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Organisation panafricaine des agriculteurs
المنظمة الإفريقية للفلاحين



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AFRICAN FARMERS

STUDY OCTOBER, 2020

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE FARMERS AND RESPONSES ALREADY IN PLACE OR RECOMMENDED



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This study report is based on an analytical consolidation of studies done by all the five (5) Pan-African Farmers Organization (PAFO) Member Networks in their respective regions. These are: The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) covering the eastern region; Plateforme Régionale des organisations paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC) covering the central region; Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA) covering the western region; Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) covering the southern region; and Union Maghrébine et nord-Africaine des Agriculteurs (UMNAGRI) covering the northern region.



It was commissioned by PAFO to assess the effect of COVID-19 on African farmers and the needed appropriate responses.

In addition to the regional reports, questionnaires were also sent to the PAFO members network and on this basis more information was provided in regard to relevant interventions that are being implemented in the respective regions. Furthermore, the PAFO Secretariat staff in Kigali provided overall guidance throughout the process and shared valuable insights that enabled the analysis to be carried out meaningfully.

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PAFO Secretariat
Kigali, Rwanda

DISCLAIMER

The views and information contained within this study report are provided for informational purposes and for policymakers and decision makers on the African continent to make appropriate decisions. The report represents the current good-faith views of PAFO and its members' network at the time of publication.

This study report is intended only to provide general and preliminary information on how farmers on the African continent were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and needed appropriate interventions to support farmers in the aftermath. It is not intended as a personal recommendation of a particular financial or investment decision and thus it does not provide individually tailored investment advice of any kind.

This study was carried out and is edited thanks to the FO4ACP project. Unless expressly stated, opinions in this study are those of PAFO and not of partners.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
CNCR	Conseil National de Concertation et de coopération des Ruraux
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
EAFF	Eastern Africa Farmers Federation
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LDC	Least Developed Country
NFOs	National Farmers' Organizations
PAFO	Pan African Farmers Organization
PROPAC	Plateforme Régionale des organisations paysannes d'Afrique Centrale
ROPFA	Reseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
SACAU	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
TFTA	Tripartite Free Trade Area
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UMAGRI	Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
US	United States
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY REPORT

The study report on the impact of covid-19 on African farmers was commissioned by the Panafrican Farmers' Organization (PAFO), to assess the effect of COVID-19 on African farmers and the needed appropriate responses. The issues covered herein take cognizance of the realities in all the five (5) PAFO Member Networks across the continent. According to the study report, farming activities were among those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and related measures that were put in place to stop its spread. In most African countries various related measures (some very stringent) were imposed for a period of about three (3) which included; the closure of borders, the cessation or to a lesser extent the suspension of certain activities and internal movements within countries, leading to a drop in income for the populations, and therefore loss of wages for workers, including for farmers and their families.

Basically, the study report highlights (brings to attention) the extent of the Covid-19 impact on the African farmers and calls on the respective governments as well as partners and stakeholders to work towards implementing the proposed recommendations. Common challenges are presented and appropriate recommendations are proposed. The recommendations are presented in a separate document (a Position Paper) and there are proposals that will be used as points of advocacy in an effort to improve the lives and welfare of African farmers.

The common challenges range from market disruptions, decreased income, anticipated loss of jobs and livelihoods due to increased food insecurity to anticipated decrease in production due to disruption of the upcoming planting seasons.

Key include ;

1. Market disruptions due to the imposed lockdown measures and other related restrictions
2. Disruptions on working time and availability of agricultural inputs
3. Challenges related to labor availability
4. Low levels and capacities of processing agricultural products
5. Disruption of agricultural advisory and related support
6. Covid-19 as an added challenge, among others, for cross-border markets for farm products
7. Anticipated loss of jobs and livelihoods due to increased food insecurity
8. Anticipated decrease in production due to disruption of the upcoming planting seasons

In light of the common challenges, the recommendations herein presented are meant to address the issues at two levels, namely; urgent and long term measures. The first four (4) recommendations are urgent measures in relation to the direct impact by the pandemic and the other eight (8) are the medium to long term measures that are needed to unlock the potential of African farmers.

The following proposals hereunder are recommended with a call on partners and stakeholders for concerted efforts to ensure implementation;

1. Securing the safety of farmers as farming continues uninterrupted
2. Connecting rural farmers through modern technologies
3. Supporting smallholder producers and promoting innovation and digitalization in agriculture
4. Consideration of agricultural sector and farming activities among the priorities under "Recovery Funds" to address Covid-19 related impact
5. Enhancing support to smallholder farmers to stay in business
6. Providing farmers training on advocacy and communication skills
7. Maximizing opportunities in farming and agro processing on the African Continent
8. Supporting and promoting agro-processing through sustainable farming
9. Enhancing the coordination and implementation of African Continental related policies and strategies
10. Honoring the commitments under the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)
11. Utilizing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote farming and farm products on the African market
12. Strengthening support systems and members' organizations for African farmers

I. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic (the COVID-19 pandemic) has affected the global economy and agriculture is among the most affected sectors. Till now, this pandemic has no cure confirmed by WHO, nor a vaccine for its eradication thus governments took tough sanitary measures including among other the restriction of movement which affected the lives of smallholder farmers and their farming enterprises around the world but most on African agriculture which was still fragile. In their respective regions, the Panafrican Farmers' Organization (PAFO) member networks conducted studies to identify challenges that farmers are facing due to the pandemic and responses already in place or recommended. Therefore, PAFO as a continental network has commissioned a study based on what was already done in the regions to get a global picture on the effect of COVID-19 on African farmers and proposed recommendations to overcome those challenges.

The Panafrican Farmers' Organization (PAFO) is composed of the following five (5) regional umbrella bodies (networks) of farmers in their respective regions on the African Continent. The regional organizations (networks) are:

- The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFB) covering the eastern region;
- Plateforme Régionale des organisations paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC) covering the central region;
- Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPO) covering the western region;
- Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) covering the southern region; and
- Union Maghrébine et Nord Africaine des Agriculteurs (UMNAGRI) covering the northern region.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY REPORT

Generally, most regional farmers' networks (PAFO member networks) have carried out relevant studies and surveys to show the Covid-19 related impact on the farmers in their respective areas. The surveys make it possible, among other things, to: (i) determine the level of information and the perception of the farmers on COVID-19; (ii) assess the level of information and the perception of the farmers / companies on the measures taken by the countries in response to COVID-19 in relation to their activities; (iii) identify, characterize and carry out a test to quantify the effects induced by the COVID-19 crisis on family farms, particularly in the segments of: (a) production; (b) processing; and (c) the marketing of agro-pastoral products, as well as their consequences on turnover, cash flow, investment, etc; (iv) determine the induced effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the households of family farmers, in particular: (a) on household consumption and their access to food markets; (b) within the family unit and at community level, in social life and health care; (c) on the relations of family farmers with other actors in the rural world (service providers to peasants, traders, etc.) at the local level, and finally, (v) collect the desired support measures and / or recommendations to be formulated for the attention of governments, partners, etc.

Note: The studies/ survey reports are not necessarily identical and some are more detailed than other best on the various realities, context and uniqueness in the respective regions.

In light of the above, the main objective of this study report is to assess the impact of the Covid-19 on the African farmers and also to propose actionable recommendations on how best to support the farmers on the African continent. In this regard, the specific objectives include the following;

- Examining the existing studies to understand farmers' challenges due to COVID19 and responses in place or recommendations.
- Collecting additional information from the PAFO regional members where needed.
- Summarizing findings from the literature review and presenting evidence-based recommendations.
- Based on the study findings, preparing a common position paper that will be discussed and validated by the PAFO Board.

1.3 THE APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The study report is based on review of relevant reports by PAFO member networks and follow up interviews (based on questionnaires) to obtain clear and updated information in the respective regions on the African continent. On this basis and in accordance with the Terms of References (ToRs), the following methodology was applied;

- i) Assessing reports of studies done by PAFO member networks and other provided materials.
- ii) Contacting PAFO secretariat and liaising with PAFO member networks (representatives) for further required information (interviews).
- iii) Consolidating all the information from interviews.
- iv) Drafting and finalizing the study report including recommendations.

II. THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) AND ITS GLOBAL IMPACT

2.1 HEALTH SITUATION RELATED TO COVID-19 IN THE WORLD

As it has been observed in many publications, media outlets and news on different channels and platforms, COVID-19 is an infectious disease that initially appeared in Wuhan (China) in late 2019. Thereafter, in early 2020, the disease quickly spread across the world, constituting an exogenous shock that brought production and growth dynamics to a halt at the global level, at the same time disrupting economic activities almost in all sectors including those essential to human needs, such as agriculture and food systems. As result, people were affected in various ways as the impact reached a level of threatening the livelihoods of the people who make a living from these activities.

What started as a "Chinese problem" at the beginning for several weeks, the novel coronavirus pandemic eventually became a global problem at an international level and attracted the attention of the world from the start of its spread in Europe and Asia. Long-spared Sub-Saharan Africa declared its first case of COVID-19 on February 27, 2020 in Nigeria, and the spread of the pandemic quickly spread to all African countries. In Cameroon, the first case was recorded on March 6, 2020[1]. Immediately, the African Union (AU) took up the case and developed a comprehensive strategy to fight this pandemic that was subsequently rolled out in each country according to its context. As a result of the disease spreading rapidly, countries implemented drastic measures aimed at containing the spread of the virus which included, among other things: closing borders, banning flights of many airlines, ban on large gatherings, confinement of populations at home, working from home (online), etc.

The WHO (2020) recorded, as of July 22, 2020, nearly 14.764 million cases of contamination, nearly 612,041 deaths worldwide, 185 countries affected by the disease. In Africa, as of September 28, the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 from 55 African countries has reached 1,460,328. Reported deaths in Africa have reached 35,163, and recoveries 1,207,261[2]. The severity of the disease disrupts global economic activity, due to its speed of spread and the feeling of insecurity it engenders. The overall impact of the pandemic on the global economy, as preliminarily assessed by the IMF (2020) suggests a loss of more than 6 percentage points in growth, to settle at -3% growth in 2020, thus making the world experience a recession.

[1]PROPAC Report; Resume analytique de l'etude sur l'impact de la COVID-19 sur les exploitations agricoles familiales en Afrique Centrale

[2]<https://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00072212.html>

2.2 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The spread of COVID-19 does not only have health and human consequences. It also has strong impacts on economic activities. The negative implications of this pandemic for economies are the direct disruption of global supply chains, the decline in final demand for imported goods and services, the complete cessation of tourist flows, the deterioration of business and consumer confidence. This slowdown in global demand coupled with the uncertainty about the spread of the pandemic also caused panic on the financial markets (fall in the interest rate on US Treasury bonds to a historically low rate and fall in stock prices), and the sharp fall in the prices of raw materials and mainly crude oil, whose prices reached the record levels observed more than 18 years ago.

The sanitary measures taken by Countries led to a sharp contraction in demand which precipitated the fall in the prices of the main raw materials. For example, oil prices have plunged by around 50% since the start of the year and are at their lowest level in 18 years, under the effect of the slowdown in global growth, the lowering of almost all the world's airlines and other modes of transport and the breach of the agreement of the Organization of the Petroleum Producing Countries and Other Major Petroleum Producers (OPEC+) on production cuts also partly explain this plunge in the price of oil. This shock wave hit the equity markets, but also all commodity prices, especially industrial metals, such as copper, lead, nickel, which saw their prices plummet.

In the agricultural sector, prices on international markets have fallen. Palm oil, affected both by concerns about the spread of the coronavirus but also by recent measures taken by India to reduce its imports was trading at the end of February, at around \$ 616 per ton, against 1,250 dollars, the ton of cocoa fell back below £ 2,000 per ton, and cotton prices hit their lowest point in February 2020. Agricultural exports of perishable products (mainly fruits and vegetables by air declined arrested, as well as those destined for the sub-region.

The world economy is thus in the riskiest position it has known since the global financial crisis. The outlook could be further degraded if certain risks such as the worsening epidemic, heightened tensions on trade and investment, uncertainty and market panic persist. Containment measures and the fear of infection would take a heavy toll on production as well as spending, and send many of the countries affected by the epidemic into deep recession.

Among the most impacted economies, there is China, with a downward forecast for economic growth from 6.1% to 4.9%. Given the preponderant place of China in the demand for commodities, production, trade and tourism markets globally. This slowdown in activities will affect most of its direct and indirect partners and particularly African countries.

The decline in global demand and trade will have serious economic and social repercussions on African countries in connection with their openness to the world economy. Indeed, according to the WTO in 2017, the main exported products are raw materials (50.3%) and intermediate goods (25.7%). The main partners are China (14.2%), India (8.7%) and the USA (6.5%) are the most affected by the pandemic. The decline in international trade will have major consequences for African economies. With China being Africa's largest trading partner, the correlation between Chinese investment in China and Africa's growth is really very high, around 190%[3].

According to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), despite the relatively low level of the number of infected cases, the economic impact could cost the African continent more than a percentage point of GDP (from 3.2% to 1.8%) and billions of dollars in losses in terms of exports, tourism, remittances and capital flight. In the face of these uncertainties, investors have stopped investing in financial markets, putting pressure on them: yield spreads on sovereign bonds in the region have widened, and bond issuance is at a standstill.

[3]Mali-Web, Dr Hippolyte Fofack, économiste en chef et directeur de la recherche et de la coopération Internationale chez Afreximbank. <https://mali-web.org/afrique/import-export-comment-le-coronavirus-impacte-le-dynamisme-des-entreprises-en-afrique>

2.3 COVID-19 AND THE SLOWDOWN OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The world economy recorded a slight slowdown in its growth rate in 2019. According to IMF data (2020)[4] the real GDP growth rate stood at 2.9% in 2019 against 3.6% in 2018. This slowdown in global economic activity is the result of trade and geopolitical tensions involving the United States and China in particular, the uncertainty surrounding the Brexit agreement, and the contractions observed in several emerging economies. This negative development is also attributable to certain structural factors, notably lower productivity and an aging population in advanced countries. In advanced economies[5], growth was estimated at 1.7% in 2019, a lower level than in 2018 (2.2%). This decline can be explained, among other things, by a slowdown in industrial production, linked to weak external demand.

In the medium term, growth in these countries (generally very affected by COVID-19), is expected to record rates well below initial projections of 1.7% in 2020 and 1.6% in 2021 and are expected to experience a recession. The magnitude of the recession will depend on: (i) the duration and rate of spread of the pandemic; (ii) the efficiency and speed of implementation of measures implemented to contain it; and accompanying economic measures to support households, businesses and Countries.

For emerging and developing countries, growth in 2019 was more robust, standing at 3.7%, but below its 2018 level (4.5%). In China, growth slowed from 6.7% in 2018 to 6.1% in 2019 (IMF, 2020), mainly due to regulatory measures aimed at containing debt and the impact of trade tensions on aggregate demand.

In Africa, the real GDP growth rate stood at 3.2%[6] in 2019, up from 3.4% in 2018, with large disparities between regions. In fact, in 2019, the real GDP growth rate varies from 0.3% in Southern Africa where it is lowest to 5.2% in East Africa where it is the highest. North Africa and West Africa recorded growth rates of 3.7% and 3.6% respectively[7], while Central Africa[8] recorded a rate of 2.8%.

[4] International Monetary Fund, 2020 - World Economic Outlook (April, 2020)

[5] Countries in the Euro zone, North America, the United Kingdom, Japan and the advanced countries of South East Asia

[6] PROPAC Report; Resume analytique de l'étude sur l'impact de la COVID-19 sur les exploitations agricoles familiales en Afrique Centrale

[7] Ibid.

[8] Central Africa brings together all the ECCAS countries

2.4. COVID-19 RELATED IMPACT ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

On the African Continent, the overall strategy proposed by the AU following the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) consisted in instructing the containment and quarantine measures imposed in the various countries to prevent the spread of the virus. In most countries various related measures (some very stringent) were imposed for a period of about three months but even thereafter, activities did not get back to normal (until now – in most cases, it is from lockdown to slowdown). These measures have resulted in : the closure of borders, the cessation or to a lesser extent the suspension of certain activities, leading to a drop in income for the populations, and therefore loss of wages for workers, including for farmers and their families, while the latter do not benefit from any safety net in terms of social protection or unemployment insurance in most Africa countries.

The economic consequences of COVID-19 on the Africa countries affected by this pandemic concern production, consumption, public finances and jobs. As a result of Covid-19, various economic sectors were affected and social lives disrupted on the African Continent, including farmers and their respective activities.

Within Africa, the impacts of COVID-19 are being felt in different ways and the measures taken by the respective governments have also differed on the areas of focus and comprehensiveness. According to a publication by tralac (Trade Law Center), Africa's projected GDP growth of 3.2% for 2020 is now expected to fall to -0.8%[9]. This is due to the enforced partial or total lockdown of economies brought on by the pandemic. The outbreak has led to disruption in the various sectors, most notably the financial industry and the tourism and hospitality sectors. Though several countries on the continent have started to reopen economic activities, it is claimed that in the absence of a medical solution, the strength of the recovery is highly uncertain and the impact on sectors and countries uneven. Given the tremendous uncertainty, policymakers are expected to remain vigilant and policies will need to adapt as the situation evolves. Substantial joint support from fiscal and monetary policy must continue for now, especially in countries where inflation is projected to remain subdued.

Herein in this report, a general assessment is presented in regard to how farmers on the continent we affected, what is being done to overcome related challenges and proposed recommendations to ensure a better future. The assessment is based on five (5) regional PAFO member networks across the African Continent.

[9]<https://www.tralac.org/news/article/14658-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-east-african-economies.html>

III. ASSESSMENT REPORTS OF PAFO MEMBER NETWORKS

As earlier pointed out, the various containment measures imposed by countries across the African Countries have affected the lives of smallholder farmers and their farming enterprises around the world but most on African agriculture which was still fragile. Therefore, this study commissioned by PAFO as the Continental Farmers Organizations Platform takes into consideration what was already done in the respective regions in Africa to get a global picture on the effect of COVID-19 on African farmers.

The study further identifies challenges that farmers are facing due to the pandemic and responses already in place or recommended as well as provides actionable recommendations to overcome related challenges faced in the respective regions. The study is based on various assessment studies and reports carried out by the respective members of PAFO – the five (5) regional umbrella bodies (networks) of farmers in their respective regions on the African Continent.

3.1 THE EASTERN AFRICA REGION



Source : Internet

In the Eastern African Region, the assessment report on Covid-19 related impact and responses was carried out by the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF). EAFF is a non-political, non-profit and a democratic apex organization of all Farmers of Eastern Africa. Its role is to voice legitimate concerns and interests of farmers of the region with the aim of enhancing regional cohesiveness and social-economic status of the farmers. The Federation, apart from voicing views and demands of the farmers on crosscutting issues also endeavors to promote regional integration of the farmers through trade and good neighborliness.

3.1.1 COVID-19 IMPACT ON FARMERS AND RELATED RESPONSES

When the Covid-19 hit the region, the respective governments of all the countries in the region took decisions and preventive measures to limit the damage because the virus is extremely volatile, spreads very quickly and seriously affects everyone without distinction. The population of most countries was called upon to respect hygiene and containment measures to limit the spread of the virus, teleworking was encouraged in several countries to continue working at home. In Eastern Africa region, all governments put in place confinement measures which included among others; putting countries under lockdown with no air travel and restricted movements within the country. As a consequence, production was affected in various sectors including in agriculture.

In light of the above, EAFF conducted a quick assessment of the situation to try to understand how EAFF 's members have been affected. According to the EAFF assessment report, some member countries are specifically looked at in details to clearly show how farmers in the region were affected what is being done to move forward the agriculture sector. EAFF specifically undertook assessments and compiled reports on the following member countries; Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, DR Congo and South Sudan.

RWANDA: The Country was in total lockdown due to the COVID-19 until April 30th 2020 when the economy reopened but still with severe restrictions. Only urgent activities were allowed and with the approval from the Government Officials and especially for security organs. The Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal resources (MINAGRI) and Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) did special supports for some Farmers cooperatives in following activities:

- Mechanization (ploughing);
- Inputs distribution (using their existing inputs distribution system: Distributor (APTC Ltd, MINAGRI & RAB, Agro Dealers-Districts & sectors Officials-Farmers);
- As the pandemic persists, farmers are not adequately receiving the necessary extension support in this main season-2020B which might affect production;
- Also Labor shortage due to the reduction of personnel mobility have been identified in Rwanda because of some laborers are not living close to where farms are located and unnecessary movements (looking for jobs) are not allowed.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE ALSO OPPORTUNITIES IN RWANDA;

- i. The Government of Rwanda is promoting the use of economic services via mobile phones for all Rwandans. This is being considered an opportunity for e-GRANARY to provide e-payment and e-extension services.
- ii. The central bank of Rwanda (BNR) regularized all related money transactions via phones and bank accounts with free charges of crediting and debiting, extended grace period for these who already had credits. This means e-GRANARY has a chance to deploy payment solution without incurring the normal transactional charges.

UGANDA: Uganda went into a lock down till 5/5/2020 where public transport was halted, private vehicles not allowed to move including cyclists/bodabodas whowere not permitted to operate. All non-agricultural/food businesses were suspended. Agricultural activities were given green light but no gatherings. Producers in the country still have access to inputs and Uganda borders are still open to input. The challenge was mainly in suspending in-country public transport.

Small holders heavily rely on buses and taxis to transport farm inputs. So, they had to hire trucks or pick-ups from major towns to their location. This made the cost of input acquisition high, making no business sense. Also, farmers were faced with cash flow challenges. With the much of the urban population confined in their homes, domestic market for farm produce dropped as everyone was spending sparingly. This has greatly affected sales and the cash available to the farmers.

KENYA: Even before the COVID-19 pandemic knocked on its door, the country faced a devastating desert locust invasion. This added to constraints posed by excessive rainfall experienced from October 2019. The agriculture ministry now estimates that 10,000 hectares of cropland were destroyed during the long rain season alone. And post-harvest losses are expected to be higher than usual because grain didn't dry adequately in the wet weather. So, when Covid-19 hit, it was an added challenge.

Due to COVID-19, administrative measures taken have included the closure of produce markets, dawn to dusk curfews and cessation of movement in and out of two major urban areas Nairobi and Mombasa. These were highly disruptive for food delivery. This is because Kenya's food system is heavily dominated by small, independent transporters as the link between producers and consumers. Produce markets, which are at the heart of distribution in urban areas, serve consumers and smaller retailers. This traditional informal system accounts for about 90% of the market. The ministry responsible has also announced plans to import maize, about 4 million bags, following its food security committee's assessment that the current stocks can last up to the end of April. The imported volumes represent slightly above a month's cover, which is estimated at about 3 million bags.

THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSES TOWARDS MITIGATING THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC;

- The ministry of agriculture agreed to categorize transport of foodstuff as an essential service, to improve food supply in urban areas.
- Kenya also has existing cash transfer programs targeting over a million people that receive 2,000 Kenyan shillings, or \$19, per month. The national treasury allocated an additional 10 billion shillings to this program for supporting vulnerable groups including the elderly and orphans during the pandemic period.
- Reduction of VAT tax from 18% to 16%.
- Reduction of mobile money transaction charges by MPESA.
- Many banks have also followed the example and removed charges associated with moving money from Bank to MPESA and MPESA to Bank to encourage use of digital payments.

TANZANIA: There was not much information shared on Tanzania but the Government did not institute down measures and thus all businesses kept on operating in all sectors including farmers' activities.

BURUNDI, DR CONGO AND SOUTH SUDAN: These are countries with already protracted conflicts and there was some panic but also the food situation somehow got worse specially with the regional lockdown.

SOME GENERAL REGIONAL CHALLENGES;

- Before the lockdown over 6 million more than half of the population were already food insecure and over 2 million malnourished which means Covid-19 was basically coming to worsen the situation.
- Related consequences have resulted in low demand for agricultural produce.
- Already there are challenges in harvesting current produce and also in organizing and coordinating planting of crops during this season.
- Suppliers have stopped giving goods on credit and are demanding to transact on cash basis only.
- Cost of finance including what is needed for farming is expected to increase.
- Employees are anticipated to request for support to be able to continue doing working remotely-internet bundles and telephone call allowances.
- Farming business relies on farmer group/cooperative meetings to interact with farmers but these have been banned.
- Limited movement has affected input distribution efforts.
- Disruptions in aggregation of harvest of January and February due to lockdowns that caused limited trade due to transport challenges mainly in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda as mentioned above.

RELEVANT MEASURES TO BE TAKEN;

- First of all, there will be a need to have a better understanding of the COVID-19 implication on agriculture in the region and EAFF members comprehensively.
- There is a need to have new strategy for market access and how best to operate within the context of limited travels.
- Encouraging farmers to use technology to report crop related incidences for insurance purposes.
- Engaging local contractors who are from farmer groups and are able to use technology to help those farmers that have challenges without technology.
- Increased training on technology literacy and this requires extra budget allocation for these training activities.
- There will be need to hire more staff that will help the business adopt and properly use the new tools and design new solution for the paradigm shift that is coming. These will be positions like product managers, project managers, human centered design specialists to help adapt new products better to customers while leveraging technology.

FUNDING RELATED MATTERS;

- There is slowdown in discussion on funding.
- Funding entities are on a wait and see attitude.
- Banks are also not keen to roll out new loans as they focus on collection and debt restructuring for the current customers.
- There is an expectation of increased cost of funding including qualification requirements on those funding opportunities that will be available.

3.1.2. OTHER NOTABLE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- **WHOSE FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS ARE MOST AT RISK?**

One of the immediate consequences will be the reduction in the production capacity of the most vulnerable small producers when thousands of them are already affected by multiple crises (erratic weather, locust invasion). This increases the likelihood of a food crisis and nutrition deficits in few months to come if no action is taken in some countries on the African continent.

- **EFFECT ON TARGETED VALUE CHAINS**

Cost of inputs have gone up increasing the cost of production. Some farmers will fail to use the inputs due to shortage and cost which will affect their yield and hence their expected income. Aggregation efforts that are key to market access for farmers is already affected.

- **EFFECT ON ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL INPUTS**

Shortage and cost are the major effects observed so far.

- **EFFECT ON FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN**

The closure of produce markets, dawn to dusk curfews and cessation of movement in some parts of the region (including travels from urban centers to rural areas) severely affected the food supply chains. These were highly disruptive for food delivery. This is because the region's food system is heavily dominated by small, independent transporters as the link between producers and consumers.

- **EFFECT ON INPUTS AND FOOD PRICES**

Already in some places (like Kenya), the cost of Maize flour is going up due to shortage in Maize. The region expects food prices to increase in the coming months due to increased cost of production as explained earlier and disruption in the supply chain.

- **MOST AFFECTED VALUE CHAIN(S)**

The most traded staple food is Maize hence it will be the most affected followed by Rice, pulses. It is also important to mention that cash crops (coffee, tea, cashewnuts), horticultural products (cut flowers), avocados which are mainly for export have seen their demands plummet significantly with huge implication on foreign exchange earnings of the exporting countries which in turn will reduce the amount of premiums paid to smallholder farmers.

• OTHER FACTORS WITH IMPACT ON FOOD PRODUCTION, DEMAND AND SUPPLY

Shortage of labour (expensive to hire farmer labour) and also the cost is increased due to the fact of investing in protective materials for labourers; Limited available resources for agriculture given the contraction of economies and the fact that most of resources are allocated to combat Covid-19.

• BROAD ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT ON SMALLHOLDER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS

The following are recommended;

- Input vouchers - to enable farmers access and afford inputs even as prices go up.
- Availing working capital to agribusiness SMEs, value chain service providers like e-GRANARY and traders to enable them continue being the link between farmers and the market.
- Availing PPE to key people in the producer organization to enable them continue handling coordination, training activities within their groups. This equipment would also be helpful for commodity aggregators especially quality assurance in preparation for market access.
- Minimize shocks: Efforts must be made to minimize the shock to agriculture in the first place. Kenya and Uganda must continue to suppress the ongoing outbreak of locusts and make sure that, despite COVID-19 lockdowns, farmers can continue to plant and market their crops, and have confidence in measures in the coming months:
- Bringing previously fallow land into agricultural use. Simple-to-grow crops, such as cassava shoots that can be grown on a wider variety of land would be ideal and should be considered.

• CAPACITY BUILDING TAKING PLACE IN TIMES OF COVID 19

By Virtual meetings to guide Farmers Organizations and cooperatives on how to continue with value chain activities.

• OTHER IMPORTANT NEEDED INTERVENTIONS

Other important needed interventions include;

- Training – increased training on use of technology as gathering continue being limited.
- Availing personal Protective Equipment to our field staff and contractors to enable them continue interacting with farmers and other stakeholders.
- Improving storage infrastructure at the farmer producer levels to mitigate postharvest losses.

Note : Many smallholder farmers lack storage to hold their harvests if buyers are delayed due to lockdown or supply chain disruption, one rain can destroy full yields, post-harvest.

In conclusion, it is important to take note that the effects of COVID-19- 19 have already been felt. The pandemic has already rattled the food supply chain (the demand for agri-products has declined), halted activities in the agricultural fields and support services (extension, credit among others) and put lives of people at risks. This is causing further uncertainty in a region with some geopolitical and economic instability. EAFF and her members need more support to mitigate the threats and impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on local food systems, ensuring productive capacity through timely access to inputs, information, markets and liquidity.

In response to these challenges, most of the countries in the region are coming up with measures to support struggling businesses, including the Covid-19 recovery funds to revive key economic sectors by directly availing financing (funds) to qualifying business. While implement these measures, the target is on supporting the recovery of businesses hardest hit by COVID-19 so they can survive, resume operations and safeguard employment, thereby cushioning the economic effects of the pandemic. However, across the region agriculture has not yet featured prominently among the top targeted economic (business) activities like, for example, the hospitality sector.

3.2 THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REGION



Source : Internet

According to the study report by PROPAC titled “Executive Summary of the Study on the Impact of Covid-19 on Family Farming in Central Africa”, the farmers in most countries in the region were affected and various mitigating measures were taken in the respective countries. Aware that this pandemic is not limited to the borders of a country, and that a regional response strategy was not only necessary but vital, the Ministers in charge of the Economy and Finance of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)

held on March 28, 2020 in Brazzaville, a meeting dedicated to the "economic and financial impact of COVID-19 on the economies of CEMAC", at the end of which, 14 resolutions were adopted, to allow economic agents to cushion the economic shock resulting from the pandemic. With regard to the policy of the States of Central Africa, the BEAC made a sum of 90 billion FCFA dedicated to the financing of the fight against the propagation of this virus in the CEMAC zone. However, these measures, which constitute the CEMAC emergency plan, did not fully take into account its harmful effects on the agricultural sector, and in particular on family farms because they were mainly broken down into three main areas/sectors, which include the following: (a) Strengthening of the health sector; (b) Preservation of macroeconomic and financial stability by supporting the private sector and maintaining jobs, and (c) Regular supply of medical and pharmaceutical products.

These public interventions, based on a one-off situation, nevertheless made it possible to lessen the immediate effects of the crisis and prevent a collapse of the economies of the countries of Central Africa. However, the magnitude of the crisis combined with the stifling of economic activity caused by the lockdown is showing its limits in containing the structural damage to the economies.

At the same time, in Central Africa, small producers are suffering the full brunt of the following effects of COVID-19;

- Lack of adequate information on the coronavirus pandemic and barrier measures in order

to avoid contamination and the spread of the virus;

- The unavailability and inaccessibility of sanitary equipment for the protection of family farmers and their households;
- The collapse of the means of production, processing and marketing of agricultural products and post-harvest losses;
- Food scarcity and rising food prices;
- Difficulties in transporting agricultural products; and
- Difficulties in accessing agricultural inputs, etc.

3.2.1 ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF CENTRAL AFRICA

In 2019, in Central Africa, growth was mainly driven by domestic and external demand. This economic recovery can also be explained by the diversification of trading partners, especially Asian countries - China and India in particular - and to a lesser extent Brazil in Latin America. The good performances of Cameroon, the CAR and the DRC in 2019, compensated for the recession in Equatorial Guinea. In Cameroon, the region's second-largest economy, real GDP growth was estimated at 3.5% in 2019. The security and humanitarian crises and the current sociopolitical crisis in the North-West and South-West regions have not allowed the government to keep pace with growth. The economy of the CAR continued to recover after a slowdown due to the sociopolitical and institutional crisis. Real GDP growth, estimated at 4.3% in 2018, was supported by the construction and public works sector, the extractive sector and the forestry sector, despite a difficult and volatile security situation. In the DRC, the region's largest economy representing a third of the regional GDP, the growth rate reached 4% in 2018.

The prices of raw materials increased there, and between September 2017 and September 2018, the various mining productions recorded increases. In Equatorial Guinea, the recession continued despite the rise in oil prices. The contraction of the economy has indeed intensified after the drop in oil production from operating wells. Chad returned to growth in 2018. This improvement follows the renegotiation of the country's external commercial debt, tighter financial governance and significant external financing. The Congo also returned to growth in 2018 thanks to the rise in oil prices and domestic production. Gabon's GDP grew to around 2% in 2018, despite a 4.3% drop in oil production.

In terms of sectoral contribution to the GDP of Central African countries, the service sector contributed the most to nominal GDP in 2019 (42.3%), while it was the industry sector (42.3%) in 2018. The industrial and service sectors represent over 84% of the region's nominal GDP. The agricultural sector's contribution to regional GDP remained stable between 2018 (15.5%) and 2019 (15.6%).

3.2.2. COVID-19 IMPACT ON FARMERS AND RELATED RESPONSES

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed countries in the Central African region to serious economic repercussions which include the following;

- **ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS RESULTING FROM THE DOMESTIC HEALTH SHOCK:**

In addition to the increasing human costs, the shutdown of activities, the disruption of supply chains, etc., have deeply disrupted production. In addition, confinement could have negative effects on vulnerable households who live in precariousness and have limited access to social safety nets. Meanwhile, loss of income, fear of contamination, loss of confidence and increased uncertainty are all reducing demand.

- **CONSEQUENCES OF THE GLOBAL FALLOUT FROM COVID-19:**

Central Africa facing severe external shocks - including a shock to trade and tighter global financial conditions. On the trade front, a sharp slowdown in the growth of major trading partners has reduced external demand while disruptions in supply chains have resulted in reduced availability of imported products, which could lead to inflationary pressures. In addition, the abrupt tightening of global financial conditions is resulting in a decrease in investment flows to the region and its ability to finance the expenditures necessary to manage the health crisis and support growth. This should lead to lower public spending, an accumulation of arrears or an increase in government borrowing in local markets, with adverse consequences for credit and growth. Slower global growth could also lower remittances, reducing disposable income and adding to external pressures. In addition, some sectors such as tourism, hospitality and transport have been severely affected by travel restrictions.

- **SHOCK ON COMMODITY PRICES:**

The decline in global demand, particularly from the main economic partners, China, and the European Union, will result in a drop in the prices of the main exported raw materials, in particular the price of crude oil and agricultural raw materials, particularly palm oil, cocoa,

cotton and coffee. The drop in global demand will thus affect certain sectors such as hydrocarbons, forestry, industrial export agriculture, and tourism. The sharp drop in commodity prices is yet another shock for the resource-rich countries of the region. It will further accentuate the impact of the pandemic. The terms of trade shock will weigh on growth and increase fiscal and external vulnerability, but most importantly, low revenues commodities will result in a contraction of resources for countries in the region to fight the epidemic and support growth.

- **SUPPLY SHOCK AND DOMESTIC DEMAND:**

Although the main shocks are those related to demand, the countries of Central Africa could also suffer a supply shock with regard to the composition of imports. In fact, a large part of imports consists of intermediate consumption and direct consumer goods such as food goods. The slowdown in production in partner countries and the virtual halt in global transport and freight will affect the rate of production in several economic sectors. Ships are scarce, which drives up costs for operators. In addition, the slowdown in the economy and global investment will help reduce the flow of foreign investment, remittances from migrants, but also the flow of external funding (grants and borrowing). Finally, the disruption of the stock market can also have impacts on the government bond market which will have repercussions on the debt and the financing of the economy. Internally, the effects of the crisis at the household and corporate level will have impacts on governments. Declines or losses in household income coupled with business difficulties resulting from the erosion of demand put them, for example, in difficulty in meeting their tax obligations. Likewise, the financial system could subsequently be affected by the increased risk of bad credit.

- **SOCIAL RELATED PROBLEMS:**

Finally, beyond the direct effects, the containment measures and travel restrictions in the countries will not only have effects on the economy but also on the social life of the country. Uncertainties related to the epidemic will, for example, lead to irrational behavior that can accentuate the direct effects of the disease on the economy. The stress-related costs or the psychological effects resulting from the lockdown add to the direct costs of preventing or treating the epidemic.

Note: It is reported that the real GDP of ECCAS countries is expected to contract by 1.2% in 2020, the worst result ever. This figure is about 3.3 percentage points lower than expected.

3.2.3 PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY FARMERS ON COVID-19

In most countries of the central African region, rural and / or community radios remain the privileged information channels in rural areas due to the fact that this medium is specialized in the dissemination of information relating to the rural world, transmits exclusively in frequency modulation, therefore they are very comfortable listening, and finally, devotes

more airtime in the local language than in French, which allows its audience, generally illiterate, to follow almost all the programs. According to the findings, 59% of those surveyed said they had heard of COVID-19 for the first time in programs broadcast by rural and / or community radio stations. 18% of those surveyed declared having learned of the pandemic by telephone message sent by telephone companies, to close families living in towns or through their service providers (transporters, traders, input distributors, etc.) or still in the markets; 7% by support / advice / extension agents for projects / programs under implementation; 5% by television, 11% by local authorities (administration, traditional chiefdom, religious, etc.)

In general, until March 15, 2020, the number of Covid-19 was insignificantly low in Central Africa to the point where, for 47% of family farmers surveyed residing in rural areas, Covid-19 was assimilated to a disease of "white people and bleached" resulting from the bad handling of molecules (viruses) in laboratories. 36% of respondents had another perception of Covid-19 based on a logic of destiny and natural fairness which posits that it is the turn of white people this time. It is based on two arguments. The irreducible separation of the destiny of peoples and the maxim which establishes that misfortune ends up invading everyone: "It's raining on all rooftops". Thus, Africa, which has had its share of misfortune before (like Ebola), is spared infection with the Covid-19 virus which is intended for the white race.

In addition, the principle of natural justice which wants that the innocent are not victims of the "witchcraft" of the others. In other words, white Covid-19 has no hold over innocent blacks who have no connection to it. The idea of black invulnerability in the face of the virus is also mentioned by 11% of respondents. It is based on three main factors: the belief in the biological supremacy of the black race over Westerners. These base their point of view on the survival of blacks to several previous epidemics and divine protection. Finally, 7% of respondents evoke hypotheses about the environment of the virus, in particular that on the high vulnerability of the virus to heat. For them, Africa at high temperatures thus believed itself out of reach.

However, from April 2020, with the number of cases increasing at a worrying rate, the Countries in Central Africa reacted vigorously by adopting response plans against COVID-19 and by strictly applying the barrier measures from the end of the month in urban areas. In rural areas, the announcement by the respective governments of the closure of markets (daily, weekly, periodical, etc.), catering and drinking establishments, places of worship, schools and universities, land borders, flights as well as the ban on gatherings of more than 50 people was at the origin of the realization by family farmers of the seriousness of the threat, which was no longer perceived as remote. This seriousness was amplified over the days by communication and awareness campaigns on prevention measures organized by governments, and relayed in the various communication media as well as by elites and local authorities.

3.2.4 SPECIAL SUPPORT (FUNDS) FOR FARMERS

At the regional level (level of PROPAC), there is a small special fund dedicated to supporting farmers affected by COVID-19 within the framework of the SAFE 2020 Project with the support of IFAD. However, these funds do not cover all member countries. At time of compiling this report, only 3 countries had benefitted from these funds. Also, the FO4ACP project has reportedly earmarked budget lines for the acquisition of teleworking equipment and health kits for Farmers Organizations that could be accessed.

Generally, in Central African countries, there are no special funds dedicated to supporting businesses affected by COVID-19. But each country has implemented support measures for businesses, particularly on the tax front. For example, in Burundi, the government received trust funds to assist and respond to the coronavirus pandemic. But Burundi does not have special funds to provide financial assistance to businesses. For Cameroon, there support for companies' cash flow through the allocation of an envelope of CFAF 25 billion for the clearance of VAT credit stocks pending reimbursement. However, there are no special funds for companies. Cameroon has further set up a fund for support to SMEs, craftsmen and social economy organizations within the framework of the Special Fund created by the government for the fight against the coronavirus and its repercussions. The fund is housed in the ministry responsible for small and medium-sized enterprises and the conditions of access were defined on September 11, 2020 by the Minister.

KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS FOR SUPPORT

The following areas have been identified as key in deserving related support;

- Training, awareness / information / communication on Covid-19;
- Training of cooperatives on good sanitary, food and nutritional hygiene practices;
- Supply and distribution of sanitary kits to producers: mobile hand washing stations, soap, masks, hydro-alcoholic gels, disinfectants, etc.
- Provision of community drinking water points;
- Supply of agricultural inputs intended for small producers (quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides;
- Establishment of community granaries for the constitution of the peasant strategic reserve;
- Support for the logistics of transport and marketing of agricultural products;
- Strengthening of collective marketing systems;
- Working capital support to relaunch production, processing and marketing of agricultural products according to the business and development plans of cooperatives;
- Training of producers on the use of ICT and establishing commercial links.

MEMBERS' CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

A critical mass of PROPAC members have been trained in negotiation and leadership and in lobbying and advocacy skills which gives them the capacity to raise their concerns and needs and defend their interests. PROPAC members defend themselves through meetings, advocacy, lobbying, press briefings, round tables, conference-debates, business dinners, memos and statements on radio, television, newspapers, social networks, letter-writing campaigns and Policies-briefs.

All in all, their capacities need to be improved in training on lobbying and advocacy, in negotiations and financial management techniques for Farmers Organizations in times of crisis, through technical and financial support (institutional support and economic services), through communication, exchanges and travel.

3.3 THE WESTERN AFRICA REGION



Source : Internet

Over the past five years, West Africa has experienced repeated crises: recurrent environmental and climate crises, persistent socio-political crises, endemic conflicts with regard to the use of natural resources, namely pastoral resources, conflicts and violence caused by the proliferation of armed groups, community conflicts and now a health and systemic crisis with the outburst of the COVID 19 pandemic. Some of these numerous crises, especially their overlay, are sources of worry, uncertainty desolation and a sense of loneliness and helplessness, even disarray, for the agro-pastoral, rural and farming communities in general.

In this degraded context, the COVID 19 pandemic is straining national and regional development policies and strategies. It also highlights the low level of preparedness of the States and the region and the limited means at their disposal to deal with a health crisis with unpredictable consequences. Most countries do not know how to deal with the increasingly difficult trade-offs between health, security and food emergencies.

Public measures of containment, curfews, lockdowns, quarantines and market closures to stop the spread of the pandemic are causing some concern and affecting the marketing of some agricultural products, including perishable products (market gardening products, fruit, milk, fish, etc.) and the live livestock trading. According to studies 60-90% of the food consumed in the region passes through territorial markets (FAO, CIRAD 2015) while most of these markets are at risk of being closed with the spread of the pandemic. This is leading to a decrease in the incomes of farmers in many production basins. While the vast majority of peasant families are already struggling to live or survive, these income losses are likely to have dramatic consequences and increase the number of people on the poverty line.

3.3.1 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AGRICULTURE IN WESTERN AFRICA

Countries in western Africa, like many other countries around the world, implemented a complete lockdown, restricting movement in all states for a period of weeks to curtail the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, the lockdowns resulted in economic costs to these countries, as supply chains and logistical disruptions have taken their toll across sectors, especially the agricultural sector. Many businesses started to struggle before the measures came into force as a result of numerous Chinese factories already being closed to contain the virus, and thus, no longer producing and shipping essential product components for companies in the region. It is now clear that the disruption to millions of livelihoods is having disparate impacts on households, with low-income families and individuals the hardest hit, and especially those who receive their wages on a daily basis.

While the governments and national organizations in the region have tried to lead food relief efforts in the respective countries, many families remain hungry, and food prices have risen significantly. Local food markets are the backbone of the agricultural economy and supply the majority of the region's population. While supermarkets have become more prominent in some cities, it is these local markets that dominate by providing opportunities to barter prices and buy food products in bulk, whilst still catering for individuals who can only afford to buy small quantities of food. The downside to these markets is their limited potential for enforcing social distancing, and as a result, they have been closed under the new restrictions. This has created challenges – not just for food traders, but for many families whose only option now is to access food from the formal retail outlets where prices are often above what they can afford.

As challenges persist, agribusinesses are severely affected at every level of the supply chain. For example, in Nigeria, like other African nations, the pandemic has greatly limited agricultural production, processing, and transportation between farmers, industries and markets. While many companies involved in these processes have been classified as essential businesses and are therefore still able to operate, labour and supply shortages exist across the value chain as a result of compliance with the lockdown directives, and reduced consumer demand. So, many companies have had to scale back production as access to raw material has become more challenging.

3.3.2 RELEVANT MEASURES TO DEAL WITH COVID-19 IMPACT

At a regional level, it was agreed that the emergency measures developed in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic must not overlook the fundamental issue of food and nutrition security. In this light, ROPPA set up a Monitoring and Action Committee to address the crises affecting West African family farmers and the systemic crisis of COVID 19 to take care of three major issues:

- a) The commitment and mobilization of the various socio-professional organizations and rural communities alongside the efforts of local authorities, States and regional institutions to help stop the spread of COVID 19;
- b) The restoration of the production capacity of hundreds of thousands of family farms, pastoral, agro-pastoral and fisheries through the implementation of appropriate instruments and measures, especially for the 2020/2021 campaign, which is coming very soon; and

c) Global recovery in the land and countries by putting in place appropriate policy measures and instruments, drawing on experience and lessons learned from these crises, to stimulate and, when the time comes, to establish and implement economic, social, inclusive and sustainable development in the land, to create wealth and jobs.

In addition, to the regional measures and interventions related to the fight and stopping the spread of Covid-19 as well as dealing with the consequences, some countries have reported on the situation at the national and these are Mali and Senegal.

MALI: In an effort to stop the spread of Covid-19, the following measures were taken by the government of Mali;

- The suspension of workshops, consultation meetings, seminars and groups of more than 50 people.
- The establishment of a special fund of 100 billion CFA francs to support the most vulnerable families, set up in 703 municipalities in the country.
- Reduction of taxes on essential products, in particular rice and milk.
- Support for the months of April and May 2020, of electricity and water bills for needy households.
- The free distribution of 56,000 tonnes of cereals and 16,000 tonnes of animal feed for the benefit of vulnerable people affected by Covid-19.
- The launch of the “one Malian, one mask” program, with the order for “20 million masks”.

RELATED IMPACTS ON FOOD PRODUCTION AND ACCESS TO MARKETS;

- Increase in the price of food products. The price increase is explained as a consequence of panic buying by the population, speculative behavior of some traders and supply problems due to restrictions on movement. These increases have led the government to fix the price of a few basic commodities including rice, sugar and oil.
- The suspension of agricultural programs as the rainy season approaches, which may have consequences for future harvests.
- The reduction of animal movements in the context of transhumance following the closure of borders.

QUICK INTERVENTIONS;

- An action plan for the period from May to December 2020 was submitted to partners for funding. The partners are: the SDC, Oxfam Belgium, International Fund for Land and Forest Tenure, GRASSROOT, WHYHUNGER, UPA DI.
- The general objective of the action plan is to develop an information and awareness strategy in support of the government response program against the COVID-19 pandemic for family farms in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou and Mopti to counter the spread and eliminate the virus in the country.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES ARE;

- Information dissemination, awareness and equipment in protection kits for farmers' organizations and family farmers.
- Training of farmer to ensure information and awareness sessions for the populations.
- Broadcasting of messages on community radios and televisions.
- Advice to family farms for the rational management of production stocks to prevent possible food crises.

SENEGAL: As soon as the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 were announced in Senegal in early March 2020, various measures were taken to fight and stop the spread and eliminate the virus in the country. The measures included raising awareness of rural stakeholders through the dissemination of messages on handwashing and social distancing, among others.

In this light, the rural population was requested to ensure the following;

- Observe the rules of hygiene decreed and implemented by national governments' health authorities.
- Avoid public gatherings, workshops and conferences, etc.
- Reduce travel in public transport and limit field trips.
- Limit occupation of public gathering places (fairground markets, wells, boreholes, village squares, etc.)

Note: In an effort to complement various national initiatives, a project proposal has been submitted to AGRICORD. This proposal aims to increase in 4 regions of Senegal, the resilience of family farms and vulnerable rural households to COVID-19 through the strengthening of production and food capacities as well as sanitary conditions and to support in the development and negotiation of proposals for public policies and post COVID-19 measures.

Five results are expected, namely:

1. 1,000 family farms and / or rural households, i.e. approximately more than 10,000 individuals, dispose of and use products and materials for protection against COVID-19.
2. 1,200 tonnes of cereals (rice, corn, sorghum and millet) produced and covering food needs for 12 months.
3. 100 tonnes of peanuts and 100 tonnes of vegetables produced and marketed strengthening the livelihood assets of at least 300 households.
4. 400 roosters and hens of improved breed produced and marketed strengthening the assets relating to the livelihoods of 100 households.
5. Technical support provided to develop post-COVID-19 response proposals.

3.4 THE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION



Source : Internet

The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Union (SACAU) has undertaken to regularly track and monitor the impact of the pandemic on farmers in southern Africa, through its member organizations in the various countries. This is part of its broader efforts to keep farmers regularly updated about the broader impacts of the virus in order to enable them to better manage the emerging risks and to take advantage of emerging opportunities. When Covid-19 cases started to be reported in the Southern African region, most governments in the region started instituting various measures, including local and international travel bans, bans on assemblies of meetings, unnecessary contact of people, as well as some degree of “lockdowns” whereby citizens were required to stay home and not go to work places to avoid contracting or spreading COVID-19.

The pandemic has negatively impacted on virtually all sectors, and the impact on agriculture has particularly stood out due to its pivotal role in the provision of food, its linkages with the rest of the economies and other factors. Thus, farmers and the national farmers’ organizations (NFOs) representing them are among the key economic players that are hard-hit by the pandemic.

3.4.1 COVID-19 IMPACT ON FARMERS AND RELATED RESPONSES

According to the survey carried out by SACAU to assess the impact of the pandemic on the respective National Farmers Organization (NFOs), it is pointed out that the farmers were impacted and their activities disrupted. It all started with the challenges of dealing with the panic created by the pandemic and severe market disruptions.

The pandemic developed very fast and created panic in all areas and sectors. Initially there was information of how the pandemic was developing and its impacts was very limited. Thus, naturally, the main challenge faced by NFOs was just getting a good understanding of the unfolding situation and its direct and indirect impacts on the sector. This made it difficult to provide urgently the much-needed information by farmers. In addition, NFOs had to suspend indefinitely much of their field activities, which included hosting farmer field days and exhibitions, convening consultative meetings and conducting farmer trainings and/or workshops, as well as implementation of donor funded programmes. The lockdowns also meant that the Secretariats of NFOs had to work from home, a move that also came with its own challenges, such as internet connectivity and the dealing with a new way of working and interacting.

On market disruptions, it was the most common cited impact that lockdown measures and other restrictions put in place to deal with the pandemic had on farmers. The disruptions were severe, and affected both input and output markets at local, national, international levels (exports and imports). For example, in Tanzania the closure of borders led to the cancellation of export orders for horticulture farmers, whilst the collapse of Dutch auction because of COVID-19 related restrictions affected flower growers in Zimbabwe. This negatively affected their income and will eventually affect their forthcoming production cycle. In countries such as Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles and Tanzania, the closure of tourism facilities such as hotels/lodges which provided niche markets for them, as well as of restaurants, fast food outlets and other food catering entities reduced demand for produce. Worse still, most of the produce that was affected were perishables, such as fresh vegetables.

With no alternative markets, a situation of oversupply was created which led to reduced prices, and some of the produce wasted away in the field or had to be thrown away. Poultry producers extended their feeding regimes as they looked for alternative buyers or waited for the market to recover, thereby increasing their costs of production. With schools closed, grain farmers in Lesotho and Eswatini lost out on a market provided by the HomeGrown School Feeding Program, which for a while offered a reliable and better paying option for maize and bean producers.

In Eswatini, the government resorted to import higher volumes of grain in anticipation of extended trade disruptions because of the COVID-19 outbreak, which may affect food availability. The government's resolution came at a time when farmers had not yet harvested their produce (especially maize and beans). By the time of harvest, the market will be flooded with imported maize and beans. Consequently, farmers will end up losing income. In Namibia, commercial farmers whose employees were not accommodated at their farms, were affected by imposed travel bans. Such containment measures also affected the movement of agricultural produce from the farm, particularly by informal traders. Madagascar poultry producers who rely on public transport to ferry their chickens to the market were seriously affected by travel restrictions.

OTHER CHALLENGES WERE HIGHLIGHTED AS FOLLOWS;

- Limited understanding of the current situation and future impacts on the sector.
- Inadequate data and information on the impacts of the virus.
- Limited financial and technical resources to get a better understanding.
- Dealing with government measures that hindered the business operations.

- Poor communication between different levels of government structures.
- Inability to provide direct technical support and advice to farmers.
- Inability to monitor and follow up on development projects.
- Limited market access.
- Orders cancellations.
- Reduced demand for products.
- Low commodity prices.
- Production/on-farm losses.
- Post-harvest losses.
- Increased input prices.
- Loss of income.
- Cash flow challenges impacting on current operations and future investments.
- Limited access to extension and knowledge support services.
- Shortages of labour.
- Input shortages (fertilizers, veterinary medicines, etc.).
- Transport, and logistical problems.
- Forced sales - lower prices.
- Delayed harvesting and selling.

NOTABLE RESPONSES TO DEAL WITH THE COVID-19 RELATED IMPACT

The points below provide an overview of the different ways in which the NFOs responded to the immediate challenges they faced in their respective countries.

These include the following;

- Establishment of virtual communication channels with members and staff.
- Established virtual meetings.
- Provision of information and advice to members.
- Situation analysis/impact assessment study.
- Preparation of written submissions of the impact to government.
- Set up a COVID-19 Agricultural Sector Advisory Committee.
- Engagements with relevant authorities and other stakeholders.
- Negotiating with and lobbying government.
- Encouraged member farmers to continue with production.
- Developed opinion papers with recommendations.

Note: The above responses indicate that NFOs responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in a variety of ways. The Agricultural Council of Tanzania (ACT), Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) of Zimbabwe, Lesotho National Farmers' Union (LENAFU) and Namibia National Farmers' Union (NNFU), for instance, submitted opinion papers to their respective Ministries responsible for agriculture in their countries wherein they outlined responsive measures that could be explored to ensure business continuity within the agricultural sector under the current pandemic.

Others (Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU), Seychelles Farmers' Association (SEYFA), and Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU)), had constant verbal engagements with the relevant authorities for the same purpose. Agri South Africa (AgriSA) made written submissions and had verbal engagements with both the public and private sectors. They also shared precautionary measures with their members and provided them with advice for a safe workplace through their website. ZFU also developed a Covid-19 preparedness plan for the short, medium, and long-term.

Some of the efforts by National Farmers Organizations (NFOs) have yielded positive results. For instance, NNFU's proposal to the Minister of Agriculture led to a government decision to introduce a stimulus package for agriculture which is managed by the agricultural bank. LENAFAU successfully negotiated for travel permits to be issued to farmers, enabling them to continue producing and moving their produce to different points of sale. Organisations such as LENAFAU and ZFU also developed virtual platforms (e.g. WhatsApp) for exchanging information with their members as well as partners.

Furthermore, relevant engagements and interventions led to governments to adopt measures that encouraged farmers to continue producing and supplying food to the local market. However, while the agriculture and food sector has been classified as an essential service sectors in almost all countries under lockdown, response measures instituted by governments for farmers and farming have not been uniform. Tanzania, for instance, instituted general regulations, which were not specifically related to farming. In Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, South Africa, Zimbabwe, practitioners within the sector were issued with special permits that allowed them to continue with their daily functions while observing public health pronouncements. Few countries (e.g. Namibia and South Africa) provided an economic stimulus package for their farmers.

3.4.2 RELEVANT CONSULTATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

In regard to consultations with the respective governments, most NFOs reported that they were generally formally consulted by their governments when developing their responses to the pandemic. For example, ACT was requested by the government of Tanzania to provide a quick assessment of the impact of the pandemic on agriculture. Also, AgriSA was involved in a task team, SEYFA that provides input through a national response committee. Another example is in Zimbabwe whereby ZFU was engaged in prioritising national essential services within the agricultural sector.

However, for response structures, very few NFOs were directly involved in committees and other structures of governments set up in response to the pandemic. Only AgriSA, NAU and SEYFA were directly involved in national structures that were set up in response to the pandemic. AgriSA is a member of the National Task Team made up of organized agriculture established by the Minister of Agriculture, which meets twice a week to discuss the impact and sector response mechanisms to the epidemic. SEYFA sits in a national committee chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture that meets once a week to discuss response measures to the effects of the virus on farmers and farming, whilst NAU is a member of a private sector committee that was set up to ensure effective information flow from private sector to government.

KEY MESSAGE FOR IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

With respect to key messages that National Farmers Organizations (NFOs) considered communicating regarding COVID-19 and the responses to it, the following areas can be highlighted from the responses;

- Stimulus packages and other support need to be specifically targeted to producers, in line with the sector being declared an essential service.
- Intra-regional trade facilitation-especially the movement of agriculture related goods and services within SADC.
- NFOs need to proactively engage with governments.
- Measures should be put in place to deal with rising social instability.
- Need to involve farmers' structures at all levels with other stakeholders in the fight against the pandemic.
- Need to balance both lives (health and safety) with livelihoods (food production)
- Food production is critical for good nutrition.
- Greater acknowledgement of agriculture as a key sector.
- Prioritize local sourcing of food.
- Strive for food self-sufficiency.
- Need for greater attention to rural areas where the majority live and derive their livelihoods from.
- Prioritize access to information in remote places.

Note: The epidemic has exposed the deficiencies in the agricultural systems and the economies at large.

In an effort to ensure that standards are maintained, a few points can be underscored from the above. In as much as the agriculture and food sector has been declared an essential service sector in the region, more direct support should be provided to farmers for recovery and continued production to ensure food and nutrition security. On a related matter, national efforts to curb the pandemic should not compromise sustainable food production, and at the same time food production should not be at the expense of the health and safety of farmers. The farmers' constituency should be more proactive and engage governments as well as the private sector to provide solutions. Where NFOs are not actively involved, they should seek audiences with authorities to present issues affecting farmers and providing ideas for addressing such issues.

Furthermore, although international trade is paramount to attainment of food security, investment in food self-sufficiency programs is equally important. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for investing in local food production, and relatedly governments should prioritize local sourcing of food to help create markets for farmers.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the impact of the pandemic has clearly demonstrated the strategic political and economic importance of the agricultural sector. The sector has been designated an essential service that should remain operational during the pandemic. However, this declaration does not seem to come with deliberate and adequate provisions specifically targeted at the generality of primary producers, especially in relation to personal protection equipment, and financial stimulus packages.

While NFOs were generally consulted by authorities, it is concerning that they are in general not directly represented in the response structures particularly on aspects pertaining to food and agriculture. It may as well be represented through other value chain actors, but surely farmers are really on the frontline and are therefore worthy a place in such structures. In this regard, the facilitation provided to the farmers to continue with their activities should also take into account the other services linked to agriculture, especially in relation to ensuring a smooth supply chain. In the same vein, the need for NFOs to be proactive and assertive in claiming their rightful place in key response structures cannot be over emphasized.

3.5 THE NORTHERN AFRICA REGION



Source : Internet

According to the Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs (UMAGRI) which represents the farmers in the region, they have set up a listening and advice cell for grassroots National Farmers Organizations (NFOs), in coordination with its member organizations in each of its member countries. In a situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, which struck each country in a different way in relation to the number of cases, but also the timing of the infections, containment efforts were initiated first in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and then in Egypt and in Mauritania, where the impact has been delayed and the health emergency still ongoing.

Despite the measures taken by all countries to fight Covid-19, the agricultural and maritime fishing sectors have been able to maintain their activities and regularly supply the markets. Indeed - with the support of specific provisions to allow their mobility even during confinement - professionals in the sector have shown great mobilization to ensure that the entire value chain remains efficient. However, the confinement created several problems in terms of the supply of inputs and seeds and the social distancing measures severely limited the activities of the work, for the obligation of the reduction of the workforce on the farms and production units.

Various relevant initiatives have been adopted to facilitate the mobilization of inputs and coordination between actors in the sector. Health and security being a priority, UMNAGRI has worked to identify and route protective devices in the field. As a result, UMNAGRI has worked to ensure the security of farmers and key players in the agricultural sector by supporting economic activities while promoting awareness of the health risk among its members throughout North Africa.

3.5.1 RELEVANT MEASURES TO DEAL WITH COVID-19 IMPACT

Since the declaration by WHO of COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11 March, governments of the Northern African region have imposed a series of measures to slow down the spread of the disease. The measures included lockdowns and social distancing which eventually had some effects on the agriculture and food security in the region. Also, measures were proposed to mitigate the impacts on food security and nutrition with special attention to the most vulnerable segments of societies.

It is important to note that countries have differentiated exposure levels to the impact of COVID-19. While most countries may withstand the initial supply- and demand-side shocks associated with COVID-19, a deepening of the global economic recession and prolonged period of disruption in the global and local supply chains may have considerable impacts on production, availability and access to food. Countries in conflicts or instability and least developed countries LDCs are the most at risk, but so are countries depending on food and oil exports, though to a lesser extent.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis and its containment measures are having an impact on all sectors of the economy, including smallholder farmers, who represent a vulnerable group and need urgent assistance in terms of access to markets, inputs and credit. Digitalization can be used to facilitate access to input and output markets and to financial support. Thus the crisis should be used to advance agriculture modernization and transformation. A range of innovation options is available and should be applied to support small-scale farmers under the emergency conditions to build stronger and more resilient farming communities. Indeed, countries should take this opportunity to accelerate the digitalization of agriculture.

Generally, the following measures were taken to deal with the Covid-19 impact;

- Government have continued to give priority to the health crisis.
- Countries have continued to ensure that all of their populations have access to adequate food and that all the necessary measures are taken to keep food systems working safely and efficiently.
- Countries in the region are playing their role in ensuring that the global food supply chain is kept alive, through international advocacy, implementing appropriate tax policies, facilitating trade flows and monitoring food prices.
- Ensuring institutional coordination and consultation with all the food value chain actors while implementing health measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Inclusion of the private sector and civil society in public decision-making to ensure that decisions are inclusive, understood and shared and that everyone involved plays their role in keeping the local food supply chain functional, to identify bottlenecks and respond to needs in a timely way.

- Protecting those who have lost their jobs and vulnerable groups including farmers.
- Scaling up social protection measures to the highest possible extent.
- Ensuring the basic needs of vulnerable people who have lost their jobs because of lockdowns including the daily wage workers and to avoid compounding the health crisis with food a security crisis.
- Supporting smallholder producers and rural youth and promoting innovation.

Note: Unlike in some of the countries, there are no reported special funds at regional or national levels that have been set up to specially support farmers. Some measures have been taken in each country to ensure food security without the establishment of donations and / or direct subsidies for farmers.

These include;

- Allowing farmers to carry out their activity with special authorizations;
- Promoting the supply of wholesale markets; and
- Developing emergency plans to cover food needs, etc.)

3.5.2 THE NEEDED INTERVENTIONS

As various stakeholders continue to find solutions and mobilize related support, the following interventions are very much needed;

- Maintaining the level of employment in the agricultural sector and the processing of agricultural products, which has been affected - in certain sectors, such as fishing - by the temporary or permanent layoff of some or all of the workers.
- Minimizing disruptions in the supply of inputs.
- Supporting the distribution and logistics network (from the transport of goods to aspects of health management throughout the chain).

ADVOCACY ISSUES AND RELATED CAPACITY BUILDING

The members of UMNAGRI are farmers' union organizations which are very often consulted by the Authorities in the implementation of national strategies for the sector. Following the crisis caused by the pandemic, their capacity must be improved to face new economic and social challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to work on pre-existing skills to find local solutions to complex global problems with the help of international cooperation.

In the case of the members, the following areas of expertise need to be strengthened:

- Negotiation of labor agreements to avoid weakening the position of agricultural workers.
- Preparing workplace health security plans (be able to provide public health advice, but also promote the distribution of health and protection equipment).
- Promoting innovation among farmers, for the adoption of sustainable exploitation and processing techniques (circular economy approaches) for the establishment of a fair and green economy.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF DIRECT INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT FARMERS IN ALL THE REGIONS

No	Regional Network	Special support funds	Farmers' needs	Advocacy Capacities
1.	The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)	Special funds to assist some sectors. However no specific funds to support farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access of inputs • Availing PPEs • Marketing produce • Catering for emergencies • Food assistance 	<p>Most NFOs have the capacity</p> <p>Others are new and need capacity building</p>
2.	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)	<p>Most countries in the region have set aside special funds to support various businesses during COVID.</p> <p>However, funds are not for agriculture and farmers are not prioritized to access such funds.</p> <p>Only Namibia and South Africa have funding for the agriculture sector under COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production inputs • Capital injection to restart their businesses • PPEs • Credits for the next cycle of production 	<p>There are varying capacities</p> <p>Some have competencies others don't</p> <p>Most don't have both financial and human resources to conduct studies</p> <p>Capacities should be enhanced through further training Resources needed consultations and studies (for evidence based advocacy).</p>
3.	Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs (UMAGRI)	<p>No special funds at regional or national level</p> <p>There are no direct subsidies for farmers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining employment in agriculture and agro-processing • Minimizing disruptions in the supply of inputs • Support the distribution and logistics network/supply chains 	<p>There are capacities but more needed</p> <p>Need to strengthen negotiation of labor agreements</p> <p>Promoting innovation among farmers.</p>

No	Regional Network	Special support funds	Farmers' needs	Advocacy Capacities
4.	Plateforme Régionale des organisations paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC)	<p>There are no special funds</p> <p>Few (3 countries) benefited from SAFE 2020 Project supported by IFAD</p> <p>FO4ACP earmarked budget for teleworking equipment and health kits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, awareness, communication on Covid-19 • Training of cooperatives on good sanitary and hygiene practices • Distribution of sanitary kits • Mobile hand washing stations, soap, disinfectants, etc • Provision of community drinking water points • Supply of agricultural inputs for small producers • Establishment of community granaries for strategic reserves • Logistics of transport and marketing of agricultural products • Strengthening of collective marketing systems • Working capital support to re-launch production • Training producers on the use of ICT and establishing commercial links 	<p>PROPAC members have lobbying and advocacy skills</p> <p>Capacities can be improved in training on lobbying and advocacy, in negotiation and financial management techniques</p>

No	Réseau régional	Fonds de soutien spéciaux	Besoins des paysans	Capacités de plaidoyer
5.	Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA)	Not much has been reported at the regional level but 2 countries in the region (Mali and Senegal) have some initiatives at the national levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals submitted to request funds to disseminate information and train farmers 	In some countries like Senegal, Farmers are active in advocacy efforts though more capacity building is needed

IV. COMMON CHALLENGES FACED BY AFRICAN FARMERS

Based on the various regional reports by the respective PAFO Member Networks, there are some challenges that seem to cut across in terms similarity and related impact. In this regard, the following are common challenges that are observed as common to all the regions on the African Continent;

1. Market disruptions due to the imposed lockdown measures and other related restrictions
2. Disruptions on working time and availability of agricultural inputs
3. Challenges related to labor availability
4. Low levels and capacities of processing agricultural products
5. Disruption of agricultural advisory and related support
6. Covid-19 as an added challenge, among others, for cross-border markets for farm products
7. Anticipated loss of jobs and livelihoods due to increased food insecurity
8. Anticipated decrease in production due to disruption of the upcoming planting seasons

Note: Here below, the common challenges are looked at in more details.

4.1. MARKET DISRUPTIONS DUE TO THE IMPOSED LOCKDOWN MEASURES AND OTHER RELATED RESTRICTIONS

According to various reports, the disruptions were severe, and they affected both input and output markets at local, national, international levels (exports and imports). In most African countries, the closure of borders led to the cancellation of export orders for various agricultural products. This negatively affected the farmers' income and will eventually affect their forthcoming production cycle.

In most countries, the closure of tourism facilities such as hotels/lodges which provided niche markets for them, as well as of restaurants, fast food outlets and other food catering entities reduced demand for produce. Worse still, most of the produce that was affected were perishables, such as fresh vegetables. With no alternative markets, a situation of oversupply was created which led to reduced prices, and some of the produce wasted away in the field or had to be thrown away.

Again, with schools closed, grain farmers in most countries had not markets provided by the “homegrown” School Feeding Programs, which for a while offered a reliable and better paying option for maize and bean producers.

4.2 DISRUPTIONS ON WORKING TIME AND AVAILABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

In the majority of the African countries, the planting season (between March and May) had not yet started before the Covid-19 pandemic affected the working time and making it difficult to import inputs.

- **On working time:** Based on various reports, it is mentioned that COVID-19 has negatively affected the farmers working time, but the reasons given are very different. Indeed, some mention the containment measures which did not encourage the displacement of their staff, others mention the difficulties of supplying seeds and agricultural inputs, while for some, it is the psychosis created by the closing of markets and weak demand.
- **Availability of inputs:** Regarding the availability of agricultural inputs, most African countries are net importers of agro-chemical inputs and horticultural seeds. So, most of them claim that they had been negatively affected by the border closure, which limited their access to seeds and other inputs in a timely manner. For example, regarding the poultry farming industry, some feed manufacturers experienced stockouts of premixes and concentrates, and some breeders, particularly those in the chick production link, experienced difficulties in sourcing from abroad, hatching eggs and day-old chicks.

4.3 CHALLENGES RELATED TO LABOR AVAILABILITY

Regarding the availability of labor, though majority of family farmers surveyed said they use family labor, there are others who use paid labor (e.g. in West Africa, 68% use family labor against 32% who use paid labor). Family farmers who use family labor report having experienced little disruption in labor availability, due to travel restrictions in countries that have prevented many young city dwellers from traveling to the city. However, for those who employ salaried staff say they have faced the shortage of seasonal workers and the unavailability of permanent staff, due to the confinement. This has thus disrupted food production and processing, especially for labor-intensive crops. The most affected farms (67% in west African region) are those that produce perishable products, in particular fruits and vegetables, which are also labor-intensive crops intended either for the spreading of products for the control of pests. Pests and diseases of plants, or to the daily harvest of products.

4.4 LOW LEVELS AND CAPACITIES OF PROCESSING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Most of the African farming and agro business is very poorly endowed with processing units for agricultural products. In addition, these units are mostly of the artisanal type, operating in an informal setting and located in rural areas near farms.

These small processing units are intended to carry out the first processing in order to obtain the semi-finished products, therefore, they depend more on workers than on machines for their activities. Their viability is therefore particularly undermined by the confinement of workers. Their low logistical and financial capacity to guarantee compliance with hygiene and health standards in the places of activity increases their relative vulnerability. For example, in the West African region, 66% of owners of artisanal-type processing units say they have temporarily stopped work during the period due to low demand and the inability to implement government response measures against the spread of COVID- 19.

4.5 DISRUPTION OF AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY AND RELATED SUPPORT

Regarding advisory support and extension services for farmers, travel restrictions and social distancing measures have prevented extension workers from carrying out normal agricultural advisory activities and monitoring plants and animals, and effective data collection during the production season. In this difficult context, many support organizations (projects / programs in progress, NGOs, public officials, international organizations) claim to have temporarily stopped their activities in the field. This situation negatively impacted the activities of smallholders in the midst of the planting campaign, especially since the logistical and financial support expected from donors was not given to them when they needed it most.

4.6 COVID-19 AS AN ADDED CHALLENGE, AMONG OTHERS, FOR CROSS-BORDER MARKETS FOR FARM PRODUCTS

Before the onset of COVID-19, some regions in Africa were already facing some challenges that were affecting cross-border markets for food products. These challenges include; insecurities, droughts and the locust invasion. For example, the twin crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the desert locust invasion pose severe threats to livelihoods and food security across eastern Africa. Meanwhile, new locust swarms have started to re-emerge in the greater Horn of Africa region, particularly in Kenya and southern Ethiopia. These new swarms are coinciding with the beginning of the long rains and the planting season, posing an even greater threat to food security than earlier this year, when crops were already mature.

For West Africa, cross-border markets for farm products had been disrupted by insecurity in some countries, especially those located around the Lake Chad basin where the terrorist group Boko Haram is waging a low-intensity war with neighboring countries (Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria), in the North West and East regions of Cameroon, bordering the CAR and Adamaoua. The pandemic has worsened the situation. Most of the livestock markets located in unsecured areas are severely affected by the situation. First, it was the collection markets that had already been tested by insecurity that experienced the first negative impacts; the quarantine of many towns, curfews enacted in many countries and self-containment have made it more than difficult to supply markets to pastoralists and other traveling collectors. This situation resulted in low availability of livestock in the various markets.

4.7 ANTICIPATED LOSS OF JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS DUE TO INCREASED FOOD INSECURITY

COVID-19 has created significant demand-side pressure that may worsen food insecurity on the continent owing to loss of incomes and potential food price increases caused by localized supply shocks and depreciating currencies. In the short term, with the closure of restaurants and hotels, demand for “higher-end” food categories such as meat and fresh produce has already been depressed in most countries. However, in the medium to long term, internal demand is likely to fall as more Africans face decreased purchasing power due to loss of jobs and businesses closures and slowdowns. Job losses are likely to disproportionately affect low-income earners and informal jobs in urban areas. Factoring in the impact of these job losses on dependents, it is likely that between many people in Africa are facing the prospect of reduced incomes.

Given that lower-income households often spend 60 to 80 percent of their incomes on food, even a moderate reduction in income could lead to nutritional problems like skipping meals, reducing caloric intake, or switching to less nutritious (but cheaper) foods. This is likely to be exacerbated by school closures, given that school meal programs are often a major source of nutrition for children. In the medium to long term, loss of jobs and overall economic contraction also imply an overall reduction in household consumption across Africa of between \$60 billion and \$90 billion. In a survey with middle-income consumers in Kenya and Nigeria, it was found that around 60 percent of respondents expected to be financially worse off in the next three months, 65 to 70 percent reported having less than four months’ worth of savings to see them through the crisis, and about 25 percent reported having less than a month’s worth of savings.

4.8 ANTICIPATED DECREASE IN PRODUCTION DUE TO DISRUPTION OF THE UPCOMING PLANTING SEASONS

In terms of agricultural production, COVID-19 could disrupt the availability and affordability of agricultural inputs, particularly as devalued currencies and higher-cost logistics may make inputs more expensive. Moreover, many farmers in countries like South Africa may still be emerging from debt caused by droughts in previous years which may cause ongoing financial challenges for upcoming production seasons, particularly if disrupted supply chains affect farmers’ ability to sell crops. In addition to all these challenges, there is also an issue of accessing other needed support services for the farmers. For example, according to the Executive Director of Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) in Nigeria, about 80-85% of smallholder farmers whom they work with are at risk of losing all their dry season investments as a result of the lockdown due to COVID-19. Also, that more worryingly, there are almost no sufficient extension services. Farmers and processors are left without field demonstrations. They’re unable to apply the critical second-phase urea fertilizers and appropriate pesticides. There is a fear that they will be unable to feed their families or the nation as food security is dependent on their performance.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, based on the reports of PAFO member networks in the respective regions on the African Continent, it is evident that there are some policy frameworks and related initiatives to support farmers. However, it is also clear that there still some room for improvement and more efforts are needed to continue supporting a competitive, sustainable and inclusive agro-industry and agribusiness in Africa as a pathway to increased economic growth and food security on the continent. Indeed, it is clearly known fact that, agro-industrialization offers immense opportunities for income generation, employment, food security and overall economic development which can further enhance peace and social cohesion on the African Continent.

Across the continent, farmers and their respective activities have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic just like other economic activities but there has also been some remarkable resilience to build on for the continent to revive and sustain the farmers, even post the pandemic period. Most countries are strategically supporting businesses that have been adversely affected so as to overcome the disruptions that have affected even priority sectors of the economies. It is anticipated that, the commitments by governments to implement various recovery measures will help to overcome the significant hardships brought on by COVID-19 on agri-businesses and allow them to be in a position to play a meaningful role in the economic recovery of the African continent.

In this regard therefore, and to build on the current moment to further improve the situation, the following recommendations are hereby proposed for policy considerations;

1. Securing the safety of farmers as farming continues uninterrupted
2. Connecting rural farmers
3. Supporting smallholder producers and promoting innovation and digitalization in agriculture
4. Consideration of agricultural sector and farming activities among the priorities under "Recovery Funds" to address Covid-19 related impact
5. Enhancing support to smallholder farmers to stay in business
6. Providing farmers training on advocacy and communication skills
7. Maximizing opportunities in farming and agro-processing on the African Continent
8. Supporting and promoting agro-processing through sustainable farming
9. Enhancing the coordination and implementation of African Continental related policies and strategies
10. Honoring the commitments under the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP)
11. Utilizing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote farming and farm products on the African market
12. Strengthening support systems and members' organizations for African farmers

Note: Here below, the recommendations are looked at in more details. The recommendations hereunder are provided with a view of the fact that, it is not over yet. Also, the common narrative of "back to normal" is not properly resonating with the farmers on the African continent because there is a need to get to a better place than how it was before the pandemic. So, for the African farmers, the right narrative is rather "build back better" by reengineering the future with African farmers as their own champions.

The recommendations herein presented are meant to address the issues at two levels, namely; urgent and long term measures. The first four (4) recommendations are urgent measures in relation to the direct impact by the pandemic and the other eight (8) are the medium to long term measures that are needed to unlock the potential of African farmers.

5.1. SECURING THE SAFETY OF FARMERS AS FARMING CONTINUES UNDISRUPTED

This should be done by availing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to key people in the producer organizations to enable them continue handling coordination, training activities within their groups. This equipment would also be helpful for commodity aggregators especially quality assurance in preparation for market access. The equipment should further be availed to all farmers exposed to related risks.

5.2. CONNECTING RURAL FARMERS

From advisory services to providing inputs and to train farmers especially in rural areas, there is need to enhance connectivity to reach out to the targeted farmers. Before the Covid-19, meetings would take place in which many farmers would congregate and could order farm supplies, participate in weekly farming trainings, and give cash to the field officers to repay their loans. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, safety precautions mean group and cluster meetings are no longer allowed, new approaches are needed through relevant innovations and modern technologies.

In this light, governments should work with relevant partners to enhance related support (e.g. providing phones to farmers) to make it possible for the services to reach them through online means to the extent possible. The following could be considered;

- **Farmer Self-Service:** Enabling farmers to get some services straight from their phones, such as; accessing their accounts balances, making payments using various mobile money platforms and thus avoiding the unnecessary exchange of physical currency.
- **Training and Knowledge Sharing:** Designing and implementing “self-training” programs through which farmers can access numerous planting guides, with information such as when to weed their farms, what spacing to leave between planting rows, etc.
- **Facilitating the wider participation in the “Mobile Money” payment systems:** While a good number is already on a path of digital transformation with fully cashless operations in some countries, there is need to maintain the momentum and bring others who are not yet on board in facilitating the African farmers to embrace paperless transactions.

5.3 SUPPORTING SMALLHOLDER PRODUCERS AND PROMOTING INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION IN AGRICULTURE

The COVID-19 crisis and containment measures are having an impact on all sectors of the economy, particularly smallholder farmers. The need to innovate, expand and promote the use of digital tools in agriculture has never been as pressing or opportune as during the COVID-19 crisis. However, digital technologies are being mainly developed and disseminated by the private sector for commercial purposes, and marketed towards large and medium-scale farmers.

When it comes to innovation, smallholders are less attractive clients for commercial firms as they are limited by constraints that require public intervention in order to establish a conducive environment for the supply and demand of digital technologies for agriculture. In this light, public interventions are needed to promote the digital transformation of agriculture.

Indeed, to enhance resilience, governments should consider the following measures to support small-scale farmers under the emergency conditions of COVID-19, and thus build stronger and more resilient farming communities:

- Promote and scale up the adoption of digital agriculture and the available digital extension tools and apps through targeting and training;
- Design new methods of farmers' advisory services (e.g., data-driven advisory services) and use social media and classical communication media (radio, TV programmes) for advice and information exchange;
- Promote and support youth entrepreneurial initiatives in the region, building on the achievements of the many existing incubators and start-ups, and engage stakeholders to become agri-entrepreneurs using digital solutions. Bridge the gap between farmers and service providers that can develop digital solutions;
- Support e-finance to address constraints in accessing credit and inputs;
- Support e-commerce platforms for food and agriculture to help link smallholder farmers to input or output providers further up the value chain; and
- Adopt and scale up smart sensing technologies to monitor food quality and safety.

5.4 CONSIDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND FARMING ACTIVITIES AMONG THE PRIORITIES UNDER "RECOVERY FUNDS" TO ADDRESS COVID-19 RELATED IMPACT

Many African countries have set up or are in the process of setting up special funds dedicated to support businesses affected by COVID-19. The purpose of these recovery funds is to support various businesses, especially in priority sectors that have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the importance of farming activities and the

agro-business sector in Africa, general observations have indicated that the agricultural sector and farmers are missing among the priorities that are being considered under such funds. This needs a reconsideration. Farmers and key players in agriculture should also have access to the recovery funds that are being set up by most African countries. This is very important because farmers on the African continent need financial support/ assistance to address the following;

- a) Purchasing production inputs for the coming season as most of them lost revenue due to disruption of markets by restrictions imposed under COVID-19. As of now most farmers need some capital injection to restart their businesses.
- b) Purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) for themselves and members of their families. Despite all the challenges, farmers are expected to work and produce food. This must be done under safe environment and farmers need to be assisted in this regard with PPE for themselves and those working with and for them.
- c) Support towards their cash flow as most of them have lost their products especially horticulture farmers whose products got damaged during COVID-19. Thus do not have adequate resources to pay for costs, credits as well as meet their requirements for the next cycle of production.

5.5 ENHANCING SUPPORT TO SMALLHOLDER FARMERS TO STAY IN BUSINESS

Farmers should be motivated and supported to increase their production. The bulk of the food supply in most countries in Africa comes from smallholder farmers; however, existing policies that support their productivity have historically undermined their performance. Farmers who show evidence of being in production should be able to access emergency funds without repayment conditions. Generally, the smallholder farmers in Africa are like the backbone of the social economic fabric of the society because majority of the rural population are in this category. Furthermore, the main actors involved are women and youth. So, enhancing targeted support is instrumental not only in terms of developing the agricultural sector but also to ensure sustainable social economic development in Africa.

Also, agriculture inputs should immediately be classified as essential materials and steps taken to ensure their uninterrupted supply to various depots. Similarly, food transport and distribution should be considered as a national security issue and thus a protected activity under the restrictive laws.

5.6 PROVIDING FARMERS TRAINING ON ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The farmers should be trained and given the tools they need to be effective communicators for them to advocate for their issues in their respective constituencies. Even to those with the skills, there is a need for further improvement and sustainability. This can be carried out through their respective Associations and Cooperatives. The training should include among others; training for TV, radio, and newspaper interviews as well as communicating directly with consumers. The story of African farmers should be told and heard clearly from those directly involved.

5.7 MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN FARMING AND AGRO PROCESSING ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

This should be done through continental strategies and initiatives to connect farmers among themselves and farmers to markets on continent. In addition, more capacity building programs should be enhanced to empower African farmers for them to work at their full potential. Again, female entrepreneurs should be given special attention through targeted financing and skills development.

5.8 SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING AGRO-PROCESSING THROUGH SUSTAINABLE FARMING

Some of the intrinsically related factors contributing to the poor farming (agriculture) performance in Africa include outdated technologies and methods of farming as well as inadequate financing for the sector. In this regard therefore, ensuring sustainable farming will require enhanced mechanization of the sector, use of green energy and empowering rural farmers (mostly women) who are the majority players. Increased mechanization in farming will require that the energy demands are met by increasing the availability of fuel and electrical power in the rural areas. By creating higher grid power connectivity for uninterrupted power supply, the villages should be provided with increased electric power.

In regard to empowering rural farmers, there is a need to enhance their involvement by building their capacities to participate in regional and continental trade taking advantage of trade opportunities (even at least by participating in the supply chains). Special attention should be paid to supporting the most vulnerable women farmers and entrepreneurs in the rural areas.

Among the support for the African farmers, the following should further be considered;

- Up-scaling localised “home grown” farming innovations and solutions.
- Developing innovative, customized and user-friendly technologies (such as applications that can enhance irrigation schemes even in rural areas)

5.9 ENHANCING THE COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AFRICAN CONTINENTAL RELATED POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

At the Continental level, the Africa Union (AU) has in place a number of relevant policies and strategies that take cognizance of national and regional development policies, plans, strategies and programs of the respective Member Countries. Again, the appropriate institutional structures for implementation are in place and thus the following measures and actions should be taken into consideration;

- The AU Commission should initiate the process of designating a special fund (Farmers' or Agricultural Fund) to support farmers on the African Continent and related activities to be accessed by key players. The resources for the fund should be from all possible sources including contributions from Member countries as well as bilateral and multilateral financing mechanisms;
- Member countries and the AU Commission should increase their efforts and capacity in the preparation, negotiation and participation in related international Agreements and various Conventions; and
- The AU Commission should facilitate interactions of the various Working Groups on Agriculture, Industry, Environment and Natural Resources with the various stakeholders and key players on the continent.
- Implementation of the United Nations (UN) Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 global action plan. The UN Decade of Family Farming provides an extraordinary opportunity for Africa to truly support the farmers on the continent. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), family farming is the predominant form of food and agricultural production in both developed and developing countries, producing over 80 percent of the world's food in value terms. Indeed, putting family farming and all family-based production models at the focus of interventions for a period of ten years, will indeed contribute to a world free of hunger and poverty, where natural resources are managed sustainably, and where no one is left behind, and especially on the African continent.

5.10 HONORING THE COMMITMENTS UNDER THE COMPREHENSIVE AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CAADP)

Through CAADP, African governments are expected to increased investment level in agriculture by allocating at least 10% of national budgets to agriculture and rural development, and to achieve agricultural growth rates of at least 6% per annum. The CAADP is one of the continental frameworks under Agenda 2063 and it aims to help African countries eliminate hunger and reduce poverty by raising economic growth through agriculture-led development as well as promoting increased national budget provision to the agriculture sector.

Honoring the pledged commitments should be based on the understanding that, for Africa to achieve the Agenda 2063 aspiration for “A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development” (Aspiration 1) the continent needs to invest in modern agriculture for increased proactivity and production as well as exploit the vast potential of Africa’s blue/ocean economy. In addition, action needs to be taken to address climate change issues and other environmental factors that pose a great risk to the agricultural sector and farming activities.

5.11 UTILIZING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA) PROMOTE FARMING AND FARM PRODUCTS ON THE AFRICAN MARKET

The AfCFTA presents Africa with a unique opportunity to unleash its economic potential for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It is believed that the arrangement will create a single African market of more than a billion consumers with a combined GDP of U\$2.5 trillion. Among others, it aims to promote agricultural transformation and growth in Africa and contribute to food security, as well as improve competitiveness through regional agricultural value chains development and incentivize critical investments in production and marketing infrastructure.

Indeed, the AfCFTA has stimulated a lot of trade potential in Africa that could see the continent significantly improving its intra-trade levels, thereby boosting the economic welfare of Africans. In regard to agriculture, intra-African agricultural trade is particularly under exploited owing to high import tariffs, other non-tariff barriers (such as health and safety standards), low productivity, and a lack of rural connectivity.

The AfCFTA should among other solutions rectify this and encourage intra-African agricultural trade for food products and for inputs as raw materials in agro-industries. As the continent embarks on the implementation of the historic free trade Agreement that is expected to boost Africa’s economic potential, the African farmers and key players in the agricultural sector need to be given their rightful place in the arrangement.

5.12 STRENGTHENING SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND AFRICAN FARMERS MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the governments’ support for the African farmers, the other reliable support system is provided by the members’ organizations that the farmers belong to at various levels, that is, national, regional and continental levels. National Farmers Organizations (NFOs) have been consistently instrumental in supporting farmers in their respective countries, most especially in the areas of advisory services, training and advocacy. These NFOs are further supported by regional farmers’ organizations in their respective regions who specifically help in the area of capacity building for them to serve better in their respective mandates. At the continental level, the Panafrican Farmers Organization (PAFO) supports and helps the African farmers through its regional member networks. In this light, there is a need to strengthen these support systems in place, most especially by building the capacities of these organizations and mobilizing the required resources to sustain their mandates as they deliver the needed services to the African farmers.

In regard to strengthening the members' organizations, there is a need to support their efforts of mobilizing the needed resources and also to hear their voices at the respective levels of their operations. As they represent their members, the farmers organizations need to be given right platforms and their voices need to be heard as they advocate for the wellbeing and productivity of the African farmers.

ANNEX 1: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

REPORTS, STUDIES, POLICIES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

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