

Myanmar is one of several late-transforming low-income countries in Southeast Asia where agriculture still plays a significant role in rural livelihoods. Food prices are a key factor affecting nutrition security for poor urban and rural households. National poverty rates in Myanmar have risen dramatically due to economic disruption following the February 1, 2021, military takeover of the government.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

Due to the compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political disruption in the country, economic suffering in 2021 was expected to be profound – [simulations showed that between 40 percent and 50 percent of Myanmar's population](#) would be in poverty under modest and sizable economic effect assumptions.

The agriculture sector, crucial to the rural economy, is likely to contract in 2022. Farmers invested less in inputs for the 2021 monsoon season due to higher costs (especially for fertilizer) and uncertainty concerning output markets. In addition, many smallholder farmers have become cash-constrained, and credit markets for farm input purchases are in disarray due to mixed signals to farmers about their repayment obligations to the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank.

CGIAR COVID-19 HUB RESEARCH RESPONSE

The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub has worked with national partners to identify ways to lessen the impact of the pandemic and improve future resilience in the agriculture sector. Below are the country team's efforts in response to the pandemic.

Impacts of COVID-19 on agrifood supply chains in Myanmar

To provide an in-depth understanding of COVID-19 impacts and pathways to build recovery and resilience undertaken by agrifood and fish value chain stakeholders, CGIAR researchers conducted two rounds of a survey in June–July and October 2021. Interviews were also conducted in September 2021 to shine light on the impacts of the pandemic and adaptation options. Findings have been incorporated into a paper (forthcoming), and the survey dataset will be published on WorldFish's DataVerse. In addition, a working paper will soon be published by WorldFish.

Nine rounds of the Rural-Urban Food Security Survey were conducted between June 2020 and September 2021 to assess the impacts of the

economic, political, and health crises on various dimensions of household welfare. Descriptive analysis of the survey data is complete and the project note will soon be published on the International Food Policy Research Institute's website.

Impacts of COVID-19 on women's agribusiness and value chains in the Gulf of Mottama

CGIAR researchers conducted interviews to understand the impacts of COVID-19 and political instability on actors along the fish value chain. Twenty respondents were interviewed as part of the Gulf of Mottama Project and Point B Design + Training. Data collection was completed in October 2021, and a report is currently in production. The data will be published on WorldFish's DataVerse.

Synthesis updating the CGIAR COVID-19 Hub activities in Myanmar and policy options to build recovery and resilience in food, land, and water value chains and systems

Based on findings from studies led by CGIAR, a brief on COVID-19 Hub activities in Myanmar was published.

USE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research outputs will be disseminated through local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international development partners whose programming focuses on food and income security and local community-based management networks. Insights into the drivers of vulnerability will be used in new programming in which CGIAR will partner with development sector NGOs to address value chain weaknesses and build more resilient production systems. Research outputs will also be disseminated through farmer associations, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation, and technical departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

CGIAR COVID-19-RELEVANT WORK IN MYANMAR

Immediate impacts of COVID-19 on female and male farmers in central Myanmar

[Heterogeneous effects among households were observed.](#) Fifty-one percent of sample households experienced income loss from various livelihood activities. Among the findings, landless households were more severely affected by the crisis, mainly because of lost farm and nonfarm employment and negative impacts on rural enterprises.

Impacts of COVID-19 on agricultural production and food systems

Surveys were repeated at regular intervals before and during the primary crop production season, which began shortly after nationwide COVID-19 prevention measures were implemented in April 2021. [While the results indicate considerable resilience in the agrifood system](#) in response to initial disruptions, persistent financial stress for a high proportion of households and agrifood system businesses suggests that the road to a full recovery will take time.

Opportunities and constraints for production and income growth in rural Myanmar

Scientists synthesized findings from four large household and community surveys to evaluate regional variations in the composition of agriculture, livelihoods, and the rural economy and prospects for production and income growth. Increasingly, there is a need for economic reforms and investments in rural infrastructure to be accompanied by [investments in human capacity development](#), the expansion of social safety nets, and social protection to buffer against shocks such as COVID-19 and protect vulnerable groups.

Mechanization service providers (MSPs) and the mechanization equipment retailer (MER) value chain

A study provided insights into the [effects of COVID-19 restrictions on MSP and MER in Myanmar](#), where most MSP and MER are relatively new and potentially vulnerable to economic shocks. Overall, evidence

suggests that policies to minimize movement restrictions, financial support, and the mitigation of any pessimism at the beginning of the production season are essential to ensure that MSPs and MERs continue to function effectively during the pandemic.

Poultry value chain

[COVID-19 has severely impacted chicken and egg production in Myanmar](#). Chicken farms experienced a partial “V-shaped” recovery between June and August 2021, while broiler farms had more rapid supply responses to the shock than layer farms. This could be because broiler farms have a much shorter production cycle than layer farms, and farmers could adjust operational status by closing or reopening rapidly. In contrast, very few layer farms reopened after closing. Integrated layer–fish farms¹ were more resilient to the shock than pure layer farms.

NEXT STEPS

Findings from COVID-19 Hub work in Myanmar provide a basis for responses that address weak links in certain value chains, mainly because the results confirm the role of class in driving food and income insecurity and deep indebtedness as external sources of support have been disrupted since the military takeover. They also highlight the importance of household livelihood diversification. Moving forward, CGIAR’s new programming on food systems assumes particular relevance and provides opportunities to understand and respond to the fragility of different livelihood types in the face of shocks.



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/

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