



Despite not implementing any lockdowns, [Malawi has registered job losses and a significant shortfall in remittances due to COVID-19](#). These have affected the informal labor market, which is the source of more than 50 percent of the population's income.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

More than [1 million people in Malawi experienced high levels of acute food insecurity](#) between July and September 2021. Despite the country's record high maize production in 2021, which was 46 percent above the five-year average, some areas experienced severe dry spells and an earlier-than-normal cessation of rainfall. This led to localized production shortfalls, which were coupled with the impact of COVID-19 on remittances, informal trade, and self-employment activities. As some people are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, urgent action is required to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods, and prevent acute malnutrition. Around 3.6 million people are classified as "stressed" – experiencing a mild level of food insecurity. All 4 urban zones analyzed (Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzdswu, and Zomba), and 16 out of 28 rural areas, are classified as "stressed."

## CGIAR COVID-19 HUB RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research efforts in Malawi have focused mainly on updating modeling of COVID-19 impacts on the economy within a social accounting matrix (SAM) framework and conducting a study on the seed system. An update on the [short-term impacts of COVID-19](#) on the Malawian economy, 2020–2021, has been published.

As part of a study on seed system improvement and assessing the impact of the pandemic on food security and diets, a list of seed producers was compiled. Challenges and suggestions were also identified based on consultations, and seed farmers were assisted by linking them to the government's Seed Services Unit.

To establish demonstration plots for climate-resilient technologies, the country team first met with senior government officials, the Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources in each district, farmers, and other partners. In May 2021, land on irrigated fields was secured. This was followed by a planning meeting with all participating CGIAR Centers on how to implement joint demonstrations of climate-smart technologies. In June, extension workers (EW) and farmers were trained, and in November a field day was open to EWs in target districts, farmers within schemes, and others interested.

## UTILIZATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

An end-of-project meeting for the Malawian government, nongovernmental organizations, CGIAR researchers, and stakeholders was held to share the Malawi COVID-19 Hub's findings and to provide attendees an opportunity to give their views. This helped summarize and circulate the findings of the project and lessons learned for approval. A book chapter has been published on the SAM multiplier update. The results will feed into government decision- and policymaking and assist seed producers and suppliers in improving their services.

## CGIAR COVID-19-RELEVANT WORK IN MALAWI

### The short-term impact of COVID-19 on the Malawian economy, 2020–2021: A SAM multiplier modeling analysis

CGIAR researchers [modeled the impact of lifting restrictions at different rates and of external shocks for 2020 and 2021](#). The analysis showed that with the more rapid easing of restrictions, cumulative gross domestic product (GDP) gains would turn positive by the third quarter of 2021 under the fast recovery scenario and exceed their pre-COVID-19 levels by US\$178 million before the end of the year. However, under the slow recovery scenario, Malawi's GDP would continue to decline until the end of 2020 before recovering during quarters 1 and 4 of 2021. However, this is not sufficient to eliminate the losses in quarters 2 to 4 of 2020, resulting in cumulative losses under the slow recovery scenario of US\$332 million over the two years. Relative to a non-COVID-19 scenario, US\$937 million of GDP was projected to be lost under the fast recovery scenario and US\$1,447 million lost under the slow recovery scenario.

### COVID-19 in rural Malawi: Perceived risks and economic impacts

[A survey conducted in which respondents were asked about their perceptions of effects of COVID-19](#) revealed that households in rural Malawi continue to be concerned about the risks and impacts of the pandemic. COVID-19 escalated in Malawi throughout the study period, and households felt the economic impacts. Encouragingly, people are highly aware of actions to reduce their exposure. Most respondents continued to cite the Ministry of Health as their most trusted source of public health information. Even as infection rates fell before the third wave of COVID-19, respondents increasingly practiced recommended behaviors. These results underscore the important role of trustworthy public health messaging during a pandemic. As the COVID-19

pandemic remains unpredictable, continued public health messaging will be critical to reducing the impacts of the pandemic on rural livelihoods.

## NEXT STEPS

The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub provided information, knowledge, evidence, innovations, and tools to policymakers and food system actors for COVID-19 response and recovery. The government, through its crop and extension departments, should select the technologies developed and demonstrated by CGIAR and scale them out to farmers using

existing channels such as the Affordable Input Program, emergency programs, and irrigation projects to improve food security and nutrition and increase incomes.

Current trends suggest the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts are likely to be present well into the future, particularly in remote places where vaccination rates are low, borders are porous, new variants are emerging, and access to public health services is limited. Careful consideration of how livelihood support can be integrated into longer-term development strategies will be vital.



WFP / Raul Saenz

The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub is led by the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health. To learn more, visit [www.a4nh.cgiar.org/covidhub/](http://www.a4nh.cgiar.org/covidhub/)

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