

Guidance on Supporting Safe and Functioning Food Markets

USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security

Lockdowns, marketplace closures, and restrictions on internal and cross-border movements threaten access to markets for basic supplies and food, especially in low and middle income countries. Below is illustrative programming for USAID Missions to consider and adapt to country and community context to support safe and functioning food markets, while maximizing safety precautions to limit coronavirus transmission.

Physical marketplaces

- Support innovations that keep markets open while maintaining social (i.e., physical) distance. Consider separate days or times for elderly or immunocompromised individuals; promote use of larger spaces; extend trading hours; promote more deliveries (encouraging safe practices to reduce risk); and reinforce use of existing small, informal, or mobile markets that people can access without transportation.¹
- Where possible, expand physical market area (e.g., into adjacent fields or open lots) and physically distance the stalls and individuals. Consider creating a one-way flow through markets to reduce back and forth movement and control the number of people in the marketplace at a given time. Give consideration to “waiting areas” and other potential points for crowding.
- Coordinate with public health offices to support body temperature checks before entering formal marketplaces.
- Leave time for cleaning and disinfecting the physical market space.
- Encourage public trash bin facilities and work with marketplace managers to ensure proper management and maintenance of trash facilities
- Install, rehabilitate or upgrade water supply and sanitation systems and handwashing facilities in markets and mandate proper handwashing. Work with water and sanitation service providers (utilities, private operators, etc.), marketplace managers, and public officials to ensure ongoing management and maintenance of water supply and sanitation systems and handwashing facilities. Where there is no well organized market management or where water supply and sanitation is expensive or logistically unavailable, consider alternative arrangements to ensure handwashing facilities are functioning.²

¹ See [Policy Brief: Evidence-Informed Social Distancing Policies for African Countries](#)

² Note temporary handwashing stations without a plan for sustainable operations cannot be funded with WASH directive funding, see [Guidance on Water Directive and COVID-19](#).

- Ensure public officials, market managers, and community influencers have information on COVID-19 transmission, are aware of new regulations they are responsible to enforce, and prioritize, plan, and implement risk reduction actions for market management.
- Share culturally appropriate public-health messaging on limiting the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., social distancing, use of masks, and handwashing) prominently in marketplaces (visual and audio), and encourage households to send a representative rather than whole family to reduce the number of people in markets.
- Where possible, leverage digital tools (e.g., mobile money) to facilitate payment and delivery (see [enabling digital payments](#) and [principles for digital payments in humanitarian response](#)).
- Use mass media (radio, television, and social media) to promote safer market behaviors (wearing locally made masks when possible) to the public, considering what is feasible and culturally appropriate. For example, it may not be practical for people who do not have savings or their own transportation to limit trips, but it may be possible for one person per household to go to the market.
- Encourage market accessibility strategies are informed by the local context through community consultations done in a safe way, that include women, older persons, and those with disabilities, and respond to their specific (and often differing) challenges, needs, and preferences as vendors and consumers.
- Help prevent future disease outbreaks. Do not sell live or dead wild animals in markets intended for livestock, meat, fruits, vegetables, spices, grain, or prepared food.

Agriculture and Food Supply Chains

- Advocate to classify food producers, processors, transporters, and vendors as essential businesses, exempt from lockdowns, that also must comply with health and food safety guidelines (social distancing, wearing masks, cleanliness, etc).
- Provide training and science-based information on managing direct and indirect food safety risks for agriculture and food supply chain workers. Remote training (e.g., radio-based 'distance learning', on-line, videos) when possible; consider different information needs, learning behaviors, and access by women and youth. As needed, consider financial support to enable safe practices (e.g., soap, water, masks, logistics planning, sick leave for workers, and separation or elimination of wild animal products in areas where domestic animals are kept and sold).

- Support financial service providers to increase liquidity and access to working capital for SMEs: modifying loan terms or extending credit lines to informal and small scale producers, traders, and vendors.
- Facilitate internal and cross-border movement of supply chain inputs and food that adheres to good postharvest handling and transport practices to maintain quality and safety; avoid a drop in availability; and manage an increase in market prices, particularly for fresh fruits, vegetables, animal source and other nutritious foods.
- Engage SME networks and the private sector to work with government officials on needed information to ensure safe movement in local and regional input and supply chains, including migrant and seasonal agricultural labor. Support capacity of the private sector, including women- and youth-owned businesses, to participate.
- Consider posting prices to avoid speculation, possibly through digital means.
- Maintain volume of goods traded across borders, while reducing health risks to officials at borders, and ensure necessary equipment and machinery are available to process and safely move goods.
- Disinfect vehicles and containers crossing borders by having all vehicles drive through disinfectant and be thoroughly sprayed when crossing borders. Initiate temperature checks for drivers and other border personnel.

Enabling Environment

- Establish avenues for private sector input into government policy formulation and implementation, ensuring the participation of SMEs, women, and youth.
- Encourage regional-level policy coordination and country compliance with existing regional and international agreements.
- Discourage import and export restrictions.
- Increase access to trade-related financing and remove barriers for use of electronic payments (e.g., mobile money), including temporarily reducing or removing transfer fees.
- Establish fast track clearance processes for expedited customs clearance, inspections and onsite lab testing for food and essential goods and migrant laborers and agricultural services.
- Publish changes to customs procedural and administrative requirements and provisions for compliance with standards and regulations online, at land and sea ports and at transportation hubs.

Additional Resources for Assessing and Monitoring Markets

- [These](#) survey questions can be used to measure COVID-19 impacts on SMEs. (Source: IFPRI/Peking University; available in English, Spanish, and Chinese.)
- Medium- and long-term programmatic guidance on measuring market system resilience to shocks/stressors: [Market System Resilience Resource Page](#).
- Multi-Bureau [Guidance for Assessing Market System Resilience](#).
- USAID/Kenya with RFS developed a [Framework for Market System Resilience Measurement](#), that includes a standard firm-level survey instrument.

Safe and Functioning Food Markets: Focus on Livestock Markets

Note: The principles in the safe and functioning market guidance above apply to livestock markets

We anticipate that reduced purchasing power, consumer caution, and preference for dry staples will reduce demand for higher-cost animal-source foods. For producers, there will be a desire to sell livestock as other income dries up. In combination, this will likely result in deteriorating terms of trade. Local milk markets (informal and semi-formal exchanges outside of a marketplace) may have increased importance if other food supply chains become disrupted. There is forthcoming guidance on wildlife trade and COVID-19, which will be cross-posted here when it has cleared.

Livestock Physical Marketplaces: Measures to Reduce Coronavirus Transmission

- Work with livestock market managers and prepare plans based on transmission risks and existing market practices. Ensure this is communicated to market participants and ensure appropriate protective equipment is used.
- Expand the area of the sale yard and organize vendors so that they are spaced out.
- Encourage small sales areas adjacent to the main market yard.
- Limit the number of market participants to those selling and buying animals.
- Consider mechanisms to bypass physical markets, connecting producers, consolidators, and processors via online platforms if livestock markets have been shut or to reduce congestion.
- Consider existing ways livestock are already sold outside of spot markets and work to strengthen these or help smaller producers gain access to virtual markets.
- Install, rehabilitate or upgrade handwashing facilities in livestock markets and mandate proper handwashing. Work with marketplace managers and public officials to ensure ongoing management and maintenance of facilities.

Maintaining Livestock Market System Functionality

- Track livestock market numbers and prices to gauge over-supply and terms of trade vis-à-vis grain prices (important in agro-pastoral areas).
- Facilitate livestock collection from households and take to markets for locked down villages.

- Consider recommending government purchases or guarantees (i.e., market support) for a range of animal source food produced to support rural producers and supply food distribution centers and urban markets.
- Monitor milk collection centers and processors and address disruptions, including logistics and food safety challenges.
- Facilitate local marketing channels (including dispersed retail points) for animal sourced food, and be aware that general diminished purchasing power could serve to reduce affordability.

Livestock and Trade

- Monitor disruptions in the livestock trade mid-stream (e.g., transport, consolidation, processing, storage).
- Target support to SME transport and logistics service providers that are critical in facilitating the movement of essential goods.
- Establish expedited clearance procedures for livestock and other animal source foods.
- Support private sector and associations in advocating for policy changes that will allow for faster inspection and testing at borders and market centers.
- Provide support to local and regional research institutes in generating real or near time data and evidence to inform policy prioritization and decision making.

Additional Information on Safe and Functioning Livestock Markets

Animal source foods are safe for consumption when practicing normal hygiene and preparation measures. COVID-19 is not a foodborne pathogen. Evidence of consumers rejecting animal-sourced foods and misinformation may reduce demand. Consider clear messaging including targeting media outlets and consumers. Possible slow downs in global grain markets will likely impact the animal feed sector, thus increasing costs or limiting availability. Grain-fed, intensive livestock production systems (predominantly pork, poultry, and dairy) are likely to be disrupted in a different way than more extensive cattle, sheep, and goat production systems. Intensive pork, poultry, and egg systems cannot “idle” in an economically sustainable way, as animals must be fattened or sold underweight, even if markets are collapsing.

Although the coronavirus is zoonotic (i.e., an infection which is spread between animals and humans), the number of animal species which the virus can infect or that are

potentially infectious is likely to be very limited. The probable host of origin was bats, with an undetermined Asian small mammal potentially acting as an intermediate bridge species. Reducing demand for wildlife and wildlife products while improving sanitary conditions in supply chains and in markets can help reduce the risk of future disease spillover from wildlife into human populations. **There is no evidence that domesticated ruminants are infected with the SARS CoV-2.** Measures that are being instituted to stop human-human transmission will also limit very unlikely transmission to other animals. Normal basic hygiene measures when handling livestock and pets are still recommended.