

“Pivoting” by food industry firms to cope with COVID-19 in developing regions: E-commerce and “copivoting” delivery intermediaries

Thomas Reardon¹ Amir Heiman² Liang Lu³ Chandra S.R. Nuthalapati⁴ Rob Vos⁵ David Zilberman⁶

Abstract

Coronavirus disease 2019 and related lockdown policies in 2020 shocked food industry firms’ supply chains in developing regions. Firms “pivoted” to e-commerce to reach consumers and e-procurement to reach processors and farmers. “Delivery intermediaries” copivoted with food firms to help them deliver and procure. This was crucial to the ability of the food firms to pivot. The pandemic was a “crucible” that induced this set of fast-tracking innovations, accelerating the diffusion of e-commerce and delivery intermediaries, and enabling food industry firms to redesign, at least temporarily, and perhaps for the long term, their supply chains to be more resilient, and to weather the pandemic, supply consumers, and contribute to food security. We present a theoretical model to explain these firm strategies, and then apply the framework to classify firms’ practical strategies. We focus on cases in Asia and Latin America. Enabling policy and infrastructural conditions allowed firms to pivot and copivot fluidly.

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¹ Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA.

² Department of Environmental Economics and Management and the Center for Agricultural Economics Research, Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Rehovot, Israel.

³ Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, USA.

⁴ Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, India.

⁵ Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, District of Columbia, USA.

⁶ Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Berkeley, California, USA.