



Responding to COVID-19 food disruptions in Africa

Update for the period of 1 July 2020 - 14 July 2020

INTRODUCTION

This situation report is a collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the University of Minnesota – Strategic Partnerships and Research Collaborative. The aim is to identify food system disruptions in Africa due to the COVID-19 by scanning and analyzing public, open-source information.

SUB-REGIONAL UPDATES

West Africa (SFW)

Burkina Faso

- A rise in jihadist violence in Burkina Faso is creating greater insecurity in northern Burkina Faso. Insurgents have focused their targeted attacks on farming groups such as the Moussi, Foulse, and Gourmantche.
 - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53333366> (07/08/20)

Côte d'Ivoire

- COVID-19 has impacted informal households increasing the amount of “extremely poor” households four-fold. The UNDP and national authorities’ assessment have reported 71.7 percent of the population surveyed has reported lower income and the poorest Ivorians have seen incomes plunge on average 30 percent. As this decrease in income will increase food insecurity in the country, monitoring and mitigating food shortages in partnership with trade unions, transport workers, and consumers was recommended.
 - [https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/Cote d'Ivoire pandemic prompts surge in extreme poverty.html](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/Cote%20dIvoire%20pandemic%20prompts%20surge%20in%20extreme%20poverty.html), (07/09/20)

The Gambia

- Less than 10 000 metric tons of certified sorghum and millet seeds will be available in the 2020 cropping season, falling far short of a projected demand of 100 000 metric tons.
 - <https://geneticliteracyproject.org/2020/06/24/covid-19-disrupts-africas-seed-supply-threatening-food-security/> (06/24/20)

Ghana

- The Ghana Private Transport Union (GPRTU) has petitioned the President of Ghana, through the Ministry of Transport, for an upward review in transport fares to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the operations of its members. The appeal follows demands by drivers for fares to be lowered to account for revenue losses due to reduced passenger volume in compliance with social distancing protocols. This policy has been in effect for 3 months and has significantly impacted the revenues and livelihoods of both passenger and cargo transport operators. The drivers have demanded an increase of about 30 percent in fares, which has added to costs of agribusinesses transporting raw materials from rural areas to processing centers.
 - <https://citibusinessnews.com/gprt-tu-to-petition-transport-ministry-for-an-increase-in-fares-due-to-social-distancing/>

Guinea

- The Agency for the Promotion of Private Investments (APIP) and the Integrated Agricultural Development Project of Guinea (PDAIG) are launching a competition to provide technical and financial support to small and mid-size agricultural enterprises affected by the pandemic. The competition aims to create and maintain at least 500 indirect jobs for women and young people in rural communities, and focus efforts on fresh produce sectors such as potatoes.
 - <https://www.africaguinee.com/articles/2020/07/11/guinee-l-apip-au-chevet-des-micro-entreprises-et-pme-agricoles> (07/11/20)

Guinea-Bissau

- Due to the COVID-19 related restrictions shut down exports of their raw cashew nuts to India and Viet Nam affecting the incomes of 80 percent of the population. Cashew nut sales during the marketing season (between March and July) are an important component of the yearly household income, particular in rural areas. While cashew accounts directly for only around 11 percent of the GDP, various other cashew-related domestic services in the value chain provide substantial economic stimulus making up 34 percent of the GDP in total. National movement restrictions and border closures have not only prevented international and regional cashew trade distribution, but also limited the movement of seasonal workers and the farmers' ability to manage the labor-intensive collection of cashew nuts.
 - https://www.gw.undp.org/content/guinea_bissau/en/home/news-centre/covid-19-socio-economic-impact-assessment-in-guinea-bissau.html (06/18/20)

Liberia

- The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is providing support to vulnerable populations through its Anti-COVID-19 Taskforce. The church is distributing food to physically challenged and elderly members. The United Methodist health board in Liberia received UMCOR grant funding to assist with training related to COVID-19 prevention and control in addition to the food relief. All work is being done utilizing established health protocols established by the government.

- <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/food-relief-helps-in-liberias-covid-19-fight> (06/29/20)

Mali

- Resource depletion is occurring in the western regions of Sahel, Liptako Gourma, and parts of northern Mali during the current lean season. COVID-19 related early stock depletion and declining incomes for agriculturalists is a primary factor for food insecurity in this country. COVID-19 related mitigation strategies impacted (i) seasonal migration; (ii) the availability of agricultural labour; (iii) access to pastoral resources; and (iv) access to agricultural inputs and tools. FAO June 2020 review of Mali estimates 1.3 million persons being in severe acute food insecurity from June - August 2020 with an additional 280 000 persons added to this category due to COVID-19
 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-response-overview-june-2020> (07/03/20)

Senegal

- The International Development Association is providing a USD 150M credit to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 through increasing the exports of high-value crops such as ground nuts and horticultural products, increase dairy productivity and reducing small ruminant mortality.
 - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19> (07/08/20)

Sierra Leone

- Inputs, land mechanization services and extensions services to support rice farmers are being provided by the Small Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project through emergency financing.
 - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19> (07/08/2020)
- Sierra Leonean agribusinesses companies have petitioned the government for more oversight on the funding allotted to Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the Quick Action Economic Response Program (QAERP). The QAERP officially plans to de-risk lending to agribusiness companies by providing guarantees on loans to SMEs, as well as negotiating loans with commercial banks to suspend the collection of interest payments to SMEs in hard-hit sectors, which includes agribusiness. However, agribusiness SMEs through their associations and industry groups, have complained that the funding is in practice not readily available to their most vulnerable members.
 - www.maintainsprogramme.org

DISCUSSION

The increased violence in the region with targeted attacks in farming communities and markets adds to the COVID-19 related disruptions. Other disruptions such as income reduction due to limited exports of cash crops and job losses as well as inadequate access to inputs and tools may increase food insecurity in the sub-region. It is therefore clear that COVID-19 and related restrictions are an additional burden to the food system in West Africa, which is already challenged

by climate change, degradation of natural resources, insecurity, and lack of investments in sustainable production systems. With COVID-19, the food system is further weakened leading to an increase in food insecurity and poverty. The latest edition of the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World shows that the hungry are expanding fastest in Africa and the COVID-19 pandemic could tip over 130 million more people into chronic hunger by the end of 2020.

It is also becoming clear that a policy role for international organizations will be to support oversight of increased flows of aid funding from the crisis, especially for funds earmarked for the private sector through commercial financial institutions. Market-linked agribusiness companies in sectors such as transport, logistics, and inputs distribution are suffering significant disruptions, which will have short- and medium-term consequences on food production, loss and waste, and food security and availability for urban regions.

Central Africa (SFC)

Cameroon

- Cameroon truck drivers carrying goods and humanitarian aid have been unable to cross the border to Central African Republic despite agreements to allow truck drivers to cross if they provide a negative COVID-19 test result. This is partly due to Central African Republic responding to the uptick of COVID-19 cases in Cameroon. At the same time, the Central African Republic depends on the Douala seaport for 95 percent of its goods and humanitarian aid. The continuation of closed borders will impact the food system as access to goods and aid continues to be difficult for Central African Republic.
 - <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/cameroon-truck-drivers-stuck-car-border-after-health-officials-refuse-accept> (07/10/2020)
- The Minister of Fisheries and Animal Industries is providing work equipment to fishermen to combat illegal and unregulated fishing while contributing to food security due to COVID-19. Donations include fiberglass canoes, outboard motors, life jackets, and lifebuoys. The goal is to reduce fish imports and increase production sustainably.
 - <http://www.africavet.com/index.php/breaking-news/cameroun-peche-et-aquaculture-le-ministre-des-peches-et-des-industries-animales-dr-taiga-offre-du-materiel-de-travail-aux-pecheurs> (07/03/2020)

Central African Republic

- The Central African Republic has been strict in maintaining its borders and only letting individuals who have proven negative COVID-19 test results to control the spread of the virus in the population. However, this has meant that goods and humanitarian aid including items provided by the United Nations World Food Programme have been blocked from coming into the Central African Republic at the border. There are still many challenges regarding border crossing for the trucks from Cameroon that are bringing in goods into the country. This has a potential to cause major food scarcities in the population that can exacerbate the effects of COVID-19.
 - <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/cameroon-truck-drivers-stuck-car-border-after-health-officials-refuse-accept> (07/10/2020)

Republic of Chad

- Movement restrictions have been relaxed to allow humanitarians to carry out food distribution operations. This has included the distribution of both nutritional inputs and seeds.
 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/chad-situation-report-3-july-2020> (07/03/2020)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Estimated agricultural production is expected to be lower during the coming season due to the combined effects of heavy floods and restrictions related to the COVID-19. A new Ebola outbreak declared in the Equateur province could exacerbate impacts to the food system as the country tackles both an emerging Ebola outbreak and continued COVID-19 spread.
 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/r-publique-d-mocratique-du-congo-perspectives-sur-la-s-curit-10> (07/01/2020)

DISCUSSION

Restrictions of cross-border movement of food and agricultural inputs need to be relaxed. Otherwise, the impact of COVID-19 on food access for the population of the sub-region will be exacerbated. Countries should understand that COVID-19 related movement restrictions not only hinder humanitarian response, but also trade within the country, the region, as well as globally. This is particularly the case for countries with a high import dependence. There is an urgent need to address this issue since cross-border challenges have been reported in other regions as well.

Eastern Africa (SFE)

Burundi

- Excessive rain and disruptions related to COVID-19 impacted the agriculture productivity and cross border access to markets. The World Food Programme is supporting flood displaced citizens with food as market shortages and price increases add to food insecurity challenges.
 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/wfp-burundi-country-brief-april-2020> (06/18/2020)

Kenya and Uganda

- Pakistan took over Uganda as the biggest buyer of Kenyan goods. Due to landlocked Uganda, there has been a decrease in delivery of goods. Revenue of exports (fruits, flowers, and vegetables) to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has grown 30 percent.
 - <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/pakistan-overtakes-uganda-as-top-kenyan-goods-buyer--1448178> (07/10/20)

Rwanda

- Rwanda Tea Exporters reel under low prices: Tea prices have decreased due to restrictions on movement of goods
 - <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/rwanda-tea-exporters-reel-under-low-prices-1447030> (07/06/20)

DISCUSSION

Most of the countries in the sub-region have been seriously affected by the desert locust outbreak. Efforts need to be made to facilitate cross border exchange of goods to mitigate the compounded food insecurity. In addition, it is worth noting that restrictions affecting exports lead to reduced incomes for producers and all actors along value chains, decline in foreign currency earnings for the countries, thus affecting individuals directly, but also reducing the government's sources to import goods and provide support to the COVID-19 response.

Southern Africa (SFS)

Angola

- To counter the impacts of COVID-19, the Center for Genetic Multiplication is continuing to inseminate cattle to stimulate the production of meat and milk
 - http://www.angop.ao/angola/en_us/noticias/economia/2020/6/29/Cattle-breeders-bet-genetic-multiplication-techniques,bea17de7-2138-43cc-83fa-66ff27adf2c8.html (07/13/20)

Botswana

- Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board (BAMB) is projecting to pay farmers P398 million for their harvest this year thanks to the very good harvest. This is more than double the amount the Board paid out to farmers last year. This will keep food produced in the country as purchasing from neighboring countries has become cost prohibitive.
 - <https://news.thevoicebw.com/bamb-to-pay-farmers-close-to-p400-million/> (no date posted)

Eswatini

- New measures implemented by the Eswatini government during COVID-19 included the successful implementation of a food relief program. More than 330 826 people have benefited from the food assistance program, exceeding the initially targeted 301 762 beneficiaries. The program will continue in July while 50 boreholes have been rehabilitated countrywide.
 - <https://twitter.com/EswatiniGovern1/status/1281851814351167488> (7/11/2020)

South Africa

- Increased measures to include nightly curfews are being enforced in an attempt to decrease the pressure on the hospitals treating COVID-19 patients. Nightly curfews may

impact the food system to include transportation of inputs and products if workers are not exempt from the curfew. Additional measures that continue to lock down the country may continue to impact the countries food supply lines.

- <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/13/890406907/south-africa-introduces-alcohol-ban-and-curfew-as-coronavirus-surges> (7/13/20)
- <https://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL5N2EJ0KG> (7/12/20)

The United Republic of Tanzania

- Sharp increases in the price of wheat may become a significant food security issue for the United Republic of Tanzania as they may be unable to keep up with increasing market prices. The United Republic of Tanzania has a high reliance on wheat imports however are small importers comparatively to others in the world making them too small to influence prices.
 - <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/-Tanzania--relies-too-much-on-wheat-imports-/1840340-5593004-fvkwr/b/index.html> (7/14/20)

Zambia

- A joint venture to increase crop yields and food security has been launched by an American nonprofit and American Green Resources (AGR). The effort is projected to support 250 000 farmers double their yield for maize and assist in feeding 10 million people in the region. Credit packages for seed, fertilizer, and training will be provided.
 - <https://www.ift.org/news-and-publications/news/2020/june/22/us-nonprofit-zambian-farm-supplier-partner-to-boost-crop-yield>

Zimbabwe

- The AMA (Agricultural Marketing Authority) which under ordinary circumstances interacts directly with food suppliers in order to enact various functions such as fair trade, regulations, and governmental production promotion, is moving its interacts to virtual platforms that includes the development of a website and Mobile app to counter restrictions for in-person interaction.
 - <https://www.herald.co.zw/ama-goes-virtual-to-sidestep-covid-19-disruptions/>

DISCUSSION

COVID-19 underlined the importance to strengthen local food systems that are resilient to crises. The pandemic has ushered in a new normal that requires countries to support and develop innovative solutions that may be the prototypes/precedent of other virtual interactive methods that benefit the food industry in Africa. Such innovations may include website and mobile application platforms that allow informal farmers to barter virtually for goods limiting person to person interaction or creating virtual (Amazon-like) flea markets etc.

Africa - continent wide

- FAO receives EUR 15 million from the European Union to fight desert locusts and improve food security. With recent support, half a trillion locusts have been killed and 1 million tons of crops have survived. Desert locusts continue to be a threat to exaggerating food security and livelihoods. The locust infestation has created additional burden on the farming and pastoral communities as they have been challenged by COVID-19 mitigation measures (e.g. border closures).
 - <https://africaanalyst.com/press-releases/?pr=126640&lang=en> (07/08/20)
- AU-IBAR (African Union Bureau for Animal Resources) released recommendations outlining the preferred next steps to the Wildlife sector due to concerns of the impacts and risks of the sector from COVID-19 using One Health methodology.
 - <http://www.africavet.com/index.php/breaking-news/au-ibar-concerned-over-covid-19-impact-and-risks-to-the-wildlife-sector-and-implications-on-wildlife-trade-from-future-pandemics> (07/01/20)
- The African Development Bank (AfDB) is supporting African governments and businesses to lessen the economic and social impact of COVID-19 through its Feed Africa strategy. A USD 20 million grant was approved to support vulnerable communities in the Sahel region that have been dealing with extremist violence in addition to COVID-19 hardships; these countries include Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania. AfDB has also given USD 2.6 million to Somalia to finance water and sanitation programs in the face of COVID-19.
 - <https://www.africanews.com/2020/07/09/covid-19-impact-on-agriculture-assessment-of-recovery-efforts-analysis/> (07/09/20)
- Refugees in Africa are more vulnerable to food insecurity and are 60 percent more likely to be financially impaired by COVID-19. In Uganda, food rations have been cut by 30 percent. Funding shortfalls have led to food cuts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. In Cameroon, the United Nations World Food Programme reduced its assistance to refugees from the Central African Republic by 50 percent. Additionally, around refugee camps in Rwanda food prices on average are 27 percent higher compared to the previous year.
 - <https://africaanalyst.com/press-releases/?pr=126910&lang=en> (07/09/20)
 - <https://africaanalyst.com/press-releases/?pr=126656&lang=en> (07/08/20)

DISCUSSION

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple threats such as insecurity in the Sahel, the desert locust outbreak in East Africa, as well as conflicts and the broad global economic crisis contributes to the overall challenge many African countries are addressing at the present moment. Accumulation of multiple challenges not only makes the health response to COVID-19 more

difficult but may also lead to a multiplying effect on the other challenges. It is therefore important for countries and the international community to continue collaboration in battling such challenges. The recommendations from the AU-IBR on the mitigation of the risk of future zoonotic pandemics demonstrates the need for a One Health approach and the key roles that Ministries of Forestry, Wildlife, Agriculture and Health jointly play in supporting a harmonized One Health continental approach. With the funding shortfalls for World Food Programme (WFP), there is a high risk of a sharp increase of malnutrition due to curbing food rations and increasing food prices at refugee camps. Specific measures need to be taken at the continental level to mitigate the impact of that serious problem on the already vulnerable groups.

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