WFP Cuba
Country Brief
March 2021

Operational Context
Over the last 50 years, Cuba’s comprehensive social protection programmes have primarily eradicated poverty and hunger. Although effective, these programmes mostly rely on food imports and strain the national budget. Recurrent natural shocks place further challenges to food security and nutrition. WFP accompanies the Government on its efforts to develop a new management model to make food-based social protection programmes more efficient and sustainable. WFP supports social safety nets for different vulnerable groups, strengthens agricultural value chains and promotes the improvement of resilience and disaster risk management. These activities contribute to Sustainable Goals 2, 5 and 17.

WFP has been working with Cuba since 1963.

Operational Updates
• WFP distributed micronutrient powder (MNP) to children aged 6-11 months old in selected municipalities of the five eastern provinces and SuperCereal (CSB+) to children aged 12-23 months, as well as pregnant and lactating women and girls (PLWG) in selected municipalities of Santiago de Cuba, Granma and Guantanamo provinces.

• WFP continued remote implementation of the project “Strengthening the resilience of the local food system to natural disasters and climate change, with a nutritional approach for supplying social protection programmes” funded by KOICA in five municipalities of the eastern provinces. WFP facilitated a virtual workshop for local authorities the prioritized agricultural value chains to be strengthened by the project, based on the local food system assessments carried out remotely in each municipality. The strengthening of the selected agricultural value chains (vegetables, tubers and grains) will improve the local food supply in the social protection programmes.

COVID-19 response
• March 2021 continued the upward trend in the number of people infected by COVID-19. The average number of confirmed cases per week was approximately 5,000. Havana, Pinar del Rio, Santiago de Cuba and Granma provinces had the highest levels of transmission of COVID-19.

• In March, national authorities reported a cumulative total of 76,276 confirmed cases, 71,493 have recovered and 425 deceased.

• The low availability of food and other essential goods have been aggravated by the impact of the COVID-19 and the subsequent international financial and economic downturn. Therefore, despite of the efforts made by national authorities to avoid crowding when buying food, people still make large lines when buying essential goods which remains a main risks for the spread of the virus.
WFP Country Strategy

Interim Country Strategic Plan (2020)

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- As part of the UN socio-economic response plan to COVID-19, WFP continued distributing beans, rice, CSB+ and vegetable oil in the five eastern provinces through the community canteens. Additionally, 483 mt of rice and 430 mt of wheat flour arrived in the country which will be benefit over 70,000 vulnerable people in community canteens nationwide.

Emergency Preparedness

- At the end of March, 82 percent of the national territory was affected by poor rainfall (meteorological drought) especially the central and eastern parts of the country. In addition, the lack of humidity in the soil (agricultural drought) affected the 95 percent of the national territory. Therefore, WFP continued monitoring the evolution of drought in Cuba in close contact with counterparts and they are jointly applying the tools developed within the project “Pon tu Ficha” financed by DIPECHO and implemented in the five eastern provinces to mitigate the impact of the drought through early actions based on risk.

Monitoring

- WFP continuously monitors the implementation of programme activities, ensuring accountability, transparency and measuring operational performance. Considering the complex COVID-19 situation in the country, field monitors have reduced their visits to institutions and have increased monitoring by using remote alternatives, in close coordination with government counterparts.

Challenges

- COVID-19 has caused delays in the implementation of the capacity strengthening activities of the Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP). However, trainings, assessments and meetings have been adjusted to be carried out virtually.

- COVID-19 has also affected the procurement processes considering the low availability of commercial flights to Cuba. This has created an increase in external transport costs. In addition, the increasing of embargo restrictions has caused delays in payments to international suppliers.

Donors: European Union, ECHO, Government of Cuba, Germany, Italy, Republic of Korea, KOICA and the Russian Federation.