

Food Security Monitor for the Americas

Full Report on the Agrifood Sector in the Americas during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Previous editions available at: <https://iica.int/en/monitor>

29,361,963

Confirmed cases of
Covid-19 in the
Americas



Países



Highest number of
cases in the
Americas:

USA (15,285,261)
BRA (6,674,999)
ARG (1,469,919)
COL (1,384,610)
MEX (1,193,255)

Analysis and scenarios

The latest from the IICA Blog

[Protecting and recovering soils, a key resource under threat](#)

Soil degradation is rapidly advancing and threatening the capacity of Latin America and the Caribbean to meet current and future food demand in a sustainable manner. This, in turn, is jeopardizing our main productive capital, which generates foreign exchange and jobs, supports the region's economies, and guarantees global food security.

Furthermore, **the estimated loss of a trillion dollars per year** due to the reduced capacity of soils to provide **ecosystem services**, which regulate global carbon, water and nutrient cycles, also limits the

**** This monitor is a dynamic, constantly updated tool created by IICA to analyze and forecast the impact of the world health crisis on food security in the Americas. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the opinion of the Institute, but a reflection of developments worldwide.*

quantity and quality of natural resources available to support socio-economic activities and the livelihoods of populations.

The main cause of soil degradation in the arid, semi-arid, sub-humid and dry regions of Latin America and the Caribbean is desertification, which affects 35% of the region's surface area.

Professor Rattan Lal, 2020 World Food Prize winner and co-laureate of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, considered the world's leading authority on soil science, has concluded that **another important consequence of soil degradation is the loss of biodiversity.**

Agricultural soils have lost up to 75% of their natural carbon stocks and biodiversity, primarily due to unsustainable agricultural management practices.

In humid regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, **deforestation** is one of the main causes of soil degradation and the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As a result of all of these limitations, it is estimated that **49%** of the Latin American and Caribbean territory is exposed to **water erosion**, and approximately **56%** of land is affected by **chemical degradation** (salinity or acidity) of soils.

Considering the fact that soils are a fundamental natural resource for human development, and that **Latin America and the Caribbean** is one of the regions of the world with the greatest wealth of natural resources and biodiversity—it possesses **23%** of the **world's arable land** and **31% of the planet's fresh water resources**—it is clear that one of the greatest challenges facing agriculture in our hemisphere is maintaining the health of cultivated land in the region, by maintaining adequate plant cover and implementing good agricultural practices.

In light of this serious situation, and in keeping with the institutional mandate to guarantee agricultural development and the well-being of rural populations in the Americas, we set out to support the development and implementation of a **hemispheric strategy** that involves policymaking as well as the implementation of land management practices and incentives for **transforming agricultural systems into more fertile ecosystems capable of accumulating more carbon in soils.**

We have transformed that willingness into action through the launch of **“Living Soils in the Americas”**, a joint initiative between the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (**IICA**) and the Carbon Management and Sequestration Center (**CMASC**) at **Ohio State University**, which is led by Professor Lal. As part of this initiative, we will be working together with governments, funding agencies and private sector partners.

As is the case with climate change, human activity is the main determinant for land degradation, because it is associated with inadequate land management and its interaction with other natural, social and economic factors.

Now is the time to coordinate efforts and capacities to provide concrete and effective solutions that would allow for reversing the serious problem of soil degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

After all, the health of soils determines that of everything that grows on it.

All the details in this week's blog post by **Manuel Otero**, *Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)*. <https://bit.ly/3n3iRts>

Relevant issues for the agrifood sector

<h2>Production</h2> <p>* Measures related to the agrifood production sector, and information on impact channels and areas affected in the countries of the Americas (products grown or harvested during this time of year).</p>	
<p>Canada: production of wheat, soybean, corn for grain, barley and oat increased in 2020</p> <p>According to data revealed by Statistics Canada for the month of November, Canadian farmers produced more wheat, soybeans, corn for grain, barley and oats in 2020 as a result of favorable conditions compared to the previous year, despite the challenges triggered by the pandemic. Canola production, however, decreased compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Compared to 2019, total wheat production increased by 7.7%, corn for grain production by 1.2%, soybean by 3.5%, barley by 3.4% and oat by 8.2%. Canola production decreased by 4.5%. https://bit.ly/33T8hh5</p>	<p>Colombia: coffee production decreased by 4% in November</p> <p>According to a report by the National Federation of Coffee Growers, coffee production decreased by 4% on an interannual basis in November, totaling 1.4 million sacks (60 kilos), due to the market slowdown resulting from the sanitary measures adopted to curb the spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>During the January-November 2020 period, the coffee harvest totaled 12.1 million sacks—a decrease of 7% compared to the same period in 2019. Coffee exports rose by 9% in November, reaching 1.3 million sacks. https://bit.ly/371WHCo</p>
<p>El Salvador: economic activity fell 8.1% on an interannual basis in September</p> <p>According to data published by the Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador (BCR), economic activity (measured by the Economic Activity Volume Index, IVAE) decreased by 8.1% in September 2020 compared to the same month in 2019; it also experienced a monthly increase of 2.9% compared to the previous month (August 2020).</p> <p>According to the information provided by the BCR, the agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries sector was one of the economic activities that saw the highest monthly growth in September 2020, rising by 5.6%. https://bit.ly/3n1NFup</p>	<p>Uruguay: state of emergency declared for fields in 10 departments due to drought</p> <p>According to an article published by newspaper El Observador, the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries (MGAP) declared a state of agricultural emergency for fields located in 10 departments due to the current water deficit.</p> <p>The producers affected will receive assistance under the Agricultural Emergency Fund, which will initially remain in effect for 60 days. https://bit.ly/3gHx9O9</p>

Trade

*Trade-related measures taken by the countries, description of the impact on products usually exported during this time of year, problems in trade logistics and global supply chains.

Alcoholic drink trends and lessons for Latin America

According to Euromonitor, more than 450,000 food service establishments are expected to close permanently by 2020 as a result of widespread social distancing measures, which will likely hinder the ability of small businesses to reopen.

As alcohol consumption moves out of these establishments, continuous distribution will be the most important factor to guarantee the continuity of sales.

An increased level of national pride and a focus on local business has motivated manufacturers to create initiatives aimed at supporting local restaurants and stores, which have been disproportionately affected by the reduction in mobility caused by the pandemic, particularly in countries that have implemented so-called “dry laws” (to limit the sale of alcoholic beverages) or in which the distribution of alcoholic beverages has been disrupted in some way.

Consumption is expected to focus on more competitive prices and discounts.

<https://bit.ly/36VYYyM>

U.S. imports of Mexican avocado rise

Despite the pandemic, imports of Mexican avocado have increased in 2020. A total of 2.1 billion pounds of avocados have been imported by the United States.

Since 1997, avocado exports have remained steady. However, in the year 2020, this stability was threatened, as demonstrated by the fact that, between late March and early April, sales fell by 40%. To overcome these difficulties, the organization “Avocados from Mexico”, which includes stakeholders who import, produce and package avocados, implemented a series of measures.

The strategy involved providing discounts for consumers, packaging avocados in bags to prevent contamination, as well as promoting the product’s quality and health measures. At present, 90% of the avocados imported by the United States comes from Mexico.

According to a recent study carried out by Texas A&M University, between 2019 and 2020, the avocado supply chain made a significant contribution to production, the GDP, labor income and tax revenues.

<https://bit.ly/3gxb70f>

Agricultural production in Peru grew by 6.3% and facilitated economic recovery

Despite the impact of the current pandemic in Peru, the agriculture sector grew by 2.1% during the first ten months of the year.

This increase was primarily due to greater blueberry production, which grew by 38%. Paprika was another agricultural product whose production increased significantly—by 28%.

The agriculture sector saw improvements in products such as paddy rice, asparagus, *pergamino* coffee, cocoa, avocado, alfalfa and grapes.

Small-scale farmers played an important role in keeping markets supplied. However, Federico Tenorio Calderón, head of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Irrigation (MIDAGRI), stated that the ministry will seek to continue strengthening family farming, associative undertakings, and efforts to secure new national and international markets, which would generate greater income for rural families in Peru.
<https://bit.ly/33RzzV0>

Deputy Director General of the WTO underscores the pressing need for a breakthrough in WTO agricultural negotiations

During a virtual WTO Agriculture Symposium, Deputy Director General Alan Wolf urged the WTO members to push for a reform of existing global farm trade rules, noting that there is a pressing need for a breakthrough on all major subjects under negotiation.

He also noted that issues such as agricultural subsidies must be addressed in a multilateral setting to achieve satisfactory progress.

Wolf considered that food should always be able to travel across borders, particularly in times of crisis.

A strengthened Agreement on Agriculture should make this outcome beyond question.
<https://bit.ly/36BBwGN>