# **Call for Action - COVID-19 recovery and the RTF**

**A Joint Submission by** [**FIAN Indonesia**](http://fian-indonesia.org/) **and** [**Right to Food Campaign India**](https://www.righttofoodcampaign.in/)**, members of the** [**Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition**](https://www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/)**/Asia Chapter**

1. **Which government programs and measures were effective during the pandemic in ensuring that people had access to good food? Please identify those measures you think should be expanded and made permanent.**

**INDONESIA**

* Several programs/measures were provided by the government: 1) The Family Hope Program (PKH), which was given to elderly, people with disabilities, toddlers, elementary school students, junior high school students, and pregnant women with various denominations, starting from IDR 75,000 up to IDR 750,000 on a quarterly basis. 2) The program for staple food cards (Kartu Sembako) that provides IDR 200,000 and 10 kilograms of rice per month from the Logistic Agency (Bulog) per family. 3) the Bulog Rice Assistance Program, as an additional supplies for households that have earned Kartu Sembako and cash social assistance (BST); 4) National Cash Social Assistance (BST) amount of IDR 300,000 per family. 5) Cash Social Assistance (BST) proposed by the Regional Government for people who have not been registered as staple food card and BST recipients in amount of IDR 200,000 per month and 10 kilograms of rice per month from Bulog; 6) Subsidies or discounts for 450 VA and 900 VA consumers on electricity and subscription fees as well as freebies or subscription fees in addition to subsidies: 7) The Pre-Employment Card Program is geared toward job seekers who encounter layoffs of Rp. 600,000 per month and online training costs; 8) Internet quota subsidies for college and high school students, as well as for teachers that use online instruction; 9) Direct Village Fund Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) for Beneficiary Families (KPM) in the amount of IDR 300,000 per month.
* However, based on [FIAN Indonesia’s monitoring](https://fian-indonesia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Laporan-Monitoring_Bansos.pdf), the implementation of some programs was problematic in one city. Poor quality of food (some of the foods are ultra processed food: packaged and canned food), lack of quantity, late distribution, and exclusionary errors are among the problems identified.
* All the assistance programs were helpful for the community, especially the pre-employment card program, which can encourage people, especially workers, to develop competency, productivity, competitiveness and entrepreneurship so that they can independently fulfil their food needs for themselves and their families.
* The National Government also released non-fiscal aid, such as intensifying direct selling between producers and consumers. Previously called Toko Tani Indonesia Center (TTIC) and now changed into "Pasar Mitra Tani", this program was actually initiated in 2017 by the Ministry of Agriculture. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was upgraded to be initiated in wider areas and to partner with GoJek (a ride-hailing application that also offers delivery services) and other online purchasing services to make ordering easier without face-to-face interaction. Existing in every provincial capital, the prices offered in this market are less than conventional market prices due to the shorter distribution chain; the agricultural products are sent directly from farmer groups in agricultural production centres. The regional government, which is tasked with taking responsibility for organising and developing this initiative, is a promising start (from the perspective of direct selling) and should be improved and sustained even after the pandemic.

**INDIA**

* The COVID-19 pandemic and the geopolitical tensions worldwide have subsequently affected the food systems. In India, without official data on hunger and food insecurity, independent field surveys and other information clearly highlight a concerning situation in India. The [Hunger Watch surveys](https://www.righttofoodcampaign.in/covid-19) conducted by the Right to Food campaign for instance show that there has been a worsening in food security both in quantity and quality compared to the pre-covid period for many (41%). The second Hunger Watch survey showed the importance of the crucial food security coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) where 84% of the households had a ration card and over 90% of those who had any ration card that is eligible for subsidised grains, said they received some food grains. The Government of India’s only program to ensure food security during the COVID-19 crisis was the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) which is an additional 5kg of food grains to ration card holders. In the survey, 68% of those who had NFSA ration cards said that they received free grains every month under PMGKAY during the last six months.
* The coverage under NFSA was to be updated as per the latest published census figures, however, as the census of 2021 has been postponed indefinitely and no date has been notified regarding the publication of the same, at least [10 crore people](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/outdated-census-data-deprives-over-10-crore-of-pds-economists/article31350648.ece) who should have been issued ration cards have been left out of the purview of the food security net. Therefore, the PMGKAY with the inclusion of the left-out population in food security along with the expansion of food baskets is crucial and would have played a much more crucial role in dealing with food insecurity.
1. **What specific measures would you like your government to build upon or implement that would enable: 1. A just transition for workers; 2. Strong land/water rights and genuine agrarian reform; or 3. Holding corporations accountable?**

**INDONESIA** (2. Strong land/water rights and genuine agrarian reform)

* Land is one of the means of production for fulfilling the right to food and nutrition (RtFN) for the people, especially in rural areas. Agrarian reform, one of the land agendas mandated in the Constitution (UUD 1945), Basic Agrarian Law No. 5 of 1960 and Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly (Tap MPR) No. 9 of 2001, has not materialised. As a result, land conflicts continue to occur and are mostly caused by agrarian policies and governance that are inconsistent with human rights principles. Agrarian reform cannot only be interpreted by granting land rights certificates and social forestry permits for farmers, indigenous peoples, and other community groups. The state must identify the number and who are the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform as well as identify self-governing lands, absentee lands, and other state lands to ensure the availability of land in the implementation of this program.
* Protection of traditional farming practices and small-scale farmers. From our research in Central Kalimantan, we see that without recognizing traditional farming practices and giving the farmers protection of their livelihood and other rights (including rights to seeds), farmers will more likely abandon their farming and opt to work in other sectors. For example, from our research in Central Kalimantan, people who used to practise swidden cultivation and/or slash-and-burn cultivation in order to fulfil their right to food had to stop when the government released policies on forest fire that impacted to prohibition of slash-and-burn agriculture, a traditional and or local agriculture system for indigenous and or local communities. Although the main culprits for the big forest and land fires are big corporations, there has been no clear exception for the traditional farmers who use this farming method in small areas of land and only for personal or family food fulfilment.

**INDIA**

* Recently the Supreme Court has ordered the provision of ration cards to migrant/unorganised workers registered under the eShram portal. eShram portal is the national database of unorganised workers including migrant workers, construction workers, etc with the objective of improving the implementation efficiency of the social security services with the integration of Social Security Schemes meant for the unorganized workers. Along with this, it also has the objective of the portability of social security and welfare benefits to migrant and construction workers. This will also be providing a comprehensive database to Central and State Governments for tackling any National Crises like COVID-19 in the future. The Supreme Court in an order dated April 20, 2023, in MA 94/2022 in ‘Re Problems and Miseries of Migrant Labourers[[1]](#footnote-1)’, has given significant directions to ensure food security for migrant workers and unorganised sector workers. 28.60 crores migrants/unorganized workers are registered on the eShram portal, of which 20.63 crores are registered on ration card data. The order directs all State/UT governments to issue ration cards under NFSA to the 8 crore persons who are registered on the eShram portal but do not possess ration cards. Due to not possessing ration cards, a large number of migrant/unorganized labourers and their families have been deprived of access to subsidized food grains and other schemes under the National Food Security Act. This is an opportunity for the Governments to universalise access to PDS for all migrant/unorganised sector workers and provide ration cards without putting in place multi-fold and complex inclusion/exclusion criteria including any income criteria. Adoption of complicated criteria ends up excluding people as they are often unable to furnish the necessary documentation including residence proof, aadhaar card, electricity bills, etc. These persons are among the most economically vulnerable sections of society and must be included under the ambit of the NFSA.
* The recent instances of the violation occurring on people’s food preferences particularly the meat ban and the violence on the lines of communalism need to be stopped. Such highly discriminatory actions are adding to communal tensions, causing huge damage to the economic security of vast masses of working people, and blocking access to much-needed sources of animal protein and nutrients for deprived populations across the country.
* There is a crucial need to strengthen customary laws which are under attack, leading to the exploitation of Indigenous communities and the overall ecological balance in the country. In India, there is a crucial need to protect as well as strengthen the Forest Rights Act which is facing the maximum attack by the corporate hegemony.
1. **What government measures or programs can better connect small, local food producers to consumers?**

**INDONESIA**

* The Farmers Partner Market (PMT) is one of the instruments developed by the Ministry of Agriculture to bring food access closer from producers to consumers. This program also helps control food prices so that they remain affordable to the public, and, at the same time, continue to provide benefits for agricultural producers.
* The products are supplied directly from joint farmers groups (Gabungan Kelompok Tani-GAPOKTAN) or Community Food Business Organization (Lembaga Usaha Pangan Masyarakat-LUPM). The price of staple foods provided in the market is relatively cheaper than the products in the conventional market due to the shorter distribution chain, making the products more affordable and attracting more consumers. This shows that Pasar Mitra Tani has the potential to connect local food producers to consumers.
* Despite the potentials, there are some problems existing in this initiative: 1) the consumers and producers cannot participate in the organizing and marketing of the PMT as the government are the one who organize it, 2) there are many and relatively difficult requirements for GAPOKTAN to become the supply partners, especially for the GAPOKTAN who consists of small-scale farmers who don’t have adequate production assets & infrastructures such as Rice Milling Unit, dryer, etc. Although sometimes owned communally under the name of farmers group, the ownership or the control of RMU, dryer, and other processing facilities in the village are in elite farmers’ hands.
* The government should improve PMT not only as a business-oriented marketplace but also as a program which focuses on providing accessibility for both vulnerable and marginalized producers (accessibility to a fairer market) and consumers (accessibility to healthier and cheaper products). For producers, the purchasing scheme should not only target GAPOKTAN with established means of production which indicates the most possible farmers to be engaged are the rich/elite GAPOKTAN in a village, but also small farmer groups who experience unabsorbed excess of yields/harvest.
* For consumers, the implementation should be also arranged and held in places that are physically accessible for vulnerable consumers. Regarding locality, the PMT initiative can be held by the Regional Government with trade locations in each sub-district in one district, and each sub-district organizes cooperation to exchange “special” commodities produced by farmers in their own respective sub-districts.
* Still for consumers, the outlet after buying directly from producers by the government can be continued not only in the form of PMT but also as a social assistance package (in the form of parcels or vouchers). The parcels will contain vegetables and fruits aside from staple foods (carbohydrates and proteins). This becomes important since social assistance has also been criticized due to the loads of unhealthy, ultra-processed foods. By linking staple and/or horticultural farmers, food contained in parcels could be replaced with healthier choices of food.
* The government can also develop direct selling between local producers and consumers through a combination of PMT and Community Food Barns. So far, the concept of the Community Food Barn has always focused on filling the food barn with rice or grain to anticipate a food crisis, which is also sold in order to develop the group's productive economic efforts. However, ‘Lumbung Pangan’ or food barn in traditional society’s concepts are the place which can also be used to store other staple foods such as corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, taro, or other local carbohydrates. Government intervention should also include these kinds of food. The government should also focus not only on seeking profits to rotate finances, but also to more communal savings and loan mechanisms and joint contributions.
1. **What government measures or programs can better encourage local agroecological practice and movements?**

**INDONESIA**

* The context of agricultural practice in Indonesia is the government supports market-oriented large-scale monocrop agriculture. This is proven by urging and initiating the implementation of Food Estates in several areas as well as insisting on the stipulation of Job Creation Law and its derivative rules that support neoliberal agenda in terms of providing national food supply. Therefore, there have been little efforts from the government to support local agroecological practice and movements.
* However, there have been some regulations in Indonesia National Medium-term Development Plan 2020-2024 (RPJMN 2020-2024) that can encourage local agroecological practice and movements, like local food promotion, diversification of food consumption, and nutritious food provision. The government even planned to create a "food system regionalization” based on specialties in seven regions in Indonesia: Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Bali-Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and Maluku- Papua. It’s still unclear how the government will make this plan into realization.
* There are two ways to encourage and support local agroecological practice and movements: 1) The main problems for the loss of agroecological practice is due to the lack of regulation that protects the traditional farmers who have been practising local agroecological practice from generation to generation. This is the case we found in [Tumbang Samui, Kalumpang, and Mantangai Hulu](https://fian-indonesia.org/policy-brief-menyeha-tana-sistem-pertanian-lokal-dan-atau-adat-yang-belum-diakui-dan-dilindungi-oleh-negara/), three villages located in Central Kalimantan whose people used to practise slash-and-burn and or swidden cultivation. The lack of clarity on the protection of traditional agroecological practices including for its farmers has made people stop doing this traditional and or local agriculture. Therefore, government should provide and or facilitate regulation, policy, and programme that recognize and/or prioritize protection for the farmers who implement agroecological practice and traditional agriculture, including protecting their land, livelihood, seeds, and biodiversity. For those who have to adapt to climate change issues, government should facilitate local or traditional agriculture practices to ensure the sustainability of local seed and biodiversity. 2) The existence of a Food Estate or Food Production Center Area (KSPP) with a large-scale food farming system and contract farming also has the effect of eliminating the community's agroecological system. FIAN Indonesia's report regarding the development of Food Estates in [North Sumatra](https://fian-indonesia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Ringkasan-Eksekutif-FE-Sumut.pdf) and [Central Kalimantan,](https://fian-indonesia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/LAPORAN.pdf) sees that the dominant approach to corporate food systems actually entangles the food political economy order in market-oriented corporate solutions, not based on fulfilling, respecting, and protecting people's rights to food and nutrition, especially local people. For this reason, the government should start identifying and protecting existing local food sources and seeds and maximizing the potential of these local resources instead of using large-scale agricultural systems that actually destroy the agroecology that already existed.

**INDIA**

* More than 80% of small-scale food producers operate locally, with a large percentage of this in the South-Asian region. In India, the farming community is safeguarded by the government through minimum support price and this further ensures the country’s food security. The demand to include more food crops under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) has been a long struggle and is the need for the ongoing farmers’ as well as a food crisis. Expansion of the PDS to provide millets and other nutritious commodities such as pulses and oils while procuring these at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). The procurement under the MSP will encourage local agroecological practices and movements. Subsequently, it can also provide a solution to the food crises present worldwide.
1. Supreme Court order of hearing dated April 20, 2023-

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UQFSHduNJgtNKDx_Od_pMgxb9W75b3fP/view?usp=share_link>

UOI affidavit of April 2023-

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MlqMx2zvihdcYM63qQV6eQOQ6z0rCiIS/view?usp=share_link>

Affidavit of January 2023 on behalf of petitioners

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fy7pK1fBtyyyxbJJz8OMikJnYSmrJgoA/view?usp=share_link> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)