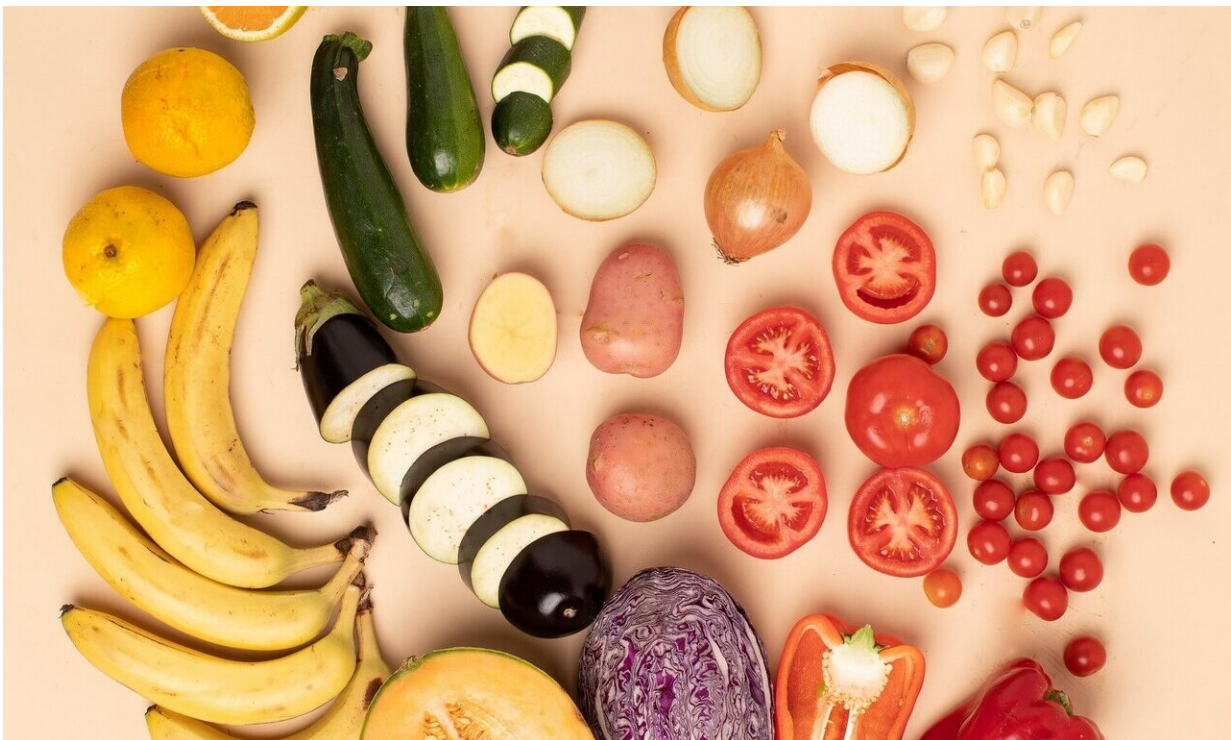


Fighting food insecurity during a global pandemic

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As the COVID-19 pandemic cripples food systems worldwide, governments must evolve and cooperate to heal the crisis, Johns Hopkins Professor Jessica Fanzo argues in a recent *Nature* op-ed.

Fanzo, who directs the Global Food Ethics and Policy Program at Johns

Hopkins, lays out the harsh facts: An estimated 130 million more people faced acute [food insecurity](#) in 2020, meaning they lacked access to affordable, [nutritious food](#). That's on top of the 135 million who already suffered from food insecurity before the pandemic hit.

COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our food systems, Fanzo writes—all the activities involved "in producing, processing, distributing, preparing, and consuming food, and the people who influence those activities." Farmers are more economically vulnerable, for example, and outbreaks have diminished the workforce at meat-processing plants. Border and port restrictions have increased food losses, especially perishables like meat and dairy.

With decreased incomes compounding such problems, a [healthy diet](#) is now elusive to many, Fanzo says, and "the health of those who are already undernourished could decline further—particularly older, vulnerable, and marginalized people"—those who presently face higher risks for COVID-19.

She urges governments to support food-assistance programs and the United Nations' COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which remains well short of its target funding. She also argues for a more holistic outlook toward food insecurity, identifying areas where human, environmental, and animal health collide. The COVID-19 pandemic, after all, most likely erupted from food system failure, with a zoonotic disease entering the [human population](#) through a [food](#) market in China.

Fanzo writes: "Instead of the splintered responses to the COVID-19 crisis seen so far, involving political polarization and geopolitical competition, politicians must embrace global cooperation and inclusion. Governments should not face inward. They should double down on opportunities to reengage and collaborate on the interlinked challenges of climate change, malnutrition, and environmental collapse."

More information: Jessica Fanzo. Cooperate to prevent food-system failure, *Nature* (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/d41586-020-03444-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-03444-5)

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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