

## SAA's response to the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems in Africa

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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SAA carried out an assessment to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on food systems in Africa, and to propose sustainable and suitable solutions to mitigate these effects.

Coronavirus is continuing its spread across the world, with more than six million confirmed cases. More than 370,000 people have lost their lives, and though Africa has had 336,000 cases as of 25 June, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) experts warn the continent will have a prolonged outbreak over several years.

In mid-April this year, SAA conducted a rapid assessment to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food systems across the agricultural value chain, and to establish the measures which can be put in place to mitigate the impact. The survey was conducted virtually – using telephone and email interviews – with a range of stakeholders, including farmers, input and output traders, Agricultural governmental officials, financial institutions and university lecturers and students in our intervention countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mali and Uganda (mainly); and Tanzania, Malawi, Benin, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Ghana.

Results showed the pandemic is significantly affecting the agriculture sector, with different stakeholders being affected in different ways. The restrictions on travel and social gatherings, for example, reduced farmers' access to agriculture inputs (e.g. seed, agro-chemicals and fertilizer), financial services, farm labor availability as well as output markets. Additionally, the pandemic has disrupted the provision of agricultural extension services, leaving farmers with limited access to capacity building. Students at agricultural colleges and universities have had to deal with disrupted studies, exacerbated by the poor ICT infrastructures to enable effective online learning. Overall, survey results suggested that should the pandemic continue, these limitations are expected to affect crop production and productivity, which could jeopardize food security and nutrition in Africa.

SAA will continue to 'take it to the farmer', and work hard to mitigate the impact of the pandemic through short, medium and long-term interventions, using innovative technology – such as e-extension platforms – to strengthen the resilience of the African food system, in response to COVID-19.



An SAA program officer and smallholder farmer wear masks as part of precautionary measures during field planting in the Mubende district, Uganda

### Key findings from SAA research

- COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the agriculture sector and food systems of African countries within a short time frame.
- Restrictive measures imposed by governments as part of plans to curb outbreaks has significantly affected crop productivity.
- The provision of agricultural extension and advisory services has been heavily disrupted, leaving farmers with limited access to training and capacity building opportunities.
- Overall, findings suggest that should the pandemic continue, these limitations, combined with the reduced availability of labor, are expected to affect most activities along the crop value chain.



Farmers wear masks during a training session in the Tigray Region, Ethiopia



Click here to download the full SAA Covid-19 Impact Assessment report

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