

Food Security Monitor for the Americas

Full Report on the Agrifood Sector in the Americas during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Previous editions available at: <https://iica.int/es/monitor>

2,277,995

Confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the Americas



Countries



Highest number of cases in the Americas:

- USA (1,575,064)
- BRA (291,579)
- PER (108,769)
- CAN (82,670)
- CHL (57,581)

Covid-19 in the world



Source: Johns Hopkins University, available at <https://bit.ly/3dJ1CZX>. Data as at 21 May 2020 (16:00 CST).

***This monitor is a dynamic, constantly updated tool created by IICA to analyze and forecast the impact of the world health crisis on food security in the Americas.*

Analysis and scenarios

The latest from the IICA Blog:

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has launched a series of webinars entitled “**Reflections on the World and Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean post-Covid-19**”. The initiative is designed to **anticipate possible solutions and the requisite policies to contribute to food security, economic reactivation and trade in the aftermath of the pandemic.**

There will be **6 webinars** in total. Please see below the **presentations for the third webinar, entitled “Innovation systems and value chains post Covid-19”:**

[Presentation by Elsa Murano, former Undersecretary of Agriculture for Food Safety of the United States](#)



“Prior to Covid-19 **technology gaps already existed in the region. Digital tools** will be required to restore distribution channels – **technologies** that improve the **efficiency of food production** to make better use of agricultural products and surpluses, and that ensure **health, safety, quality and traceability** to rehabilitate **safety systems**”.

We encourage you to share your comments and queries in our **#IICABlog**. The full presentation is available at: <https://bit.ly/2LKzUPS>

[Presentation by Juan Lucas Restrepo, Director General of the Bioversity International – International Center for Tropical Agriculture \(CIAT\) Alliance](#)



“**Seeds are also a relevant topic**—we must implement regulations to ensure that **producers have legal, easy access** to a greater variety of seeds. **We must not forget about** digital aspects either, and **find a way to ensure** that the digital revolution reaches farmers. Digital extension **will be crucial. We must find ways to connect agricultural specialists to producers, so that they can meet their knowledge needs through digital means**”.

We encourage you to share your comments and queries in our **#IICABlog**. The full presentation is available at: <https://bit.ly/2WJWhew>

Relevant issues for the agrifood sector

Markets

*Report from the MIOA, a cooperation network comprising the Agricultural Market Information Systems (AMIS) of the 33 countries in the hemisphere. Information is compiled on a per country basis.

Ecuador. The monitoring network has been expanded to include 21 wholesale markets. Markets have reduced opening hours, which has limited access to information. Logistical corridors have been set up to facilitate the movement of food to wholesale markets and to guarantee food supply. Transportation costs have increased due to growing concerns among transporters of becoming infected in high-risk areas. Although the pandemic has not affected production, marketing has been hindered by the limited movement of goods. The next planting period is being monitored to foster adequate production levels to meet internal and external demands. Foreign trade, on the other hand, has been hindered by border closures in Colombia and Peru. Wholesale markets have seen higher prices for and a lower quantity of certain products (such as onion). Banana and flower exports in particular have fallen. The country has also set up roaming markets, which are smaller markets that cater to the specific needs of certain areas.

Peru. Due to a high risk of contamination in the main fruit market, supplies have been partially redirected to other wholesale markets in Lima.

Market reporters have been provided with the necessary protective clothing to conduct their work.

Due to curfews, the amount of produce entering Lima has decreased, which, in turn, has increased prices. However, thanks to government efforts, the country has succeeded in increasing the number of products that enter markets in Lima, guaranteeing an adequate supply of products.

Because certain retail markets have closed, "roaming markets" have been set up, enabling producers to sell their products directly to consumers in specific locations. Prices in these markets are also being monitored.

United States. Due to the collapse of food services, wholesalers now have a surplus of agricultural products with very specific characteristics that do not necessarily meet the needs of end consumers. The pandemic has accelerated certain technological trends to avoid contact with other persons in supermarkets. These trends are likely to persist after the pandemic is over. New opportunities for small-scale traders and producers are emerging. There has even been an increase in the number of new retail outlets that have opened in neighborhoods. Some consumers prefer to shop in smaller, more controlled spaces. The operation of some meat processing plants has been disrupted due to staff members falling ill, or due to closures for cleaning purposes. Some retail establishments are limiting the amount of meat products sold per person.

Production

* Measures related to the agrifood production sector, and information on impact channels and areas affected in the countries of the Americas (products grown or harvested during this time of year).

Argentina: economic activity decreases in March

According to a report by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), the monthly economic activity estimator (EMAE) recorded a variation of -11.5% in March (when the quarantine began) compared to the same month in 2019.

On the other hand, the seasonally adjusted indicator reported a 9.8% drop compared to the previous month. The activity that was affected the most was fishing, which decreased by 48.6%. Agriculture also fell by 8.1% compared to the previous month.

<https://bit.ly/3e6yMCb>

Canada seeks to attract migrant farm staff

Canada is seeking to attract foreign workers to its farms. According to Bloomberg, Canada's agriculture sector relies on nearly 60,000 migrant workers. As a result of the pandemic, however, many of them are deciding to stay home, resulting in a dearth in foreign labor. Political pressure is also mounting, and rights groups are calling for increased protections for workers.

The government has implemented various measures, which include rolling out exemptions from border closures, easing visa renewals for agriculture workers and providing US\$36 million to cover mandatory quarantine costs.

<https://bloom.bg/2XgMPOV>

Colombia: coffee farmers take action to contain the berry borer beetles

According to a report by Reuters, coffee farmers are working to contain the berry borer beetles (known as "broca") in Colombia, where a drought during the first four months of the year aided the infestation. They are also working to guarantee coffee harvesting despite labor shortages.

Colombia is the world's third largest coffee producer after Brazil and Vietnam. Its coffee farms span 855,000 hectares, and more than 500,000 families depend on this activity. <https://reut.rs/2AKqlhv>

Ecuador: The Ministry of Agriculture is working with small producers to establish areas for selling

In response to the closure of markets amidst the pandemic, many small farmers and traders who are not organized or registered have established stalls to sell on the streets.

The authorities are working to set up fairs and locations for selling, and to purchase products for a basic family basket of goods.

<https://bit.ly/2yrCBD0>

Honduras: Handover of solidarity production bonus begins, as coffee bonus payment is being expedited

The Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock began the hand-over of the Solidarity Production Bonus (BSP), which is an initiative that will provide 140,306 producers with seeds and fertilizer.

The BSP investment will represent a L. 200 million investment for the government this year, delivered in two phases. L. 50 million will be used for the first planting season (focusing on beans) and L. 150 million has been allocated for the second planting season.

On the other hand, the Coffee Bonus for small- and medium-scale farmers in 15 districts will represent a L. 300 million investment. This assistance will benefit 91,462 coffee farmers, providing them with 555,399 quintals of fertilizer.

<https://bit.ly/3gbiqhM> and <https://bit.ly/2ZrACJO>

Paraguay: earnings from soybean did not exceed US\$1 billion for the first time since 2012

The soybean crop generated US\$ 999.09 million in the first four months of the year.

According to Paraguay's Chamber of Oilseed and Cereal Producers, this figure indicates a 29% decline in comparison to the average amount of foreign exchange earnings generated in the last three years and a reduction of more than US\$172 million in comparison to the first four months of 2019.

<https://bit.ly/2yrUqlo>

Trade

*Trade-related measures taken by the countries, description of the impact on products usually exported during this time of year, problems in trade logistics and global supply chains.

Argentina: blueberry producers are working with national carrier, Aerolíneas Argentinas, to guarantee delivery of goods

Producers are preparing protocols for the 2020 harvest, which will take effect in June for internal consumption and in August for the export market. In August 2019, 50% of exports were transported by sea and the other 50% by air.

Currently, commercial flights have been cancelled until 1 September, and therefore producers are seeking to establish agreements to guarantee airline transportation of blueberries to export destinations.

<https://bit.ly/2Tn8sMn>

Colombia: Colombian meat exports are on the rise

During the first three months of the year, meat sales climbed 45%, that is US\$25.6 million.

The country exports approximately 80% of the meat it produces. In the first three months of 2020, Colombia sold 80% of its exports to Middle Eastern countries, mainly to Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

<https://bit.ly/2XlVe3o>

Costa Rica and Panama: agree on a joint pilot plan for the transportation of goods

The agreement (developed jointly by the private and public sectors) allows truckers to enter Costa Rican soil, in keeping with a sanitary and safety protocol that allows them to follow a controlled route from the border to established customs bonded warehouses, allowing for pre-authorized rest stops.

The plan will enter into force on Friday, 22 May. Costa and Nicaragua have still not established an agreement.

<https://bit.ly/2WOlfbG> and <https://bit.ly/2XlGMZt>

Ecuador: non-petrol exports plunge in April

Non-petrol exports plummeted US\$400 million in April, mainly in consignments of shrimp, banana, cocoa and tuna.

Accumulated non-petrol exports up to April had climbed 19%, but much of this was due to the growth surge in January and February prior to the pandemic. As of March, exports began to decline.

The Ministry of Production is forecasting a 1.5% decline in non-petrol exports in 2020.

<https://bit.ly/2WR6g1z>

Paraguay: the Paraná and Paraguay rivers are subsiding, posing a threat to oil producers

The subsiding water level in the Paraná and Paraguay rivers is translating into excessive export costs and delays in shipments. These logistical limitations are affecting the competitiveness of sales. The Paraguay Chamber of Oilseed and Cereal Producers has said that this may force them to suspend activities, since the industries only have limited storage capacity.

<https://bit.ly/2LR4BmB>

Supply

*Measures taken by Ministries of Agriculture in different countries regarding food security.

Agrifood chains must make greater use of biotechnology and innovations

Expanding the use of biotechnology in food production, providing producers with access to improved seed varieties, enhancing connectivity in rural areas and increasing investment in research and development will all be fundamental to strengthening agricultural value chains.

This was the assessment provided by Elsa Murano, former United States Undersecretary of Agriculture for Food Safety, and Juan Restrepo, Director General of the Alliance of International Bioversity–International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), in the most recent webinar organized by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

<https://bit.ly/2WSbAlr>

The call of the land: How Eric López went from migrating to becoming a successful Guatemalan coffee farmer

After a failed attempt to migrate, Erick López began working with a partner and, with his father's help, was able to raise funds to refurbish the family farm, where his grandmother had stayed behind.

“The only job I liked was coffee farming, which I learned to do on the spot, because I did not receive any formal advice or training; I received no support whatsoever”, he remarked.

Today, with twice as many years of experience, López is one of the leading small-scale coffee farmers in San Antonio Huista and a beneficiary of the Central American Program for Integrated Coffee Rust Management (PROCAGICA) – a joint IICA-European Union program to improve the living conditions of rural dwellers in coffee-farming areas throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic.

<https://bit.ly/3ebTxg2>

Specialists in Mexico agree on the importance of protecting agrifood chains amidst Covid-19

How is the Covid-19 health emergency affecting the food supply? This was the first question raised by food science specialists from the la Universidad de las Américas Puebla during a webinar that was held to share experiences and provide an objective assessment of the current pandemic.

<https://bit.ly/36oJ1iD>

How are citrus prices set in Argentina?

The price of this fruit keeps rising. The Intercooperative Agricultural Federation (CONINAGRO) analyzed the citrus production chain, specifically how citrus prices are set at each stage of the chain up to the price charged when it reaches consumers on supermarket shelves.

<https://bit.ly/3e699RX>

Colombians launch a system to bring rural products to consumers' homes

Logistics company Cienda launched a home service, to cut out intermediaries between agricultural producers and final consumers, thereby facilitating fair trade and competitive prices.

The firm is currently marketing fruits and vegetables, using an innovative, mobile point-of-sale concept, which sees it bringing displays of goods to the doorways of its clients, specifically to gated communities and buildings. The company began with two mobile units and is now taking its mobile store to 45 gated communities each week, amounting to close to 4,200 households.

<https://bit.ly/2XmXAzN>