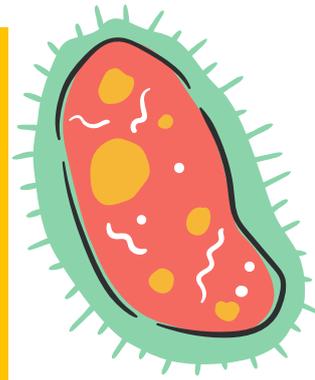
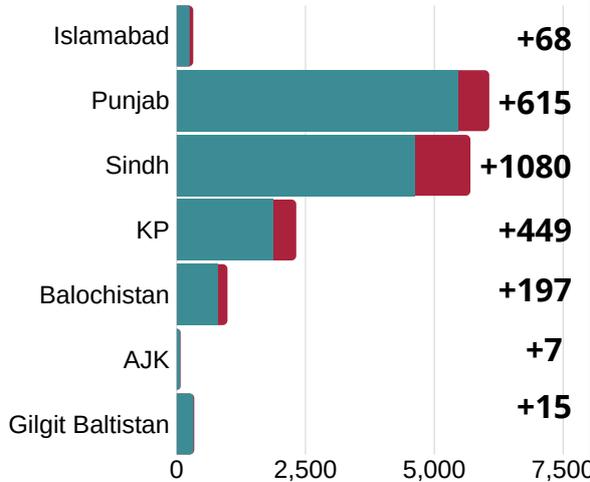


Situations like the coronavirus pandemic can quickly become a catalyst for social conflict due to misinformation, rumors and fake news, as we've seen in the past. Every day we continue to see more false information shared throughout communities, confusing citizens and leaving them unsure as to who can answer their questions.



**Confirmed Cases**



The **Pakistan Coronavirus CivicActs Campaign (CCC)** captures rumors and perceptions among communities to eliminate information gaps between the government, media, humanitarian agencies and citizens. By providing the public with facts, these coronavirus bulletins aim to create a better understanding of needs regarding coronavirus and to debunk rumors before they can do more harm.



# DON'T PANIC!

**Follow these steps to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.**

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) if soap and water aren't available.
- Cover your nose and mouth (with your elbow or a tissue) when sneezing.
- Avoid crowded places and practice social distancing. If you think you have been exposed to someone with coronavirus, quarantine yourself for a minimum of 14 days and monitor any symptoms.
- Do not stockpile supplies.

# HOW IS COVID-19 AFFECTING AGRICULTURE?

## Is the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami programme employing virus-idled workers?

Since Pakistan was locked down on March 23, many businesses, shops, and all means of work had to be closed down, affecting the livelihoods of many daily wagers. A recent assessment by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics found that, due to the lockdown, up to 19 million people could be laid off. But earlier this month, the Prime Minister granted an exemption to allow the forestry agency to restart the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami programme, a five-year tree planting programme launched in 2018 to counter rising temperatures, flooding, droughts and other extreme weather conditions. The programme was initially halted as part of social distancing orders put in place to slow the spread of the virus, but is now resuming to create more than 60,000 jobs. This “green jobs” initiative is a way to help Pakistan’s workers recover from the coronavirus crisis “with dignity and avoiding handouts”.

This year, the programme is employing triple the number of workers it did in its first year, and creating more jobs in rural areas with a focus on hiring women and unemployed daily-wagers - mainly young people - who were migrating home from locked-down cities. The work, which pays between Rs. 500-800 a day, includes setting up nurseries, planting saplings, and serving as forest protection guards or forest firefighters.

All workers have been instructed to wear masks and maintain the mandated distance of six feet between them at all times. In Pakistan, planting season usually ends in May, but programme organisers plan to extend the initiative until the end of June to keep workers employed and able to earn for a longer period.

## What agricultural challenges does Pakistan stand to face?

60% of Pakistan’s economy is dependent on agriculture. As the harvesting season is approaching amidst, farmers are facing challenges in harvesting and transporting crops to markets. With an absence of laborers and means of transportation due to lockdowns, millions of farmers are watching their produce rot in the fields. Even farmers who have harvested their crops cannot sell their produce in the absence of transportation.

Opposition leaders in the National Assembly are putting forth recommendations in consultation with medical experts, economists, businessmen, traders and farming communities for the government to announce an agriculture policy that is in the best interest of farmers and the country's economy. As suggested, the policy should focus on protecting the interests of small farmers while taking into account the measures needed to harvest wheat, transporting the wheat from farms to markets, and the government’s wheat support price to help the farmers in the coming days of the wheat harvesting season. Meanwhile, professors of agriculture at a conference hosted by the Center for Global and Strategic Studies called for an agriculture relief plan from the government which should employ new technologies to increase food security. Additionally, economists have cautioned the government that if the coronavirus pandemic prolongs, the first commodity to be impacted will be perishable food items, and then staple food items. It is up to the government to maintain an uninterrupted food supply, with the provision of input to farmers, mobility of labour in the agriculture sector, and shipment of food from farm to markets and market to retailers.

# HOW IS COVID-19 AFFECTING AGRICULTURE?

How can we increase food security amidst COVID-19?



To protect livelihoods of farmers and all food chain workers, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations is helping develop food security for small farmers in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while taking all necessary precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. By providing 480 farmers, including 127 women farmers, with vegetable seeds, the FAO is encouraging them to establish vegetable enterprises. High yielding potato crop seeds have been distributed to 840 farmers as potatoes hold a great promise for reducing hunger and poverty for smallholder farmers.

Farmers are also being trained on tunnel farming, a method of growing out-of-season crops in a controlled atmosphere inside polythene tunnels. This will enable them to produce off-season vegetables, increasing their profitability. Other assistance includes providing poultry for backyard poultry farming, supporting construction of different aspects of the supply chain, and establishing farmer field schools. These are some of the practices they are adopting to build resilience among small farmers.

## Conversation with an Expert

As agricultural policy is being discussed in the National Assembly, we asked Zarak Khan, an expert in alternative technologies for agriculture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to guide us on the main concerns of farmers. He is a London School of Economics dropout, and has been working for the past eight years as a farming consultant with seven divisions of the army and the United Nations Development Program. Zarak shared how he is using plastic mulch to grow weedless crops, which decreases costs and increases productivity, thus yielding low-cost but high productivity crops. This is a low-tech solution which works by using plastic to reduce weed growth, thus diminishing the need for weedicide. He is also using soilless techniques to grow crops which enables him to reclaim unused spaces like building rooftops to grow crops.

Zarak is mainly focused on encouraging his fellow farmers to rebuild the soil, because unsuitable fertilizer usage has decreased the organic matter of Pakistani soil to 0.3%, and agri-scientists recommend that it should be 1%. The organic matter in soil helps to retain water which leads to the formation of the top layer of mineral rich soil. He promotes no tilling practices by using tractor implements that do not break the soil structure. This helps the organic matter grow back. Zarak also trains farmers on data gathering and monitoring the growth of their crops, as data helps to identify which type of crops work best in a specific environment.

When asked about what the government's response should be to best facilitate farmers during the global COVID-19 pandemic, Zarak replied that he sees the pandemic as a small aspect of a bigger problem. He mentioned that it is predicted that by 2025, Pakistan will face acute water shortage otherwise known as "Day Zero". Simultaneously, the rise in population will render the cultivable soil unable to sustain food production for such a large population. He was of the view that surely due to COVID-19, the supply chain is slowing down but it is still moving. During this time when world markets are slowing down, we should focus on collecting data and using low technological solutions to better prepare for the future.

# What do I do if I think I have coronavirus?

## Do you have any symptoms?

- **Fever**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Dry cough**
- **Tiredness**



**If so, contact your doctor or the coronavirus helpline at 1166.**



## Where can I get tested?

### **Karachi**

#### **Aga Khan University Hospital**

Stadium Road, Karachi

#### **Civil Hospital**

DOW University Campus  
Mission Road, Karachi

#### **Dow Medical Hospital**

Ojha Campus  
Suparco Road, Karachi

#### **Indus Hospital**

Opposite Darussalam Society, Korangi  
Crossing, Karachi

### **Lahore**

#### **Punjab AIDS Lab**

PACP Complex  
6 - Birdwood Road, Lahore

#### **Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital**

7A Block R-3 M.A. Johar Town, Lahore

### **Islamabad**

#### **National Institute of Health**

Park Road  
Chak Shahzad, Islamabad

### **Rawalpindi**

#### **Armed Forces Institute of Pathology**

Range Road  
CMH Complex, Rawalpindi

### **Multan**

#### **Nishtar Hospital**

Nishtar Road,  
Justice Hamid Colony, Multan

**For more cities visit the**  
[\*\*COVID-19 Health Advisory Platform\*\*](#)

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