments for the poorest people. Health packages sent to people in extreme poverty. School programmes will allow for the withdrawal of food from educational establishments.

### Social security measures

Advance payment of pensions. Bonuses for workers who have been dismissed or whose working hours have been reduced.

### Labour market

Formal workers were given access to severance benefits.

## Guatemala

### Social assistance measures

Unconditional payment transfers have been facilitated (conditionality has been waived). Benefits in electricity payments. Transfers of food and food stamps, medicines, and inputs to prevent COVID-19. Programme for vulnerable families, including the elderly and the elderly in homes. Parents' associations received the school meals rations that are withdrawn from the establishment.

### Labour market

Wage subsidy for formal workers in the private sector whose contract is suspended.

## El Salvador

### Social assistance measures

Transfer to the informal economy. Exemption for payment of utility bills by individuals and corporations directly affected by the curfew, including electricity, water, telephone, cable and Internet for three months. Same for payment of credits and mortgages for three months.

### Social security measures

Private companies must guarantee quarantine of persons at risk, who are paid a medical license for one month. In addition, companies wishing to send all their workers to quarantine will receive support from the government.

## Panama

### Social assistance measures

Through its Panama Solidario programme, the government is delivering more than 100 000 basic foodstuffs every two weeks to vulnerable families who have no income due to quarantine measures.

### Social security measures

Leave payment to workers in quarantine or recovery.

### Labour market

A temporary regulation was approved allowing teleworking for workers over 60 years of age.



Source: UN World Map, February 2020, modified by the authors.



A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

## Argentina

### Social assistance measures

Vertical expansion of social assistance programmes: beneficiaries of the universal pension for the elderly, persons receiving the universal child allowance (minors and other beneficiaries with disabilities), and women receiving the universal pregnancy allowance. In addition, a new emergency family income voucher has been created, which consists of a single payment to the families of informal workers. Horizontal expansion in food delivery through the Universal Child Allowance card (AUH, by its initials in Spanish). Price control on products in the basic food basket. Delivery of food to schools. Exemption from rent payment until September, as well as from payment of basic services (water, electricity, gas, Internet and television). Evictions are prohibited.

### Social security measures

Medical leave for all those who are risk factors (over 60 years old, pregnant women, chronically ill persons); also for people with dependent children. Vertical increase in pension payments. Unemployment insurance. Exemption from tax payments for companies.

### Labour market

Subsidy for companies with up to 100 employees.

## Peru

### Social assistance measures

Cash transfers for vulnerable persons. Also, a specific social protection measure for rural families has been developed, a single payment voucher to assist vulnerable rural families.

### Social security measures

Vertical increase of existing pensions.

Source: UN World Map, February 2020, modified by the authors.

## Chile

### Social assistance measures

Cash transfers for vulnerable persons. School feeding programmes are continued with home and school deliveries. Delivery of a food basket for the most vulnerable families.

### Social security measures

People who have been dismissed can access unemployment insurance.

## Paraguay

### Social assistance measures

Vertical expansion of cash transfers for older beneficiaries of the Elderly Program. Cash transfer to the most vulnerable families for the purchase of food and cleaning supplies. In addition, distribution of food baskets to families benefiting from protection programmes, day labourers and the self-employed.

## 6. The pandemic in numbers

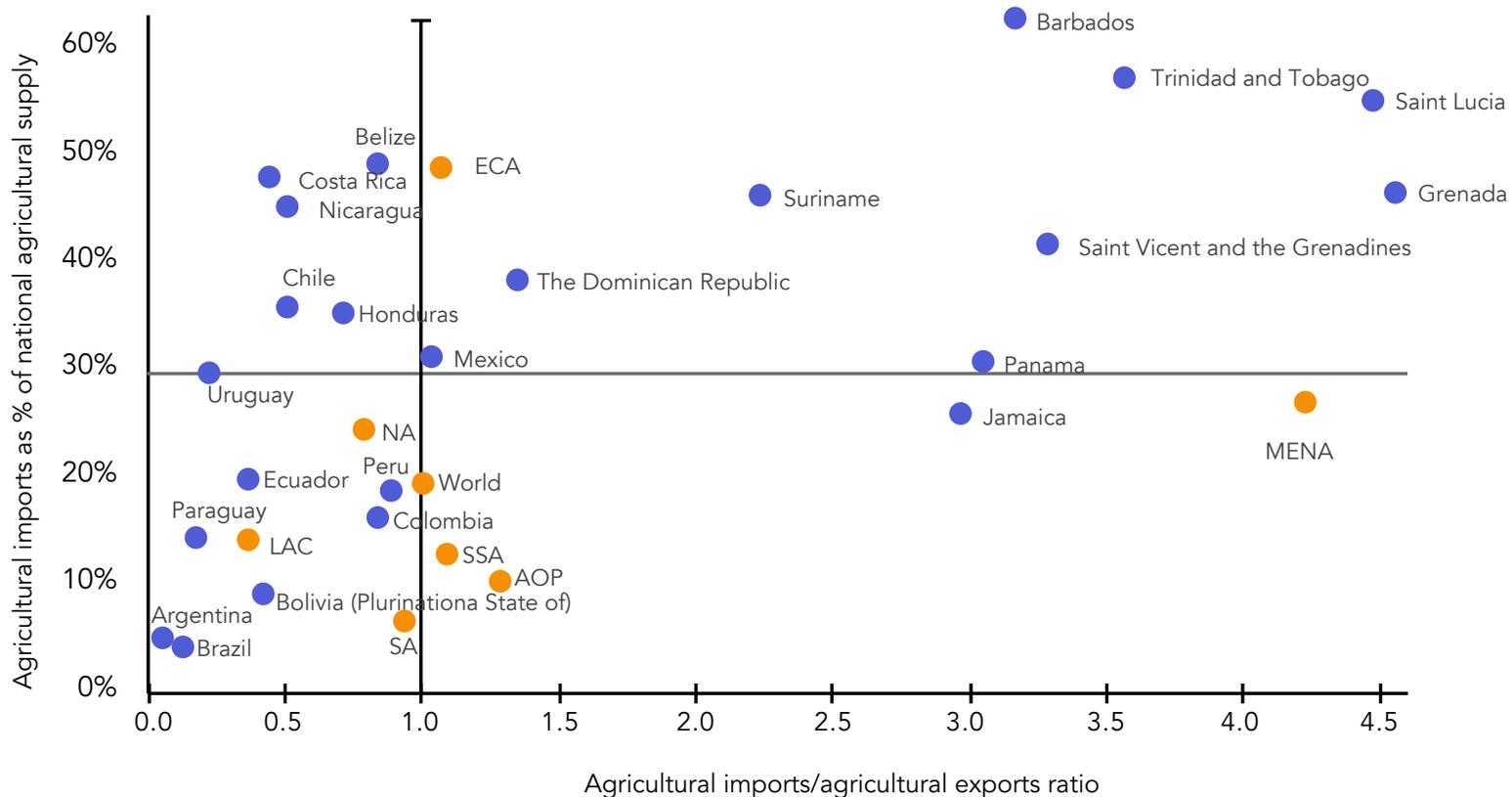


This section is designed to make available to the readers different statistical analyses on the effects of the pandemic in the agrifood sector. This issue discusses vulnerability to disruptions in food trade and food exports.

As the impact of the COVID-19 crisis deepens on economic performance around the world, concerns may arise regarding countries responding with unilateral trade restrictions on sensitive products. In fact, fifteen countries have imposed active and binding restrictions on food exports, especially in Eastern Europe. These restrictions still account for no more than 5 percent of world agricultural trade, but they send the wrong signal to policy makers in other countries. No such restrictions have been implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean, except in Honduras, which imposes a specific restriction on red bean exports.

The effects of these restrictions in the region are limited, given that the countries that have implemented food export restrictions are not among the main food exporters to Latin America and the Caribbean. However, it is worth wondering about the vulnerability to a possible increase in food export restrictions, especially if they are imposed by major trading partners. One indicator of short-term vulnerability is the relative importance of food imports in the domestic food supply. If a trading partner suddenly restricts food exports to a particular country, the short-term impact on domestic availability will be related to the magnitude of imports on domestic food consumption (see Figure 4).

Figura 4/ Importance of agricultural imports in the domestic agricultural supply



Source: FAOSTAT, Crop and Livestock Value of Production, Imports and Exports for the period 2012-2016

Note: LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean, NA: North America, EAP: East Asia and the Pacific, SA: South Asia, SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa, ECA: Europe and Central Asia, MENA: Middle East and North Africa

In the short and medium-term, the capacity to respond to food shortages could be greater among net food exporters (after the economy adjusts its agricultural trade balance or eventually the overall trade balance). Figure 4 shows on the horizontal axis the relationship between food imports and food exports, where a value of less than one represents a net food exporter. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, only the Caribbean countries show some indication of vulnerability in the short and medium-term to sudden crises in food trade. The Caribbean countries are mainly net food importers and the importance of food imports in the domestic supply is in most cases higher than the world average. South America is the most robust subregion, as not only are the countries net food exporters, but they also have a low dependence on food imports. In Central America, countries may be vulnerable in the short term, but because they are net food exporters they can adapt to a food trade shock. In general, Latin America and the Caribbean is a leading net exporter of food, which makes it potentially more resistant to eventual disruptions in agricultural trade.

## 7. Resources



As in all the issues of this series of bulletins, we offer you different sources of information available on the web that may be useful to complement the topics covered in this edition.

### FAO

**FAO Social Protection Framework**  
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7016s.pdf>

This document presents FAO's vision and approach to social protection and its importance in boosting and accelerating progress in food security and nutrition, agricultural development, rural poverty and resilience building.



### ECLAC

**COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean: Economic and Social Impact**  
<https://www.cepal.org/es/temas/covid-19>

This website allows access to information in real time on the measures that countries have carried out in terms of social protection, but also in health, education and gender, among others.



### FAO

**FAO's work in social protection**  
<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5779es/CA5779ES.pdf>

This paper highlights the key role of social protection in addressing the many barriers that poorer rural households face in achieving resilient and sustainable livelihoods.



### FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF

**Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2019**  
<http://www.fao.org/3/ca6979es/ca6979es.pdf>

This version of the Panorama of Food Security in the Region highlights the need to promote healthier food environments through taxes and fiscal incentives that favour adequate food, social protection systems, school feeding programmes, and the regulation of advertising and food marketing.



### FAO

**Food systems and social protection in the rural world in the face of COVID-19**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUmK68D5IQk&app=desktop>

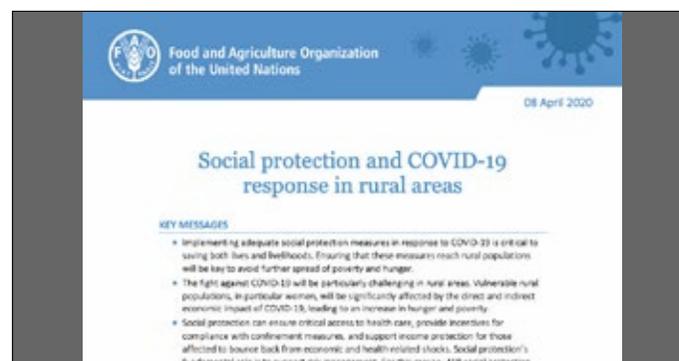
The third FAO conference, held on Thursday 23 April 2020, is part of the agreement between eleven international organizations present in the region to coordinate their actions and provide technical support to governments.



### WTO

**Social Protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas**  
<http://www.fao.org/3/ca8561en/CA8561EN.pdf>

This document explains how social protection measures could protect the rural poor from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, while summarizing several social protection measures that countries adopted worldwide in response to COVID-19.



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