



Impact of COVID-19 on food systems

Pacific Island Countries

Focal countries overview July 2020



Land use

Small islands average 1,336 km²
 (51% agriculture)
 Medium islands average 3,893 km²
 (29% agriculture)
 Large islands average 64,058 km²
 (14% agriculture)
 20.6% GDP from agriculture
 and fish (average)



Population

Small islands 130,000 people
 Medium islands 299,000 people
 Large islands 1,867,945 people
 62% rural (average)
 Adjusted income per capita
 US\$3,343 (average)



COVID-19 and health

First recorded cases:
 18 March (Samoa); 19 March (Fiji)
 At 3 August: 509 known cases;
 8 deaths*
 Cases in 6 out of 21 countries
 (excluding PNG)



Local response to COVID-19

State of emergency: March 2020
 (all 7 countries)
 Rapid closure of national borders
 Quarantine established,
 from 14 to 28 days
 Suspension of schools, mass
 gatherings; changes to working
 arrangements



Agriculture and fisheries

Top staples: coconut,
 taro, cassava, bananas,
 sweetpotato, yams
 Low farm productivity; traditional
 farming and fishing practices
 Primary production focuses
 on domestic markets



Key risk multipliers

Climate impacts, declining fresh
 water resources
 Agricultural and biosecurity risks
 Persistent malnutrition
 and dietary issues

This assessment is organised around a typology of island groups that is consistent with other Pacific studies. The three types are small reef and composite islands (Kiribati and Tuvalu), medium-sized volcanic, limestone and composite islands (Samoa and Tonga) and larger composite, limestone and sand-based islands (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji).

* Of the seven focal countries, all but Fiji were free of COVID-19 at the conclusion of the assessment. At 9 July, Fiji had reported 21 cases.

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Key findings



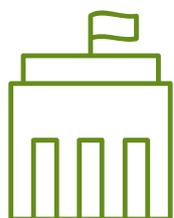
Smallholders

Farmers, fishers impacted by movement restriction and input availability
Tropical Cyclone Harold increased production challenges in affected countries
Return to rural areas increased food demand and agricultural pressure



Supply chains

Disruption to limited distribution services problematic on small and medium islands
Reduced demand for exports from large islands
Tourism decline has ongoing impacts for farm incomes
Local market closures; reduced availability of fresh produce



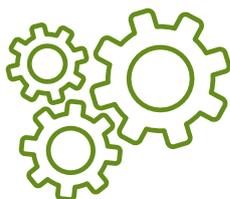
Governance

Domestic travel restrictions eased in July
Some governments enacted price stabilisation for staples
Limited formal social protection; support activities include distribution of planting material, support for fishing



Community

Increased tension over 'idle' and disputed land
Changes in food consumption; cheaper, less nutritious foods
Impacts on women include exclusion from workforce, particularly food markets



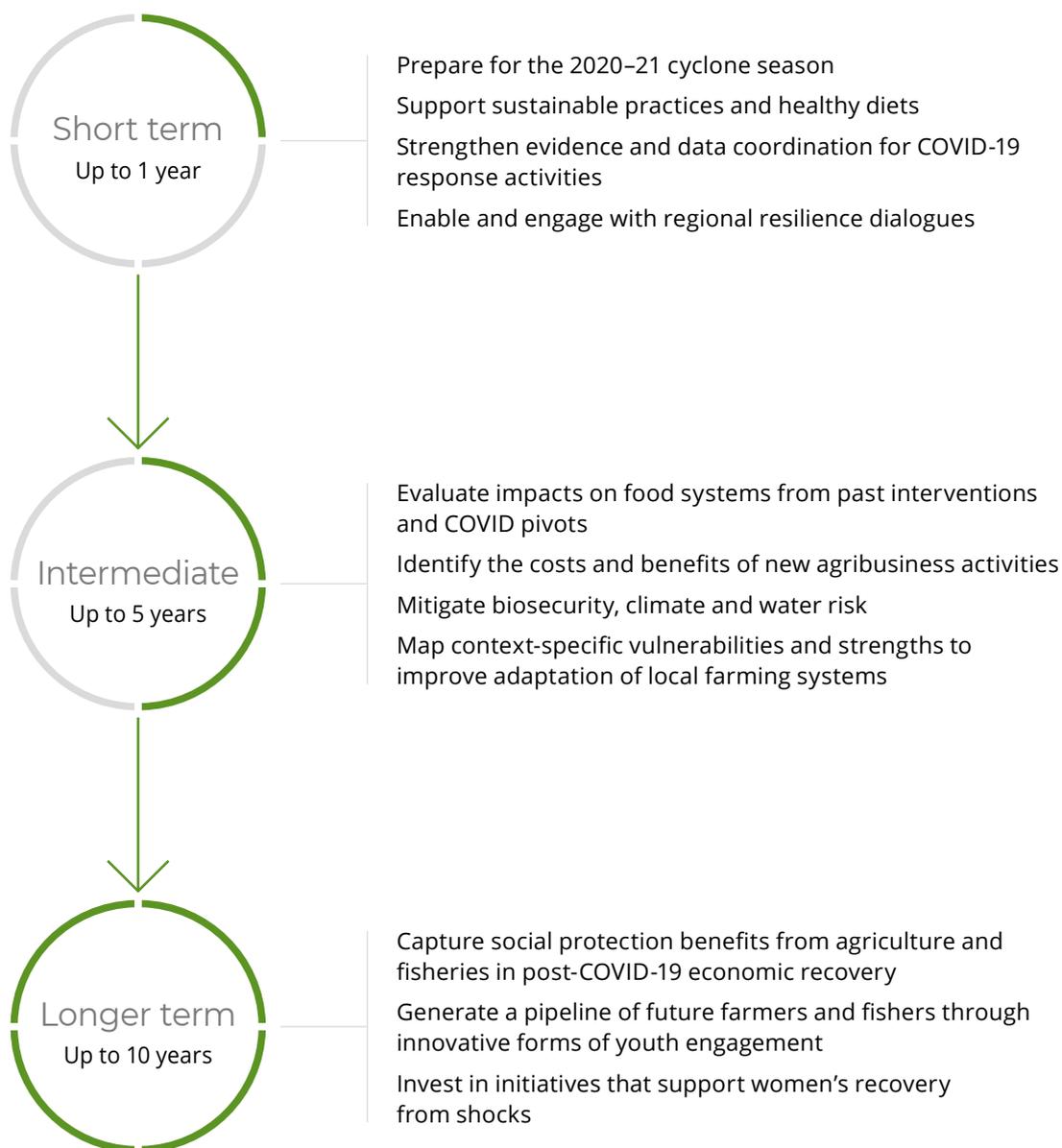
Employment

Reduced income from tourism a major concern
Reduction in remittances across the Pacific
Poverty likely to increase as economies contract
Pandemic worsens existing challenge of high youth unemployment

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Suggested opportunities for action



Short-term opportunities include resource mobilisation and pivoting existing activities towards COVID-19 responses (up to 1 year). Intermediate-term opportunities include addressing gaps in knowledge, redressing negative impacts and/or boosting aspects of recovery or resilience (up to 5 years). Longer-term opportunities include research and development to address systemic challenges and options for transformational change (up to 10 years).

Visit www.aciar.gov.au/covid19-assessment-stage2 to learn more about the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems in Pacific Island Countries and the Indo-Pacific region



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