



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



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COVID-19 Impacts on Food Systems in Asia



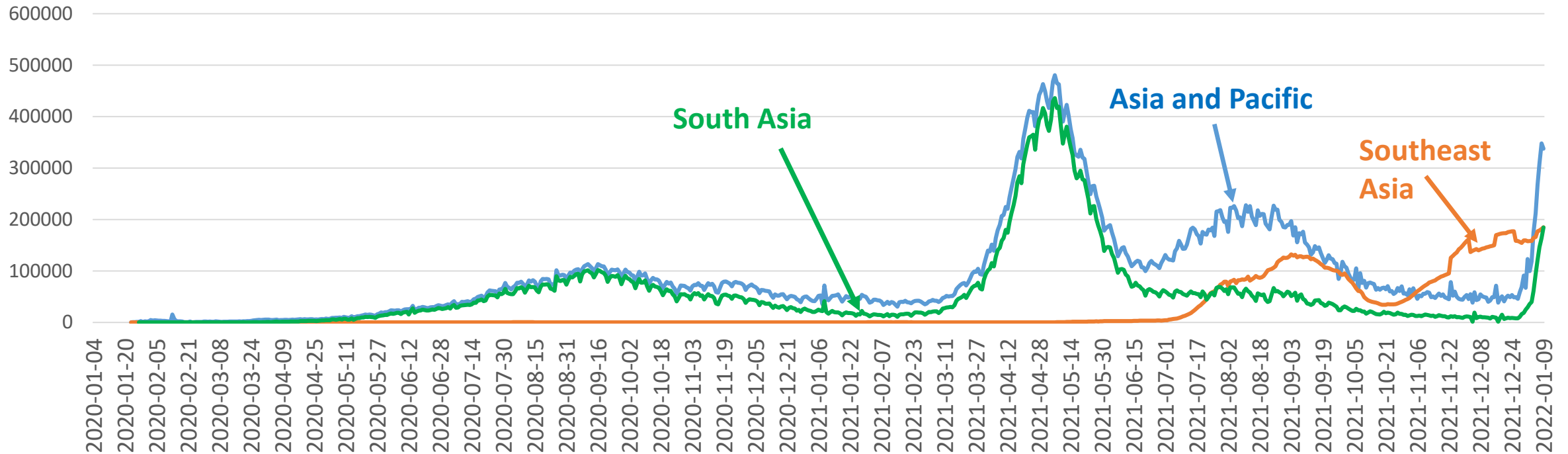
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COVID-19: Unending pandemic (middle of 5th wave)

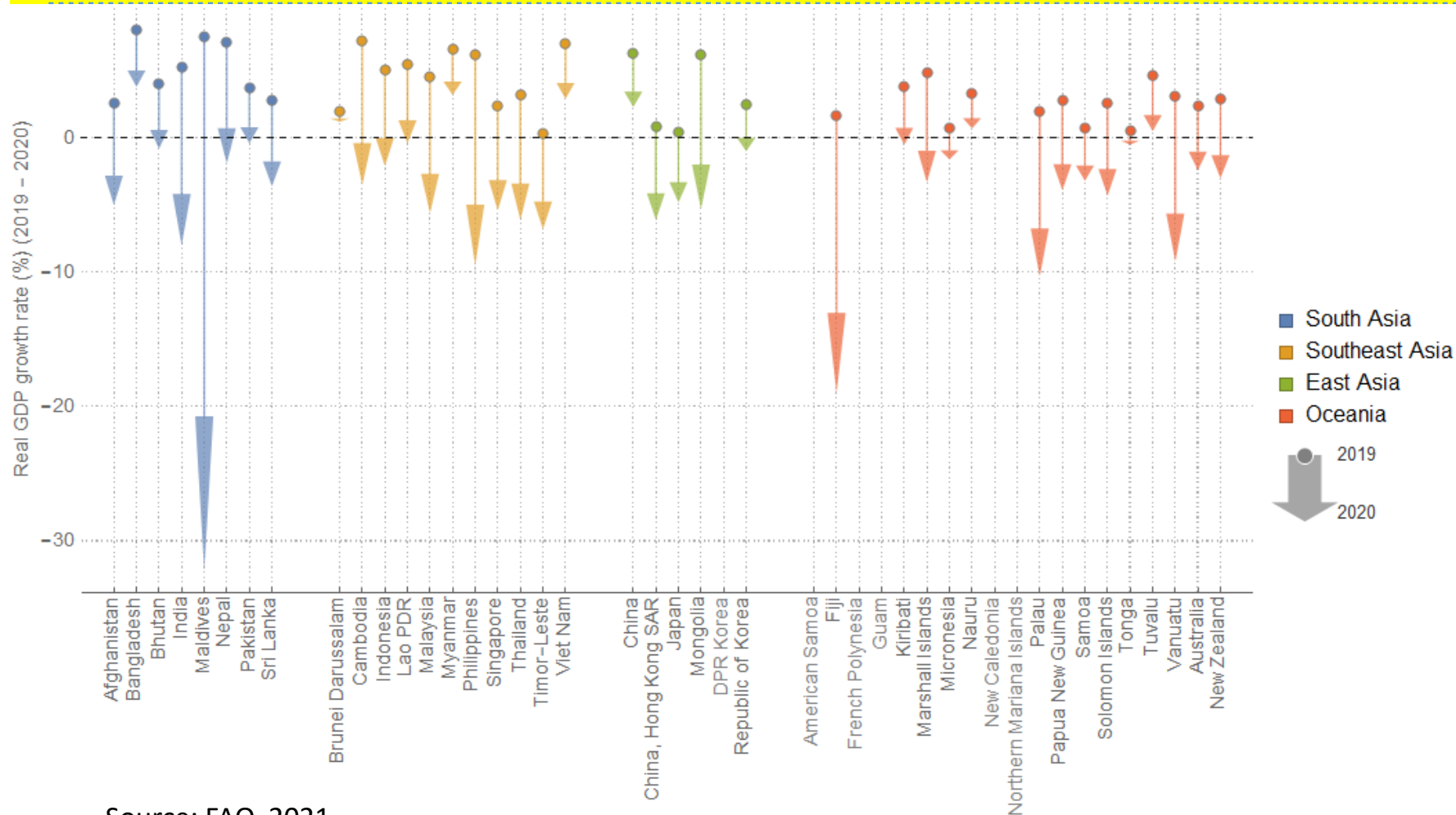
Daily COVID Cases in Asia and Pacific



Source: FAO 2021 (based on data from: <https://github.com/owid/covid-19-data/tree/master/public/data>)



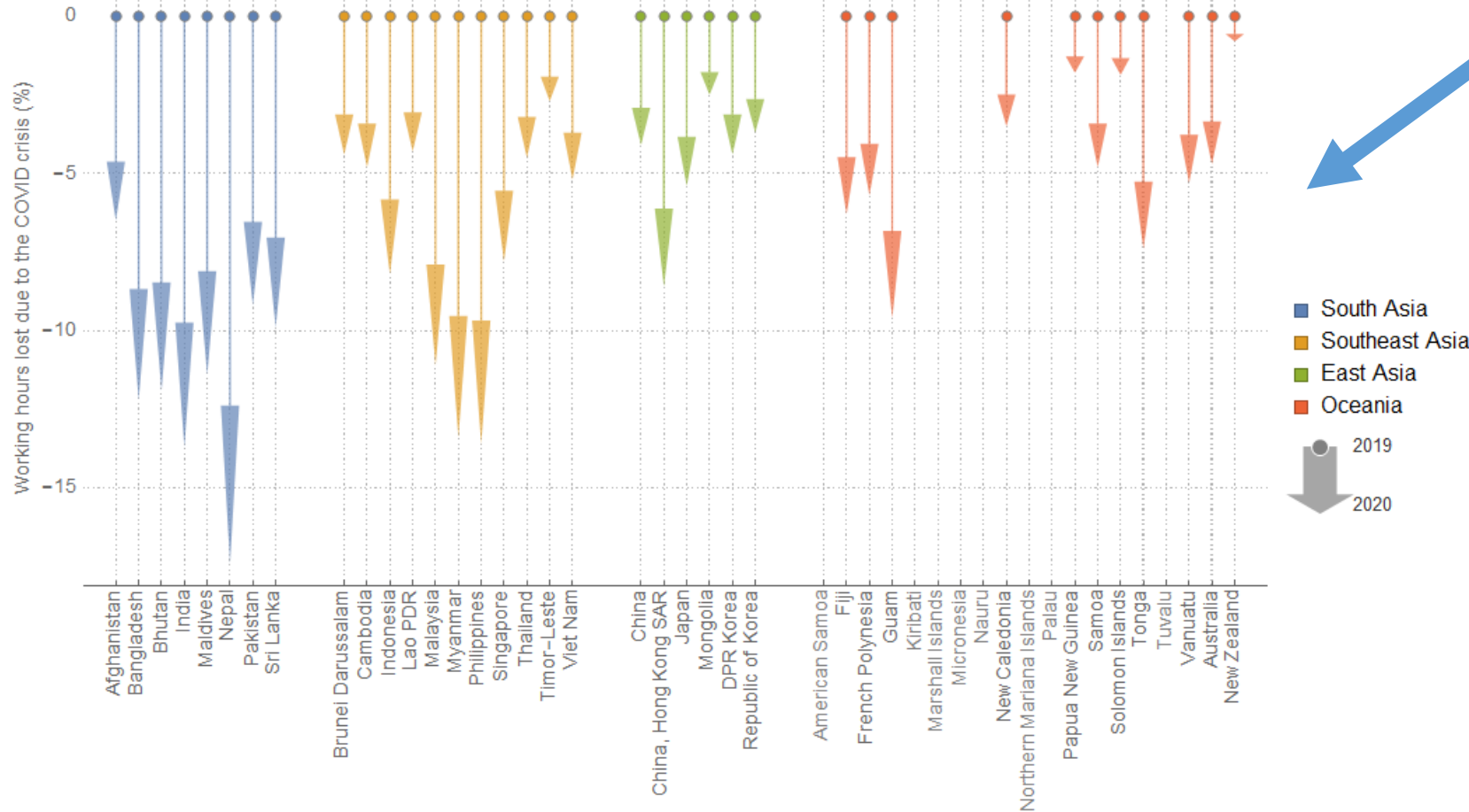
COVID-19: Macroeconomic contraction in 2020



- 2020 is a lost year for the region with an average 4.1 percent GDP contraction which nullifies a growth rate of 4 percent for the year before
- Latest outlook depends on how long Omicron will play out (as of January 2022)



COVID-19 and Macroeconomic contraction



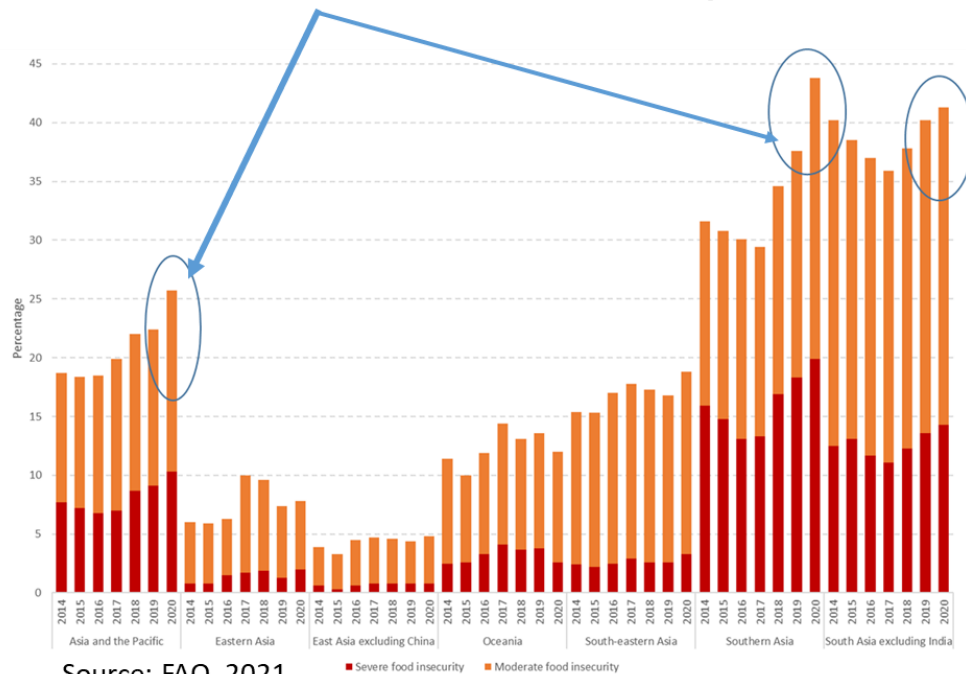
- **Employment** was severely affected as a result of lockdowns and restrictions
- **Uneven impacts:** Urban areas experienced more income loss, reduced activities; rural areas – saw higher food insecurity
- **Poverty** more pronounced in urban than rural sector
- Multi-dimensional poverty: 640M now; might double under COVID-19
- **More pronounced impacts on women:** more job loss, health impacts and domestic stress for women
- **Migration:** contracted in 2020; impacts on migrants and receiving countries

Impacts of COVID-19 on the food system

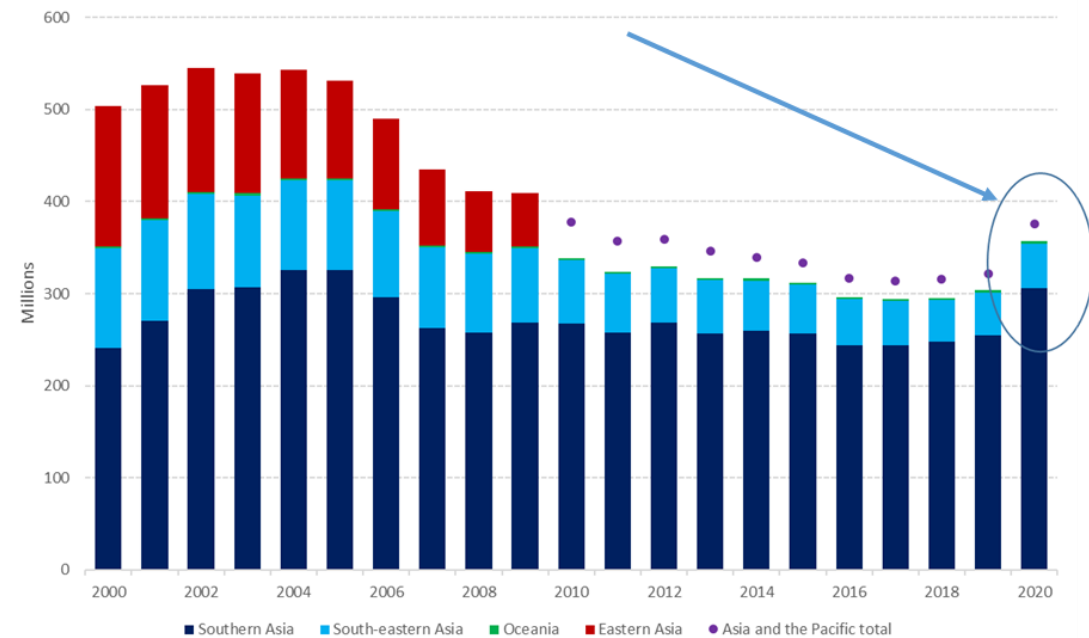
- **Urban poor** access to food compromised during pandemic
- **Food demand** disruptions and reduced food consumption (income and job losses)
- **Food supply shocks** (from market closure; restrictions; drop in demand)
- **Production** was impacted through short term disruptions of labor, inputs, processing leading to periodic and localized food losses; however, agriculture production was relatively less severe as food benefited from exceptions to movement restrictions
- **Distribution and logistics** were affected by COVID-19
- **Perishable** foods, **livestock** and **fish** products were all sensitive to supply chains disruptions from COVID-19 compared to staple or storable foods.

COVID-19: Food Insecurity worsened measurably

Prevalence of food insecurity in A-P



Prevalence of Undernutrition, higher in 2020



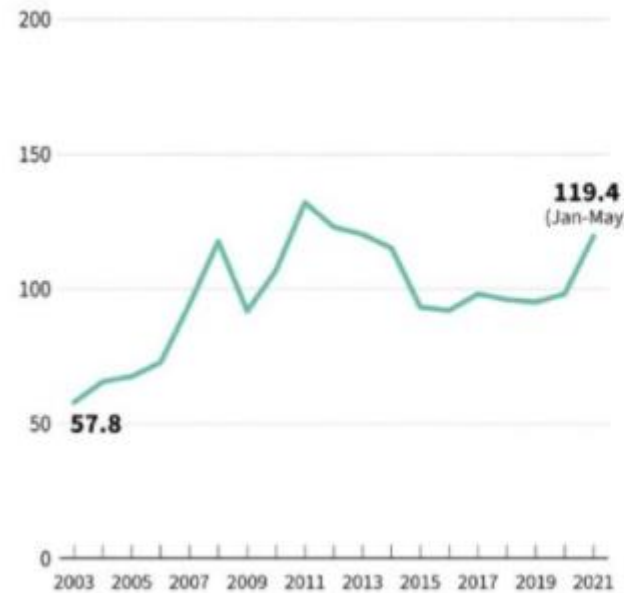
- Number of undernourished rose from 322 M in 2019 to 376 M in 2020 (+17%).
- The largest increase in undernourishment in 2020 was in Southern Asia
- There was a 3.3 % increase in prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity from 2019 to 2020 when COVID-19 emerged.



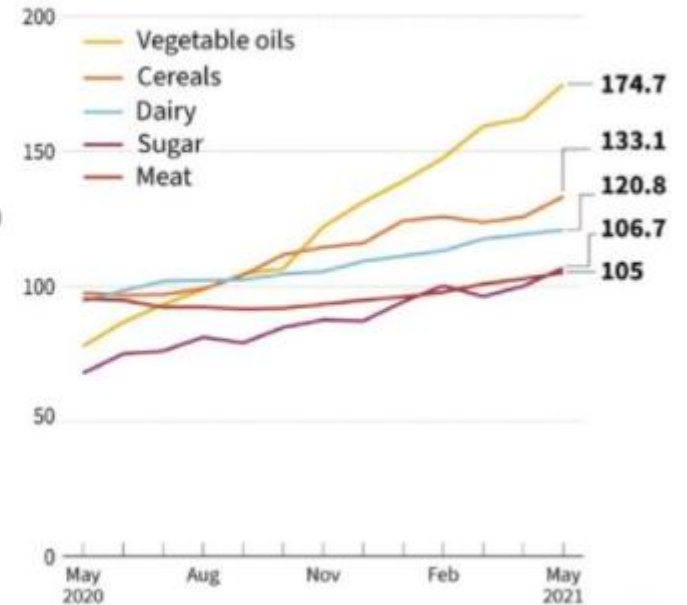
COVID-19: Food Inflation and Food Insecurity Impacts

- Food inflation increased slightly in 2020 (thanks to strong pre-COVID fundamentals)
- Food inflation higher in 2021 (due to supply chain disruptions; fertilizer supply shortages)
- In 2022 – Ukraine crisis pushed food prices to crisis level and significant global food challenges are predicted)
- Food price inflation and income losses cut into the ability of poor households to access food and maintain dietary diversity.
- Children’s nutritional status worsened from reduced family income, school closures and isolation

FAO FOOD PRICE INDEX (NOMINAL)



INDIVIDUAL COMMODITY PRICE INDICES



Source: FAO



Consumers food responses to COVID-19

- In many Asian countries, consumers either:
 - reduced consumption of nutritious food;
 - turned to cheaper calorie-rich food (unemployment);
 - cut the size of meals and reducing intake of dense food;
- urban households have reportedly resorted to overeating and consuming low nutrition high energy comfort food to manage stress;
- increased their intake of salty snacks;
- intake of alcohol and sugary drinks also increased substantially;
- increased reliance on online food and food delivery services but also a notable shift towards processed and unbalanced diets.



Policy responses to strengthen Ari-food systems

- Government moved to support **food production** and remedy the missing markets, including provision of critical inputs, seeds, finance
- Governments also intervened directly in **product procurement** to support smooth functioning of the supply chain.
- On **the trade**, except temporarily, most countries refrained from export bans, except in some cases on a temporary basis.
- In many countries, especially in small island states, governments moved to support substitution to domestic production, **short value chains** or **urban agriculture**
- Investments in **digital technologies** in agri-food (on-line marketing, e-commerce, to digital payments, digital ID systems, e-contracts and e-extension services, etc.)
- COVID-19 provided a strong impetus to **expand social protection** (SP) in AP - a region where 60 % of the population has no access to SP and 40 % has no health care.



FAO Priorities to support COVID-19 Response

Building Back Better

Focus agri-food system transformation post COVID to be greener, inclusive and resilient leading to diverse and affordable diets, and to climate-smart and nature-based agriculture production practices.

Rural revitalization (youth, SME)

Link COVID-19 response and recovery to rural revitalization that creates employment and livelihood options for youth, women and rural communities, and strengthens urban–rural agri-food market linkages, through digital innovations.

Accelerating digitalization Innovations

Accelerate investments in digital technologies to promote agri-food transformation, digital trade, e-commerce, and broadens the deployment, use and access of digital innovations and services to rural communities, rural villages and the rural economy.

Expanding SP and safety net programs

Strengthen social protection and safety net policies and programmes targeting the poor, especially vulnerable groups to achieve socio-economic resiliency and reduce food insecurity and malnutrition, poverty and hunger in line with the SDG goals and targets



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COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A regional review of socioeconomic, agrifood and
nutrition impacts and policy responses



For more details, see the (new) FAO Report:

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

*A Regional Review of Socio-
economic, Agri-food and Nutrition
Impacts and Policy Responses*

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Asia-Pacific Rural Development and Food Security Forum 2022

Thank you

