

Rapid Market Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Local Markets in Colombia

April 2020

Introduction

On March 11 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic. A day later, the Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MinSalud) declared a health emergency in the country, adopting quarantine measures to control the spread of the virus. To help inform the humanitarian response around COVID-19 in Colombia and to provide an update on the impact of official COVID-19 measures on market access, capacity and functionality (especially in the border areas with Venezuela), REACH Initiative (REACH) conducted a rapid market assessment in coordination with the Cash Transfer Working Group (Grupo de Transferencias Monetarias [GTM]) in Colombia.

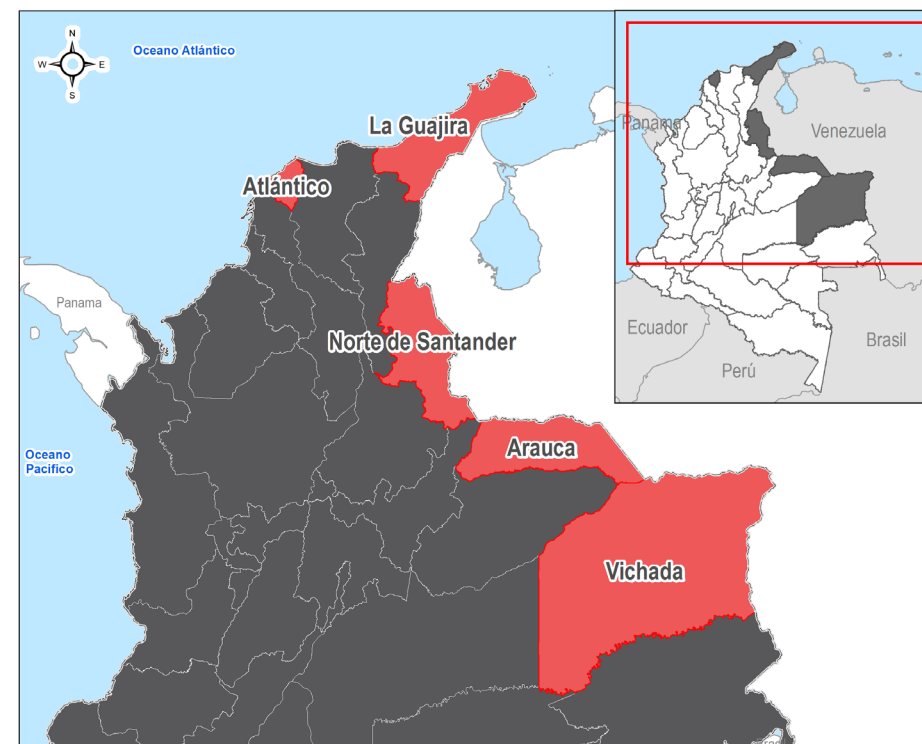
Methodology

In collaboration with nine GTM partners, REACH conducted a rapid assessment with both consumers and traders in five departments in Colombia. The assessment adopted a quantitative approach, consisting of structured household level interviews with the beneficiaries of participating partners' programmes (consumers) and individual interviews with key informants (traders). Given the restrictions and difficulties conducting in-person data collection while COVID-19 measures are in place, data for this assessment was collected remotely by telephone. This situation overview includes data from 528 interviews with consumers and 36 interviews with traders. The data was collected by the participating partners between 3 and 16 April 2020.

Limitations

All key findings of this assessment are indicative, as the sample is not representative of the whole populations of interest. In addition, due to the restrictions around data collection at the time of the assessment, partners collected data from consumers and traders who were beneficiaries of their programmes. All data is self-reported by respondents and is therefore subject to a degree of bias.

Assessment Coverage



of interviews held with consumers¹: 528 # of departments assessed: 5
of interviews held with traders²: 36 # of participating partners: 9

¹ 177 interviews with consumers were conducted in La Guajira, 164 in Norte de Santander, 147 in Arauca, 20 in Atlántico and 20 in Vichada.

² 19 traders were interviewed in La Guajira, 13 in Norte de Santander, 3 in Arauca and 1 in Atlántico.

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Key Findings



CONSUMERS

- The vast majority of consumers interviewed (95%) reported that their income levels had decreased since the implementation of the official COVID-19 measures, highlighting a high level of economic vulnerability in the population assessed.
- More than half (53%) of all consumers interviewed reported that they had faced barriers in accessing their usual store or market in the seven days prior to data collection, with 10% of all respondents reporting that they did not have access to the usual store or market at the time of data collection. Of this 10%, 44% stated that they did not have sufficient financial resources to access the market and 64% stated that the markets were closed.
- Of all departments, the highest proportion of consumers who reported not having access in the seven days prior to data collection was in Norte de Santander, at 65%. The most frequently reported reasons for a lack of access to markets were the closure of markets and a lack of financial resources.
- Almost three quarters (73%) of consumers reported difficulties in purchasing food and non-food items; of these consumers, the main reason given for these difficulties was lack of financial resources (69%).
- Of the consumers who reported difficulties buying food and non-food items (73%), the foods most frequently reported as difficult to buy were eggs (72%), beef (61%), and chicken (60%). Anti-bacterial gel and bleach were the non-food items most commonly reported as difficult to buy, at 62% and 53% respectively.
- In parallel, of the 90% of consumers who reported experiencing price changes in the seven days prior to data collection, eggs and bleach were among the items most frequently reported as affected by price increases, at 96% and 76% respectively. Potatoes (91%), rice (90%) and soap (77%) were also reported as items most affected by price changes in the same time period.



TRADERS

- Of the 36 traders interviewed, the majority (61%: 22 traders) were retailers (who sold their products to consumers only) and sold both food and non-food items (81%: 29 traders).
- Almost three quarters (72% - 26 traders) reported that they faced a shortage of stock; for these traders, anti-bacterial gel (64% - 9 traders) and eggs (21% - 4 traders) were reported to be the most commonly affected items.
- The majority (78% - 28 traders) reported difficulties in replenishing stocks at the time of data collection; for these traders, rice (53% - 14 traders), flour (27% - 7 traders) and anti-bacterial gel (46% - 11 traders) were the most commonly affected items.
- The vast majority (84% - 30 traders) reported that they expected prices to increase while official COVID-19 measures were implemented, with the most frequently reported reason given by these traders being that there are currently shortages in stock for items (69%).
- In addition, 69% (25 traders) of all traders reported that the official COVID-19 measures had had a negative effect on their business; of these traders, the main reasons given were higher prices from suppliers (76%: 19 traders) and a lower level of daily sales (72%: 18 traders), highlighting the potential impact of COVID-19 measures on supply and demand.
- However, approximately two thirds (67% - 24 traders) of traders reported that they considered the market to be capable of meeting current demand.

³ Due to the small sample size of interviewed traders (36 in total), findings related to traders are indicated here and throughout the report in both percentage and total figures.

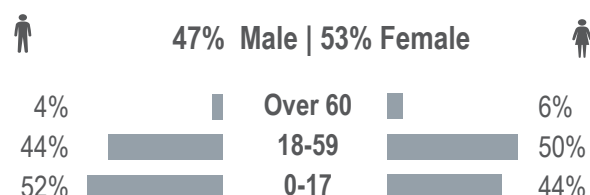
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Key Findings: Consumers

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERVIEWED CONSUMERS

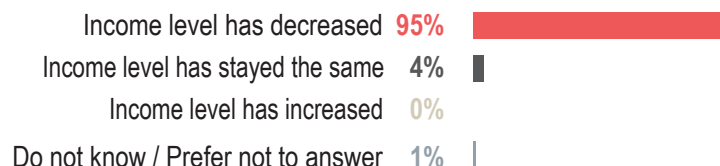
5 Average household size of respondents

Demographic breakdown by age and sex as reported by respondents:



REPORTED ACCESS TO INCOME

Reported changes in income levels since the implementation of official COVID-19 measures:



Main reasons reported for a decrease in income⁴:

- 1 Fewer opportunities to find new jobs every day due to the official COVID-19 measures: **70%**
- 2 Termination of my current employment due to official COVID-19 measures: **35%**
- 3 Difficulties in accessing new income opportunities without public transport: **19%**

⁴ Of the 502 consumers who reported a decrease in income since official COVID-19 measures were implemented. Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

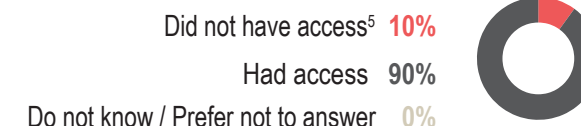
⁵ Of the 10% of respondents who reported having no access to the market when the data was collected, 81% reported having access to another store or market within 5KM of their home.

⁶ Of the 52 consumers who reported reasons for not having access to the market at the time of data collection. Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

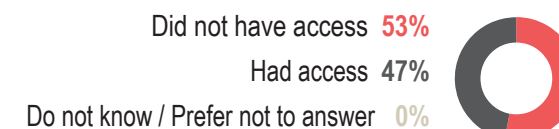
ACCESS TO MARKETS DURING OFFICIAL COVID-19 MEASURES

Although the vast majority of consumers (90%) reported having physical access to the market at the time of data collection, **more than half (53%) reported not having access at some point in the seven days prior to data collection**. Of those who reported not having access to their usual store or market at the time of data collection, **the type of barrier most frequently reported was financial in nature** (either not having the money to buy items, or not having enough money to pay for public transportation to access the store or market). No notable differences in the level of access at the time of data collection were found for larger households (those with more than 5 members), or for households with at least one person over the age of 60.

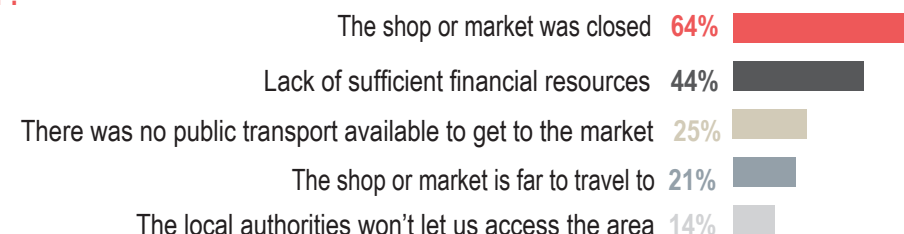
Proportion of respondents who reported having physical access to the market at the time of data collection:



Proportion of respondents who reported having no physical access to the market within the seven days prior to data collection:



Main reasons reported for the inability to access the market at the time of data collection⁶:



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Key Findings: Consumers

REPORTED MARKET ACCESS DURING OFFICIAL COVID-19 MEASURES, BY DEPARTMENT

📍 Atlántico

Of the 20 consumers interviewed in Atlántico, **all stated that they had access to the market at the time of data collection**. However, just under half (40%) reported having no access in the seven days prior to data collection.

📍 La Guajira

Although 94% of respondents in La Guajira reported that they had access to the market at the time of data collection, **over a third (36%) reported that they did not have access to the market in the seven days prior to data collection**. The main reasons given for this lack of access were related to **financial barriers**, such as not having sufficient financial resources to travel to the market. Other reasons reported indicate physical barriers to accessing the market, such as a long distance to travel to the market.

📍 Arauca

The majority of consumers interviewed in Arauca reported having access to the market at the time of data collection. Of the 12% who reported not having access, the main difficulties cited were a lack of sufficient financial resources, official quarantine measures and shops or markets being closed as reasons for a lack of access to the markets.

📍 Vichada

Of the 20 respondents in Vichada, **all reported that they had no problems in accessing the market at the time of data collection**.

📍 Norte de Santander

Of all departments, **the highest proportion of consumers who reported not having access to the market at the time of data collection or in the seven days prior to data collection was in Norte de Santander**, at 15% and 65%, respectively. The most frequently reported reasons for a lack of access to the market was **closure of shops or markets**, with just over a quarter of respondents (28%) reporting a **lack of sufficient financial resources** as a barrier to access.



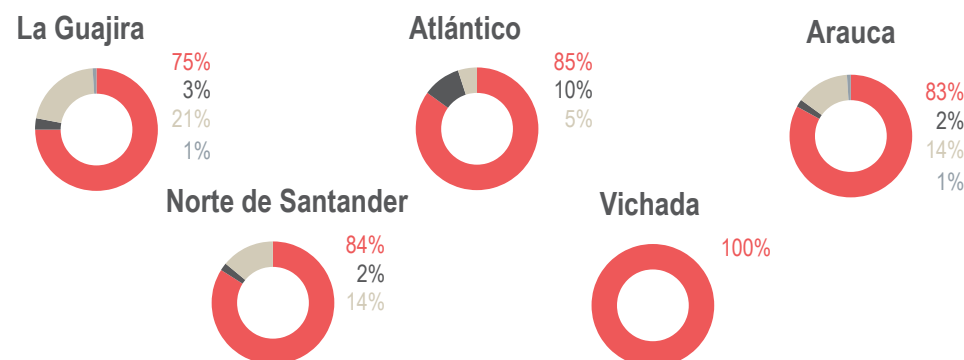
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Key Findings: Consumers

IMPACT OF OFFICIAL COVID-19 MEASURES ON CONSUMER WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO BUY PRODUCTS

Since the implementation of COVID-19 measures, respondents reported changes in their willingness and ability to continue purchasing food and non-food products. Specifically, respondents from all assessed departments reported visiting the market less frequently since the measures came into effect (81% of all respondents). While the highest proportion of respondents (48%) reported that they visited the market once a day, on average, before the measures were put in place, a similar proportion (45%) reported that since the measures were put in place, they visited the market approximately once a week.⁷ The main reasons reported for this change in frequency of market visits were related to **fear of catching the virus, followed by isolation measures and that respondents did not feel safe going to the market.**

Reported change in frequency of store or market visits due to official COVID-19 measures, by department:



Key:

- Visit the market less frequently
- Visit the market more frequently
- Visit the market with the same frequency as before the measures
- Do not know / Prefer not to answer

Reported changes in the frequency of market visits due to official COVID-19 measures:

- Visit the market less frequently since measures **81%**
- Visit the market with the same frequency as before measures **16%**
- Visit the market more frequently since the measures **3%**
- Do not know / Prefer not to answer **0%**



48% of respondents reported visiting the market **at least once a day before the official COVID-19 measures**⁸

7% of respondents reported visiting the market **at least once a day after the official COVID-19 measures**⁹

Top three reported reasons for visiting the market less frequently¹⁰:

- Due to the risk of exposure to COVID-19 **71%**
- Quarantine measures in my municipality **69%**
- I don't feel safe going to my marketplace **39%**



Top three reported reasons for visiting the market more frequently¹¹:

- The specific needs of my household members require me to replenish our products more frequently **50%**
- I need to collect enough quantity of products for the duration of time that the quarantine will last **36%**
- My household size requires me to replenish our products more frequently **36%**



⁷ Figures given here relate to responses from 355 out of 528 respondents; due to some technical problems with partners' data collection tools, some answers were removed during the data cleaning process.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Of the 430 consumers who reported going to the market less frequently. Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

¹¹ Of the 14 consumers who reported going to the market more frequently. Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

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Key Findings: Consumers

REPORTED DIFFICULTIES IN PURCHASING FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

Proportion of respondents reporting difficulties in purchasing products in the seven days prior to data collection:

Difficulties faced buying food and non-food items **37%**
 Difficulties faced buying food items **31%**
 No difficulties faced in buying food or non-food items **25%**
 Difficulties faced buying non-food items **5%**
 Don't know / Prefer not answer **2%**



Most frequently reported difficulties faced when purchasing products in the seven days prior to data collection¹²:

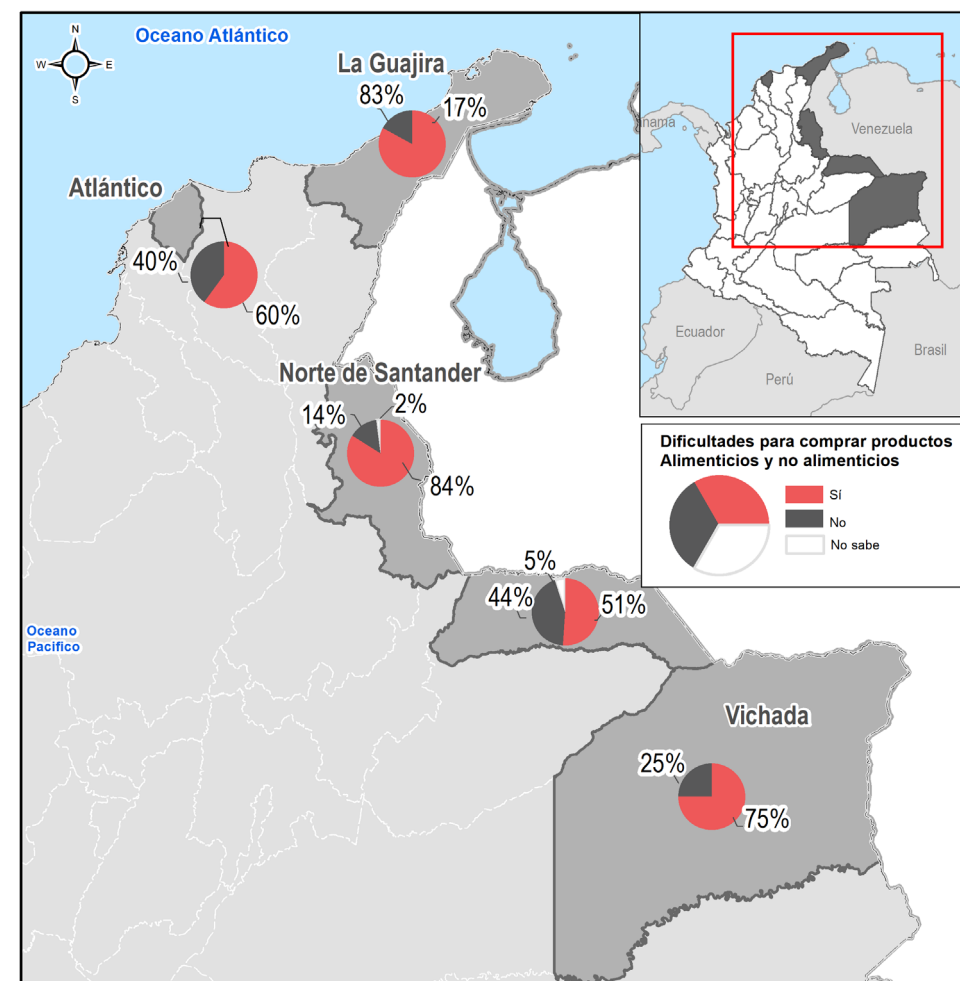
Insufficient financial resources to buy these products **69%**
 The products I want have risen in price / are too expensive now **67%**
 The products I want are not available in the shops or market **33%**



NFI Food¹³ and non-food items¹⁴ most frequently reported as difficult to buy in the seven days prior to data collection:

Eggs: 72%
 Beef: 61%
 Chicken: 60%
 Rice: 51%
 Anti-bacterial gel: 62%
 Bleach: 53%

Proportion of respondents reporting difficulties in purchasing products in the seven days prior to data collection, by department:



¹² This question was asked to those respondents who reported difficulties in purchasing food and/or non-food products. The figures here relate to 386 of the total 528 respondents.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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Key Findings: Consumers

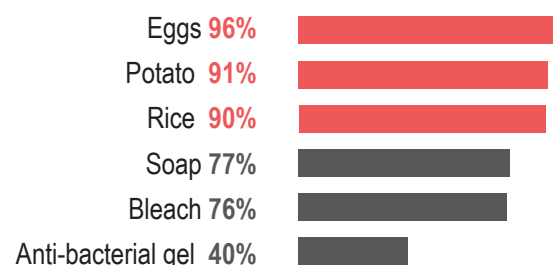
REPORTED PRICE FLUCTUATIONS

Proportion of respondents reporting changes in product prices within the seven days prior to data collection:

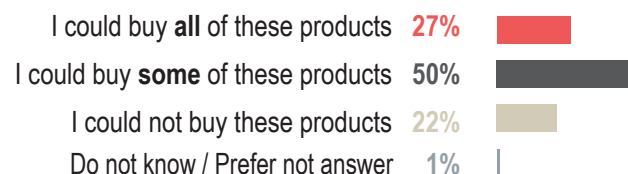
Prices have changed in the last 7 days **90%**
Prices have not changed in the last 7 days **8%**
Do not know / Prefer not answer **2%**



Main products for which consumers reported price fluctuations¹⁵:



Proportion of respondents reporting being able to buy the products with price increases within the seven days prior to data collection¹⁶:



Reported Price Fluctuations, per item¹⁷

Product	Unit	Median price 7 days prior to data collection ¹⁸ (COP)	Median price at time of data collection ¹⁹ (COP)	Percentage change in reported price
Food Items				
Chicken	1KG	6700	9000	▲ 34%
Beef	1KG	12000	17000	▲ 42%
Tomato	1KG	3000	4000	▲ 33%
Rice	1KG	3000	4000	▲ 33%
Pasta	1KG	3000	3900	▲ 30%
Eggs	Unit	300	500	▲ 67%
Onion	1KG	2500	4000	▲ 60%
Banana	1KG	2000	2800	▲ 40%
Canned Tuna	Unit	3000	4250	▲ 42%
Oil	250ML	1200	1600	▲ 33%
Beans	1KG	4000	6000	▲ 50%
Lentils	1KG	3200	4900	▲ 53%
Yuca	1KG	2000	3000	▲ 50%
Salt	1KG	1000	1200	▲ 20%
Powdered milk	1KG	12900	17000	▲ 32%
Non-Food Items				
Anti-bacterial gel	250ML	3000	5000	▲ 67%
Bleach	250ML	588	950	▲ 62%
Soap	Unit	1500	2000	▲ 33%

¹⁵ For each product, a different number of consumers reported prices: eggs (403), potato (224), rice (329), soap and anti-bacterial gel (147) and bleach (121).

¹⁶ Of the 477 consumers who reported prices had increased in the seven days prior to data collection.

¹⁷ For the calculation of the median price of each product, only the prices of products that were measured in the same unit were taken into account. Thus, the sample sizes for each reported product are different.

¹⁸ Median price in the seven days prior to data collection.

¹⁹ Median price at the time of data collection.

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Key Findings: Consumers



PRICE FLUCTUATIONS REPORTED BY DEPARTMENT

📍 Atlántico

Of the 20 respondents from Atlántico, the majority (85%) reported that they had experienced changes in the prices of products they normally buy within the seven days prior to data collection. Of these respondents, the food products most frequently reported as affected by price changes were **tomatoes and potatoes (93%)**, followed by **eggs (88%)**. **Bleach (100%) and soap (92%)** were the hygiene items most frequently reported as affected by price changes.

📍 La Guajira

Almost all respondents in La Guajira (97%) reported changes in the prices of the products they normally buy within the seven days prior to data collection. Of these respondents, the food products most frequently reported as affected were **eggs (98%) and potatoes (93%)**, followed by **rice (92%)**. **Soap (77%) and bleach (76%)** were the hygiene items most frequently reported as affected by price changes.

📍 Arauca

In Arauca, **three quarters of respondents reported price changes**; of these respondents, the foods most frequently reported as affected by price changes were **eggs (94%)**, **potatoes (93%)** and **rice (82%)**. Regarding hygiene items, **soap for personal use (82%)** and **soap for clothing (64%)** were most frequently reported as affected by price changes.

📍 Vichada

Of the 20 respondents in Vichada, **all reported that they had experienced changes in the prices of the products they normally buy** in the seven days prior to data collection. Of these respondents, the food products most frequently reported as affected by price changes were **tomatoes (85%)**, **chicken (84%)** and **beef (79%)**. **All reported changes in the prices of soap (both for personal use and laundry) and bleach.**

📍 Norte de Santander

The vast majority of respondents in Norte de Santander (96%) reported changes in the prices of the products they normally buy in the seven days prior to data collection. Of these respondents, the food products most frequently reported as affected by price changes were **eggs (97%)**, **rice (91%)** and **potatoes (84%)**. **Bleach (83%) and soap (71%)** were the hygiene items most frequently reported as affected by price changes.



Rapid Market Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Local Markets in Colombia

Key Findings: Traders

PROFILE OF INTERVIEWED TRADERS

Respondents by main type of customer:

Only consumers **61% (22)**
Other traders and consumers **39% (14)**



Respondents by main type of products sold:

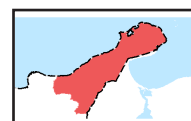
Food and non-food items **81% (29)**
Only food items **14% (5)**
Only non-food items **5% (2)**



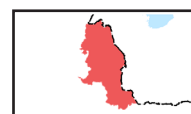
REPORTED STOCK LEVELS OF PRODUCTS

Reported stock levels by median number of days reported, per category of product:

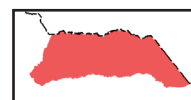
Median days of reported stock	
Food Items	
Meats	8
Grains	59
Fruits and fresh vegetables	16
Root vegetables (potato, yuca)	6
Dairy and eggs	17
Canned and non-perishable products	36
Non-Food Items	
Personal hygiene products	15
Household products	14



In **La Guajira**, the product for which stock was expected to **last the longest (13 days)** was **barley**, while the stock for **fish** was expected to last the shortest (2 days).



In **Norte de Santander**, the product for which stock was expected to **last the longest (15 days)** was **cooking oil**, while the stock for **anti-bacterial gel** was expected to last the shortest (1 day).



In **Arauca**, the product for which stock was expected to **last the longest (20 days)** was **cooking oil**, while the **stock for carrots** was expected to last the shortest (3 days).



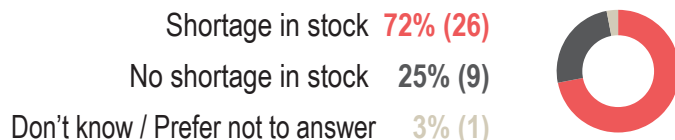
In **Atlántico**, the only trader interviewed reported that the stock for anti-bacterial gel and soap was expected to last 2 days.

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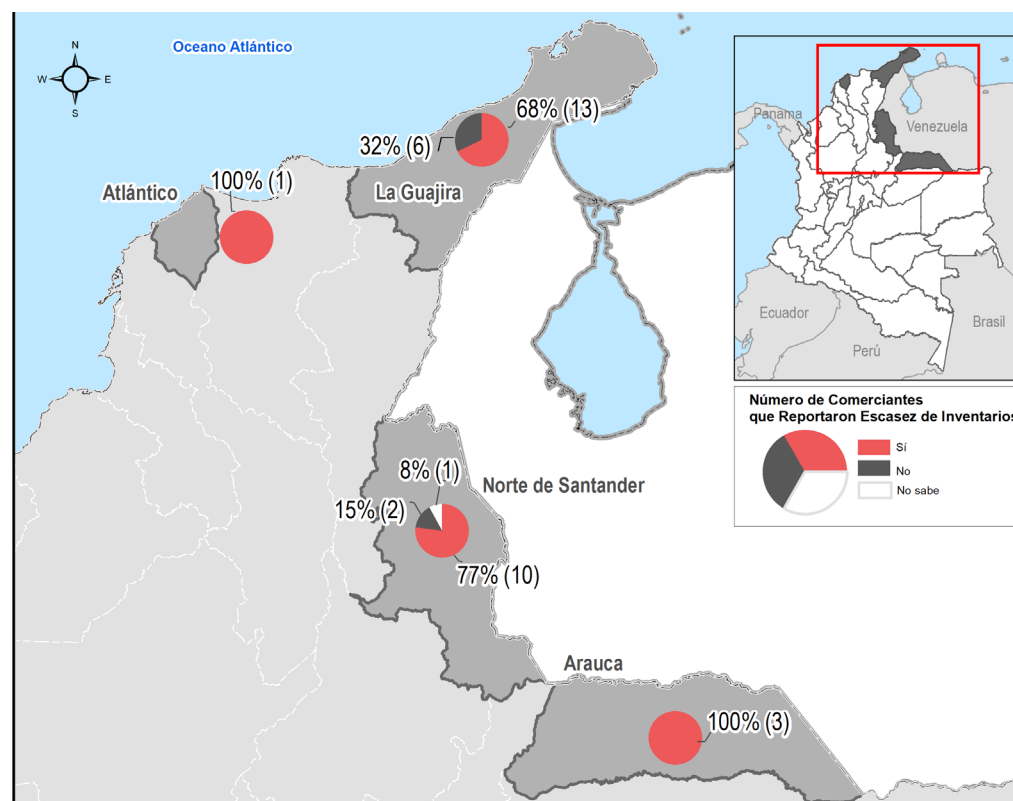
Key Findings: Traders

REPORTED SHORTAGES IN STOCK

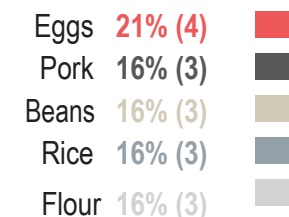
Proportion of respondents reporting stock shortages:



Proportion of respondents who reported at the time of data collection having a shortage of food and/or non-food product inventory by department:



Main food products for which there was a reported shortage in stock, as reported by 19 traders²⁰:



Main non-food items for which there was a reported shortage in stock, as reported by 14 traders²¹:



Main food and non-food items for which traders reported shortages in stock, by department²²:



In **La Guajira**, stock shortages were reported mainly for rice and anti-bacterial gel (2 and 2 traders reporting shortages, respectively)



In **Norte de Santander**, stock shortages were reported mainly for pork and anti-bacterial gel (2 and 6 respondents reporting shortages, respectively)



In **Arauca**, stock shortages were reported for barley and anti-bacterial gel (1 and 1 of the respondents reporting shortages, respectively)



In **Atlántico**, the one trader interviewed reported no shortages in any of the products sold.

²⁰ Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

²¹ Ibid.

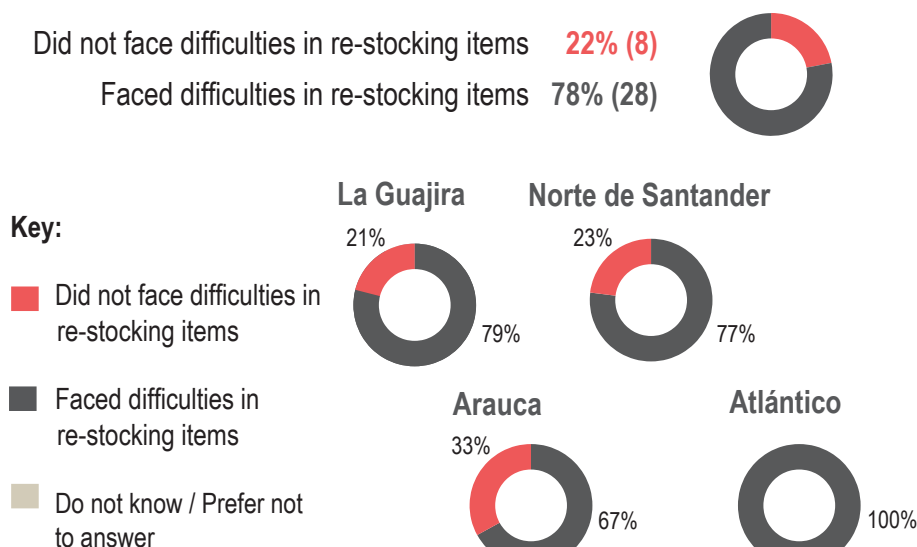
²² In La Guajira, ten traders reported shortages of food products, and five reported shortages of non-food products. In Norte de Santander, seven traders reported shortages for food products, and six reported shortages for non-food products. In Arauca, two traders reported shortages of food products, and three reported shortages of non-food products.

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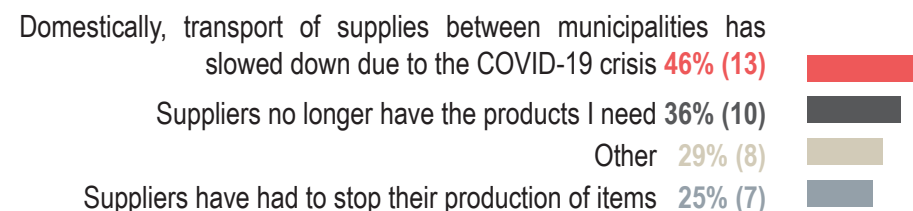
Key Findings: Traders

REPORTED CHALLENGES IN RE-STOCKING FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

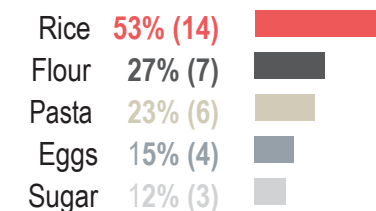
Proportion of respondents reporting difficulties in re-stocking items:



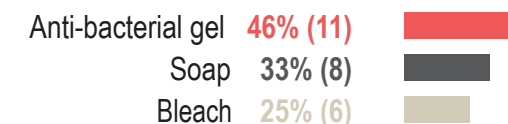
Types of difficulties faced in re-stocking items, as reported by 28 respondents:



Food products primarily affected by difficulties in re-stocking, as reported by 26 respondents²³:



Non-food items primarily affected by difficulties in re-stocking, as reported by 25 respondents²⁴:



Locations of suppliers of the main products affected by re-stocking difficulties, as reported by 28 respondents:

- For rice, 29% (4) reported that their supplier was in Atlántico or La Guajira
- For flour, 29% (2) reported that their supplier was in Atlántico, La Guajira or Norte de Santander
- For pasta, 33% (2) reported that their supplier was in Atlántico or La Guajira

²³ Of the 28 traders who reported difficulties in re-stocking items, 26 reported this to be the case for food items. Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

²⁴ Of the 28 traders who reported difficulties with re-stocking items, 25 reported this to be the case for non-food items. Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

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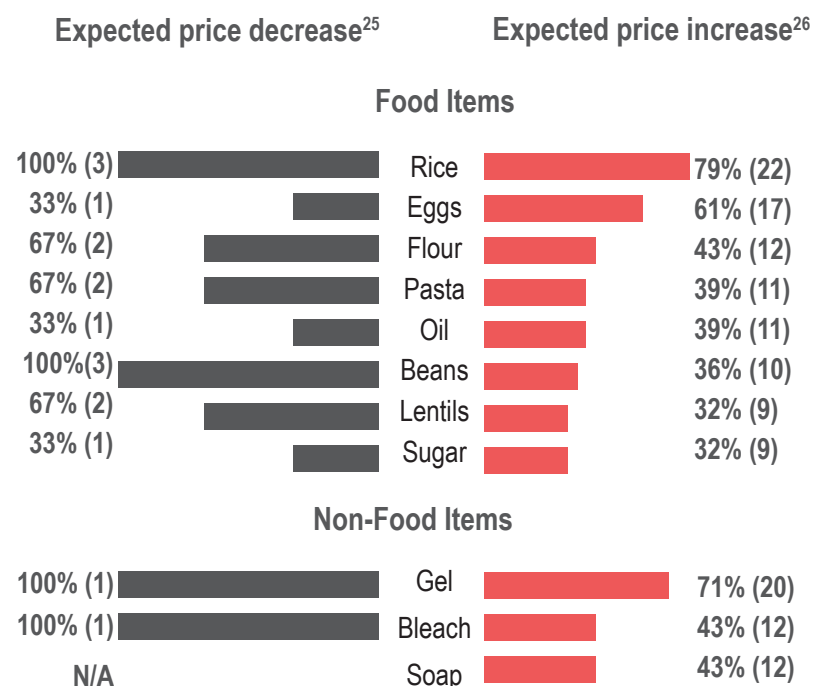
Key Findings: Traders



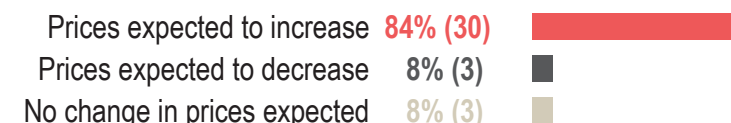
EXPECTED PRICE FLUCTUATIONS

Of the 36 traders interviewed, the majority (30 traders) reported that they expected prices to increase while official COVID-19 measures were in place. Of these 30 traders, the items reported as most affected by an experienced or expected increase in price were rice (25), eggs (18), anti-bacterial gel (21) and bleach (13).

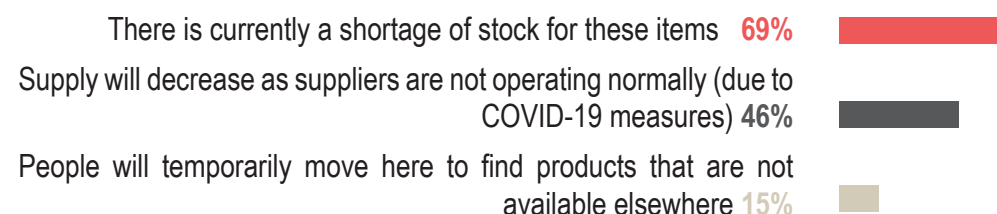
Expected price fluctuations by product, as reported by 33 respondents:



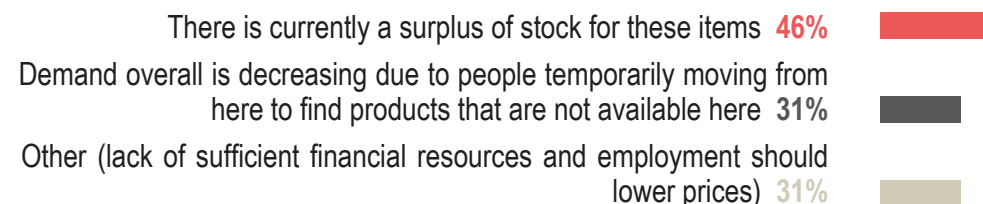
Proportion of traders who reported expecting a change in prices over the time that official COVID-19 measures are implemented:



Main reasons given for expected price increases, as reported by 30 respondents²⁷:



Main reasons given for expected price decreases, as reported by 3 respondents²⁸:



²⁵ Of the three traders who reported price decreases, all reported decreases in food prices and one reported a decrease in non-food prices.

²⁶ Of the 30 traders who reported price increases, 28 reported increases for food products and 28 reported increases for non-food products.

²⁷ Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

²⁸ Ibid.

Rapid Market Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Local Markets in Colombia

Key Findings: Traders

IMPACT OF OFFICIAL COVID-19 MEASURES ON BUSINESS

Proportion of respondents who reported effects of official COVID-19 measures on their business, by type of effect:

Negative effect on business **69% (25)**
Positive effect on business **25% (9)**
No effect on business²⁹ **3% (1)**
Do not know / Prefer not to answer **3% (1)**



Perceived positive effects of COVID-19 measures on business, as reported by nine respondents³⁰:

Number of daily customers has increased **100% (9)**
I am selling more products and more frequently **78% (7)**
The specific products I sell are currently in higher demand **56% (5)**

Perceived negative effects of COVID-19 measures on business, as reported by 25 respondents³¹:

Supplier prices have increased **76% (19)**
Lower amount of daily sales **72% (18)**
Difficulties in obtaining new supplies **52% (13)**
Reduction in demand overall **44% (11)**
Fear of getting sick from running the business **16% (4)**

97% (n=36) of traders reported that they had implemented government-recommended hygiene measures for customers and staff at the time of data collection.

Type of government-recommended hygiene measures implemented in shops, as reported by 35 respondents³²:

Use of facemasks **80% (28)**
Use of antibacterial gel **71% (25)**
Limiting the number of persons in the shop at any one time **66% (23)**
Use of gloves **51% (18)**
Providing customers with hand-washing facilities **40% (14)**

Reported change in payment methods in shops since official COVID-19 measures were implemented:

No **69% (25)**
Yes **31% (11)**



Accepted payment methods at the time of data collection, as reported by 11 respondents³³:

Cash (Colombian Pesos) **46% (5)**
Bank cards **46% (5)**
On credit **27% (3)**
Vouchers/government coupons **18% (2)**
Humanitarian organisation cards **18% (2)**

²⁹ Of the one respondent who reported that the official COVID-19 measures had no effect on their business, it was reported that they expected to face challenges during the measures, such as theft or robbery of their business or high prices from suppliers.

³⁰ Please note that respondents could choose multiple response options for this indicator.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid

Rapid Market Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Local Markets in Colombia

Key Findings: Traders

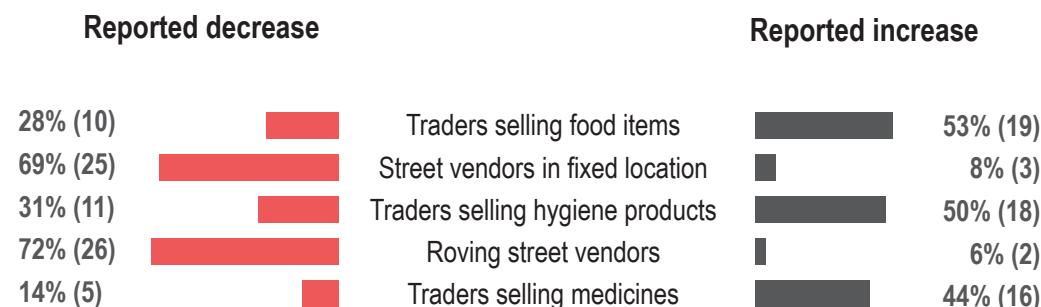
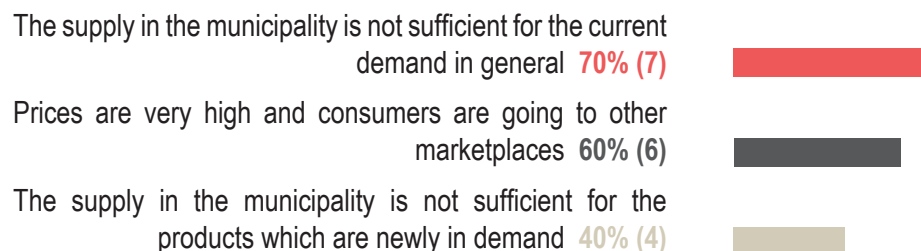


IMPACT OF COVID-19 MEASURES ON MARKET CAPACITY AND FUNCTIONALITY

67% of traders felt that markets have the capacity to meet current demand.
(n=24)

Proportion of respondents reporting perceived changes in type and number of traders, by type of traders:

Main reasons given for the perception that the market does not have the capacity to meet current demand, as reported by 10 traders:



About REACH's COVID-19 response

As an initiative deployed in many vulnerable and crisis-affected countries, REACH is deeply concerned by the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the millions of affected people we seek to serve. REACH is currently working with Cash Working Groups and partners to scale up its programming in response to this pandemic, with the goal of identifying practical ways to inform humanitarian responses in the countries where we operate. COVID-19-relevant market monitoring and market assessments are a key area where REACH aims to leverage its existing expertise to help humanitarian actors understand the impact of changing restrictions on markets and trade. Updates regarding REACH's response to COVID-19 can be found in a devoted thread on the [REACH website](https://reach-initiatives.org/). Contact geneva@impact-initiatives.org for further information.

Participating Partners:

