



CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR MARITIME TRANSPORTATION



**SICA**  
Sistema de la Integración  
Centroamericana

# REPORT

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PORT OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Central American Commission for  
Maritime Transportation

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# REPORT: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PORT OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

## Introduction

In the scope of the world emergency generated by the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) with alarming levels of spread, severity of cases globally, significant growth at the regional level, and considering the maritime and port scenario, the Central American Commission for Maritime Transportation (COCATRAM) shares the results of the survey on the “Impact of COVID-19 on Port Operations in Central America and the Dominican Republic”.

This report has been prepared from a survey answered by 28 ports and terminals in Central America and the Dominican Republic from April 16<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic. At the closing date of the survey, we received no response from any port in Belize. The results shown below are representative of the situation and the impact of COVID-19 in the region. The sample represents 50% of the ports and terminals of international trade within the scope of the countries of the survey.

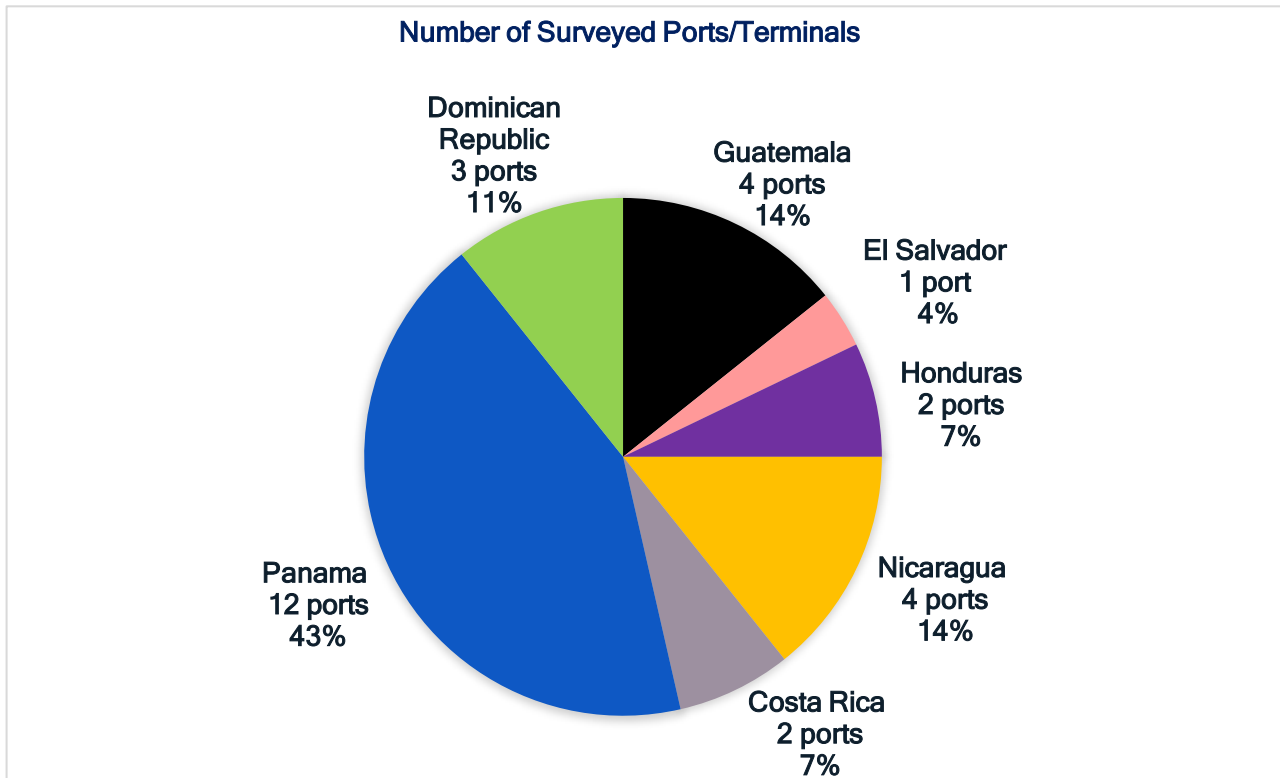
The report is structured as follows:

1. Performance of port operations in the region, facing the pandemic.
2. Detection of COVID-19 in ports / terminals.
3. Preventive actions at ports / terminals.
4. Level of impact of COVID-19 on port operations.
5. Impact prospects on the supply chain, if the period of implementation of the issued measures by national authorities is extended.
6. Recommendations of ports / terminals to the National Governments to guarantee the supply chain fluidity.
7. Conclusions.

It is expected that this report will contribute to the decision-making process of the ports / terminals and the governments of the region.

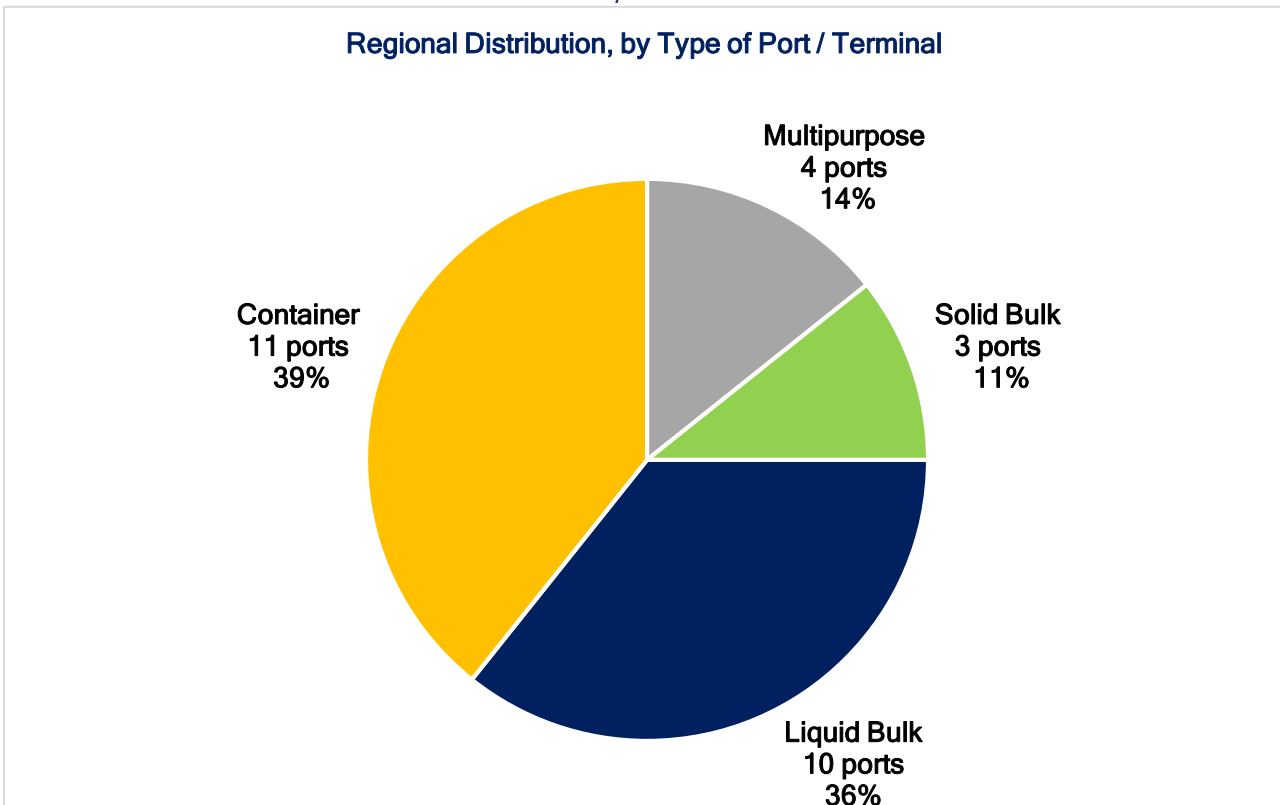
## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Graph No. 1.



Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

Graph No. 2.

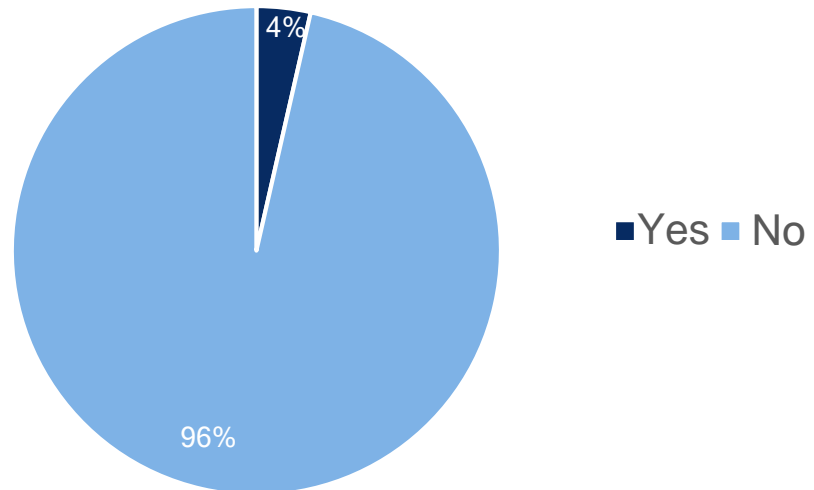


Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

## II. PERFORMANCE OF PORT OPERATIONS IN THE REGION FACING THE PANDEMIC

Graph No. 3

Has the port/terminal stopped operating at any time because of COVID-19?

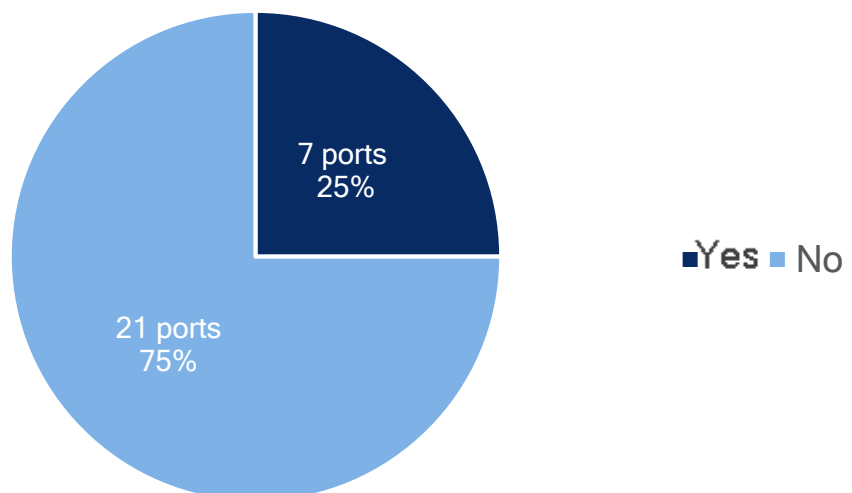


Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

Port operations in the region have had a fairly stable performance in terms of the working hours they provide. 100% of the surveyed ports / terminals indicated that they have not suspended operations at any time, despite the situation generated by COVID-19. 4% of the respondents (which only corresponds to one port) have restricted the attention hours for vessels (Graph No.3), which have been reduced by two hours a day, one in the morning and other in the afternoon, time used for the staff shift change, which involves the implementation of preventive measures against COVID-19.

Graph No. 4

Has the port/terminal restricted the hours for attending land freight transport?



Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

25% of the surveyed ports / terminals have restricted the working hours of inland cargo transportation (Graph No.4). The reduction in hours are in the ranges of 10-12 hours in Guatemala, 14-15 hours from Monday to Friday and up to 16 hours on Saturdays in the ports / terminals of Panama, and in ports / terminals of the Dominican Republic of 10 -11 hours.

Table No. 1

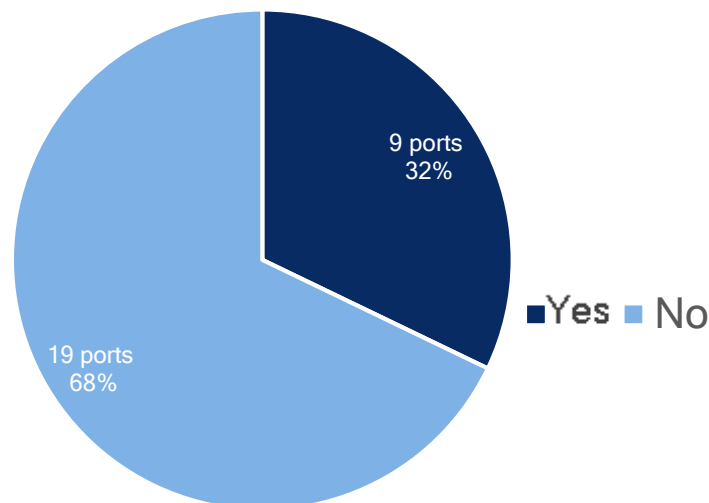
Restrictions on attention hours for land freight transport, by country		
	Ports with restrictions	Ports without restrictions
Guatemala	2	2
El Salvador	0	1
Honduras	0	2
Nicaragua	0	4
Costa Rica	0	2
Panama	3	9
Dominican Republic	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>

Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

### Working hours in ports/terminals

Graph No. 5

Are workers related to port operations (loading, unloading, stowage, among others) and administrative areas working normally?



Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

Other variations in port operations are related to the hours and work mode of port workers (loading, unloading, stowage, among others) and administrative workers, where 68% of the ports / terminals have not been working normally, mainly due to cut of working hours, vacation leave because of the COVID-19 and teleworking; while 32% have worked normally (Graph No.5).

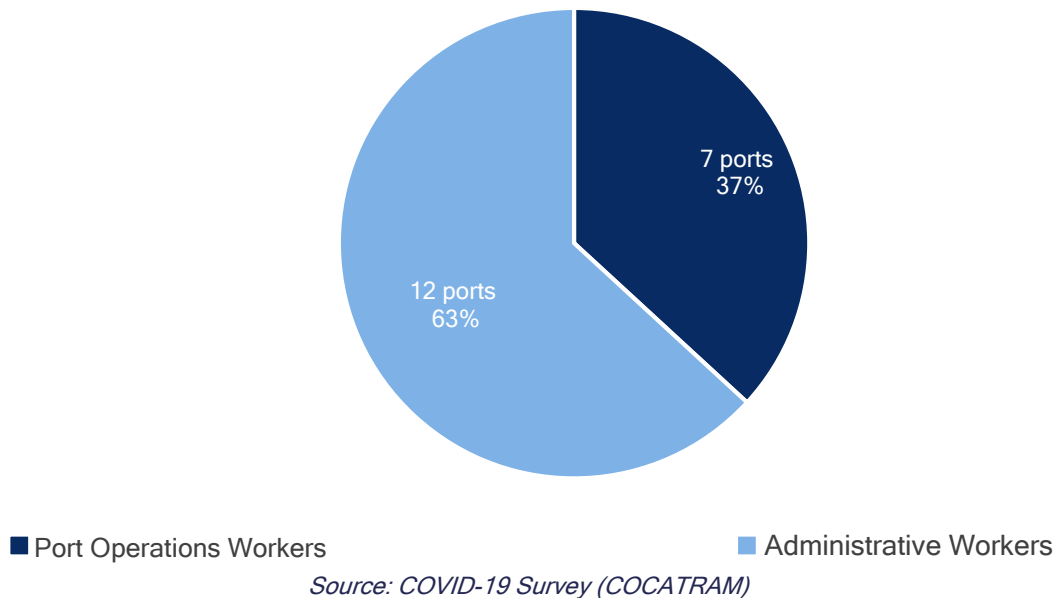
Table No. 2

Performance of Port and Administrative Operations		
	Normal	Irregular
Guatemala	1	3
El Salvador	1	0
Honduras	0	2
Nicaragua	4	0
Costa Rica	0	2
Panama	3	9
Dominican Republic	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

Graph No. 6

Impact of sanitary measures on port / terminal workers, according to their functions



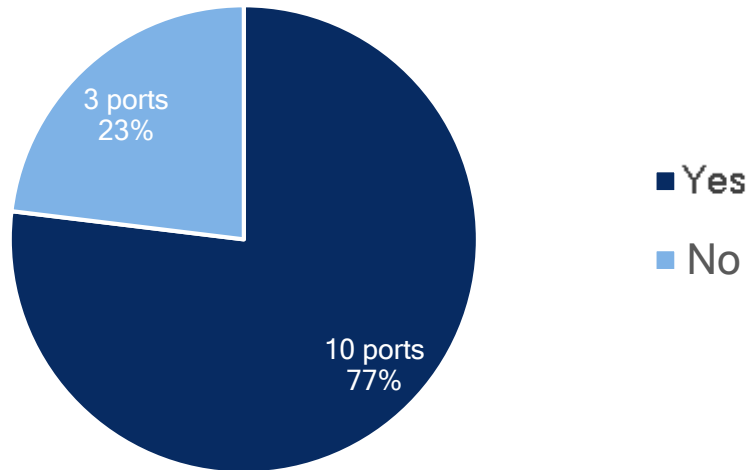
Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

From the 19 ports / terminals that have not worked normally, 63% corresponds to variations in working hours of administrative workers and 37% is due to variations in port operators working hours (Graph No.6); showing that the administrative area has been the most affected.

## MARPOL Waste Reception

Graph No. 7

Does the port/terminal continue receiving MARPOL waste from ships?



Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

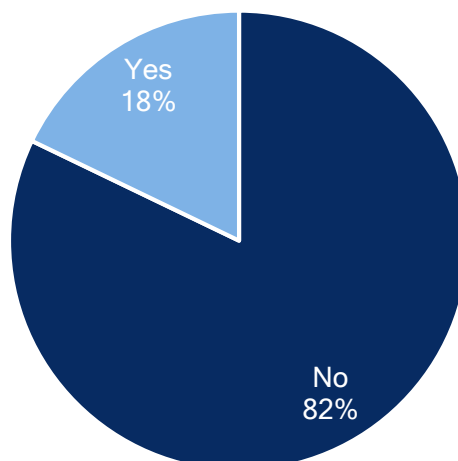
A segment of the services offered in ports / terminals correspond to the reception of MARPOL waste. In the surveyed ports and terminals, 53% do not offer these services, while 47% (13 ports / terminals) do offer them. Of this latter percentage, 77% (10 ports / terminals) still continue to provide the service without interruption, while 23% (3 ports / terminals) have temporarily suspended it (Graph No.7).

### III. DETECTION OF COVID-19 IN PORTS/TERMINALS

#### In port workers

Graph No. 8

Has a port/terminal worker been detected with COVID-19 symptoms?

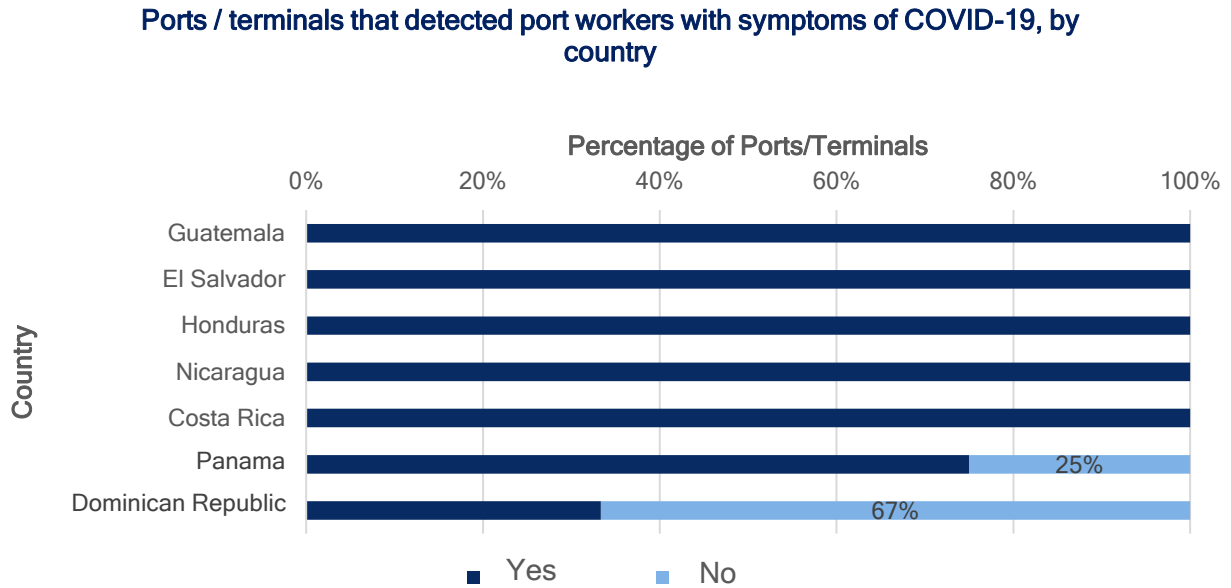


Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)



As a result of the prevention and control measures of COVID-19 in port facilities, 82% of ports / terminals in Central America and the Dominican Republic had not detected workers with symptoms of COVID-19; while 18% had registered cases (Graph No.8).

Graph No. 9



*Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)*

18% correspond to ports / terminals in Panama and the Dominican Republic (Graph No.9), whose number of diagnosed workers were 6 and 5, respectively. The detection dates range from the last week of March for Panama to the second week of March, and April in two different terminals in the Dominican Republic.

In this situation, ports / terminals of Panama and Dominican Republic have implemented the guidelines of their health authorities, reporting the cases, proceeding to house quarantine of the symptomatic worker as well as the staff who came into contact with him and carrying out the protocol sanitation area and work equipment.

### **In vessels crew**

So far, only one case of COVID-19 has been detected in vessels crew, reported from a port in the Dominican Republic. In such eventuality, the port proceeded to report the case, according to the protocol of the Ministry of Public Health and the Dominican Port Authority. From this moment, the Ministry of Public Health began its protocol to receive and treat the patient, assuming responsibility for it.

## IV. PREVENTIVE ACTIONS AT PORTS/TERMINALS

Illustration No. 1

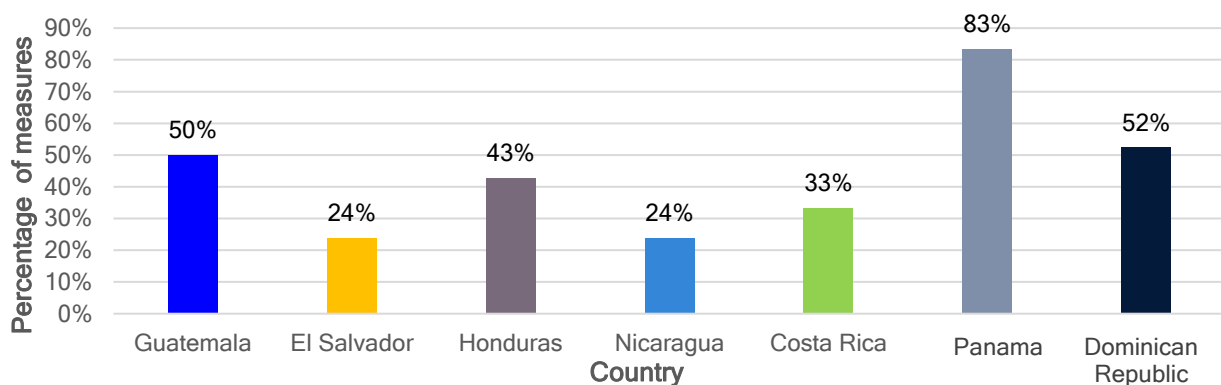
Measures taken on larger scale	Measures taken on a smaller scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of masks.</li> <li>• Fever temperature control.</li> <li>• Frequent hand washing.</li> <li>• Installation of additional hand washing stations.</li> <li>• Additional soap dispensers.</li> <li>• Gel alcohol dispenser.</li> <li>• Social distancing measures in cafeterias, buses and waiting lines.</li> <li>• Frequent misting of areas and equipment.</li> <li>• Prohibition disembarking of crews.</li> <li>• Port entry restrictions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desinfection of facilities based on quaternary ammonium or spray tunnels.</li> <li>• Vehicule spray with disinfectant solution.</li> <li>• Administrative licenses paid to risk workers and/or over 60 years of age.</li> <li>• Facilitate transportation for staff.</li> <li>• Increase surveillance in susceptible areas.</li> <li>• Greater control over ship itineraries.</li> <li>• Daily communication with health authorities.</li> <li>• Creation of protocols for response to symptoms of COVID-19.</li> <li>• Contractor job reduction.</li> <li>• Implementation of contingency plans.</li> </ul>

Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

The preventive measures used in ports / terminals in Central America and the Dominican Republic, both in operational and administrative areas, are aligned with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). See Illustration No.1.

Graph No. 10

Proportion of measures implemented, by country



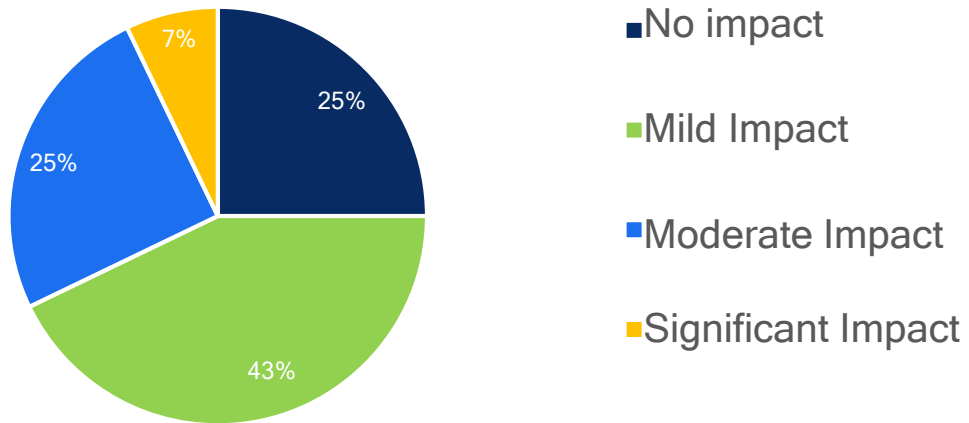
Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

However, the proportion of measures implemented in each country varies depending on government regulations and port / terminal guidelines, highlighting Panama as the country with the highest number of preventive actions with 83% of the measures in the Region, followed by the Dominican Republic and Guatemala (Graphic No.10).

## V. LEVEL OF IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PORT OPERATIONS

### Impact of COVID-19 on service levels in port operations

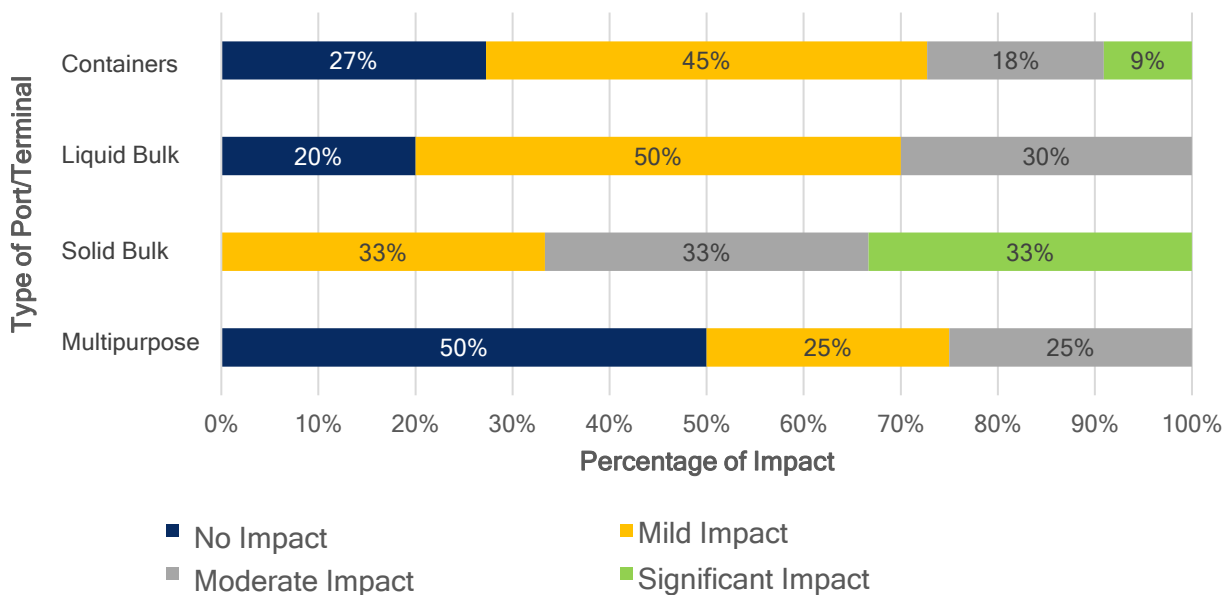
*Graph No. 11*  
**How does the current situation of COVID-19 impact on the service levels of its operation?**



*Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)*

The outcome of the survey on the levels of service of the port operation shows the following levels of impact: none 25%, mild 43%, moderate 25% and significant 7%, in general, mainly related to variations and restrictions in schedules and forms of work (Graph No.11).

*Graph No. 12*  
**Impact of the COVID-19 situation on operating service levels, by type of port / terminal**



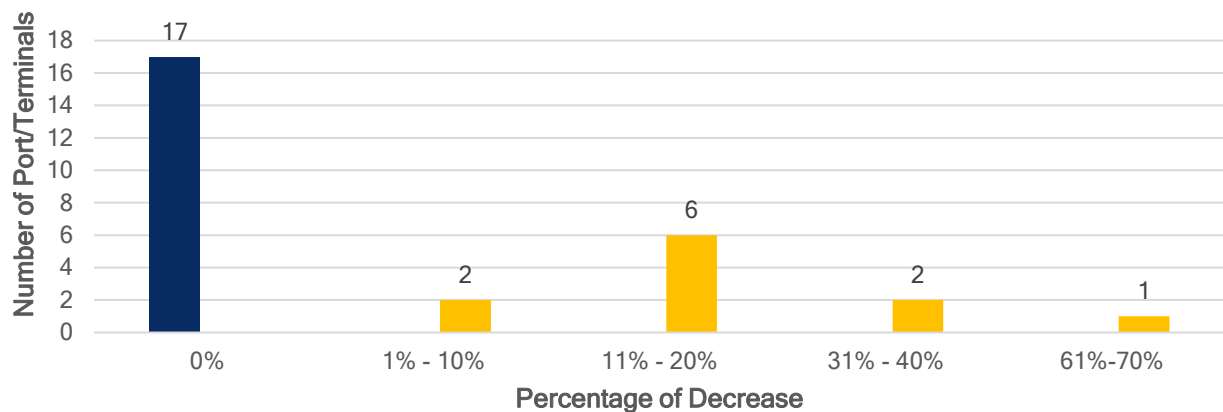
*Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)*

Considering the type of cargo, those ports / terminals that receive containers and liquid bulk, mostly, stated that the impact of the situation of COVID-19 on its operation levels has been mild, while in ports / terminals that move solid bulk, the impact is considered mild to significant and in the multipurpose ports / terminals the majority of the respondents indicated that there has been no impact on their service levels (Graph No. 12).

### Impact of COVID-19 in cargo throughput

Graph No. 13.

#### Has the cargo throughput at the port/terminal currently decreased?

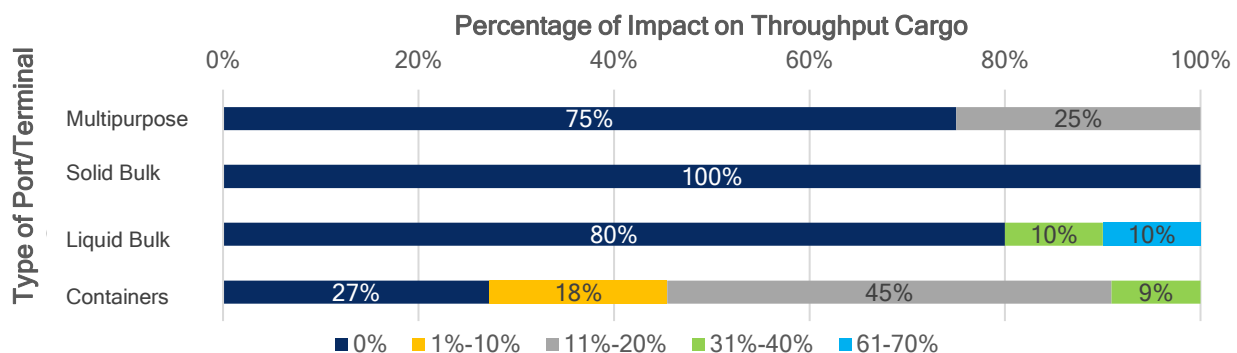


Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

61% of the surveyed ports / terminals indicated that they have not decreased their cargo throughput, while 39% have experienced it. 21.3% of ports / terminals decreased 11% - 20% of their cargo throughput, while 7.1% in the range of 1% -10% decrease, on the other hand 7.1% decreased 31% -40 % and 3.5% of ports in a range of 61% -70% (Graph No.13). The ports that responded with the highest cargo throughput reduction are located in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama.

Graph No. 14.

#### COVID-19 impact on cargo throughput, by port / terminal type



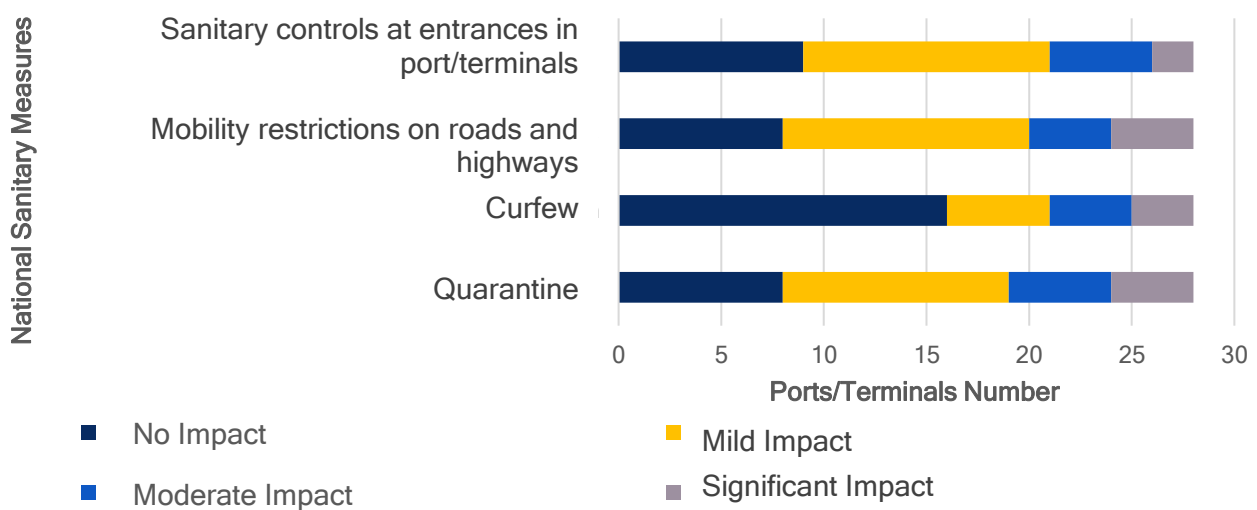
Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

Considering the type of ports / terminal, the results show that in most of the multipurpose ports / terminals, solid bulk and liquid bulk, no variations in cargo volumes were experienced, while in the case of ports / terminals that receive containers, a significant percentage presented variations between 11% -20% (See Graph No.14).

### Impact of national sanitary measures in ports/terminals

Graph No. 15

How have national sanitary measures for the prevention of COVID-19 affected your port / terminal?



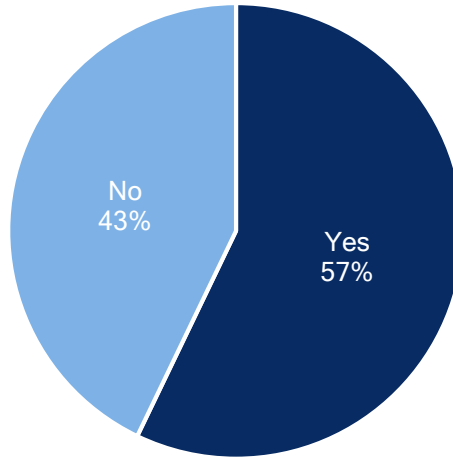
Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

The impact of the sanitary measures recommended by national authorities has been mild to none in port operations (Graph No.15), because their most critical activities have remained unchanged, and the support activities plus others done remotely, have been performed with or without schedule variations.

## VI. IMPACT PROPECTS ON THE SUPPLY CHAIN, IF THE PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISSUED MEASURES BY THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES IS EXTENDED

Graph No. 16

If the preventive measures taken by the national authorities are extended, will the fluidity of the supply chain be affected?

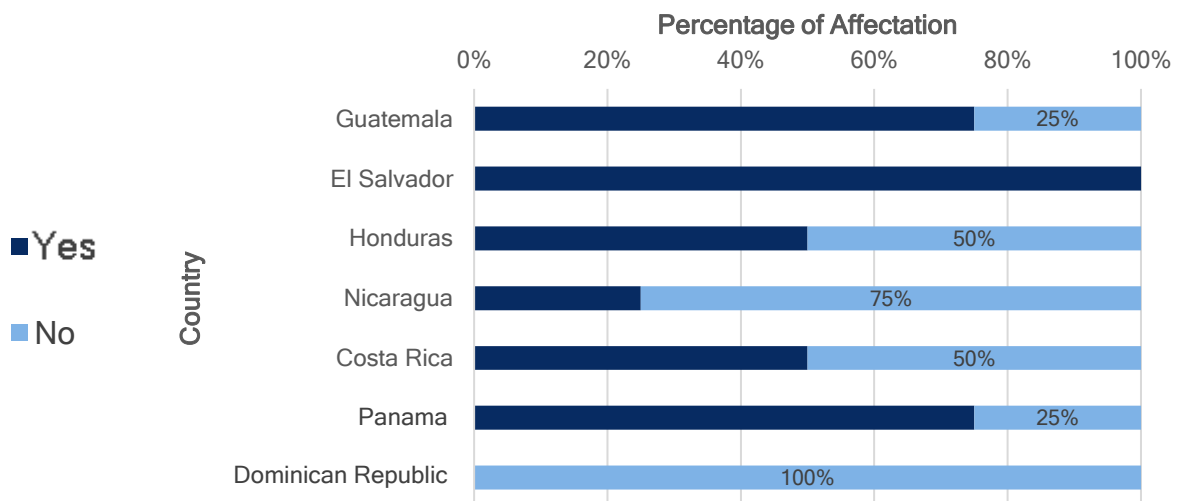


Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

57% of the ports / terminals responded that, in the long term, the adoption of these measures would affect the supply chain (Graph No.16) causing shortages of specific products, delays in deliveries, inventory build-up (effects on the internal movement of containers), among others.

Graph No. 17

Effects on supply chain fluidity by country



Source: COVID-19 Survey (COCATRAM)

The impact prospect on damage in the supply chain, considering the country, is shown in Graph No.17.

In general, the surveyed ports / terminals indicated that the limitation in the movement of people would cause a demand reduction for goods and, consequently, would affect the internal movement of containers and, therefore, vessels, the impossibility of importers to operate their businesses would reduce the flow and access to merchandise. On the other hand, the agility of the port services would be affected due to the social distancing measures and the delays in customs procedures caused by the restriction of the working hours of public personnel, necessary to approve these processes.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF PORTS/TERMINALS TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO GUARANTEE THE SUPPLY CHAIN FLUIDITY

Given the aforementioned scenario, the ports / terminals have suggested certain initiatives that could be implemented by the national authorities of each country:

### *Guatemala*

- Guarantee the proper flow of heavy cargo.
- Follow up on road restrictions.
- Continue with the free mobilization of port workers.

### *El Salvador*

- Enable companies, regardless of their line of business, to remove their import containers, even if they are not allowed to produce, so that saturation in ports / terminals will be alleviated.

### *Honduras*

- Review logistics chains of ports and terminals providers to help them resume and maintain services.

### *Nicaragua*

- Continue to maintain the production dynamics - commercial exchange (national / international) in the country, so that there will not be food shortage.
- Ensure that the Health System Regulations (based on international standards) are followed in a very conscious way and with high citizen participation.
- Proper Security (national / citizen) and Territorial Integrity.

### *Costa Rica*

- Reduce the vehicle restriction to increase the demand for goods and reduce the saturation of containers in ports / terminals.
- In relation to the other prevention measures before COVID-19, continue its implementation, guaranteeing the mobility of port personnel, the fundamental link in the supply chain.

***Panama***

- Enable the circulation of logistics support companies to port operations, which carry out maintenance, repairs and facilities that are priority and critical to the operation.
- Continue to allow local cargo to be processed outside ports / terminals to avoid the increasing use of the container yard, which will eventually inhibit efficient operations.
- Establish parameters to avoid further cargo release delays.
- Continue solidarity subsidies, for people who are not working; so that demand for consumer goods will be guaranteed and therefore, cargo mobility in ports / terminals.
- Increase serological tests / evaluate level of measurements.
- Improve digital platforms for permits and licenses.
- Improve coordination between committees: logistics / health / safety.
- Control in the issuance of quarantine waivers.

***Dominican Republic***

- Continue providing transport unions, cargo stevedores, cargo and related unions with preventive clothing.
- Continue to consider ports / terminals as the fundamental link in economic activity; providing quarantine waivers for dock workers.

## **VIII. CONCLUSIONS**

- ✓ Despite the crisis caused by COVID-19, ports / terminals in Central America and the Dominican Republic have not closed operations as they are considered to be fundamental links in the countries' supply chain.
- ✓ The hours of attention to land freight transport have been more restricted than the hours of attention to vessels.
- ✓ Port worker mode and working hours have varied since the crisis began, especially in the administrative area.
- ✓ The MARPOL waste services in ports / terminals continue relatively stable. 77% of these continue to offer this service.
- ✓ Few port workers have been detected with symptoms of COVID-19.
- ✓ The preventive measures used in ports / terminals in both operational and administrative areas are aligned with the health recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO).



- ✓ The use of masks, facilities and supplies for hand washing, as well as isolation measures are the most frequently implemented prevention measures in ports / terminals.
- ✓ The ports / terminals with the highest number of preventive measures correspond to Panama.
- ✓ 67% of ports / terminals consider that the impact of the sanitary measures on the service levels of the port operation is between null and mild.
- ✓ The impact on cargo volume in ports / terminals has been considered null in 61% of them, but 39% have experienced reduction in a range of 1% -20%.
- ✓ The impact of national sanitary measures in ports / terminals has been considered mild to null due to the issuance of safe-conducts that facilitate the exercise of functions by its workers.
- ✓ 57% of ports / terminals stated that, in the long term, the continuation of these measures would affect the supply chain, causing shortages of specific products, delays in deliveries, inventory build-up (effects on the internal movement of containers), among others.
- ✓ Recommendations to government authorities focus on the consideration of ports / terminals as essential organizations for the supply of intermediate and final consumer goods; so as to ensure the continuity of their work.