

From The Executive Director's Desk



The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of global food systems, and the reliance that we all place on these same systems to end food insecurity.

Countries have reported millions of job and income loss.

Food production has been affected because travel restrictions have reduced the movement of migrant workers and these has affected the availability of farm labor, the lockdown have also made it harder to secure farm inputs.

Worst affected are smallholder farmers who make up the bulk of Africa's food producers.

It with this in mind that AWAN Afrika conducted a survey from April to June this year in 29 out of 42 countries where the organization has members, to understand the impacts of restrictions of movement, border closures on productivity, profitability, food supply chains and security and nutrition at household, regional and national level.

This month's newsletter will break down those numbers from the survey and also offer recommendations on the way forward for the continent's sustainability post covid-19.

In June, we continued with our tweet series, which has now come to an end. Its culmination is an E-book, which will be distributed to our members as well as partners.

I want to thank all the 200 members who took part in the study. They are from 29 countries out of our 42 member countries. Champions, we appreciate you.

Keep Safe, and keep going

Beatrice Gakuba

Executive Director, **AWAN Afrika**



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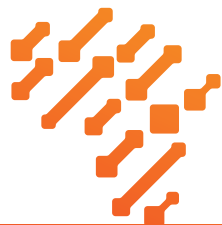
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON AFRICAN WOMEN AGRIBUSINESS NETWORK (AWAN-AFRIKA) MEMBERS

Throughout the world COVID-19 has caused substantial loss of life and forced many nations to take drastic measures to curb the spread of the disease. Associated with these measures has been a rise of social challenges and economic consequences which FAO¹ predicts will deeply compromise food security and nutrition, especially the restriction of movement within and across countries which hinders food logistical services, disrupts short and long food supply chains and affects availability of food.

The slowing down of economic growth in Africa due to COVID-19 will trigger the first economic recession in 25 years² and force 27 million people into extreme poverty³. Lives and livelihoods of women (who contribute to nearly 50% of the agricultural workforce; who 70% are engaged in agriculture for economic growth⁴; who make up nearly 70% of cross-border traders; and who own nearly 30% of small and medium enterprises in Africa), are highly threatened.

COVID 19 has impacted women led Micro- Small and Medium Enterprises most of whom are agribusinesses who are already vulnerable to internal shocks due to lack of access to finance, markets and digitalization which is the latest addition to a long list of gender inequalities that continue to disproportionately affect them.

Since March, almost all African countries were on lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, restrictions of movements has led to shortage of farm labourers, halted cross border trade, affected long and short distance supply chains resulting in skyrocketing transport and food costs, putting pressure on Micro and Small Enterprises, their livelihoods and those of their families are at risk.

Although some countries have provided stimulus packages to the vulnerable families, millions were left exposed and could be the next vulnerable groups. The most affected are women, because of the pandemic, the gains made in women economic empowerment are at risk.

In order to understand how COVID-19 is affecting our members' Agribusinesses and how AWAN Afrika can support our members and their businesses to build resilience against internal and external shocks associated with the pandemic, a survey was conducted through a questionnaire that was sent to all our 1,600 champion business owners in 42 African countries. From the 200 respondents of those surveyed 35% are from ECOWAS, 24% from SADC and 20% from East Africa Community regions.

Loss of income due to COVID-19 pandemic has raised the poverty rate in many African countries and led to a reduction in food demand.

Before COVID-19 pandemic, we estimate that the annual turnover of the 1600 AWAN-Afrika women owned SMEs across the continent was over \$100Million (100 MILLIONS USD). In this survey, 91% of the respondents have lost revenue, and have reduced production by 16% and distribution by 15% and post-harvest losses was at 45%. The combination of the above with continued food consumption and panic-buying has resulted in a net reduction food stocks which has driven food prices up as experienced by 41% of the respondents.

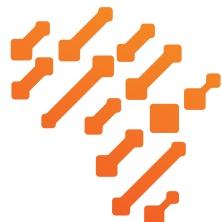
It was also found that 61% of the respondent's businesses are experiencing heavy losses during the current pandemic in the following value chains ranging from fruits, vegetables, livestock/dairy, fisheries and cash crops.

Cross border trade which is dominated by women who before COVID 19 were transporting goods as luggage in cross- border buses within regional economic blocks which allow free movement of goods and services. According to the findings, 88% have experienced restriction of movement and 70% have lost all of their income and 4 months into the crisis the livelihoods of their families are badly affected. This has led to household food insecurity and increased rates of malnutrition.

Confinement/lockdown/curfews and fear related to COVID-19 has caused a drop in demand for agriproducts as was experienced by 63% of the Agribusiness in AWAN-Afrika network. However, these conditions created an opportunity for digital marketing and door-to-door delivery of agro-products.

Not surprisingly, it was found that only 4.4% of agribusiness who had adopted digital marketing were able to stay afloat, and even in some cases increase in business. Interesting to note is that 90% of these agriprenuers using digital marketing were under the age of 30. Generally, women who own a larger percentage of Ag-SMEs are not tech-literate and have very low uptake on the rising access to technology. In other cases, low adaptation of digital marketing was due to high costs of internet and poor connectivity in most rural African areas where agricultural activities are conducted.

DIGITALIZATION IN AGRICULTURE IS THE FUTURE IF WE WANT TO SEE GROWTH IN THE SECTOR



In the new normal and in post-COVID era government and donors will have to mobilize resources so that we can embark on a massive digitalization training campaign for women and youth to adapt to the new way of conducting business through digital marketing and trading. This will require investment in infrastructure; roads, electricity, internet penetration and training for adaptation.

Without the above investments there will be little improvement in value chains and supply chains. With the current crisis, if those are not addressed, we are heading to chronic food insecurity and malnutrition.

AWAN Afrika recommends that while African governments and donors are providing stimulus packages, to cushion those affected, they should ensure mechanisms to monitor the delivery of these packages are put in place so that they reach smallholder farmers and traders.

NewsRoom

Africa's face of agriculture is female

Africa has a huge opportunity to make agriculture its economic driver. However, the potential for this is far from being made exhaustive use of, one reason being that women face considerable difficulties in their economic activities. The organisation AWAN Afrika seeks to change this state of affairs.

By Beatrice Gakuba

https://www.rural21.com/fileadmin/downloads/2020/en-02/Rural21_2_2020.pdf

Opinion: Support Africa's Agribusiness to avert a food crisis

By Beatrice Gakuba May 15, 2020

<https://africafeeds.com/2020/05/15/opinion-support-africas-agribusiness-to-avert-a-food-crisis/>

OPINION: Supporting Africa's Agribusiness will avert a food crisis

14 May 2020, 2:50 PM | SABC Digital News | @SABCNews

Women in Agribusiness plead for help amid COVID-19 pandemic

22 May 2020, 5:36 PM | Sarah Kimani | @SABCNews

<https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/women-in-agribusiness-plead-for-help-amid-covid-19-pandemic/>