



iFood is partnering with Brazilian e-bike company Tembici on a special programme just for couriers | Photo source Tembici

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BRAZILIAN FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE PIVOTS TO E-BIKES AMIDST COVID PANDEMIC



MOBILITY & TRANSPORT

iFood is partnering with an e-bike company to provide subsidised rentals to its couriers, allowing it to expand its staff

Spotted: Brazilian food delivery service iFood has announced that it is launching an e-bike programme for its couriers in Sao Paulo. iFood will partner with mobility company Tembici to provide e-bikes starting at a flat weekly fee of R\$11.90 (around €1.80). The programme will also provide access to manual bikes through the Bike Samba's Itaú app.

The rental fee will include up to two trips per day, lasting up to four hours each, although there must be a four-hour interval between Couriers wanting to rent for longer will pay R\$5 (about €0.77) per hour. Couriers in the programme take a short course on how to use and take care of the bikes, as well as basic instruction on avoiding COVID-19.

The bikes will be available to couriers through local “support points”, which will also include a place for couriers to rest, recharge their phones, use the bathroom and buy water or coffee. The programme will also provide helmets, masks and hand sanitiser. All of the electric bikes have pedal assist, which is a must in hilly São Paulo.

The programme is starting with a pilot of 20 bikes but has plans to expand to 500 e-bikes by the end of the year. If successful, iFood could launch similar programs in some of the hundreds of other cities in which it delivers. The bikes are not only a way to reduce emissions but are also crucial to the hiring of more drivers. Diego Barreto, CFO and VP of strategy for iFood, [points out that](#), “There are people that are unemployed, that don't have money currently to afford a motorcycle”, and this is an incentive for them.

The novel coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the trend of food delivery and led companies to focus on ways to become more efficient. Earlier this year, we wrote about iFood gaining permission to use [drones to deliver](#) food from a food court to a hub, for onward delivery by courier. Other delivery innovations include [delivery by robot](#) and [superfast](#) grocery delivery.

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Takeaway:

In addition to reducing emissions, iFood is hoping the e-bike scheme will encourage more women to work as couriers. The pilot is designed to provide data that will help show iFood where e-bikes represent a feasible alternative to motorcycles. São Paulo was chosen for the pilot, in part, because the city has recently invested in new bike lanes and biking is becoming more popular there. A few e-bikes may seem like a drop in the bucket, but iFood delivers around 40 million orders each month – and that’s a lot of driving. If the scheme works, it may also encourage other delivery companies to follow suit.