

CONTINUING IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON FARM HOUSEHOLDS IN PAKISTAN

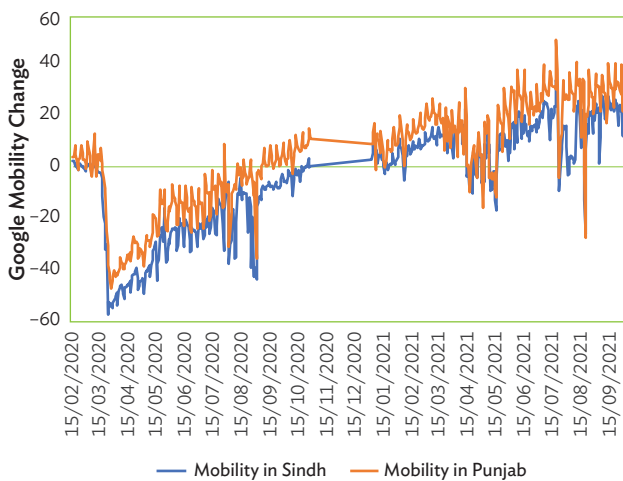


The Government of Pakistan allowed exemptions on food systems during the lockdown and movement restrictions caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, disruptions in food supply chains persisted in 2020 and 2021. In 2021, some farmers in Sindh Province became wary of growing high-value crops for fear of prolonged market disruptions. This calls for support from the government in terms of ensuring that farmers have market access for their production of high-value agricultural products.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS IN PAKISTAN

COVID-19 resulted in the national lockdown imposed by the Government of Pakistan from 1 April 2020 to 9 May 2020. Initially, mobility declined by 60% in Sindh and 40% in Punjab but gradually recovered to the pre-pandemic level. However, mobility was subject to large fluctuations in 2021 as additional movement restrictions were imposed due to COVID-19 variants (Figure 1). Thus, the risk of supply chain disruption remained throughout the year.

Figure 1: Mobility in Pakistan in February 2020–July 2021



Note: Data for November 2020 and January 2021 are missing in the figure.
Source: Authors.

SURVEYS HELD IN 2020 AND 2021

During the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted two mobile phone surveys on farm households in Punjab and Sindh (map). The main agricultural production areas of Pakistan are located in these two provinces.

Respondents of the May–June 2020 survey were 839 farmers from 10 districts. On the other hand, the April–May 2021 survey completed interviews with 744 out of the 839 farmers that were contacted.

Map of Survey Areas in Pakistan

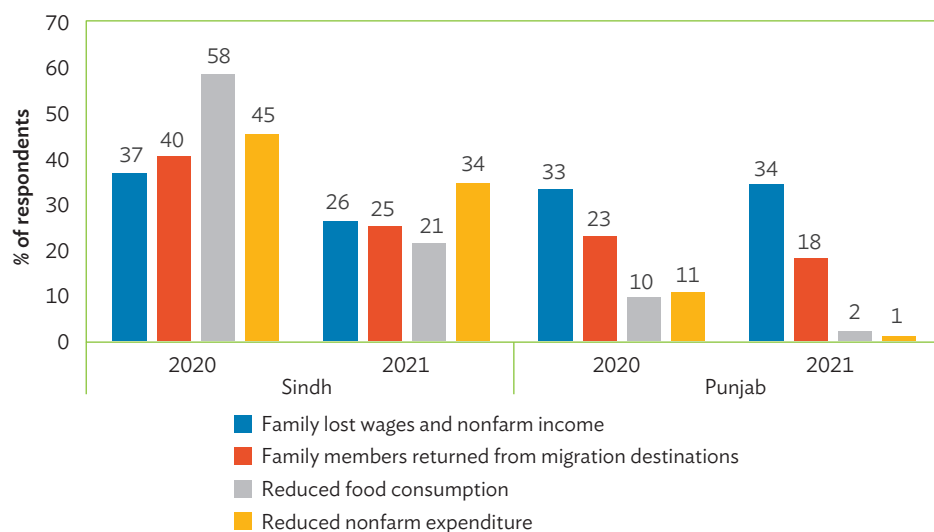


IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FARM HOUSEHOLDS CONTINUED IN SINDH AND PUNJAB IN 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to hurt rural households in 2021. In Punjab, one-third of farm households experienced losses in wages and off-farm income in 2020 and 2021. In Sindh, the same proportion declined from 37% to 26% over the same period. The percentage of rural households reporting lower food consumption declined from 58% in 2020 to 21% in 2021, and the percentage of households reporting lower nonfood expenditure decreased from 45% to 34%. The survey results indicate that there were some improvements eventually, but respondents from Sindh still experienced hardships (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Continuing Impact of COVID-19 in Sindh and Punjab, 2020 and 2021

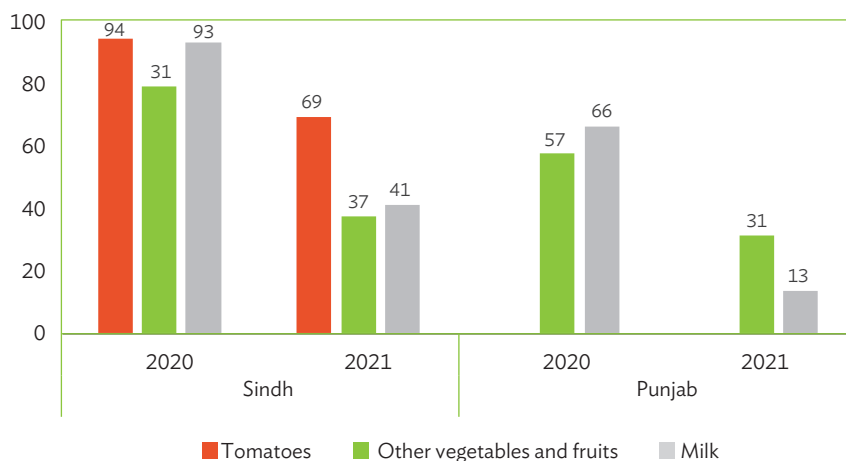


Source: Asian Development Bank surveys.

FARMERS IN SINDH FACED SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN MARKETING OF TOMATOES IN 2020 AND 2021

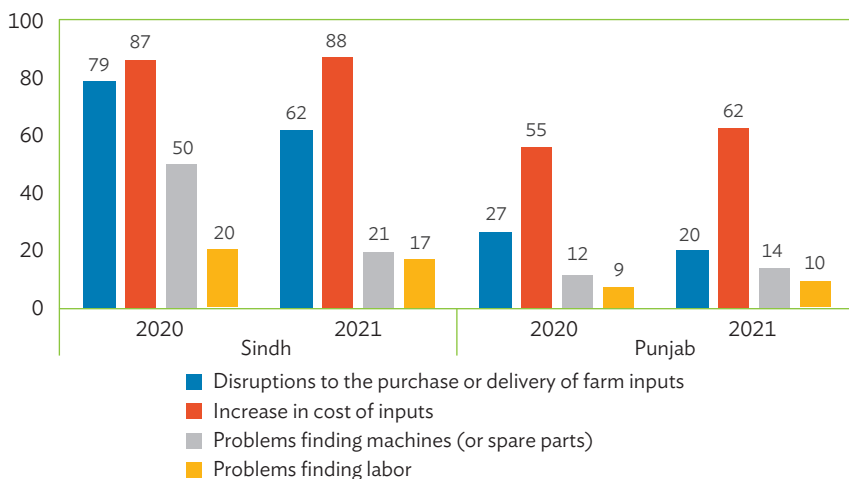
In 2020, 94% of Sindh farmers who grew tomatoes reported that they had difficulty selling tomato crop or could not sell it at all. In 2021, this percentage dropped to 69%. Due to marketing difficulties and low prices, two-thirds of farmers in 2020 and about half in 2021 plowed their tomato crop as green manure without harvesting it completely. Other high-value products, i.e., vegetables, fruits, and milk, continued to experience marketing difficulties in 2021 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Farmers Reporting Difficulties in Marketing Products



Source: Authors.

Figure 4: Farmers Experiencing Disruptions and Increase in Input Prices

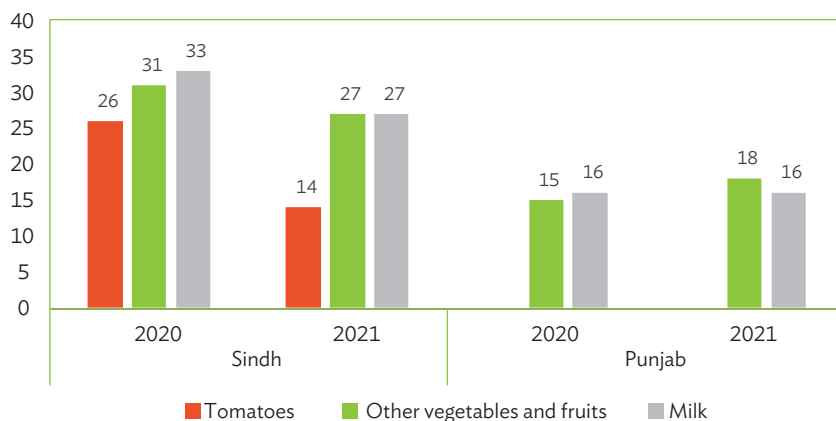


Source: Authors.

COVID-19-RELATED DISRUPTIONS IN 2020 REDUCED PRODUCTION OF HIGH-VALUE PRODUCTS IN 2021 IN SINDH

In 2021, the percentage of farmers producing high-value products decreased in Sindh. The percentage of producers dropped from 26% to 14% for tomatoes, from 31% to 27% for vegetables (except tomatoes) and fruits, and from 33% to 27% for milk. In Punjab, the situation is more stable. The percentages for these crops remained at the same level (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Farmers Producing High-Value Products



Source: Authors.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The pandemic and disruption of movement have negatively affected the marketing of vegetables, fruits, and milk in both Punjab and Sindh.

Although marketing conditions have improved, the proportion of farmers producing high-value agricultural products has declined in Sindh. It is likely that farmers are still wary of market disruptions, as they had experienced in 2020 and 2021.

To encourage farmers to produce high-value agricultural products, the national and provincial governments in Pakistan need to ensure market access for farmers. Governments need to review the exemptions under movement restrictions to minimize disruption to the food supply chain under the exemption policy. This action is important to prepare for the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant or another pandemic.

This infographic was prepared by Takashi Yamano, principal economist, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department, ADB; Noriko Sato, senior natural resources specialist, Central and West Asia Department, ADB; and Babur Wasim Arif, economist (independent consultant), based on the surveys carried out under the ADB technical assistance reports on [Enhancing Technology-Based Agriculture and Marketing in Rural Punjab \(TA 9838-PAK\)](#) and [Strengthening Food Security Post-COVID-19 and Locust Attacks \(TA 6663-PAK\)](#). The surveys' computer-assisted telephonic interview was undertaken by the Center for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), Regional Bioscience Centre Pakistan, PARC Agrotech Company Pakistan, and Research and Development Foundation Pakistan. The following publications are also relevant to this infographic: [ADB Brief No. 149 on COVID-19 Impact on Farm Households in Punjab, Pakistan: Analysis of Data from a Cross-Sectional Survey](#); [ADB Brief No. 153 on "Impact of COVID-19 and Locust Swarms on Farm Households in Sindh, Pakistan: Analysis of Data from a Cross-Sectional Survey"](#); and [2021 ADB Central and West Asia Working Paper No. 10 on "The Impact of COVID-19 Locust Invasion on Farm Households in Punjab and Sindh: Analysis from Cross-Sectional Surveys in Pakistan"](#).