

# Ensuring global food security during COVID-19

April 20 2020, by Jess Reid

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An agricultural expert from The University of Western Australia has warned that while Australia is one of the most food secure countries in the world, COVID-19 presents complex challenges for the food security

of vulnerable communities and nations where hunger and malnutrition are already common.

Hackett Professor Kadambot Siddique from UWA's Institute of Agriculture said that as well as emergency support measures for the healthcare system, emergency support measures for [food access](#) should also be addressed.

"COVID-19 does not present an immediate threat to our [global food supply](#), as we have produced enough in previous seasons to have an adequate and stable global supply," Professor Siddique said.

"However, the ramifications of the pandemic for [food](#) access and affordability will disproportionately affect the poor, hungry and malnourished people of the world."

Professor Siddique said hunger and malnutrition affected more than 820 million people around the globe, with close to 150 million children stunted due to lack of proper nutrition.

"The role of international organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in reducing hunger and malnutrition is so important, especially now and in the future," Professor Siddique said.

He said in Australia, action must also be taken to ensure vulnerable communities had access to affordable, nutritious food.

"Food relief organizations such as [food banks](#) and school meal programs will need continued support during this time," Professor Siddique said.

"We will also need transparent monitoring of food prices, to prevent inequitable food price increases, especially in remote and regional

areas."

Professor Siddique said [policy makers](#) also needed to ensure producers were given adequate support for the production and delivery of the upcoming season of crops, to ensure a smooth flow of food for global trade and international markets.

"We are already seeing some [travel restrictions](#) causing labor shortages on farms, particularly with seasonal workers who are essential during planting and harvest periods," Professor Siddique said.

"Governments need to ensure producers have support for farm workers, as well as transport lines for delivering produce safely and receiving necessary farm inputs, such as fertilizers."

Professor Siddique emphasized that these support measures, together with enhanced research and development in agriculture and food production systems, in Australia and globally, must continue beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We need to continue working towards ending hunger and malnutrition, and making our global food systems resilient and equitable," Professor Siddique said.

"This is vitally important, not only during times of crisis but at all times."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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