



Introductory Brief

Photo: Bala Wenceslas Sanou

COVID-19 RAPID ASSESSMENT OF AGRI-FOOD SECTORS IN AFRICA

Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food systems

Amidst the worldwide COVID-19 crisis we currently face, and the socio-economic effects of coping measures, specific attention and actions are needed to secure agricultural production for income, employment, and food security and nutrition, i.e., to safeguard the continued functioning of the food system.

For the near and mid-term 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 assessing how the COVID-19 containment measures and other indirect results of the pandemic affect individual agricultural sectors and take action to minimize negative impacts on the functioning of agricultural sectors within the larger food system.

This introductory brief elaborates a collaborative effort to conduct rapid assessments of four agri-food sectors and propose adequate responses to the challenges that are identified. The rapid assessments contribute to developing short-term and strategic practical, remedial, and preventative actions that enhance the sectors’ resilience and support the continuity of activities within each sector.

FAO assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Africa

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), through its Regional Office for Africa in Accra, is assessing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food and agriculture in Africa and compiling a continental synthesis report. In this report, it draws on various existing sources including assessments conducted by FAO itself, and reports of other agencies of the United Nations, the World Bank, African Development Bank, international research organizations such as the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and other stakeholders at country, regional and sectoral levels.

In compiling the continental synthesis report, FAO has revealed significant information gaps and a lack of solid evidence regarding the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on certain agricultural sectors. Sector-specific impact assessments and insights into potential actions to address those impacts, accompanied by sound recovery plans, are critical inputs for informing FAO’s continental synthesis of the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture.

In order to fill this information gap, FAO has contracted Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), part of Wageningen University & Research (WUR), to conduct rapid assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on four specific agricultural sectors in three countries, in collaboration with African-based consulting organizations. In addition to conducting the assessments, FAO asked WCDI to provide a synthesis of those four assessments and of the assessments conducted for other sectors in 2020.

Sectors and platforms

To implement the assessments, WUR worked in collaboration with national consulting or research organizations. Together they teamed up with national platforms to ensure that the outcomes of the results supported the sector in responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. The resulting documents highlighted the major challenges of how COVID-19 has impacted the functioning of the sectors and how they have affected the food system. Moreover, the assessments identified short-term and strategic actions for addressing those challenges.

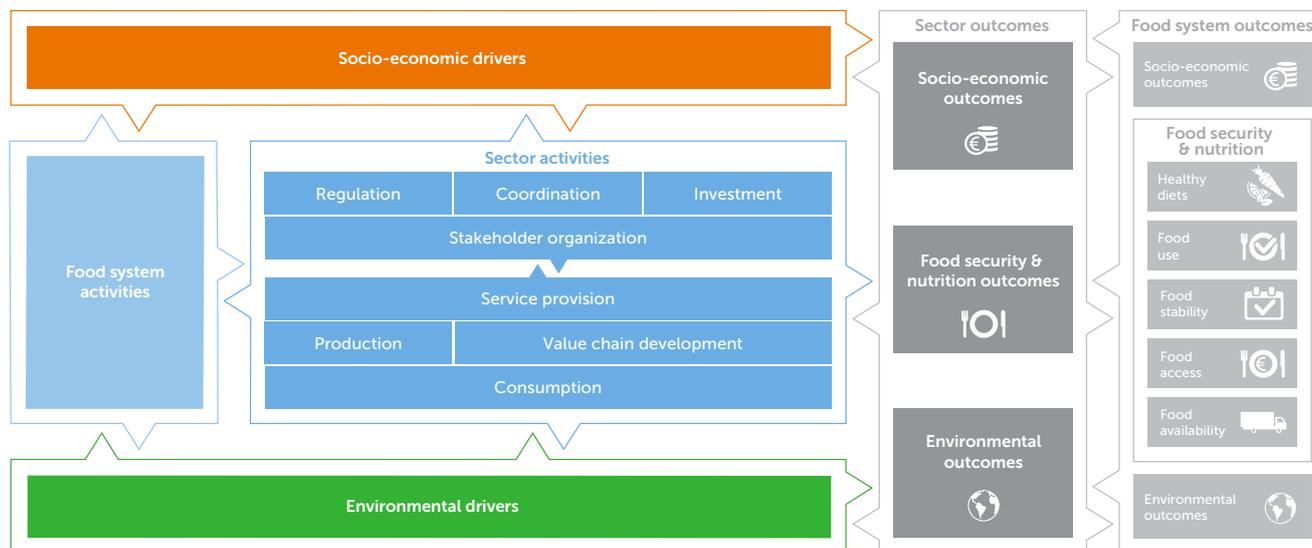
The rapid assessments involved a diversity of sector stakeholders. The aims were threefold: (1) to identify the impact of the COVID-19 crisis; (2) to prepare a rapid assessment document to inform decision-makers in government, industry, research, and civil society, as organized in the platform where the impact is felt the most; and (3) to contribute to the identification of short-term and structural actions needed to address the challenges.

The rapid assessments were implemented in four sectors; a specific country was identified for each sector. The assessments were conducted by WUR in close collaboration with sector platforms(s) and national consulting organization(s) in each country (Table 1).

Table 1. Rapid assessments

Sector	Country	Platforms	National consulting organizations
Cotton	Burkina Faso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina • Association Interprofessionnelle du Coton du Burkina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Research Institute, Bobo-Dioulasso
Marine fishery	Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council • Ghana Inshore Fishermen Association • Ghana Industrial Trawlers Association • Ghana Tuna Association • National Fish Processors and Traders Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Fisheries and Watershed Management, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi • Department of Marine and Fisheries Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra
Dairy	Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenya Dairy Board • Kenyan dairy stakeholders WhatsApp group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Market Options, Nairobi
Floriculture	Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenya Flower Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradecare Africa Ltd, Nairobi

Figure 1. Integrated food system and sector framework



Focus on critical sector activities

The rapid assessment is based on an integrated sector and food system framework (Figure 1) and identifies the following eight activities within a sector: (i) production, (ii) value chain development, (iii) stakeholder organization, (iv) service provision, (v) consumption, (vi) policies & regulation, (vii) sector coordination, and (viii) investment; these activities are complemented by (ix) socio-economic, and (x) environmental drivers. The assessment draws attention to outcomes at sector and food system levels. The integrated framework facilitates a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the sector, to identify the most affected activities and vulnerable interactions within the sector and larger food system, and to direct the need for action and strategic interventions. Of critical importance is that WUR and its partners have strong links with sector platforms. The integrated framework allows for the four sectors to contribute to an analysis of the impact the COVID-19 crisis on food systems, i.e., the continental synthesis document compiled by FAO.

Communication

The rapid assessment documents will be shared using a variety of communication tools, including social media, blogs, video messages, and internet portals. They will be complemented by similar documents

covering other sectors and multiple countries that will be available for access on a [dedicated website](#) of Wageningen University & Research.

About WCDI

WCDI supports value creation by strengthening capacities for sustainable development. As the international expertise and capacity-building institute of Wageningen University & Research (WUR), we bring knowledge into action, with the aim of exploring the potential of nature to improve quality of life. WCDI is engaged in various programmes and in guiding sector transformation in a manner that sectors become inclusive, effective, and sustainable. Dealing with the complexity of sector transformation and connecting different functions of the sector, WCDI applies a range of concepts, approaches, models, and tools to support such transformation processes in various agricultural sectors. WCDI collaborates with various partners and other WUR units in sector transformation through a range of collaborative programmes. Such collaboration has created unique partnerships in various countries, and it serves as a basis for using an action-research approach with sector transformation as the guiding model.

This rapid assessment is published within a series of rapid assessments in multiple (sub)sectors and countries, and is part of WCDI Sector Transformation publications.

Please cite as: *WCDI, 2021. Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural sectors. Introductory brief.* Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen. (10 June 2021)

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