



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



CITIES AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS
AT THE FOREFRONT
IN BUILDING INCLUSIVE
AND RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

Key results from the FAO survey
“Urban Food Systems and COVID-19”



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Rome, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting urban food systems worldwide, affecting the food security and nutrition of urban populations. With up to 70 percent of the global food supply destined for urban consumption, the disruption of urban food systems has particularly affected the food distribution and the food retail sectors. The management of the crisis by city and local governments can therefore play a major role in preventing the spread of the virus and, at the same time, in mitigating the disruptions in their food systems and any negative effects on vulnerable populations. **It was consequently deemed very important for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to map the municipal responses to the emergency, and to analyze progress and setbacks in managing disruptions in the urban food systems and related implications for food security and nutrition. Such understanding will strengthen the evidence-base on which countries will build policies and programmes dealing with the crisis and its effects. It will also provide valuable information on how to strengthen the performance and resilience of urban food systems.**

In an effort to better understand how city and local governments faced the challenges of food systems disruptions associated with COVID-19, information was collected through a survey of relevant stakeholders. The survey questionnaire was administered between April and May 2020.¹ Eight hundred sixty urban actors returned the completed questionnaire, 56 percent of which were members of local governments while the rest of the respondents were members of academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and national governments.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY

The responses represent a wide range of city sizes across Low-income Countries - LIC (16 percent), Lower-middle-income countries - LMIC (41 percent), Upper-middle-income countries - UMIC (32 percent) and High-income countries - HIC (11 percent). In terms of regional breakdown, 40.3 percent of responses came from cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 25.2 percent from cities in Africa, 11.9 percent from Asia and the Pacific, 16.9 percent from Europe and Central Asia, and 5.1 percent from the Near East and North Africa (Table 1). With respect to size, and for the purposes of this analysis, responding cities was classified into five categories: large cities with populations exceeding five million; cities with a population between 5 million and 500 000 inhabitants; towns with population between 500 000 and 25 000 inhabitants; small towns with population between 25 000 and 5 000 inhabitants; and villages with populations of less than 5 000 inhabitants.² The broad geographical and city size distribution of the responses allows for some conclusions with wider validity.³

¹ Web link to the questionnaire: <https://bit.ly/2x1B7yI>

² The size classification has been generated on the basis of the distribution of city sizes of the received responses and it does not correspond to standard size classifications (e.g. UNDESA or OECD).

³ However, it should be noted that very few responses (0.6 percent) were received from North America.

TABLE 1 | Geographic distribution of the responses

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>% of tot. responses</i>	<i>Number of countries with one response or more</i>	<i>Number of Cities with one response or more</i>
Africa	223	25.2%	20	202
Asia and the Pacific	103	11.9%	15	95
Europe and Central Asia	140	16.9%	17	135
Latin America and the Caribbean	342	40.3%	17	322
Near East and North Africa	47	5.1%	6	41
North America	5	0.6%	2	5
Total	860	100%	77	800⁴

TABLE 2 | Number of responses received by cities by size and country classification (by GDP)

City size (by number of inhabitants) ⁵	Large city (>5000k)	City (500-5000k)	Town (25-500k)	Small town (5-25k)	Village (<5k)	Grand Total
LIC (low-income country)	2	26	64	27	7	126
LMIC (lower-middle income country)	8	43	154	91	32	328
UMIC (upper-middle income country)	14	63	97	72	10	255
HIC (high-income country)		24	35	14	17	90
Total	24	156	350	204	66	800

RESTRICTIVE MEASURES AND THE EFFECTS ON URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS AND FOOD ACCESS

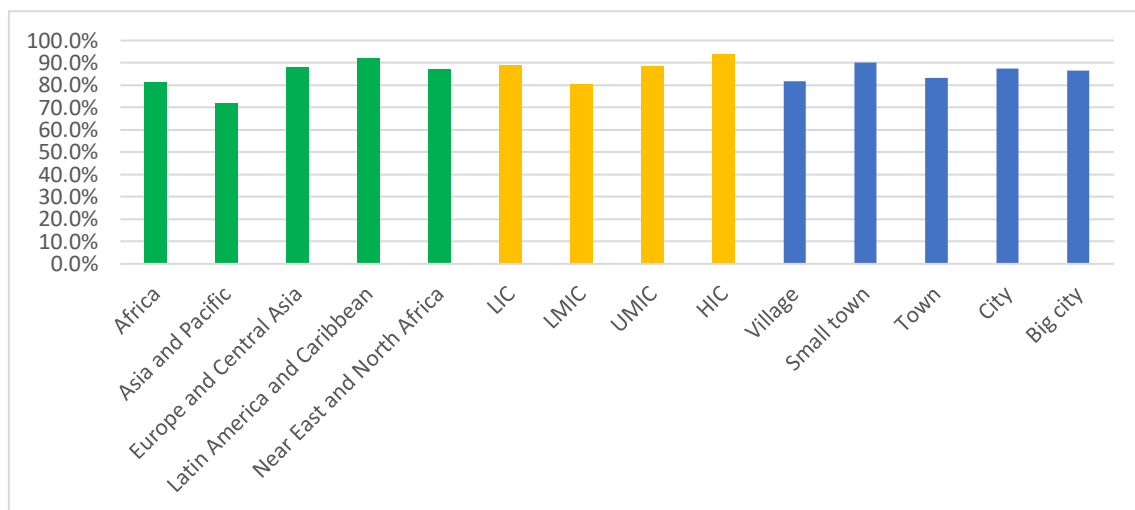
Most research to-date on the effects of the COVID-19 on food systems, points to problems in the upstream of the food supply chain (processing, transport, distribution, retail). Restrictions on the movement of people, goods and services and other containment measures (such as closing of schools, marketplaces etc.) affected both food distribution and food availability in

⁴ The total number of responses is 860 as more than one response has been received from some cities.

⁵ This classification is based on the distribution of the received responses.

urban markets. Food shortages often associated with panic buying has led to increases in prices. This effect, coupled with losses in employment and disruptions in public food procurement and distribution of food to vulnerable groups, including through school meal programmes, have directly and negatively affected access to food by existing vulnerable groups and have also created new vulnerabilities (e.g. unemployed workers, those involved in small and medium enterprises along the food supply chain etc.). The analysis of the questionnaire responses provides support to this. **It shows that closure of schools and the consequent suspension of school meals is a widespread problem experienced in all regions, for all city sizes, and country income categories: 86 percent of the responses signaled this as a problem (Figure 1).** Since for millions of children around the world the meal that they get at school is a fundamental part of their nutritional intake, disruptions in school meal programmes may have both short and long-term effects on children.⁶

FIGURE 1 | Closure of school canteens (responses by region, country income level and city size)



Closure of restaurants, canteens, street food outlets are also affecting food systems, as reported by 70.3 percent of the responding cities (87.2 percent from high-income countries and 47.4 percent from low-income countries).

The other most widely reported measure affecting food systems was the **restriction in selling food in public spaces** such as parks, squares and streets (68.3 percent). Cities from high-income countries seems to be less affected by such measures (referred by 56.4 percent of responding cities) whereas 79.2 percent of the cities from upper-middle-income countries seem to consider this measure an important impediment in the functioning of the food system.

Restrictions in the **use of public transport** was reported as a problem by 65.9 percent of the respondents, affecting mainly cities from low-middle-income countries (73 percent), compared with cities from high-income countries (43.6 percent).

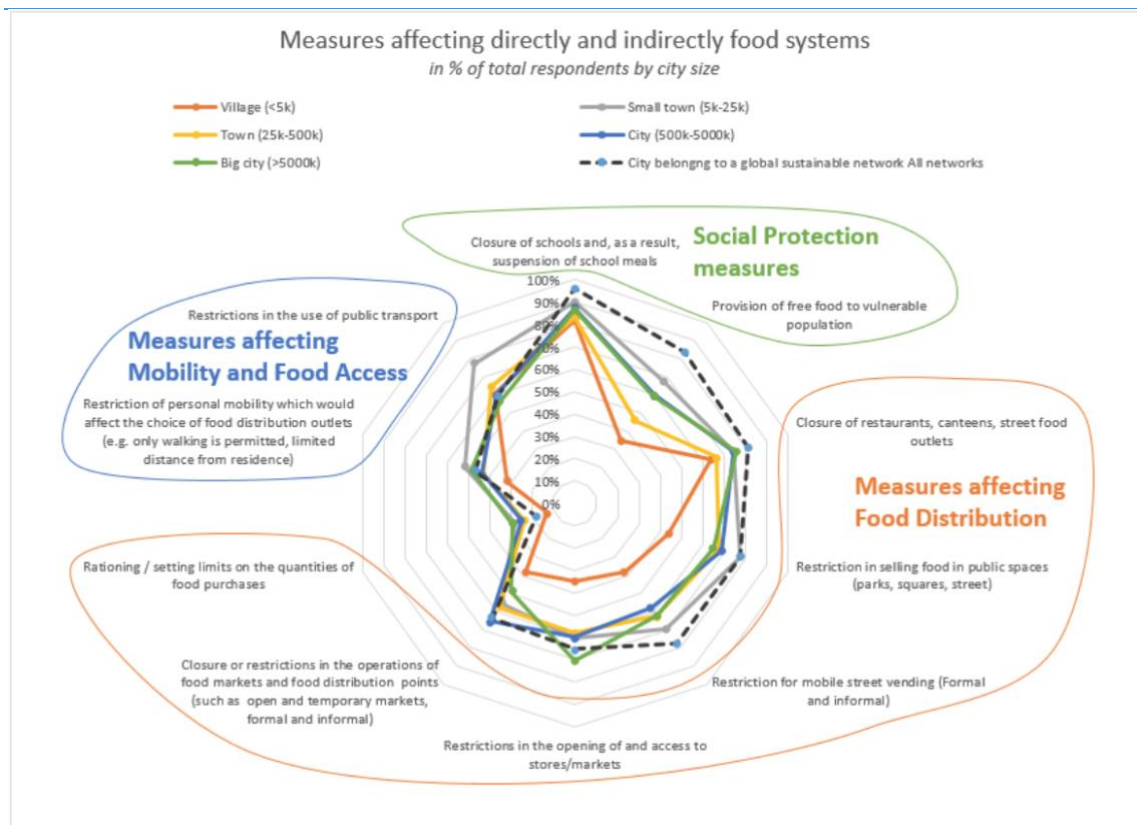
In general, food systems seem to be less affected by the restrictive measures in small villages with less than 5 000 inhabitants (Figure 2). The food systems of cities with populations between

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8434en/>

500 000 and 5 million inhabitants and in cities of more than 5 million inhabitants, were more vulnerable to disruptions caused by the response to the health emergency.

Possible reasons are stricter application of measures due to higher population densities. This, in turn, affected both the formal and informal food distribution sectors, disrupted (longer) food supply chains and may explain the greater vulnerability to restrictive measures in large cities. On the other hand, in small cities, sparsely distributed populations render the need for restrictive measures less necessary. **Proximity to the production areas and shorter supply chains make small towns and villages less vulnerable to disruptions on food distribution networks and thus more resilient to shocks.**

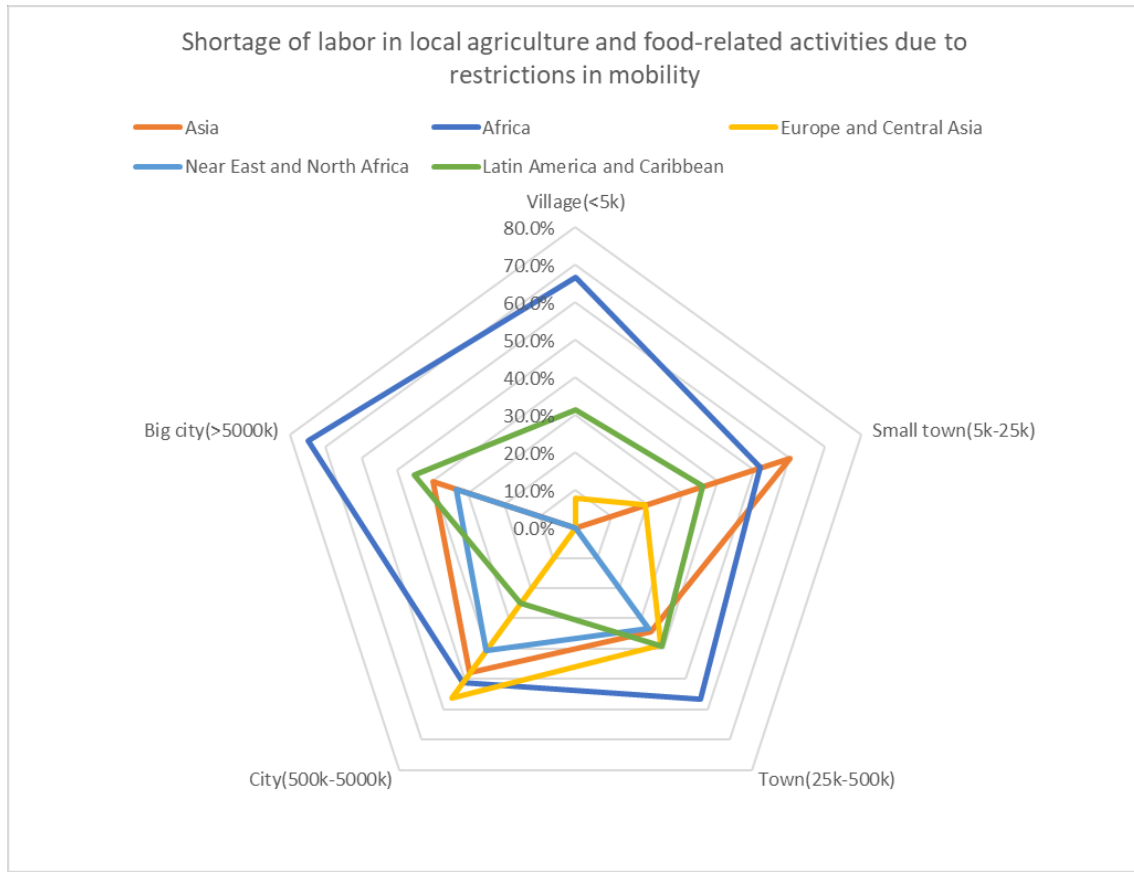
FIGURE 2 | Measures affecting directly and indirectly the food systems



Moreover, **shortage of labour in local agriculture and food-related activities** are reported by over 40 percent of the cities, with a higher ratio in Africa (55.6 percent) and Asia and the Pacific (41.7 percent) region. The production impact may be seen also in the medium and longer term if critical agronomic timings are missed (e.g. planting, pruning, harvesting, etc.). Figure 3 shows that the level of labour shortage in the agriculture sector varies a lot among the different city sizes and their geographic location. In towns with populations between 25 000 – 500 000, the rates were similar across regions (30-40 percent) except for Africa, which had a higher rate of 56.6 percent. According to FAO, in the regions which are already affected by conflict or humanitarian crises, the lack of labour in agricultural activities is likely to have much more serious impacts on livelihoods and food security. The experience of Ebola outbreaks provides evidence of how livelihoods can be decimated, as fear of contagion and movement restrictions

kept some farmers from producing, affecting both cash and food crop production, disrupting agricultural supply chains, and causing acute agricultural labor shortages in the region.⁷

FIGURE 3 | Shortage of labour in local agriculture and food-related activities due to restrictions in mobility



Three key messages may be gleaned

- Food systems in small villages were more resilient to such shocks compared to larger urban areas due to proximity to production areas and shorter supply chains.
- It is essential that programmes and contingency plans are put in place in order to ensure that the food-related urban-rural linkages remain uninterrupted in time of crises including promoting shorter supply chains.
- Special provisions may have to be made to ensure that agricultural labour is available especially at critical points of the production process.

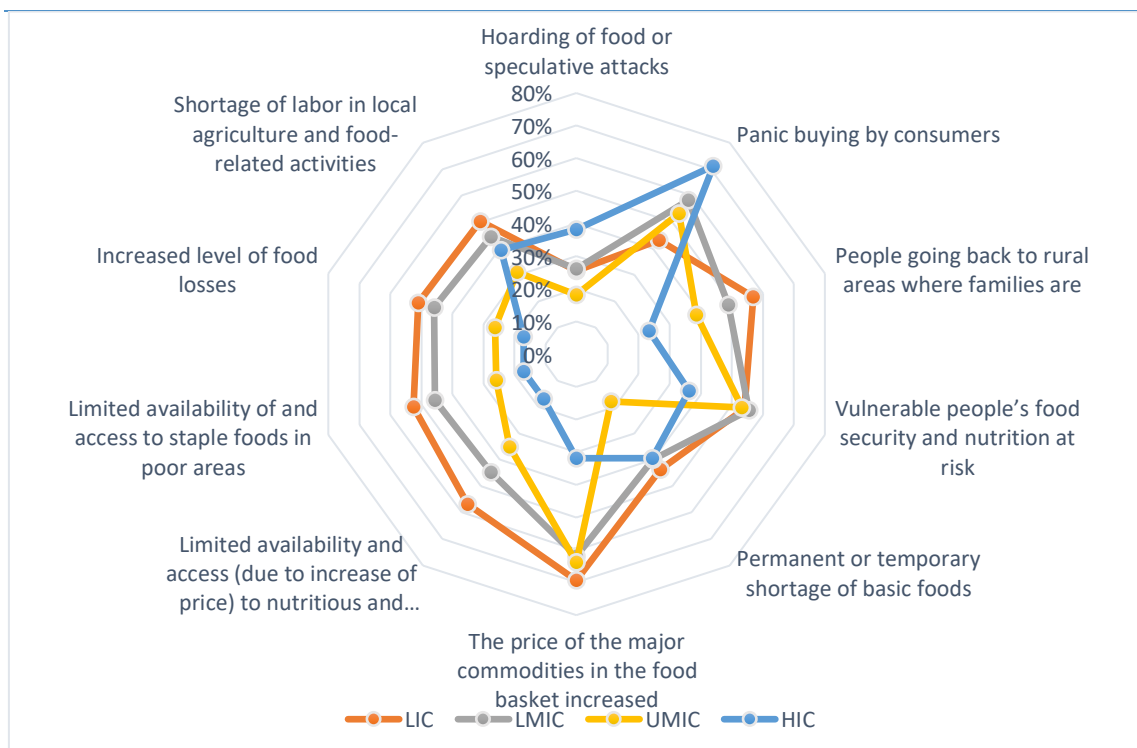
⁷ <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/270716/icode/>

FOOD SYSTEM DISRUPTIONS BY COUNTRY INCOME LEVEL CLASSIFICATION

The effects of the measures taken to combat the pandemic at the municipal level are related to the country income level. The following are the key conclusions arising from the radar graph in Figure 4.

- a) Panic buying and hoarding were detected in high-income countries and tended to decrease with the country income level. This is possibly related to the ability of urban residents in high-income countries to buy and store large amounts of food.
- b) The incidence of people moving back to rural areas increases as the country income category decreases.
- c) Temporary shortages in basic foods were experienced in most of the countries (44.2 percent of the respondents).
- d) High-income countries appeared to be more sensitive to labour shortages than other groups (80.0 percent for cities for HIC vs. 40.6 percent for all the respondents). The magnitude of the effects on food access is strongly connected to the level of country income.
- e) Food losses have been observed in low-income and lower middle-income countries (respectively 51.1 percent and 45.9 percent of the corresponding responses).
- f) As a result of shortages, panic buying, food losses and other disruptions, prices for major food commodities have risen in many cities worldwide (60 percent of respondents overall which makes it the most significant effect). Price increases have been reported particularly by cities in LIC (69.3 percent) and LMIC (63.9 percent), but only in 31.9 percent by cities in HIC.
- g) Except for municipalities in high-income countries, in all other income categories, respondents assessed that the food security and nutrition of vulnerable people were at risk.

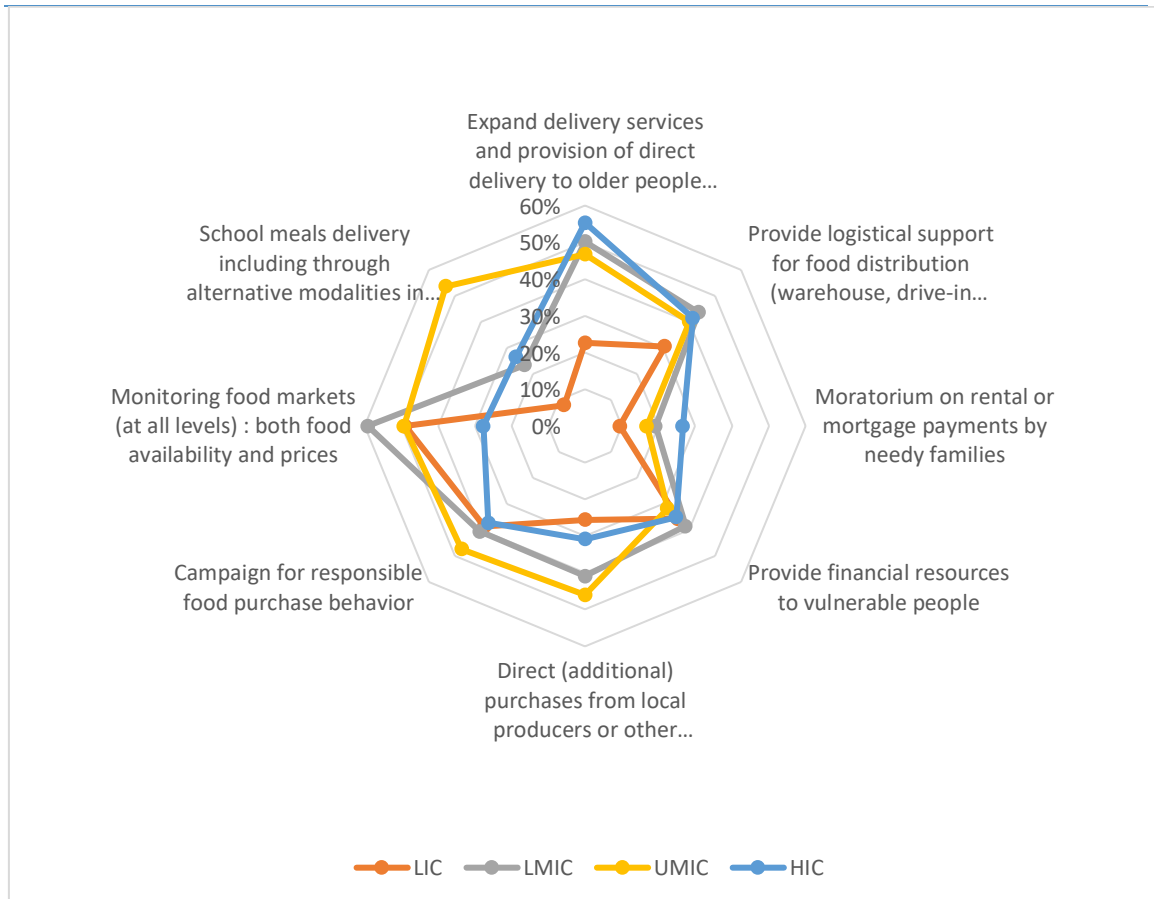
FIGURE 4 | Reported effects on key aspects of the urban food systems by country income category



MUNICIPAL RESPONSES FOR MITIGATING FOOD SYSTEMS DISRUPTION AND ENSURING ACCESS TO FOOD FOR ALL

Local governments have and are taking actions to counteract the effects of the pandemic and of the restrictive measures taken, to ensure that food systems do not break down and the vulnerable groups are protected.

FIGURE 5 | Measures taken by local governments by country income category



According to the survey, the following actions have been prioritized (Figure 5):

- a) Many cities have put in place mechanisms for **monitoring food markets, both food availability and prices** (50.9 percent), specifically cities in the Near East and North Africa and in Asia. Quite often, this measure is connected to actions taken by the national governments. The most active cities in monitoring food prices are from lower-middle income countries (59.2 percent). A small percentage (27.7 percent) of cities from high-income countries reported on such mechanisms since, most likely, food market monitoring mechanisms were already in place.
- b) **Effective food distribution** measures to improve access to food particularly by vulnerable populations is also fairly high on the agenda of municipalities (45.2 percent of responses). They include expansion of delivery services, establishment of temporary food hubs and direct distribution to vulnerable populations. Around one city in two has put in place those kinds of measures, except in low-income countries (22.6 percent). Cities in high-income countries have been most active regarding food distribution

measures (55.3 percent) followed by cities from lower and Upper-middle-Income countries (47 to 50 percent). However, in general, logistical support to food distribution is mainly provided in large cities (56.8 percent) and is less frequent in low-income countries (30.7 percent), but very little has been reported by low-income countries (22.6 percent).

BOX I Lima: measures providing logistical support to limit the spread of the virus, while supporting food distribution and providing food delivery services for vulnerable people.

In Lima, Peru, food markets have become the epicenters of COVID-19 contagion. 79 percent of stall-holders in Lima's wholesale fruit market tested positive for COVID-19, while spot tests at five other large fresh food markets in the city revealed that, at least half of the stall-holders were infected by the virus.

The Municipality adapted its markets to help social distancing and support vulnerable people at the same time.

The Municipality of Lima administers the main wholesale market in Lima, with a daily volume of over 6 000 tons of agricultural products destined to supply more than 1 100 traditional markets within the city in addition to the redistribution at national level. The city has been using municipal infrastructures to decentralize this large market (e.g. mobile markets are held in the large area parks). Additionally, the Municipality of Lima has been developing *ad hoc* food fairs with this aim of serving an average of 900 families for each fair, selling more than 15 tons of food per day. The Municipality of Lima has also established the House of All, with the purpose of sheltering people who have no home and providing them with nutritious food and health care. In addition, food is provided to vulnerable people through direct delivery of meal or food baskets.

BOX II: Food access for the most vulnerable in Dhaka, Bangladesh

In Dhaka, Bangladesh, one of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis was a food crisis suffered by the urban poor due to large-scale economic losses that resulted from the closure of businesses and restrictions on movement across the city. Without opportunities to earn income, the poor faced unprecedented challenges to find enough food and became dependent on government assistance. The Dhaka City Corporations (both Dhaka North and South) collaborated with the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Relief and Disaster Response to distribute food assistance, prioritizing the most vulnerable. Working through the city zonal offices and Ward-level government, the city government also collaborated with local community organizations to identify the most vulnerable and needy in each low-income settlement, for example the disabled, elderly, single mothers and children. These community groups were able to identify and target the most vulnerable beneficiaries because of their intimate knowledge of their communities. This targeting approach allowed the city government to distribute approximately 300,000 food baskets to the urban poor throughout the lockdown period (between March and June), when food was scarce and many households were desperate.

- c) **Direct (additional) purchases from local producers or other distribution channels** were reported by 39.0 percent of the respondents, mainly in the Asia and the Pacific region (51.5 percent) and middle-income countries (40 to 46 percent of respondents of these countries).

BOX III - Davao city: supporting both vulnerable urban consumers and small farmers during the pandemic

Davao city government is purchasing food from local producers, repackaging and distributing it to the most vulnerable. This strategy, named "Buyback, Repack and Distribute" was designed to assist both small farmers and households living in urban areas, whose incomes have been affected by restrictions posed by COVID-19.

BOX IV - Connecting farmers to households in short food supply chains in Senegal

Senegal's Household Food Basket initiative aims to address the dual issues of farmers being unable to sell their products because of movement restrictions related to COVID-19 and the resulting reduced availability of nutritious and diversified food, particularly for food-insecure families.

FAO is collaborating with Senegal's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment, UN Women and the UN Population Fund to both create markets and provide access to nutritious food. Local producers, especially women and young people, are being connected to around 37 500 food-insecure families (around 300 000 people), and cash transfers will allow the most vulnerable families to purchase food.

- d) More worrisome is the fact that **school meals delivery was very limited including through alternative modalities** where schools were closed (30.9 percent globally and only 8.0 percent in low-income countries). However, cities from Latin America and the Caribbean had a very different approach with 57.0 percent of the Latin America respondents mentioning alternative mechanisms to school canteens. In Latin America, 55.7 percent of municipalities either continued delivery of school meals or set up alternative mechanisms to continue ensuring food access for vulnerable families.

BOX V - Alternative mechanisms to school canteen and innovative measure to protect the most vulnerable In Quilmes, Argentina

In order to guarantee food for families, the Municipality of Quilmes in Argentina, has taken measures such as: continuity of the SAE (School Food Service), creation of 120 Solidarity Points in all the neighborhoods of the district where lunch is distributed in conjunction with social organizations, launch of the "Quilmes buys at home" programme

to offer neighbours a simple way of doing their shopping in times of quarantine, maximum price control operations in markets and food shops, purchase and distribution of various food products, creation of the Committee for Monitoring the Health Emergency headed by the Mayor. In addition, a statistics monitoring centre is installed in the municipality's offices.

- e) Although several cities provided financial support to vulnerable people (36 percent), local governments in general have had very limited power to support measures such as rental or loan payment deferments which are usually national prerogatives. Such measures need support/compensation to property owners or to the banking system. Low-income countries seem to be at par with all other countries in relation to providing some sort of financial assistance to vulnerable people

BOX VI - Latvia: coordination between national and local governments for supporting alternatives to school canteens

The national budget allocated for free lunches for first to fourth grade students (possibly up to ninth grade), has been used by Riga municipality to feed children from low-income and large families.

The poor and low-income families of Riga city, whose children study at pre-school, primary or secondary schools (public or private), receive special store payment cards for food products. The nominal value of the card is set at 1.42 euros per student for each working day during the emergency period, counted from March 13 or from the day when the family has acquired the status of a low-income family being registered in the Riga City Family Support Register. The card is valid for 12 months and can be used in MAXIMA Latvija Ltd. food stores throughout the territory of Latvia. Families were invited to keep their payment cards so that they could be supplemented with funding in case the emergency is extended.

- f) **Campaigns for responsible food purchase behavior** (42.1 percent) have been staged mainly in Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean aimed at reducing the impact on prices.

BOX VII: Strengthening food safety for street food vending in Tanzania

In the United Republic of Tanzania, street food has become a common source of nutrition for a growing number of low- and middle-income city dwellers, and a crucial source of income for thousands of low-income women. However, food safety issues and nutritionally unbalanced menus undermine the sector. Addressing such issues and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in urban food systems, the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children and FAO supported the design and dissemination of brochures, posters and audio material to prevent exposure to or

transmission of the virus, and to strengthen food hygiene and sanitation practices on street-vending stalls.

Overall, it can be concluded that cities from low-income countries were less able than other cities to implement measures to support their populations.

It is important to underline that more than 70 percent of the municipalities have taken these measures without having access to additional funds. Specific funds have been allocated mainly for implementation of health programmes. In very few cases there was a transfer of additional funds by the central government to address the impacts of the crisis, and even when the central government released additional funds, the resources were still insufficient (e.g. in Las Flores, Honduras, community investment funds were utilized to cope with the pandemic). Some respondents highlighted that (insufficient) transfers of additional funds had taken place without prior consultation with the municipalities and assessment of their needs.

BOX VIII: Mboumba, Senegal - Migrants remittances supported the municipality in helping vulnerable people

The central government has set up a system for food support for vulnerable populations. The total number of targeted households is 436, including 340 listed in the Single National Register. However, there were still 350 heads of families who were not included in the previous census. The support of Senegalese associations in France and the United States was sought, starting with awareness raising. This approach made it possible to collect large sums of money from the above-mentioned associations. The money collected made it possible to offer food kits including a 50 kg bag of rice, 5 litres of oil, a box of 18 bars of soap, etc. These products are intended for the 350 heads of families who were not included in the census.”

In this case the role of migrant associations and their involvement in their locality of origin is an important element. The collaboration between the municipality and migrant associations in Europe and USA was constant during the COVID-19 period.

Three key messages may be gleaned

- A. City and local governments are key enablers (and not just implementing agents) in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 on food systems and in the effort to ensure access to food by the most vulnerable (90 percent of the responding local governments had taken at least one measure to ensure access to food from the most vulnerable).
- B. Action by municipalities during the COVID-19 pandemic was in most cases not sufficiently supported by additional funding.
- C. The empowerment of local governments with adequate resources, a clear mandate and proper links to national government programmes can therefore make a significant difference in preventing a food security crisis following a health or other emergency.

FOOD SYSTEMS GOVERNANCE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISES

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the coordination among food system actors has played an important role. The existing Food Policy Councils, particularly in the Global North, have been developing creative strategies to support local farmers, to make food distribution efficient and to reach the most vulnerable, ensuring access to food and protecting workers. According to the survey, 55 percent of the respondents confirmed the existence of municipal coordination teams and 31.3 percent mentioned the establishment of specific municipal food committees to respond to the emergency. Those committees were principally responsible for monitoring food prices and ensuring food to the vulnerable populations.

Urban Food Committees, in some cases, especially in small towns in Sub-Saharan Africa, took various actions to reach vulnerable populations. They established ad-hoc coordination mechanisms with various local organizations for example, implementing creative ways for distributing food (through volunteer groups, NGOs, neighbourhood communities, religious institutions, charities and private donors).

Furthermore, large cities have been leading in the area of setting ordinances or municipal food contingency plans (47 percent) as well as on promoting national coordination with other municipalities (43 percent).

In terms of vertical food governance coordination, the overwhelming majority of responses report a lack of coordination and communication with central governments, and insufficient devolution of resources and regulatory powers from the central to the local level. A small minority of respondents pointed to the coordination with the district, province or region-level government. As mentioned previously, transfer of additional resources to the municipalities was rare and insufficient.

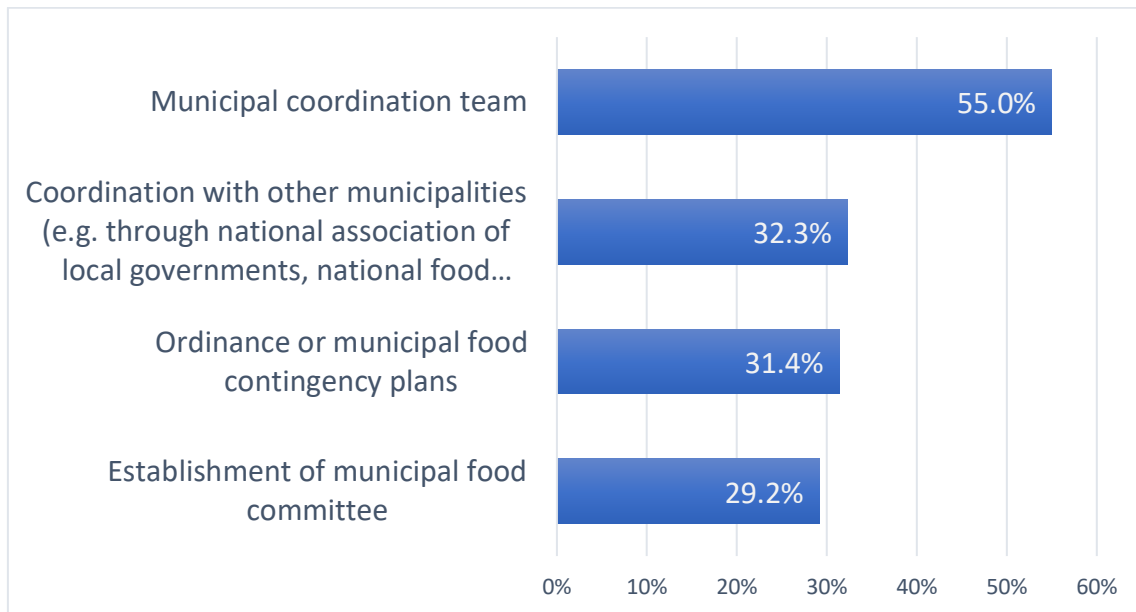
The qualitative analysis shows, in some cases, that local governments are in a difficult position because they are the implementing agents, but they are not part of the decision-making process (e.g. drafting of regulations). The result has been inconsistent implementation/enforcement and the need for numerous clarifications and re-issuing of regulations.

However, this potential has not been effectively used, particularly in developing countries. It is important to recognize the key role that local governments can play in facilitating the connection among food systems actors beyond “charity and emergency” to long term strategy, policy and planning. The establishment of multi-level food governance mechanisms (e.g. food policy councils or other multi-stakeholder platforms) should be a key part of the urban food and resilience agenda.

The analysis of the questionnaire also found that only 32.3 percent of the respondents referred to coordination with other municipalities (e.g. through the national association of local governments, national food networks). However, in some specific contexts, roundtable discussions among food council members (e.g. regional roundtables among food policy councils in the US, regional exchanges among the members of the C40 food systems network) have been fostered, facilitating the exchange of experiences among cities.

Those national, regional and international food alliances need to be strengthened to increase the capacity of local food governance mechanisms and for supporting cities and local governments in identifying and developing effective food strategies.

FIGURE 6 | Food governance measures during the COVID-19 crisis – global responses



A key message emerging from the analysis of the questionnaire regarding food governance is that during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the municipal governments demonstrated enormous potential in identifying and connecting the food systems actors, facilitating collaboration and coordination and exploring innovative community-based solutions. Urban food governance is therefore considered a crucial area for innovation to be supported in order to ensure inclusive and resilient food systems.

POLICY AND ACTION RECCOMENDATIONS TO BUILD BACK BETTER

The COVID-19 Pandemic has revealed significant gaps and critical weaknesses in urban, but also in national food systems, as well as in their coordination. The health crisis has been in many cases turned into a food security crisis while the potential of local and municipal governments to take food system related actions to ensure that this does not happen has not been fully leveraged. However, the transformation of urban food systems has to take a long-term perspective and think beyond the immediate. According to the analysis of the responses to the relevant section of the survey, some of the key lessons for building back better are:

Developing evidence-based and inclusive policy and plans on food systems preparedness and resilience to shocks and extreme events

The respondents highlighted the importance of mapping the most vulnerable with details on their location along with identifying modalities for reaching those groups especially in cases of emergency. **The survey therefore highlighted that the resilience component of the food systems should go hand in hand with inclusiveness.** To build resilient systems there is an urgent need to understand the root causes of vulnerability in urban areas and to promote policy, planning and

actions for mobilizing the existing local and national resources to accelerate the urban food systems inclusive transformation.

Promote sectoral, vertical and horizontal coordination

The importance of coordinating cross-sectoral national and local level plans was highlighted alongside the appropriate resource allocation at local level, where needs and connection with key stakeholders may be rapidly identified. The establishment of multi-stakeholder and multi-scalar (from local to national) food governance mechanisms should be also considered as priority, recognizing that various local actors (e.g. community associations, slum associations, the informal food sector) could become essential driving forces in emergency situations. For example, the informal economy, which plays a pivotal role in food distribution particularly in cities in developing countries, should be better analyzed and integrated into policy, planning and actions related to food systems preparedness and resilience.

Promoting local food production and short supply chains and a greater degree of self-sufficiency

The respondents highlighted the importance of promoting local production through urban and peri-urban agriculture, thus preserving agricultural land in urban and peri-urban areas. They also pointed out the need for the establishment/improvement of traditional markets but also for promoting e-commerce to improve producer-consumer linkages. They also emphasized the creation of storage facilities at local level to facilitate access to food reserves in emergency situations. A number of initiatives to promote local production and short supply chains have emerged worldwide during the pandemic.

Facilitating access to food for the most vulnerable through social protection programmes complemented by efficient, safe and innovative food distribution

Many cities are activating protective measures and effective food distribution modalities (food vouchers, emergency food delivery options, temporary hubs for food distribution) relying on various local actors and associations. Place-based and diversified retail distribution systems should be at the center of the food distribution strategies. For example, traditional markets can be considered key for reaching out to vulnerable people and promoting healthy and culturally appropriate food, particularly in developing countries. Small shops, street markets, and other players in the informal and traditional food economy structures are central to many urban food supply and distribution systems and remain a major source of informal and formal employment. Food safety is also considered key and the implementation of protocols of quality, and traceability is considered crucial in the post-pandemic phase.

Establishing/strengthening networks among cities

The survey questionnaire could become an opportunity for FAO to establish, in a systematic manner, a network/platform of cities/city governments and to collect a continuous flow of information to better understand the types of support that cities need in developing sustainable and resilient food systems, including in the context of the FAO Green Cities initiative⁸.

Box IX – The FAO Green Cities Initiative

In February 2020, FAO developed the Green Cities Initiative which aims to increase people’s wellbeing through better availability of and access to products and services provided by urban and peri-urban forestry, agriculture and food systems.

The FAO Green Cities initiative will improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of urban and peri-urban populations of 1000 cities around the world by 2030, improving the urban environment, strengthening urban-rural linkages, the resilience of urban populations to external shocks and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation while ensuring access to healthy diets from sustainable food systems. Local governments and communities will have the capacity to develop and implement context-specific strategies, actions and investment plans for the integrated design and management of resilient and sustainable multifunctional green spaces and food systems to ensure that green technologies, innovation and investments are scaled up. FAO is currently in the process of finalizing the development of the Green Cities Action Plan.

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