

Sustainable Food Systems in a Post-COVID World

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EDITORIAL

Food systems are vital to economic activity because they provide us with the nutrition we need to live and work. Macroeconomists, on the other hand, have long rejected them, claiming that the global agri-food industry, which is now highly mechanized, subsidized, and centralized, provides all we might want in terms of food. The year 2020 will be a landmark moment for the world's food systems. COVID-19 shut down half of the planet in a matter of months. Photos of panic shopping, bare store shelves, and miles-long lines at food banks have jolted us awake to the importance of food systems in our lives, as well as how unbalanced they have become.

Pandemic-induced food shortages, on the other hand, aren't just a result of human actions in times of crisis. They show that the global food supply chain, which is highly concentrated and operates on a just-in-time supply basis, is vulnerable to shocks. Harvesting and packing food became difficult in many countries as workers were stuck at borders or became ill. Since restaurants and bars were closed, stocks stacked up and avalanches of food went to waste. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program predict that unless action is taken, a "hunger pandemic" and a doubling of the number of people who are hungry would soon exceed the coronavirus in developing countries.

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Economic reset

The recovery of economies following the COVID-19 crisis provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the global food system and make it more resilient to potential shocks, ensuring environmentally safe and balanced nutrition for everyone. United Nations organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Environment Program, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are working to make this happen.

Resilient food supply chains

Food supply chains that are reliable and successful will reduce the risks of food insecurity, malnutrition, and price volatility while also creating employment. Rural transformation will help create resilient food supply chains by empowering small producers and retailers and mainstreaming them into the food systems economy.

Healthy diets

Increasing access to good nutrition in developing countries and reducing overconsumption of animal and highly processed foods in wealthy countries will boost well-being and land use performance, make nutritious food more accessible globally, and reduce carbon emissions. Redirecting agricultural subsidies to organic foods, taxing unhealthy foods, and aligning procurement policies, education services, and healthcare systems to promote healthier eating habits can all help. As a result, healthcare prices will be lower internationally, disparities will be reduced, and we will be better prepared to weather the next pandemic with healthy individuals.

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