



Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty Strengthening rural institutions and producers' organizations

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The issue

The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly affecting smallholder family farmers and other small-scale food producers. Because of their central contribution to food security and nutrition, it is crucial that policies, strategies and actions are put in place to protect and support the recovery of their productive capacity after the COVID-19 crisis.

Smallholders are currently experiencing a severe loss of income and productive capacity as a result of: (1) temporary restrictions on movement, which are hindering market access; (2) changes in consumer behaviour and lower demand due to the closure of schools, farmers' markets, restaurants and other public places; (3) disruptions to production (due to shortages of migrant seasonal workers, for example); (4) value-chain disruptions, creating financial challenges and constraining access to necessary services and operational materials; and (5) limited access to social protection and insurance.

Lessons learned from previous crises show that integrated policies and a comprehensive set of actions are needed to ensure smallholder family farmers have access to productive resources, services, finance and markets. In tandem, rural institutions and family farmer/producer organizations need to be supported to promote improved and sustainable productivity, market linkages, economic resilience and livelihoods.

The action

This programme aims to support rural institutions and organizations in mitigating the impact of COVID-19, ensuring the provision of agricultural, business and financial services to smallholder family farmers. Actions will connect with ongoing national initiatives as part of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming. It will combine expertise on demand-driven, market-oriented extension and advisory services, inclusive rural finance, territorial development approaches and strengthening producer organizations.

It will enable increased access to services, financial and other productive resources to support smallholder family farmers in restoring their productive capacity and financial assets, ensuring the continuity of farm and enterprise operations and facilitating adaptive marketing channels and links to end-consumers, focusing on innovative approaches and technologies.

The programme will also promote the engagement of producer organizations and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as agents of change with diverse service and finance providers. It will leverage existing and establish new linkages and

Budget

USD 15 million

Time frame

2020–2023

SDGs



Related FAO policy notes on COVID-19

► [COVID-19 and smallholder producers' access to markets](#)



networks to enable producers to reach markets, diversify and benefit from wider socioeconomic opportunities. It will also promote adequate access to risk-management interventions, including insurance, social assistance and employment guarantees.

Expected results

Overall, the programme will lead to strengthened, resilient and adaptable family farmer and producer organizations, better able to be part of leading the COVID response. It will enhance their capacity in service provision, business management, finance and market access, creating linkages for collaboration with the public and private sectors.

- 1 **Rapid diagnosis** will be undertaken, using a systems approach, of the impact of COVID-19 on smallholder family farmers, mapping the status of their productive resources and needs for services, rural finance and linkages to markets, with attention to existing social and gender inequalities.
- 2 **Targeted smallholder family-farmer actions** will be taken to restore productivity, livelihoods, value chains and market links through inclusive access to a wide range of extension and market-oriented gender-sensitive and advisory services (including e-commerce, innovative and diversified market channels, and shorter value chains) and inclusive rural finance measures, leveraging digital and institutional innovations and territorial development approaches. Financial mechanisms to avoid execution of current debts will also be explored to maintain or enhance access to land, forest and water of small-scale producers affected by the pandemic.
- 3 **Governments' capacity will be increased, and national strategies and programmes** will be developed, in dialogue with United Nations Decade of Family Farming national processes, to accelerate the recovery and bolster the resilience of smallholder family farmers through improved provision and access to services and finance, collective action and innovations.
- 4 **Institutional capacity** will be enhanced to facilitate innovation processes and coordination mechanisms among rural/territorial institutions and stakeholders and ensure access to a wide range of services (from the private and public sectors), rural finance, social protection and to coordinated and comprehensive responses, with emphasis on the capacity of producers' and women's organizations.
- 5 **Exchanges and learning across countries and regions** will be established through South-South Cooperation on context-specific response strategies, policy options and choice of implementation instruments.

Partnerships

The International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT) Royal Tropical Institute, the World Bank, ADA Microfinance, the Rabobank Foundation, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, regional rural and agricultural credit associations, governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, producer organizations, South-South Cooperation partnerships.

Programme links

The programme will tie in with work for the United Nations Decade of Family Farming and the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Country focus

Africa: Ethiopia, the Gambia, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe

Asia and the Pacific: Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Philippines

Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Tajikistan

Latin America and the Caribbean: Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Jamaica

Near East: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, West Bank and Gaza Strip

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