

# Horticulture sector

## Introductory brief for stakeholders

### Rapid assessment of the horticulture sector

**Amidst the worldwide COVID-19 crisis we currently face, and the socio-economic effects of coping measures, specific attention and action are needed to secure agricultural production for income, employment, and food and nutrition security.**

After 25 years of economic growth, the World Bank<sup>1</sup> projects economic decline in Africa in 2020. Agriculture is expected to be one of the most seriously affected sectors. The High-Level Panel of Experts, under the Committee on World Food Security<sup>2</sup>, indicates that the COVID-19 crisis is leading to instability in both local and global food markets, causing a disruption to food supply and availability; consequently, a decline in agricultural production and food imports, and an increase in food insecurity is anticipated.

For the near future, it is important to ensure that the production and marketing of agricultural commodities will continue in the best way possible under the prevailing circumstances. This requires regularly assessing how the COVID-19 containment measures affect the agricultural sector, and taking action to minimize negative impacts on income generation and food security.

This introductory brief suggests a collaborative effort to conduct rapid assessments of the horticulture sector and propose adequate responses to the challenges that are identified. It will contribute to developing immediate actions and interventions that will enhance the sector's resilience and support the continuity of activities in the horticulture sector, taking into account the unpredictability of the crisis and the seasonal dependency of the horticulture sector.

#### COVID-19 crisis and the horticulture sector

Activities in the horticulture sector are seasonal and time-sensitive; they take place in farmers' fields and company premises, and involve many interactions between value chain and other stakeholders. The COVID-19 crisis may threaten the performance and resilience of the horticulture sector in multiple ways:

- If farmers cannot access inputs, credit or labour, horticulture production and harvesting activities will be seriously affected or even fail
- If mobility is restricted, labourers will not be able to travel to the field or companies to earn an income
- If health measures are not respected, labourers, transporters and traders may spread the virus
- If both production and logistics are being disrupted, processors, traders and service providers will not be able to continue their activities and fulfil their crucial roles in the value chain system
- If marketing channels are blocked, especially exports, prices will fall, and sector revenues will decrease
- If nutritious and essential horticulture food items become scarce because of availability or mobility issues, and farm households earn lower incomes, consumption patterns will be disrupted.

These examples show that disruptions can have multiple and far-reaching effects. However, proactive and collaborative action can still mitigate risks and optimize the performance of the horticulture value chains under the current circumstances.

<sup>1</sup>World Bank, 2020. *An analysis of issues shaping Africa's economic future. Africa's Pulse*, No. 21, Spring 2020. World Bank, Washington, DC ([link](#)).

<sup>2</sup>HLEPE, 2020. *Interim issues paper on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition*. HLEPE Secretariat, Rome ([link](#)).

## Focus on critical functions

The rapid assessment of the horticulture sector is based on a sector transformation model and focuses on the following ten functions: (i) horticulture production, (ii) ecosystems, (iii) communities, (iv) producer organizations, (v) value chains, (vi) horticulture services, (vii) consumption, (viii) horticulture sector coordination, (ix) horticulture policy and regulation, and (x) horticulture sector revenues and investments. The model allows for a comprehensive sector assessment, facilitating the identification of the most affected functions and vulnerable interactions within the horticulture sector, in order to direct the need for immediate action and interventions.

## Method

The rapid sector assessment is regularly conducted and involves all relevant stakeholder groups who operate at different levels. The group of stakeholders participate in a rapid remote survey. Survey results are discussed in more depth during focus group discussions (FGDs).

The first step is to establish a panel, including horticulture stakeholders representing producers, producer organizations, processors, traders, exporters, service providers, government departments, financial institutions, education and research, and development organizations. The panellists will participate in a survey delivered online or on their smartphone. In case of no internet access, the survey can be conducted by telephone. The survey covers the full range of functions and value chain operations of the horticulture sector, which are considered essential at the time of the survey. A summary of the results is generated and feeds into the FGDs.

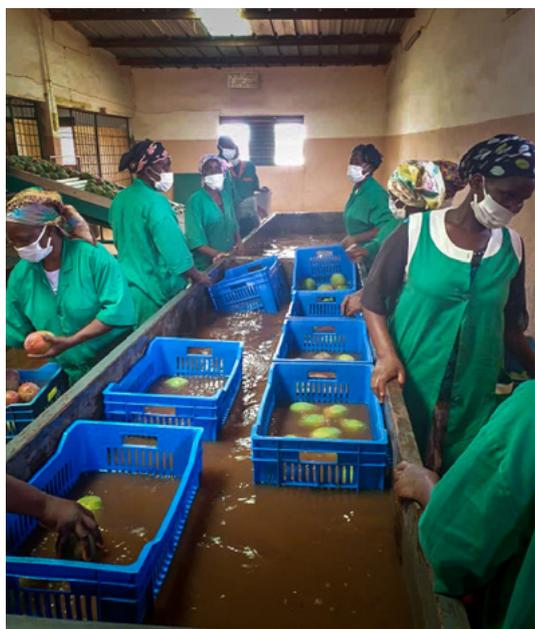
Each discussion brings some 5-8 stakeholders together (virtually) to review the results, propose actions, and identify stakeholders responsible for taking action.

The outcomes of the survey and FGDs will be compiled in a 'Horticulture Alert'. This is a short document that outlines the most important and pressing challenges within the horticulture sector and suggests immediate actions for stakeholders to initiate a practical response. A variety of communication tools, including social media, blogs, video messages, and portals are used to share the 'Horticulture Alert'.

The current planning is that the first 'Horticulture Alert' will be published in early July 2020. Subsequent alerts is anticipated every 6 to 8 weeks for the full duration of the crisis. The second such alert would thus be published at the end of August, after which the pilot will be evaluated.

## Partnership and collaboration

The rapid assessment of the horticulture sector is facilitated by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WC DI), part of Wageningen University & Research, in partnership with SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, and implemented in collaboration with partners in the HortInvest (Rwanda) and HortiFresh (Ghana and Ivory Coast) programmes. These horticulture programmes are funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in Kigali and Accra.



Packaging mango's for export, Korhogo, Ivory Coast  
(Photo:Moussa Coulibali)



HortiFresh launch (Photo:Cobby Nelson)

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