
Global Bodies Warn Of "Worldwide Food Crisis" In Wake Of Coronavirus

By: NDTV
01/04/2020



Paris: The heads of three global agencies warned Wednesday of the risk of a worldwide "food shortage" if authorities fail to manage the ongoing coronavirus crisis properly.

Many governments around the world have put their populations on lockdown causing severe slow-downs in international trade and food supply chains.

Panic buying by people going into confinement has already demonstrated the fragility of supply chains as supermarket shelves emptied in many countries.

"Uncertainty about food availability can spark a wave of export restrictions, creating a shortage on the global market," said the joint text signed by Qu Dongyu, head of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Roberto Azevedo, director of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

"In the midst of the COVID-19 lockdowns, every effort must be made to ensure that trade flows as freely as possible, specially to avoid food shortage(s)" from developing, they said in their statement.

"When acting to protect the health and well-being of their citizens, countries should ensure that any trade-related measures do not disrupt the food supply chain," they added.

Over the longer term confinement orders and travel restrictions risk causing disruptions in agricultural production due to the unavailability of agricultural labour and the inability to get food to markets.

"Such disruptions including hampering the movement of agricultural and food industry workers and extending border delays for food containers, result in the spoilage of perishables and increasing food waste," said the three

leaders.

They also stressed the need to protect employees engaged in food production, processing and distribution, both for their own health and that of others, as well as to maintain food supply chains.

"It is at times like these that more, not less, international cooperation is essential," they said.

"We must ensure that our response to COVID-19 does not unintentionally create unwarranted shortages of essential items and exacerbate hunger and malnutrition."
