



Food systems transformation Developing sustainable, eco-friendly, climate-smart food production along value chains in Africa

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The issue

The disruptions created by the COVID-19 crisis have accentuated many of the fragilities in contemporary food systems in Africa. The pandemic has added another layer of challenges to the systems that are already characterized by unsustainable and non-competitive food production practices leading to land degradation and loss in biodiversity, without providing adequate and decent jobs. This has resulted to many countries in Africa not being able to provide safe and nutritious food to everyone, and thus being highly import-dependent.

However, the pandemic has also increased focus on the importance of sustainable utilization and protection of natural resources, including soils, water, forests and biodiversity to maintain the buffer capacity of nature against diseases as well as climate change. COVID-19 also highlighted vulnerabilities in nations dependent on importation of food and agricultural inputs, prompting consideration of the redistribution of food surpluses within the region through expanded intra-continental trade and by increasing support towards the creation of shorter value chains. This will create more localized, gender sensitive and innovative approaches that are a response to specific needs of men, women and youth along the value chains.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of some of the fundamental longer-term tradeoffs of delivering sustainability of food systems and the need to factor these into the response and recovery. A transition is needed for a more sustainable food system that produce more, with more socio-economic benefits and with less environmental consequences. In many countries agriculture has been seen as an enemy of the environment and one of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, but there is increasing recognition that a restorative, productive farming sector can provide environmental benefits and services while creating employment and sustaining livelihoods. It is critical that the *after pandemic* efforts are aimed at “build back better” with actions that catalyze transformation to food systems that are resilient to shocks and extreme weather variabilities; making all actors, especially in the informal sector, less vulnerable and that ensure individuals' health and wellbeing and social protection when needed while at the same time promoting inclusiveness and improving environmental and economic sustainability by increasing efficiency and reducing waste.

The action

This programme will assist governments to transform food systems to be more resilient and sustainable, from farm to fork, while scaling-up context-specific technologies and innovations, and at the same time, taking gender responsive

Budget

USD 15 million

Time frame

2021–2025

SDGs



Related FAO COVID-19 policy notes

- ▶ [Adjusting business models to sustain agri-food enterprises during COVID-19](#)
- ▶ [COVID-19 and smallholder producers access to markets](#)
- ▶ [The opportunity for digital transformation](#)
- ▶ [Farmers and agribusinesses at risk under COVID-19. What role for blended finance funds?](#)
- ▶ [Africa's youth in agrifood systems: Innovation in the context of COVID-19](#)



action. In the short term, measures will focus on sustainably mitigating the immediate effects of the COVID-19 crisis but in the longer term, activities will focus on transforming and building back better, food systems that are sustainable, inclusive, ecologically friendly, climate-smart and fair. Actions will be structured along value chains, from production to consumption, across all production sectors (fish, livestock, crops and forest), inclusive of all actors at all levels (family farmers, women, youth, small and medium Enterprises (SMEs), government, civil society, producer organizations, research, academia and private sector) following a gender-responsive approach around four key objectives:

- 1 Sustainable food production** by adopting climate-smart agriculture and agroecological approaches to address climate change challenges while optimizing interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment to increase productivity. Efforts will be made towards:
 - Promoting gender sensitive climate smart and agroecological best practices for increased market-led productivity of crops, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and agroforestry/forest food products, through capacity building (farmer field schools, research/extension services, vocational education for youth and women, training and education services for private actors).
 - Creating an enabling environment for investments that are evidence based with reliable, updated statistics that provide sex disaggregated data, on environmentally, socially and economically sustainable food production.
 - Restoration of ecosystem services and sustainable use/management of natural resources (including soil, water, forest) and biodiversity including pollinators and soil micro-fauna, at farm and landscape levels.
 - Increase resilience through diversification of livelihoods and the improvement or introduction of social protection and safety nets for food producers, inclusive of women.
- 2 Innovations** for increased efficiency, resilience and inclusiveness **along food supply chains:**
 - Enhance peri-urban and urban food production to increase availability and access to affordable and high quality nutritious food products (such as fruits, vegetables, meat and fish proteins, nuts and seeds, and non-wood forest products) in the growing urban centers. The support will be linked to the informal sector, which is a key player in rural-urban value chains, distribution and marketing of food in urban centers.
 - Build and/or support existing short value chains and rapid market access mechanism responsive to women's role in processing and marketing of

many agriculture value chains, linking producers to markets and consumers while promoting the use of gender sensitive digital marketing technologies and public purchasing for schools and other public institutions.

- Develop inclusive sustainable agricultural mechanization along the value chain, especially supporting family farmers and SMEs to achieve sustainable production intensification and enhanced post-harvest management and reduction of food loss and waste.
 - Build and strengthen enabling environments that enhance private sector (producers and their organizations, formal and informal entrepreneurs and their umbrella organizations and SMEs) participation and investments in sustainable agribusinesses along value chains.
 - Support creation of decent employment and business opportunities for women and youth.
 - Expedite capacity development of women and youth through vocational education and training opportunities that are focusing on innovative and accessible digital technologies for enhancement of efficiency along the value chains and linking them to the job market.
- 3 Access to and consumption of healthy and nutritious food** for everyone, everywhere:
 - Ensure availability, access, stability and utilization of healthy and nutritious food products through context-specific activities (e.g. urban-rural).
 - Support market development and demand for a nutritious food base guided by cross-sectoral dialogues with consumer organizations, retailers, food processors, Ministries of Health and Agriculture and private sector associations.
 - Support healthy, diversified and culturally appropriate diets through promotion of neglected and underutilized nutritious species and foods, with special attention to women, youth, and food or nutrition insecure/vulnerable populations.
 - 4 Support institutional efforts towards increasing the competitiveness of food production** and processing, income generation and regional trade:
 - Support countries to enhance institutional and policy environment to foster coordinated and coherent actions including; (i) value chain stakeholder platform dialogues with producers, women, youth entrepreneurs and their umbrella organizations and (ii) develop action plans that take into account needs and interests of all value chain nodes.
 - Support exchange and policy coordination at all levels (national, regional and continental) within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with



the objectives of; (i) using synergies and increase food trade within the continent, (ii) achieve food and nutrition security in the region, and (iii) generate mutual benefits such as income opportunities for vulnerable cross-border agricultural traders, women and youth.

- Create an enabling environment for socially, environmentally and economically fair and gender sensitive investments in food systems. This includes research and development, multi-sectoral policy creation, and knowledge sharing inclusive of the private sector.
- Support governance and institution strengthening of weak and fragmented value chains actors including traders, retailers, processors and consumers.

Expected results

- 1 Productivity of crops, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and forest food products is sustainably increased, climate-smart, uses agroecological approaches and is gender responsive.
- 2 Food systems are efficient, resilient, accessible for all and connect producers and consumers through circular and solidarity economies.
- 3 Food systems protect and improve livelihoods and ensuring equity and social well-being, increasing income generation opportunities through enhanced value addition and trade.
- 4 Food and nutrition security is ensured for everybody, across sectors and at all levels.
- 5 Capacity of governments to guide an inclusive sustainable food system transformation is improved, and investments and participation of the private sector in sustainable food production and research are enhanced.

Partnerships

African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency, regional economic communities in Africa, World Trade Organization, International Trade Centre, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Development Programme, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Bank, African Development Bank, United States Agency for International Development, Islamic Development Bank, World Health Organization, public and private sector partners linked to the green recovery of agricultural and food systems

Programmes links

This work is linked to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Hand-in-Hand Initiative, food systems transformation, Sustainable Production and Inclusive Value Chains, FAO's strategy and multi-stakeholder dialogue on mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors, the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), Africa Great Green Wall, the Scaling-up Agroecology initiative, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) 25x25 engagement to transforming Africa's agriculture climate smart, the African Union (AU) Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, the AU Gender policy and strategy and regional economic commissions gender strategies and action plans (Economic Community of Central African States and Economic Community of West African States), the Framework for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Africa (F-SAMA), the continental strategy on post-harvest management, the initiative on boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services under the AfCFTA and the United Nations decades on ecosystem restoration and family farming. In addition, the project contributes to the realization of the AU's Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the short term, it will support efforts on doubling agricultural productivity and eliminating hunger and malnutrition in Africa by 2025.

Countries of focus

Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Nigeria

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