

COVID-19, Domestic Agricultural Supply Chain and Food Security: The Case of Fiji

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1. Introduction

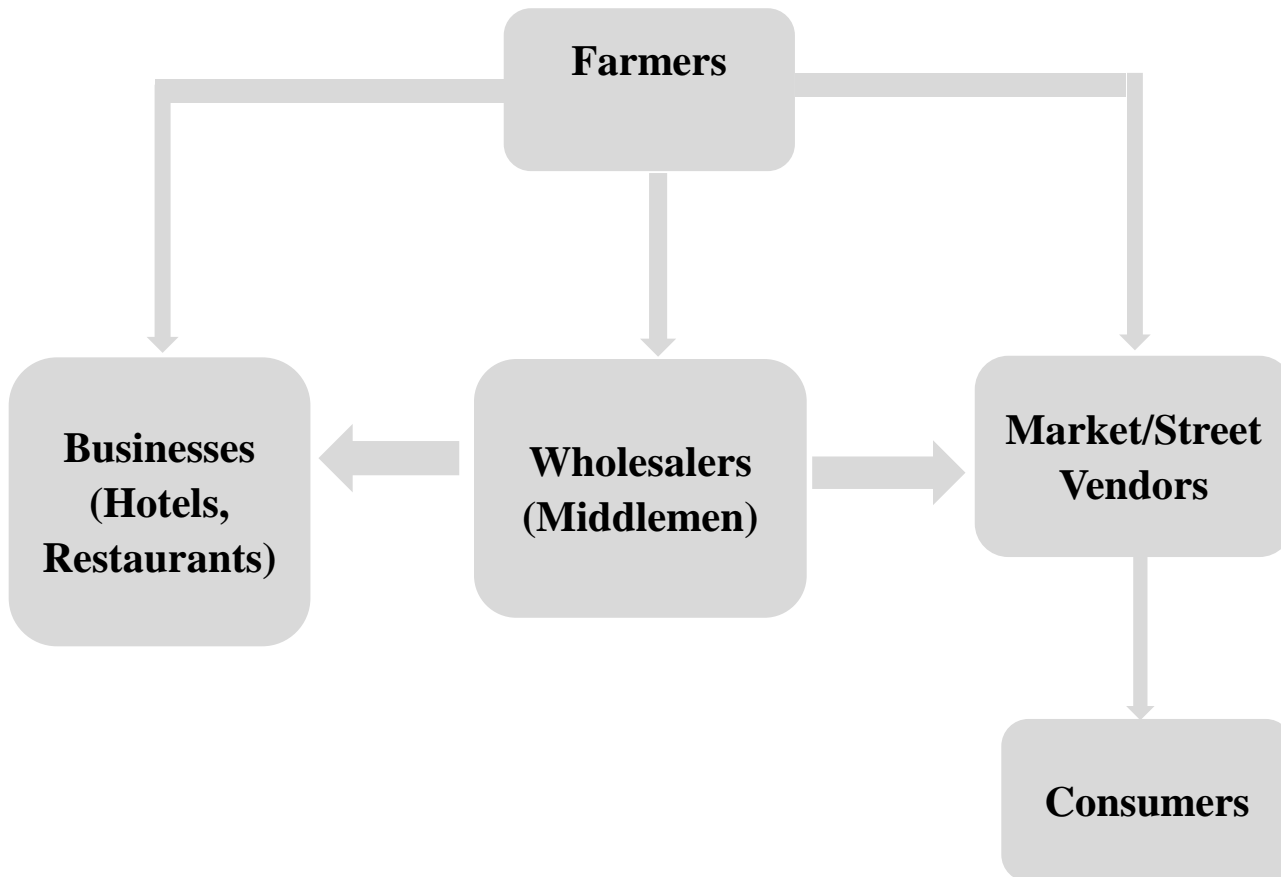
- Apart from international supply chains, the domestic supply chains for locally grown perishable produce such as vegetables, root crops and fruits have also been impacted in many countries due to COVID-19 related restrictions - health and safety restrictions such as lockdowns and overnight curfews (FAO, 2020).
- During the lockdown periods in Fiji, farmers and market vendors from rural areas were unable to supply directly to consumers in urban centers due to movement restrictions (arising from containment zones and other restrictions).
- Impact of COVID-19 restrictions on domestic agricultural supply chains in Fiji by using Sigatoka Valley (the main vegetable production center of Fiji) and the municipal market in Sigatoka town as a case study.

2. Case Study – Sigatoka Valley

- Survey of farmers and market vendors was carried out to collect data to map out key challenges faced by farmers and vendors in either producing or sourcing produce for forward flow or selling.
- Sigatoka Valley is the main vegetable growing area in Fiji.
- Sigatoka is also one of Fiji's main destination for foreign tourists.
 - Hotels in Sigatoka, usually referred to as located in the Coral Coast, received 20% of all expenditure by tourists in hotels in Fiji (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2020).
 - Hotels in Coral Coast spent around F\$10 million to purchase local agricultural produce (IFC, 2018).

3. Survey

Figure 1: Domestic Agricultural Supply Chain

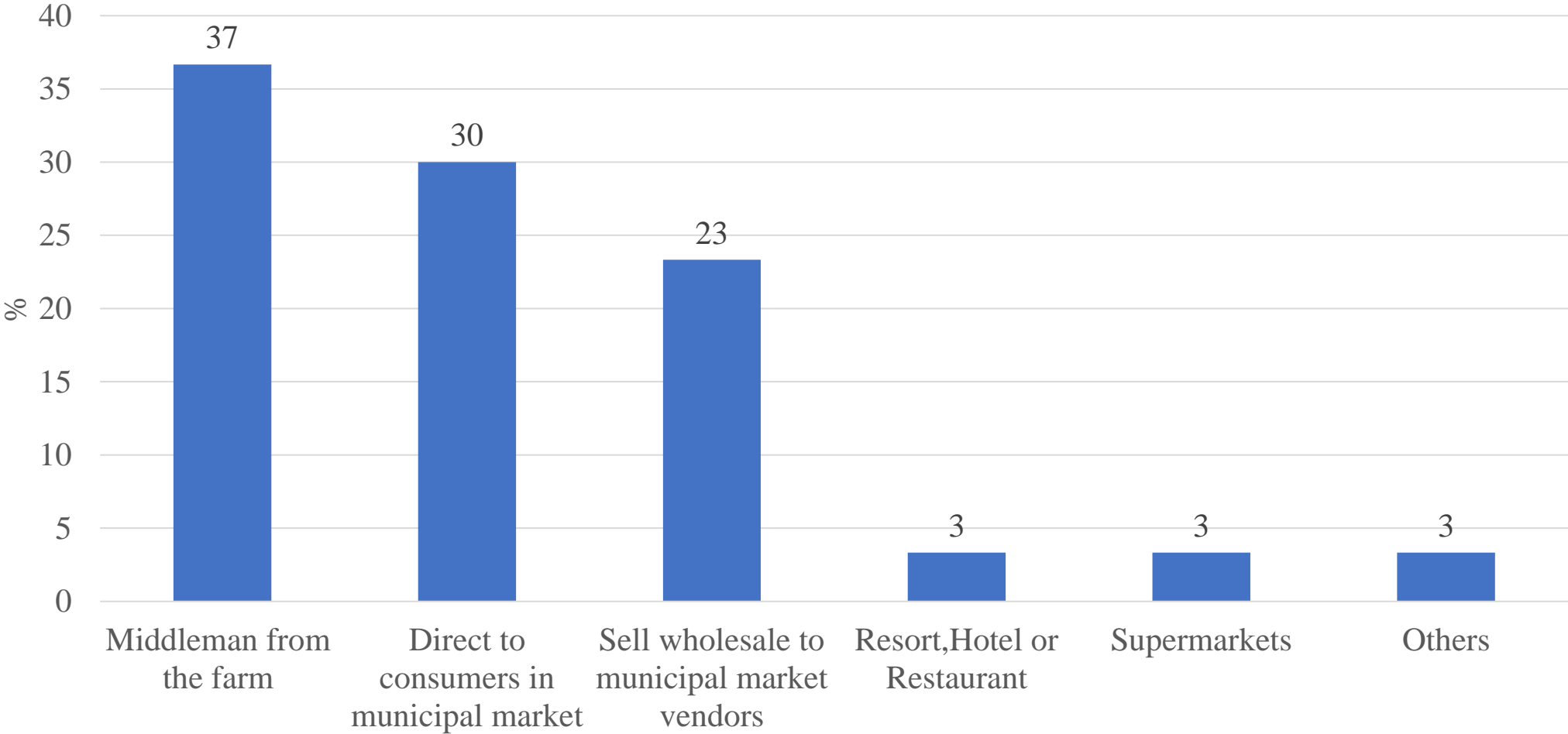


Sample:

- Survey undertaken in Sigatoka municipal market and Sigatoka Valley in December 2020.
- Farmer survey: conducted at the house of farmers in the evenings to avoid disturbance to farm activities.
- Market vendor survey: conducted in Sigatoka municipal market during market operating hours.
- Farmers = 30 (5% of the total active farmers).
- Market Vendors = 63 (34% female)/238 permanent vendors.

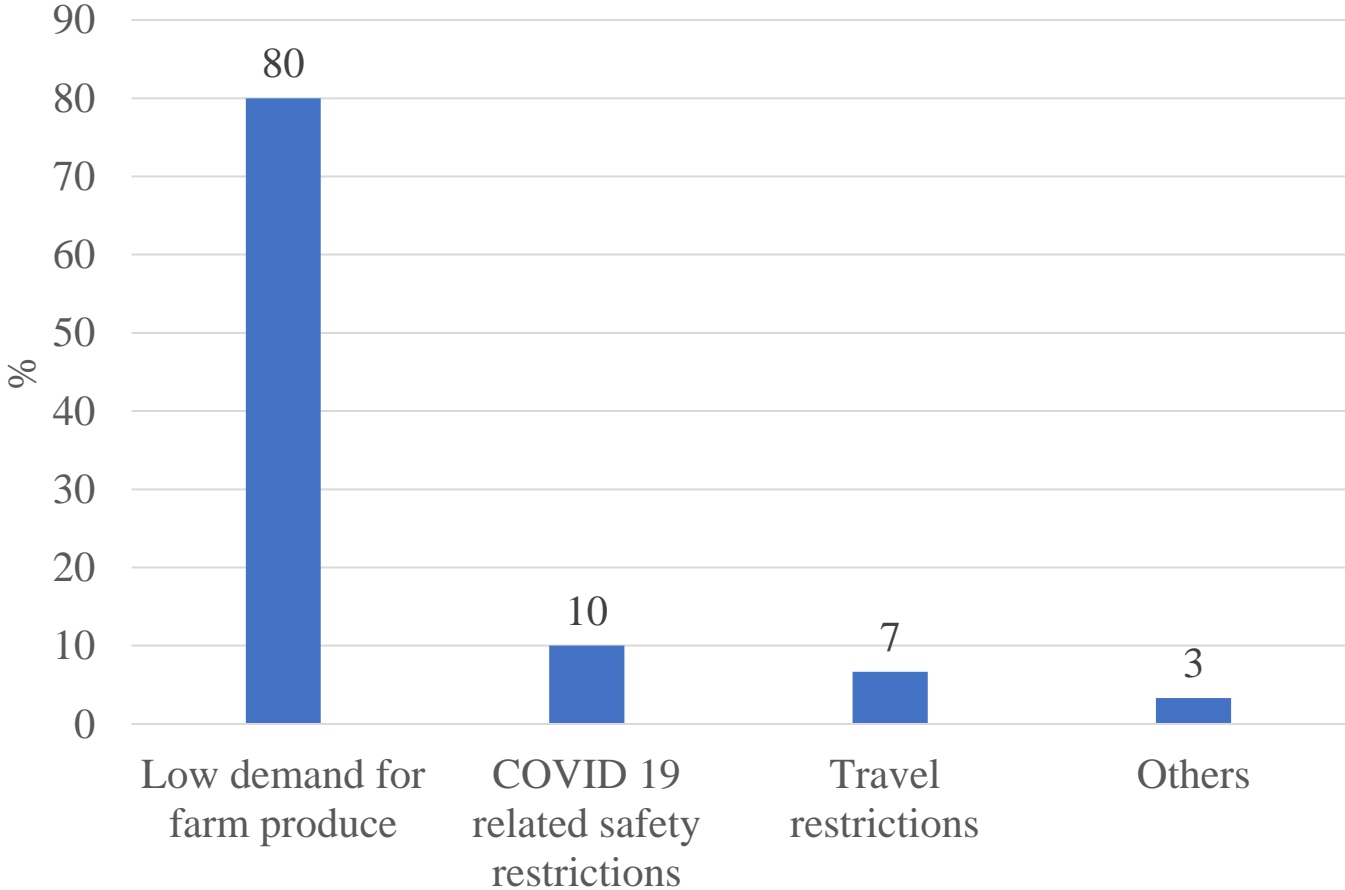
4. Results – Survey of Farmers

Figure 2: How did you normally sold your produce before COVID-19 (April 2020)?



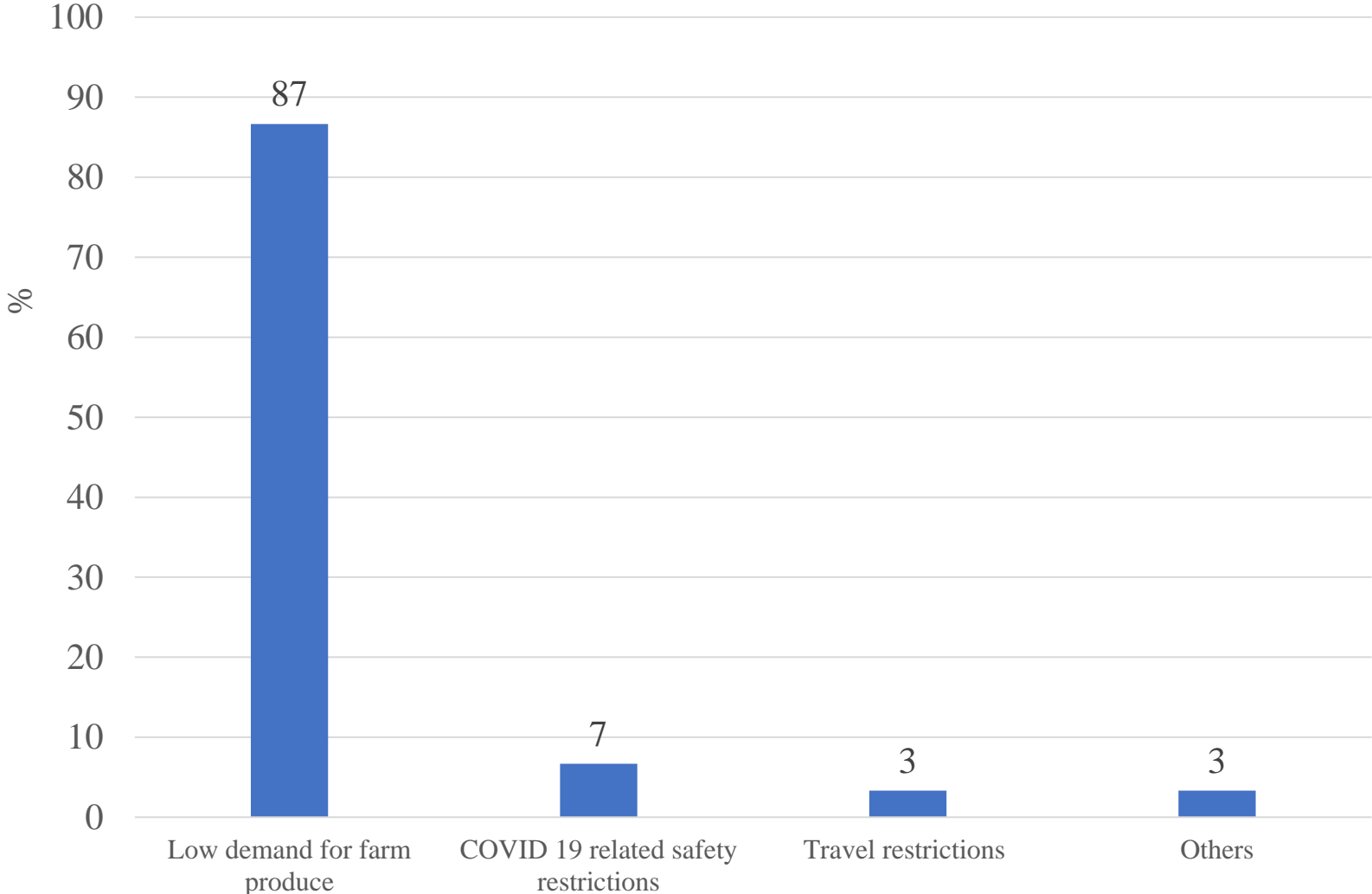
4. Results – Survey of Farmers

Figure 3: Factors that most affected your farm and farm income in the last month



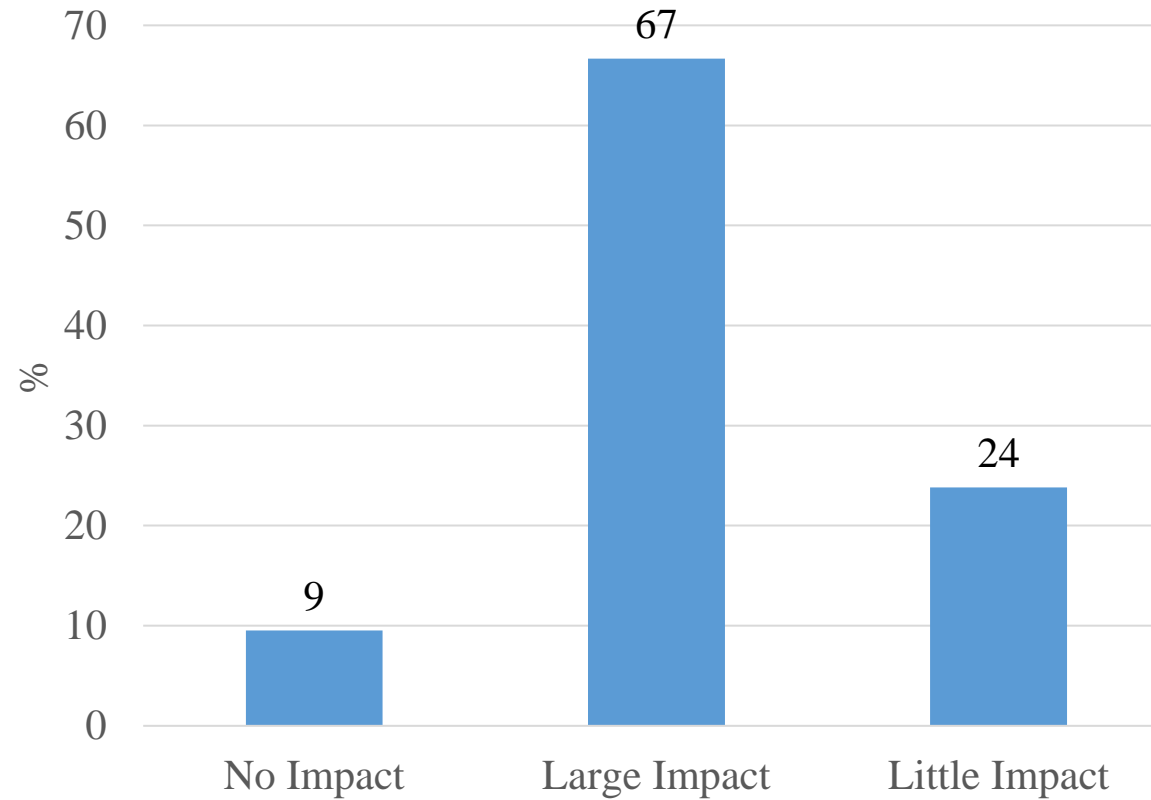
4. Results – Survey of Farmers

Figure 4: Factors that most affected your farm and farm income in the last 12 months



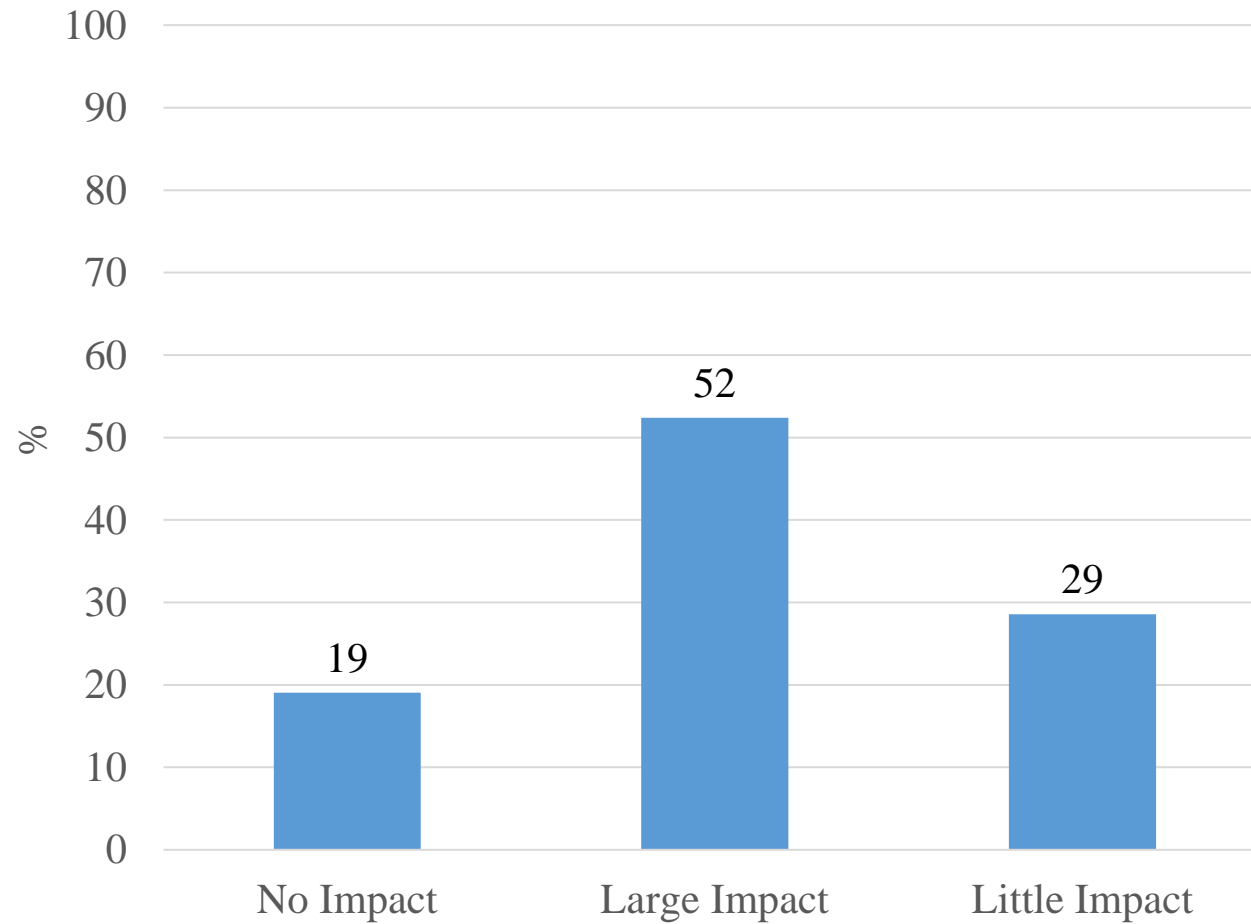
5. Results – Survey of Market Vendors

Figure 5: Impact of Closure of Tourism Industry



6. Results – Survey of Market Vendors

Figure 6 Impact of Reduced Market Operation Hours



6. Policy Implications

- Disruptions emerging from COVID-19 and related restrictions have impacted both demand and supply, and subsequently loss of farmer and market vendor incomes:
 - Adverse shocks on incomes arising from COVID-19: policymakers should ensure timely support to farmers and market vendors. Smallholder farmers and majority of market vendors have strong dependence on farming incomes for their livelihoods. The impact of COVID-19 is very different from other shocks as it has been ongoing for 18 months now.
 - Supply has been disrupted due to containment zones and health related restrictions: it would be useful to have an agricultural supply system that is set up to serve a broad range of consumers in urban areas. Containment zone borders can lead to delays that are damaging to perishable goods – bottlenecks causing delays, increasing postharvest losses and raising costs.

6. Policy Implications

- Food security and agricultural supply chains are interlinked, especially for vulnerable households in urban areas. Policy emphasis thus needs to ensure agricultural food systems continue to provide vegetables, fruits and root crops to households in rural and urban areas. This is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Targets 2.1 and 2.2 which recognizes ensuring access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all people all year round, and of eradicating all forms of malnutrition.
- SDG 2 also seeks to double the incomes of smallholder farmers through SDG 2.3. Agriculture sector is important to Fiji but faces increasing threats from climate change, environmental degradation and diseases impacting plants and livestock. In this regard, policy support and fundamental structural changes are needed for the agriculture sector, where majority of the poor are concentrated (Gounder, 2020).

Thank you