WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

Food security in a community depends on three main pillars:

- **food availability**
- **food access**
- **food utilization**

**Food availability** means that enough food is physically present for the entire population. It is in markets and shops, is grown on farms or home gardens, or has arrived as the result of food aid.

**Food access** means that individuals can obtain available food. Households may access food in many ways: growing, buying, and bartering; or through gifts, welfare programs, or food aid. Food access is ensured when households have enough resources, like land, money, or social connections, to obtain nutritious foods in adequate amounts.

**Food utilization** refers to the way people’s bodies are able to use the food they eat. Making the best use of foods depends on proper food storage and processing, overall nutrition and health status, the availability of clean drinking water, and adequate health and sanitation services.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST SIGNS THAT A PANDEMIC HAS Affected FOOD SECURITY?

The global health impact of an influenza pandemic may affect workforces, transportation systems, and supply chains. The impact of the virus in other areas of the world may result in your community experiencing a food crisis even before the influenza virus causes severe health problems in your municipality. Some of the first things that you will notice that indicate a pandemic could cause a food security problem are:

- Industries that rely on import and export are struggling.
- Food supplies are hard to get locally.
- Economic activities are disrupted.

**DID YOU KNOW:**
The first sign that a community may experience a food security crisis due to pandemic influenza may NOT be an outbreak of disease.

For more information, see Tool 1, *Priority Actions to Lead Your Municipality Through a Pandemic* and Tool 2, *Presentation on the Threat of a Severe Influenza Pandemic.*
WHO MIGHT BE MOST AT RISK FOR FOOD SECURITY PROBLEMS?

Some groups will be more at risk than others for the food security impact of a pandemic. The most at-risk populations in most emergency situations are those that are already struggling with hunger, health, and poverty. These populations will be at great risk during a severe pandemic. In addition to these groups, many other households are vulnerable to the impact of a severe pandemic because of the way it may affect economic and social systems. Any household that has not taken necessary actions to prepare for a severe pandemic will face greater difficulties in coping with the impacts of spreading disease.

Groups typically at risk in all emergencies

- People with limited or irregular income
- People who cannot build up emergency reserves of money or food
- People in poor health (especially malnutrition, chronic disease, and compromised immune systems)
- Those with stigma (people living with HIV, prisoners and their families, the mentally ill, the disabled)
- The isolated (living in a remote location or having no social network)
- The homeless or internally displaced
- The elderly
- Those with little or no transportation
- Orphans and vulnerable children

Additional groups at risk in a pandemic

- Those who rely on markets for the majority of food purchases (experts believe that market systems may be severely impacted)
- People without knowledge about how to prepare for a pandemic
- Those employed in occupations that may be severely impacted (tourism, restaurants, taxi drivers, etc.)
- People who rely on public transportation to get to job
- People who migrate for income
- Caregivers

For more information, see Tool 8, Classification of Food Security Risk Locations and Tool 9, Identification of People Most at Risk of Food Insecurity.

WHY SHOULD MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES TAKE ACTIONS TO PROTECT FOOD SECURITY RIGHT NOW?

Municipalities can help reduce possible food emergencies by paying close attention to what is happening at the local level in terms of food security. Building community resilience is key to surviving disasters. The way to build resilience is to communicate, plan, prepare, and invest time and money long before a disaster is present in your municipality. Your immediate actions can help reduce the negative impact that a pandemic, or other emergency, may have on the food security of your municipality because:

- By the time you notice food shortages it may be too late to produce more food locally or to expect that national governments or international agencies can get food to you in time.
- Transporting food to your communities will be difficult if transportation systems break down.
- Even if you can get food to your communities, purchasing and stockpiling food to get through a 6–12 week pandemic wave will become very expensive if food prices rise as expected.

WHAT DOES THE MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP TEAM NEED TO DO?

In many countries food security is handled at the national level. However, during a severe pandemic, national governments may be overwhelmed and may be unable to provide timely assistance to every municipality. The most important thing to do is start planning for your municipality now, in the likely event that your municipality will have to become food self-sufficient for a period of time.

Municipal leaders will want to take the necessary steps to:

- Work with national governments and private sector providers to secure essential food stocks (food availability) during successive periods (waves) of 6–12 weeks when normal supplies of food may be disrupted.
- Ensure that the population can obtain the food they need (food access), especially the most vulnerable individuals (infants, young children and women, elderly people, homeless people, people living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illness, disabled people, and homebound individuals).
- Educate the public about the necessity of increased hygiene, nutrition, and safe food and water storage. Work with national and regional governments to reduce malnutrition and other debilitating diseases so that people’s bodies can make the best use of the foods they eat (food utilization).

HOW CAN MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP PROTECT FOOD SECURITY?

A wide range of actions can support and protect food security in a pandemic. Most of these responses depend on early planning, which is why preparation is so important. After considering a range of responses, the municipal leadership team should determine which actions best suit the local context. You may find that many of these responses are also appropriate after the pandemic, during the recovery period.

The charts on the following pages describe conditions in a municipality that could impact food availability, food access, and food utilization. Each chart provides a menu of potential responses to consider based on the conditions of your municipality. The chart also suggests the stage of the pandemic where these actions will be most helpful.

Tools which offer more guidance on how to put these actions into place are listed in the last box of each of the three charts (availability, access, and utilization).
### Potential Food Security Issues and Actions During a Pandemic

**TOOL 7: FOOD SECURITY IN A PANDEMIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions that Could Cause Food Accessibility Problems</th>
<th>Actions to Reduce Potential Food Access Problems</th>
<th>Timing of Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before pandemic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Early pandemic</strong></td>
<td><strong>During pandemic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food prices may drastically increase and make many food items unaffordable to those on limited incomes</td>
<td>• Educate the public about the critical need to prepare for food shortages</td>
<td>• Request donations from local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People who are able to afford extra food may hoard more than they need</td>
<td>• <em>People who are able to afford extra food may hoard more than they need.</em></td>
<td>• Due to economic disruptions, local shopkeepers may stop offering credit to customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many communities (especially urban centers) rely on markets, with limited home production and processing</td>
<td>• Distribute seeds, tools, and fertilizers for small rural farms and limited home food production and/or processing</td>
<td>• Implement a price freeze on staple and nutritious food items that form important parts of local diets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local production/harvests are insufficient to begin with</td>
<td>• Educate the public about the critical need to prepare for food shortages</td>
<td>• Determine whether cash transfer programs are available through regional or central government to provide at-risk households with limited home food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People who live alone may become too ill to physically get to a market or community food warehouse</td>
<td>• <em>People who live alone may become too ill to physically get to a market or community food warehouse.</em></td>
<td>• Facilitate low-cost credit arrangements with local shopkeepers, medical credit to customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduced income due to illness, caregiving, or job loss</td>
<td>• Request donations from local residents</td>
<td>• Determine whether cash transfer programs are available through regional or central government to provide at-risk households with limited home food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More money must be used to pay high medical fees or funeral expenses</td>
<td>• <em>More money must be used to pay medical fees or funeral expenses.</em></td>
<td>• Determine whether to place purchase limitations on specific products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shopkeeper bias during times of limited resources may result in people being turned away from markets because of their race, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, or disability</td>
<td>• Facilitate low-cost credit arrangements with local shopkeepers, medical credit to customers</td>
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*These are just a few examples. What else might work? For more information, see Tool 9, *Identification of People Most at Risk of Food Insecurity;* and Tool 11, *Distribution of Emergency Food During an Influenza Pandemic.*

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**TOOL 8: LEADERSHIP DURING A PANDEMIC: WHAT YOUR MUNICIPALITY CAN DO**

- **Household Food Security Preparedness.** Tool 10, Distribution of Emergency Food During an Influenza Pandemic, and Tool 11, Distribution of Emergency Food During a Pandemic. These are just a few examples. What else might work?
  - A significant amount of food is committed for sale to other areas outside the municipality.
  - Transportation of local food crops that are necessary to feed the population of the municipality used for emergency food stockpiling.
  - Request donations from local retailers.
  - Acquired food spoils due to improper storage.
  - Take an inventory of public and private storage facilities that could be used for emergency food stockpiling.
  - Purchase extra stock from local and regional food suppliers and growers.
  - Contact central government representatives to find out about availability of stockpiling.
  - Request donations from national and international food aid agencies.
  - Facilitate low-cost credit arrangements with local shopkeepers, medical credit to customers.
  - Determine whether to place purchase limitations on specific products.

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**LEADERSHIP DURING A PANDEMIC: WHAT YOUR MUNICIPALITY CAN DO**

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  - Take an inventory of public and private storage facilities that could be used for emergency food stockpiling.
  - Purchase extra stock from local and regional food suppliers and growers.
  - Contact central government representatives to find out about availability of stockpiling.
  - Request donations from national and international food aid agencies.
  - Facilitate low-cost credit arrangements with local shopkeepers, medical credit to customers.
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### Conditions that Could Cultivate Food Utilization Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Before Pandemic</th>
<th>Early Pandemic</th>
<th>During Pandemic</th>
<th>After Pandemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of knowledge about hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, and proper child feeding practices</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contaminated water may increase intestinal illnesses that will contribute to malnutrition and dehydration; these illnesses will make it more difficult for people to fight off the pandemic virus</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educate households about the nutritional food requirements of short- or medium-term emergencies like the pandemic</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educate households about water treatment and storage</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educate households about the need for increased hygiene</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Actions to Reduce Potential Food Utilization Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Before Pandemic</th>
<th>Early Pandemic</th>
<th>During Pandemic</th>
<th>After Pandemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Distribute containers for proper water storage</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Distribute water kits to improve water storage</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implement contingency plan to maintain essential services such as water, power, and basic sanitation</td>
<td>Before pandemic</td>
<td>Early pandemic</td>
<td>During pandemic</td>
<td>After pandemic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Timing of Support

- Early Pandemic
- During Pandemic
- After Pandemic

### Food Security During a Pandemic: What Your Municipality Can Do

Food insecurity during an influenza pandemic is not a threat that stands separate from the sectors of health, family welfare, commerce, or governance and public services. Now that you have explored how a severe pandemic may impact each pillar of food security, it is time to examine why the protection of food security must be integrated into all sectors. Key partners may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Agricultural producers and processors
- Commerce and industry employers
- Labor and farmer associations
- Humanitarian and development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- National emergency management agencies
- Public works and water agencies
- Community leaders and teachers
- Food wholesalers and retail markets
- Transportation companies/associations
- Community-based and religious organizations
- Health centers and hospitals
- Public security agencies

The chart on the following page will help the municipal leadership team understand how the potential problems that a municipality may face in a pandemic are interconnected. It offers some main points to consider as the team begins to prepare for and meet the challenges of a pandemic. It also offers a menu of potential responses to consider based on the conditions in the municipality.

Following the comprehensive one-page chart are expanded sector-specific charts that explain what might happen if a municipality does not prepare for a severe pandemic, and actions that each sector can take to protect food security. Local geography, demographics, economic and social structures, as well as the severity of the virus in the region will determine the specific preparation and response actions most appropriate for each community.
**Surviving An Influenza Pandemic – Understand What Can Happen, Be Prepared, And Take Action**

### Potential Events

What can happen if the pandemic arrives in full force to the municipality:

- Restrictions on movements of people, goods, and services
- Limitations on social gathering and travel that affects schools, religious groups, public meetings, family visits
- Workforce absenteeism leads to breakdown of commerce, and trade that affects food, energy, business inputs and sales, banking and medical supplies

### Consequences

What might happen if local authorities do not prepare before the pandemic virus arrives:

- Market closures
- Hoarding of food fuel and other basic necessities
- Merchant and trader speculation
- Food spoilage in fields due to disrupted transportation systems
- Large quantities of refrigerated foods spoil due to power outages
- Economic impacts on households and businesses such as inflation, rising unemployment, loss of land and leases, resulting in tenants that have nowhere to live

### Preparedness

What you can do before the pandemic virus arrives to reduce death and suffering:

- Assess all resources and plan how you will address gaps
- Determine the status of supply chains for food, medical supplies, fuel, and other essential goods
- Organize and initiate local purchases of food stocks and essential goods
- Identify temporary employment opportunities in key sectors and prioritize public works projects
- Develop a continuity of operations (COOP) plan

### Responses

Actions that you can take to lessen the impact once the pandemic virus has arrived in your municipality:

- Enforce social distancing measures
- Set up fair trade and barter shops
- Develop alternate employment plans
- Restrict export of locally produced food crops that are necessary to feed the population of the municipality
- Provide transportation support that allows producers to get products to markets or community stockpiles
- Mandate a price freeze on staple and nutritious food items that form important parts of local diets
- Encourage businesses and clients to use the Internet and telephone for transactions
LEADERSHIP DURING A PANDEMIC: WHAT YOUR MUNICIPALITY CAN DO

TOOL 7: FOOD SECURITY IN A PANDEMIC

SOURCES


SURVIVING AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC — UNDERSTAND WHAT CAN HAPPEN, BE PREPARED, AND TAKE ACTION

Potential Events

What can happen if the pandemic arrives in full force to the municipality

Consequences

What might happen if local authorities do not prepare before the pandemic virus arrives

Preparedness

What you can do before the pandemic virus arrives to reduce death and suffering

Responses

Actions that you can take to lessen the impact once the pandemic virus has arrived in your municipality

Governance and Public Services

- Real estate and property service providers and the municipality’s ability to provide emergency food and water services such as police, justice, communications, water and sanitation, electricity, natural gas, transportation, and healthcare in a timely manner
- Strategic short term measures to maintain the systems that sustain public services
- Loss of revenues from reduced collection of fees and taxes
- Reduced capacity to provide emergency food and water services
- Rumors, misinformation, panic
- Conflicts over public resources
- Reduction of basic privileges and rights
- People are excluded from obtaining necessary survival items due to bias or stigma

Triage

- What might happen if local authorities do not prepare before the pandemic virus arrives
- Review national food security plans and available resources
- Strengthen local expertise in food security
- Develop COOP plans
- Identify services that must be continued
- Develop information and communication mechanisms
- Develop public awareness programs
- Conduct trainings for conflict resolution services
- Establish procedures for conflict resolution services
- Conduct trainings for conflict resolution services
- Develop public awareness programs
- Continuous plans updated to provide public service continuity
- Contingency plans updated to provide public service continuity
- Develop public awareness programs
- Provide conflict resolution services
- Keep government running
- Implement effective risk and emergency communication tools
- Identify services that must be continued
- Develop information and communication mechanisms
- Develop public awareness programs
- Provide conflict resolution services
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