

COVID-19, food systems, and One Health in an urbanizing world: Research responses at a national level

Co-organized by CGIAR and RUAF

COVID-19 exposed vulnerabilities in food systems, which varied depending on circumstances.

- ▶ In urban areas, impacts came from mobility restrictions and the types of activities food system actors are engaged in. In Ethiopia, urban households faced rising prices and lower diet diversity. In Nigeria, households saw reductions in income and declines in food security.
- ▶ Women are often engaged in small businesses. Impacts on these businesses had impacts on food security.

The food system's overall resilience in the face of the pandemic masked critical vulnerabilities, the extent of which is still not fully understood.

- ▶ While there were no major food supply shortages, physical and economic access to food was affected, especially in urban areas. While production outlooks are positive, will this food reach consumers?
- ▶ Many experienced a high level of impact, while a few profited significantly: Supermarkets and grocery chains were protected and profited, while small, informal sellers faced lockdown restrictions.
- ▶ Long-term impacts on nutrition, shifts in consumption patterns, and other areas are still evolving.

As the world becomes increasingly urbanized, food systems transformation must consider vulnerabilities and opportunities relevant to this trend.

- ▶ People are increasingly living in densely populated areas, where food production, including of vegetables, fish, and live-stock, inevitably encroaches on urban habitation, making the One Health linkages between human, animal, and environmental health more immediate.
- ▶ The importance of informal markets, where many city dwellers buy and sell food, cannot be discounted. Building back better needs to include the informal sector.
- ▶ Analyzing lessons — from multi-actor platforms; policies, including social protection programs; and community responses from several cities — to better understand what is working and what needs to be modified or updated will help identify and fill gaps in resilience building.

To “build back better” we need to better understand vulnerabilities and identify concrete steps to build resilience.

- ▶ Identifying systemic sources of vulnerability, types of responses to shocks, and nuances of resilience capacities will help determine where priority areas of action should be.
- ▶ Local considerations and voices are critical: researchers, policymakers, and others must consider local factors while drawing upon learning from other experiences.