



C. de Bode/CGIAR

A 4-POINT CGIAR RESPONSE PLAN ON COVID-19

CGIAR recognizes the profound role of the food system as both the source and main impact pathway of this crisis – and has mobilized itself to support policymakers, farmers and food system practitioners amongst others make an informed response to both the immediate crisis and transforming the food system as we “build back better”.

In response, CGIAR will 1.) change existing CGIAR Research Programs to support an immediate COVID-19 response; 2.) implement CGIAR Research Programs already highly relevant to COVID-19; 3.) re-orient CGIAR’s longer-term research strategy to reflect the ‘game-changing’ scale of COVID-19; and 4.) strengthen our immediate and longer-term response capability.

COVID-19 compounds an urgent need to transform the world’s food system

Before this current crisis the need for change was already clear. Most of the world’s population eats too little, too much, or the wrong type or combination of food – at an unsustainable cost to the climate, the environment and human health.

The food system is creating and multiplying risks. For example, a new zoonosis – a disease transmitted between animals and people – breaks out on an average of every four months. This is the predictable consequence of the ever-intensifying interactions among humans, animals and the natural world. Zoonotic diseases develop and intensify when human and wildlife interactions increase, often due to habitat loss hand-in-hand with intensified agriculture and food markets.

COVID-19 is the latest materialization of this risk. As the pandemic now accelerates in less resilient social and economic contexts, the public health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19 – and measures to slow or stop its spread globally and locally – have undermined incomes and exposed large underlying inequalities. This is morphing into a food security and nutrition crisis, and a clear illustration of the huge costs of the ‘externalities’ of the food system.

The way this crisis will unfold in the medium to longer term is uncertain, but one thing is clear, it presents a unique opportunity to reset the world’s food system, to “build back better” – to finally implement what has been [advocated for some time by CGIAR](#) and many others: a sustainable food systems revolution – as urgent as the agricultural revolution that launched CGIAR, yet exponentially more complex. This was articulated in CGIAR’s most recent [System Business Plan](#) – whose transformation elements remain valid although with more emphasis needed in the One Health agenda to reduce the risk of a repeat pandemic.

A research response

Our research response to COVID-19 is addressing **four thematic areas** to maximize the relevance and utility of support to policymakers and practitioners.

- **Food systems:** Improve functioning of the full food supply chain and its enabling environments to secure jobs and livelihoods, and to ensure access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all.
- **One Health:** Manage the human, animal and environmental health interface to improve prevention of, detection of, and response to emerging and endemic zoonoses.
- **Inclusive public programs:** For food security and nutrition – implement social protection, agricultural development and other inclusive programs to mitigate food and nutrition insecurity among vulnerable populations.
- **Policies and investments:** Enable more effective cross-sectoral policies and investments linking beneficial environment, economic, social and health outcomes for crisis response, economic recovery and improved future resilience.

CGIAR’s research response is anchored on three overlapping phases of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Short-term crisis response:** Provide immediate evidence and tools for decision-making to support food availability and access, health interventions and public programs, policies and investments at scale.
- **Medium-term recovery:** Support understanding of the impacts of crisis response and adapt policies and programs to reflect initial experiences and consequences for all groups in society. Recovery actions form the basis for addressing longer-term resilience issues.
- **Long-term resilience:** Generate evidence and tools to prevent and manage emerging disease threats and comparable food system shocks and build greater resilience into food, land and water systems.

Some examples of planned current or potential research responses to COVID-19 are shown below:

	Food systems	One Health	Inclusive public programs	Policies and investments
Short-term: Crisis response (up to 12 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support production of adequate and diverse foods. Monitor supply and accessibility of vital agricultural inputs. Provide options for supply chains and markets for both staples and perishable foods. Monitor and propose measures to reduce market volatility and enhance access to food among vulnerable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide evidence and information on disease risks from an integrated human-animal-environment health perspective. Maintain key food safety and One Health programs; ensure that disease control strategies help rather than harm poor men, women and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the food, nutrition and related livelihood needs of key vulnerable groups and devise and implement social protection programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct global and regional scenario analyses to determine COVID-19 impacts on food, nutrition and livelihood security and inform COVID-19 policy responses needing to balance different government priorities.
Medium-term: Recovery (up to 18 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt systems for greater supply and access of nutritious foods. Use digital technologies to monitor, predict and adapt food flows. Analyze COVID-19 impacts on household livelihoods and assets, labor supply and gender and equity issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen risk-based food safety approaches appropriate for informal marketplaces. Develop One Health and risk-based approaches for key public health risks in agriculture -environment management. Improve management of emerging zoonoses and agriculture-associated antimicrobial resistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the benefits and costs of public programs and support the prioritization of programs where fiscal capacity is constrained to improve food and nutrition security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide the adaptation of crisis policies and investments to reflect lessons learned in mitigating the pandemic’s health and economic impacts on food and nutrition security. Consider differential actions that are gender-sensitive and in key sub-national regions.
Long-term: Resilience (up to 24 months and beyond)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to build back better and make food, land and water systems more robust and resilient to shocks. Adapt systematic approaches to food systems transformation that link health, sustainability and socioeconomic outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement practices for better managing the agriculture-environment interface (including aquatic systems and forests). Reduce the risk of the emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases by improving rapid detection and response to emerging diseases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to longer-term strategies for fragile areas and vulnerable populations that effectively integrate development and humanitarian programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support more effective cross-sectoral policies and investments for food systems resilience. Improve One Health preparedness that links environmental, economic, social and health outcomes.

CGIAR's 4-point response plan

CGIAR must, and will, focus on COVID-19 in delivering its new mission statement, “Ending hunger by 2030 – through science to transform food, land and water systems in a climate crisis”.

As the world's largest global agricultural innovation network, CGIAR is playing a leading role in the global response to COVID-19 – on the immediate response, on the medium-term recover and on the essential long-term resilience-building needed to build back better. CGIAR is deploying its 8,000 scientists and staff in over 100 countries, depth of expertise, +3,000 partnerships and the world's genebanks.

CGIAR is providing knowledge, evidence, technologies and methods to help key implementing and policy partners mitigate the pandemic's effects on agriculture and food security. Working closely with national stakeholders, CGIAR is identifying country-specific demands for COVID-19 relevant research, carrying out multidisciplinary research in response to this demand and supporting uptake of evidence-based policy and investment decisions to deliver impacts on the ground.

This is set out in a new report entitled [Responding to COVID-19](#). Four key elements underpin our response plan:

1 Change existing CGIAR Research Programs to support an immediate COVID-19 response

Three-quarters of all flagships in the CGIAR Research Programs and Platforms adjusted their 2020 budgets to include activities to maximize relevance and utility for governments and other partners in relation to their COVID-19 response. At the same time, 100% of CGIAR research is already relevant to building back better food systems.

Among activities to address the new challenges posed by COVID-19, CGIAR is:

- Redeploying livestock data analytic capacity to support the development of a COVID-19 vaccine;
- Providing online tracker tools on poverty effects and public policy responses to COVID-19's impacts on food systems;
- Updating digital tools to include COVID-19 market information for small businesses;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of nutrition programs during the pandemic.

2 Implement CGIAR programs already highly relevant to COVID-19

Two-thirds of the 2020 CGIAR Research Portfolio address two or more near-term COVID-19-relevant themes (e.g. food production, trade and markets, human and animal health, pro-poor policies), while 100% of the portfolio aims to deliver on long-term resilience of food, land and water systems. Collectively, CGIAR is making available its latest research and analysis on COVID-19 to support informed decisions. Integrated support is being provided on-demand to governments seeking to improve their food system responses and social protection programs. Ongoing efforts draw on the four research pillars outlined above: food systems; One Health; inclusive public programs for food and nutritional security; and pro-poor policies and investments.

For example:

- In a number of countries, including Ethiopia, CGIAR is using economic models to assess the economic and food security impacts of COVID-19;
- In Bangladesh, CGIAR is working with local partners to monitor supplies and prices of food, labor

and inputs, and to advise on appropriate policies, with an emphasis on mitigating COVID-19 impacts on the most vulnerable members of society;

- ILRI Nairobi laboratory temporarily re-purposed to process human COVID-19 tests for the Kenyan Ministry of Health.

3 Re-orient CGIAR's longer-term research strategy to reflect the 'game-changing' scale of COVID-19

CGIAR's new research strategy, covering our work up to 2030 and for approval this year, will fully reflect the scale and substance of COVID-19 in the context of CGIAR's new mission to transform food, land and water systems. This is likely to include placing sharper focus on building greater resilience into food, land and water systems; and more emphasis on the One Health agenda in the form of generating evidence and tools to prevent and respond both to emerging disease threats and to comparable shocks. The aim to 'build back better' – not return to business as usual following the COVID-19 crisis – is a priority for a united CGIAR in its efforts to transform food systems to meet global goals on food security, sustainable development and climate change.

4 Strengthen our immediate and longer-term response capability

Immediate capability: to quickly mobilize research to address global and country needs, CGIAR has established a [COVID-19 Hub](#) tasked with (i) Providing a System-wide entry point on COVID-19 for partners and Funders; (ii) Delivering an active intelligence service to the CGIAR System Management Board on COVID-19 impacts and priority responses; and (iii) Articulating a set of prioritized areas of work on COVID-19 response, recovery and longer-term resilience. The Hub is run in partnership with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

CGIAR is seeking funding for additional research to support the immediate response to the pandemic through the COVID-19 Hub that will provide evidence to policymakers, innovations to partners and tools to food system actors across the four thematic areas. Specifically, the Hub will deliver high-impact research for (i) overcoming value chain challenges (Food systems); (ii) integrating a One Health approach to COVID-19 responses (One Health); (iii) providing in-country support to government and national partner for implementation of COVID-19 initiatives (all four thematic areas); and (iv) addressing food systems' fragility and building back better (all four thematic areas).

Longer-term: implementation of [One CGIAR](#) with a Common Board and Executive Management Team will enable a more coordinated and integrated ability to respond to partners' needs – and to emerging research issues – as the COVID-19 crisis unfolds. It will also harness One Health approaches to prevent future outbreaks originating in food systems.

More information

- [CGIAR COVID-19 webpage](#)
- [COVID-19 Hub launch announcement](#)
- [COVID-19 Hub webpage](#)

Contact

Email: COVID-19-Hub@cgiar.org



CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food-secure future. CGIAR science is dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security and improving natural resources and ecosystem services. Its research is carried out by 15 CGIAR Research Centers in close collaboration with hundreds of partners, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, development organizations and the private sector.

CGIAR System Organization

1000 avenue Agropolis
34394 Montpellier
France

Tel: +33 4 67 04 7575
Fax: +33 4 67 04 7583
Email: contact@cgiar.org

www.cgiar.org