

# GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES 2020



## IN BRIEF

The data and the analyses in this report were prepared before the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and do not account for its impact on vulnerable people in food-crisis situations.

The *Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2020* is the result of a joint, consensus-based assessment of acute food insecurity situations around the world by 16 partner organizations.

At 135 million, the number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) in 2019 was the highest in the four years of the GRFC's existence. This increase also reflected the inclusion of additional countries and areas within some countries.

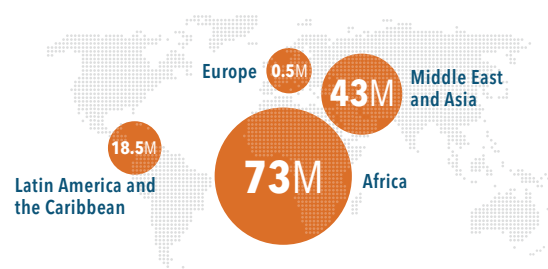
When comparing the 50 countries that were in both the 2019 and the 2020 reports, the population in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) rose from 112 to 123 million. This reflected worsening acute food insecurity in key conflict-driven crises, notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan and the growing severity of drought and economic shocks as drivers in countries such as Haiti, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

Around 183 million people in 47 countries were classified in Stressed (IPC/CH Phase 2) conditions, at risk of slipping into Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) if confronted by an additional shock or stressor.



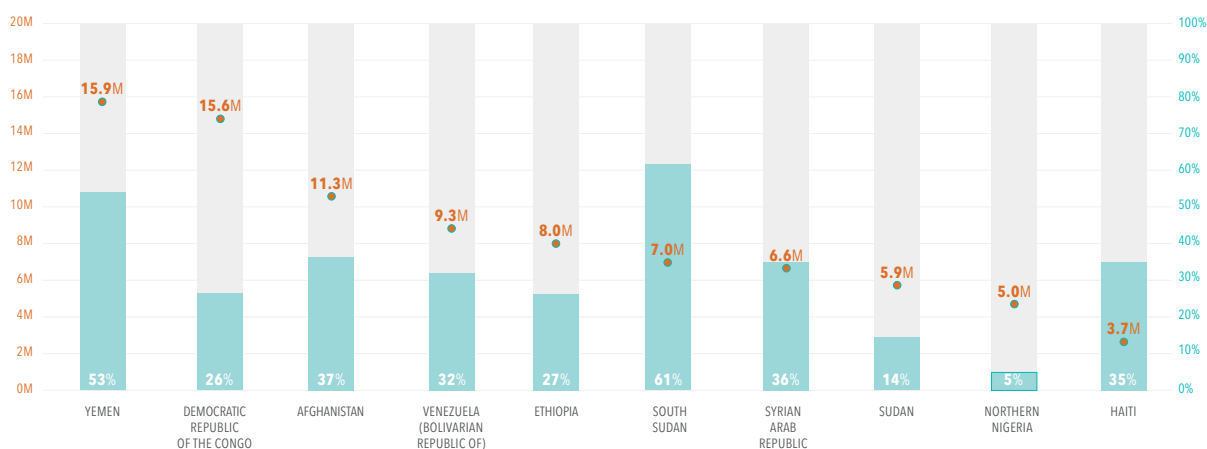
The number of acutely food-insecure people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) across 55 countries and territories analysed

More than half of the affected population were in Africa



Source: FSIN, GRFC 2020

## The 10 worst food crises in 2019 by number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)



● Number of people (in millions) in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)

● Percentage of population analysed in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above)

Source: FSIN, GRFC 2020

An estimated 75 million stunted children were living in the 55 food-crisis countries analysed. These children have limited access to sufficient dietary energy, nutritionally diverse diets, clean drinking water, sanitation and health care, which weakens their health and nutrition status, with dire consequences for their development and long-term productivity.

## Drivers of acute food insecurity

Conflict/insecurity was still the main driver of food crises in 2019, but weather extremes and economic shocks became increasingly significant. Over half of the 77 million acutely food-insecure people in countries where conflict was identified as the primary driver were in the Middle East and Asia. Regional crises continued to see high levels of acute food insecurity, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin and Central Sahel.

Africa had the largest numbers of acutely food-insecure people in need of assistance in countries badly affected by weather events, particularly in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa, followed by Central America and Pakistan.

In East Africa, armed conflicts, intercommunal violence and other localized tensions continued to affect peace and security, particularly in South Sudan, and continued to maintain large refugee populations in neighbouring countries, such as Uganda.

The report reflects the growing influence of economic crises on acute food insecurity levels, particularly in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Haiti and the Sudan.

An estimated 79 million people remained displaced globally as of mid-2019 – 44 million of them internally displaced and 20 million were refugees under UNHCR's mandate. More than half of these refugees were hosted in countries with high numbers of acutely food-insecure people. In countries where funding constraints have reduced assistance in refugee camps, refugees' food security was severely threatened.

## Short-term outlook for 2020

The acute food insecurity forecasts for 2020 were produced before COVID-19 became a pandemic and do not account for its likely impact in food crisis countries.

The combined effects of conflict, macroeconomic crisis, climate-related shocks and crop pests, including fall armyworm and desert locusts, were likely to ensure that Yemen remained the world's worst food crisis.

In East Africa, abundant seasonal rains benefitted crops and rangelands, but fostered a severe desert locust outbreak that will likely aggravate acute food insecurity in complex and fragile contexts.

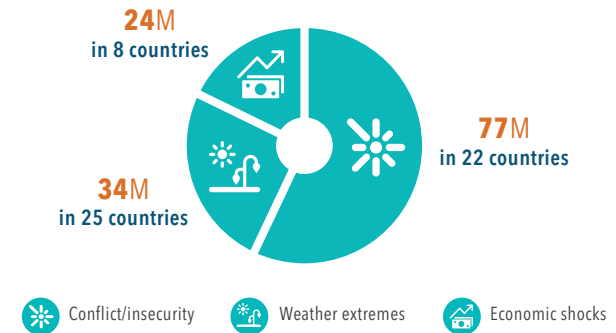
Protracted conflicts will either maintain or increase acute food insecurity levels in parts of Central Africa. In Southern Africa,



# 17M

The number of acutely malnourished children under 5 years across the 55 countries/territories analysed in 2019

## Numbers of acutely food-insecure people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) (millions) by key driver



Conflict/insecurity, weather extremes, desert locusts, economic shocks and COVID-19 are expected to be the key drivers of acute food insecurity 2020

post-harvest improvements are likely to be short-lived as poor rains, high food prices and unresolved political and economic instability could worsen acute food insecurity levels. Increasing violence, displacements and disrupted agriculture and trade in tandem with adverse climate in West Africa and Sahel countries will worsen acute food insecurity conditions in many areas.

Violent conflict and currency depreciation will drive alarming rates of acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition levels across the most troubled areas of the Middle East and Asia.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, sociopolitical crises, weather extremes, lack of employment and high food prices are likely to lead to deteriorating acute food insecurity in some countries.

The drivers of food crises, as well as lack of access to dietary energy and diversity, safe water, sanitation and health care will continue to create high levels of child malnutrition, while COVID-19 is likely to overburden health systems.

The pandemic may well devastate livelihoods and food security, especially in fragile contexts and particularly for the most vulnerable people working in the informal agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. A global recession will majorly disrupt food supply chains.

While all partners are in broad agreement with the data and information presented in this report, FEWS NET's analyses suggest that the population requiring emergency food assistance in 2019 was lower than the IPC estimates for Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Haiti.

## Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic



The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is having an unprecedented impact around the world, both in health and socioeconomic terms.

While COVID-19 does not discriminate, the 55 countries and territories that are home to 135 million acutely food-insecure people in need of urgent humanitarian food and nutrition assistance are the most vulnerable to the consequences of this pandemic as they have very limited or no capacity to cope with either the health or socioeconomic aspects of the shock. Additionally, the pandemic may drive up acute food insecurity levels in countries that are dependent on food imports, and oil exports, tourism and remittances for income, such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

### Potential impacts on food-crisis countries

At the time of publication it was too early to tell to what extent the pandemic would affect these countries. COVID-19 is likely to have a profound impact on health and nutrition status – particularly that of vulnerable groups – given the poor state of public health systems and people's lack of economic resources to access health care. Higher rates of underlying health conditions, including non-communicable diseases and malnutrition that weaken the immune system, are likely to increase the risk of people developing severe symptoms.

The collateral global effects of COVID-19 could result in an increase in food prices through agricultural labour shortages and the adverse effect of protectionism policies. Necessary movement restrictions, combined with the expected slowdown of the global economy, simultaneously threaten to disrupt food production, processing and marketing activities, as well as livestock movements.

Rising unemployment and under-employment and decreasing purchasing power will have serious consequences for poor and vulnerable populations in countries already dealing with crises such as conflict and/or ongoing economic and political turmoil. Displaced people living in camps and displaced/host populations in urban settings as well as the elderly, young children, pregnant and lactating women and the disabled are particularly vulnerable to the far-reaching impacts of this disease.

COVID-19 could also have negative effects on social and political stability, creating the conditions for unrest especially in the most vulnerable food crisis countries. It may hinder international mediation efforts for conflict resolution, as well as peacekeeping operations, with consequent negative effects on vulnerable and food-insecure conflict-affected people.

The pandemic may affect the delivery and cost of delivering humanitarian assistance due to transport and travel restrictions. At the same time, budgets are likely to be reduced if resources are diverted to support national COVID-19 efforts. This may have major consequences for the populations who are heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive and/or protect their livelihoods. Aid agencies will also face major challenges in conducting face-to-face assessments and post-distribution monitoring.

### Urgent need for coordinated action

To prevent tens of millions of people already facing food crises from succumbing to the virus or to its economic consequences, all actors need to mobilize and coordinate along a set of operational and strategic priorities.

This will entail scaling up public health preparedness and response and protecting vulnerable populations. It is also crucial to mobilize rapidly to safeguard the livelihoods and related agri-food systems in food-crisis countries and protect the critical food supply chain. Support for food processing, transport and local food markets is vital, as is advocating for trade corridors to remain open for the continuous functioning of the critical food supply chain and agri-food systems in food-crisis countries.

Such interventions must comply with government measures and health guidelines and be designed and implemented in partnership between governments, humanitarian and development actors.

Given the unprecedented nature of the crisis, creating a better understanding of the potential impacts of COVID-19 on food security and related vulnerabilities is of paramount importance and urgency. The Global Network against Food Crises will engage immediately to monitor the situation against the data currently available and will strive to provide timely data, analyses and intelligence on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition.



## ACTION POINTS



### Accelerate efforts, hasten progress

The report's latest estimates, and the likely further degradation fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrate that the global international community must accelerate efforts to tackle hunger's root causes during the Decade of Action if it expects a sustainable future for all by 2030.



### Promote high-quality data collection and sharing

Food security and nutrition evidence is required to increase the understanding of food crises. The data community needs to invest in technology-savvy monitoring systems and predictive analysis, adapting tools to provide timely, reliable data that is easy to access, interpret and use by policymakers.



### Invest in analysis, response and policy

Serious strategic investments in food security and resilience must be made at the country and regional level for significant change to take hold and positively impact people's lives. Improving early warning and early action, strengthening national social protection and providing livelihoods support will foster resilience and spur multigenerational growth.



### Advocate for political action to address the root causes of food insecurity

Humanitarian and development stakeholders must raise the recurrent issues that obstruct food security and adequate nutrition and bring attention to the factors that drive food crises. As advocates, they can convene and elicit the necessary political awareness and uptake with national governments and decision makers.



### Address people's vulnerabilities before, during and after crisis

Food crises are complex, often requiring simultaneous and coherent humanitarian and development action and peace-building – known as the Humanitarian, Development and Peace nexus – for sustainable context-specific responses and solutions.



### Rethink food and agricultural systems

Global food and agricultural systems are becoming increasingly strained. In poor and fragile areas, conflict is aggravating already precarious situations. Food systems must be flexible and able to deliver food security and nutrition in a way that corresponds to the current realities.



### Recognize the importance of health, WASH and social protection in food systems

Food crises are not only about food. Disease outbreaks have a direct impact on the health and nutritional status of a population and may affect food security in various ways. The adequate functioning of food systems is reliant on that of health, WASH, education and social protection systems.



### Ensure people are the focus of structural changes

Progress in the fight against hunger will require open dialogue, strategic coordination and new approaches but also long-term structural changes that put people at the centre. This will impact the food security and nutritional outlook for future generations.

#### CONTACTS



[fsin-secretariat@wfp.org](mailto:fsin-secretariat@wfp.org)



[www.fsinplatform.org](http://www.fsinplatform.org)



[@FSIN\\_News](https://twitter.com/FSIN_News)

This initiative is undertaken by the Global Network Against Food Crises. FSIN's work is made possible thanks to the generous support of the European Union and USAID.



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

