



# National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Kenya

## Effects, policy responses, and long-term implications

This country profile covers responses and effects up to end of June 2020

### INTRODUCTION

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The COVID-19 pandemic has put significant pressure on health systems all around the world. The drastic measures established to contain its spread are creating serious impediments to economic activity (including agrifood systems) and, consequently, to livelihoods and food security and nutrition.

The COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates both how health and food systems are linked to one another, and how local food systems are linked to global systems. High rates of urbanization and the globalization of trade and travel have contributed to the spread of the virus across countries. Lockdowns and movement restrictions within countries and across borders have disrupted national and local food and agricultural output and input markets and have caused sharp reductions in overall economic activity globally. In poorer countries, disruptions have further exacerbated the fragility of systems (including agrifood systems) and livelihoods.

The Global Report on Food Crises 2020 found that 135 million people in 55 countries and territories are facing acute food insecurity at “crisis” level or higher – a situation that requires urgent action. The report further concluded that over 183 million people were experiencing a “stressed” level of acute food insecurity and bore a high risk of sliding into a “crisis” level if confronted by with additional shocks (FSIN, 2020). The situation is particularly worrisome in light of the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the situation evolves, the question arises as to how, or whether, food, health and financial and economic systems could become better prepared to prevent similar outbreaks from escalating into a full-blown economic and social crisis.

This report is part of a series of country profiles that describe: (i) policy measures enacted by governments to contain the spread of the virus; (ii) policies and measures to stabilize the functioning of agri-food systems; (iii) potential effects of policies on agri-food systems and vulnerable groups. Finally, the profiles also assess longer-term options for agri-food system policies and investments so as to make them more resilient.

## POLICY MEASURES TO CONTAIN COVID-19

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### What major measures have been taken to contain the spread of the virus? How are they evolving?

- **Night-time curfew.** Curfew hours, which originally ran between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m., were reduced to 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. to allow more time for businesses to operate. The curfew was also extended by 30 days until 6 July 2020.
- **Nationwide school closures.** The Ministries of Education and Health have been instructed to jointly develop and publicize guidelines for the gradual and progressive reopening of schools, starting 1 September 2020.
- **Border controls.** Anyone who enters or leaves the country (especially if they are carrying essential commodities, such as food) must have a letter from the Ministry of Health stating that they have been tested in the last 14 days and were COVID-19 free at the time of testing. The letter should be authenticated by the Director of Public Health.
- **Prohibition of public gatherings.** Gatherings, including religious services, weddings, funerals, political rallies and sporting activities, continue to be prohibited. The Ministries of Interior Coordination and Health, together with the Inter-Religious Council, are at an advanced stage in their review of options for reopening churches and other places of worship.
- **Suspension of all international travel.** The requirement that recent travellers self-isolate for 14 days continues.
- **Closure of bars and restaurants (except for takeaway services).** Starting on 11 May 2020, the Ministry of Health has allowed restaurants to reopen, but under strict guidelines: they can only operate between 5 a.m. and 4 p.m.; utmost four customers sit within 10 square metres; tables must be spaced 1.5 metres apart; no buffet services; everyone that enters the restaurant must wash/sanitize their hands and wear face masks; all staff working in restaurant are required to have a valid COVID-19-free certificate, to be renewed every 14 days).
- **Passenger distancing guidelines.** Guidelines have been enacted to regulate distances between passengers in public service vehicles.
- **Cessation of movements.** A ban on movement into and out of Nairobi, Mombasa and Mandera (except for essential goods and services) was extended by another 30 days until 6 July 2020. The government has lifted the ban on movement into and out of Kwale and Kilifi Counties as new cases have been significantly reduced. The ban on movement into and out of Eastleigh and Old Town has been lifted. The two areas have been in lockdown since mid-April.
- **Closure of small shops and open-air markets.** Many small businesses and markets have been allowed to resume operations but are required to adhere to guidelines from the Ministry of Health.

Most of the measures described above have been rigorously implemented. However, it has been a challenge to ensure physical distancing in restaurants. It has also been difficult to guarantee hand washing/use of sanitizer, especially at agrifood markets. Given the recent increase in the number of infections, the Kenyan Government is likely to strengthen the enforcement of protection measures in areas deemed to be hotspots, while at the same time endeavouring to open up the economy. This has been an important dilemma for the government. In a 6 July address, President Uhuru Kenyatta stated: “Our families, our schools, our way of life, the way we

worship, our economy, our businesses, our workers; every single Kenyan stands threatened by this invisible, relentless enemy that is COVID-19” (Daily Nation, 2020).

### **What are the major measures undertaken to relax or strengthen the lockdown?**

### **What other measures have been taken to contain the spread of the disease, especially in relation to the functions of the agrifood system?**

The government prefers to conduct a gradual relaxation of the lockdown. Starting in early June, hotels and eateries began to resume work, following the easing of restrictions on movement and physical distancing. Many Kenyans hoped that President Kenyatta would reopen the economy on 6 June. However, the President chose a more cautious approach, reducing the curfew from ten to seven hours and easing restrictions on travel into certain areas. These measures have allowed food retailers and the hospitality sector to work longer hours; however, many people in the formal sector, who lost their jobs or took a pay cut, have continued to struggle (Warugu, 2020).

## **2 · AGRIFOOD POLICY MEASURES TO RESPOND TO THE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS**

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### **What are the major measures (in place or anticipated) that aim at the food system directly?**

Kenya’s food system depends heavily on small, independent transporters, who provide the link between producers and consumers. Produce markets, which are at the heart of distribution in urban areas, serve consumers and smaller retailers. This traditional informal system accounts for about 90 percent of the market (The Conversation, 2020).

The government has taken a number of steps to protect Kenya’s agrifood system:

- The Ministry of Agriculture developed protocols and guidelines to facilitate the operations of agricultural input providers, producers, traders, processors and consumers in the food supply chains.
- Food processing and feed manufacturing operations are working around the clock to ensure adequate production.
- The availability of staple foods is monitored regularly and action is taken as needed to ensure an adequate food supply for all Kenyans during the pandemic.
- Producer and consumer associations are encouraged to liaise with service providers to use digital technologies that link farmers to markets and avail food commodities in urban areas (MAFF, 2020). The use of online digital platforms has increased recently. For example, a partnership between Twiga Foods (a Kenyan start-up that delivers fruits and vegetable to customers) and Jumia (a company offering online goods and services in 11 countries) have made it easier for Jumia users to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at affordable prices. Through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) component, Jumia users donate food for distribution to vulnerable families.
- The Ministry of Trade waived its mandatory inspection fee on seed, pesticides and veterinary medicine at the country of origin for an initial period of six months, which has helped to reduce import costs.
- The government set aside KSH 3 billion (USD 27.9 million) to be injected into the economy as seed capital for a scheme to provide affordable credit to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

- The government will spend KSH 3 billion (USD 27.9 million) to supply farm inputs through e-vouchers in an initiative targeting 200 000 small scale farmers. The package aims to cushion farmers from the effects of adverse weather and to secure food supply chains in the post COVID-19 period and beyond (in addition to opening up the supply chain, as noted above). KSH 1.5 billion (USD 14 million) will be set aside to assist flower and horticultural producers to access international markets.

The Food Security War Room (FSWR), established by the government in April 2020, monitors the food security situation in the country. The FSWR provides technical advice to the National COVID-19 Response Committee, the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant ministries on potential policy directions. The FSWR played a critical role in the recently-introduced waiver on seed inspection fees.

### **What additional policy measures( in place or anticipated) aim to mitigate the effect of the crisis on vulnerable groups and their livelihoods?**

#### **Social protection measures**

Social cash transfer programmes are a vital component of efforts to support low-income households. In April, Kenya announced the release of KSH 10 billion (USD 100 million) for its regular cash transfers, which mainly target the elderly, the severely disabled, orphans and poor households. The abrupt economic shock induced by the COVID-19 epidemic, however, meant that there were millions of newly vulnerable people who were not beneficiaries of existing programmes. Many people, especially in the slums of Nairobi, have become increasingly desperate, lacking the ability to access basic provisions including food and clean water due to loss of income.

On 23 May, the government announced a second stimulus package amounting to KSH 53.7 billion (USD 500 million), which will be channelled to vulnerable families and businesses affected by COVID-19. The package includes KSH 10 billion (USD 93 million) to expedite value added tax (VAT) returns and other pending payments. The first stimulus was announced on 25 March and included measures which reduced income tax, reduced VAT, and allocated additional KSH 10 billion to the elderly, orphans and other vulnerable members of the society through cash-transfers, among others (Business Daily, 2020).

#### **Public works programmes for vulnerable groups**

In April, the government introduced the National Hygiene Program (NHP), dubbed Kazi Mtaani, which aims to integrate Kenyans who are unable to find work due to the disruption of normal economic activity into urban hygiene and sanitation operations in 23 informal settlements.<sup>1</sup> Under of the second stimulus package, the government has allocated KSH 5 billion (USD 500 million) that will be used to hire local labour, mainly through Kazi Mtaani. Currently, Kazi Mtaani workers from Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa earn a daily wage of KSH 653.10 (USD 6.5), while workers from other municipalities earn KSH 600.00 (USD 6.0) per day. Payments are made once a week through mobile money transfer. The use of local labour and local construction materials is expected to stimulate and support SMEs.

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<sup>1</sup> Street cleaning or access path clearing; fumigation and disinfection; garbage collection; bush clearing; and drainage cleaning/clearing/unclogging.

The second phase of the Kazi Mitaani is expected to create jobs for 200 000 people for the next six months, starting in July 2020 at a cost of KSH 10 billion (USD 100 million). The programme has been expanded to include projects such as the upgrade of public sanitation facilities (toilets, wash stations, sewer lines), creating and paving workways and construction of spaces and pocket parks for children.

### Nutrition support

In May, the Ministry of Agriculture released the National COVID-19 Nutrition and Healthy Diets Guidelines, mainly to boost its campaign for a reliable food supply, lifestyle changes and healthy diets in the wake of the pandemic. The initiative is promoting the establishment of a million kitchen gardens in both in rural and urban areas. The programme is funded by the World Bank through its Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (KCSAP). The private sector has donated over 250 000 kitchen garden starter kits to be distributed to target beneficiaries.

### How is the government funding the measures described above?

Over KSH 20.3 billion (USD 203 million) were reallocated from Kenya's 2019/20 development budget to support COVID-19 response activities. There are concerns that this will undermine project implementation and the growth of the country's economy in future. Resources have also been raised through the COVID-19 National Emergency Response Fund (APA News, 2020) and mobilized from the national treasury, private sector, development partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals. Kenya has also received substantial monetary support from the international community. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved an emergency disbursement of approximately KSH 79 billion (USD 736 million) under its rapid credit facility. Previously, a KSH 5 billion (USD 500 million) facility was activated by the World Bank to support emergency COVID-19-related measures. An additional USD 1 billion has been approved by the World Bank to support the country's 2020/21 budget.

### What are the main initiatives taken by the humanitarian and development community to mitigate the direct/indirect impacts of COVID-19 on food security, nutrition, agriculture and WASH (water and sanitation)?

Development partners, community-based organizations, civil society organizations and NGOs are also playing an important role in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations (UN), through its Country Team in Kenya, has partnered with the government to launch a USD 267 million emergency funding appeal to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups at this time. The programme is expected to cover food distribution among other services. The appeal runs from April to September 2020.

The Sustainable Development Goals Kenya Forum (comprising over 60 civil society organizations) has played a key part in providing personal protective equipment in Kilifi, Mombasa, Nairobi and Kisumu. The group has led community education drives in these counties to spread awareness on the prevention and control of the virus, coupled with psychosocial support for vulnerable populations. Initiatives such as Safe Hands Kenya have brought together private sector actors to promote community-based handwashing and education drives to manage and prevent the spread of the virus in Kenya's densely populated areas, particularly urban slums.

## IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

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### Food security and nutrition situation: latest data and projections

Persistent droughts, floods and an upsurge of desert locusts have already exacerbated vulnerabilities across the country, especially for the urban poor. The ability of people to access food has been significantly impacted as the government imposes restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics estimates that about 12 million people are food poor, while the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimates that 1.3 million in the country are currently facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (KNBS, 2020a; USAID, 2020).

With the informal sector accounting for over 83.6 percent of the total labour force in Kenya, government restrictions have put the livelihoods of many households in a precarious position. Nearly one million people are estimated to have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of whom work in the informal sector (Wafula, 2020). Reduced economic activity, declining incomes and uncertainty over the future have the potential to deepen long-standing grievances and increase levels of social unrest and crime in the country (UNDP, 2019).

Produce markets are facing supply and distribution challenges associated with transport restrictions and closed borders. The temporary closing of markets has caused significant post-harvest losses, reduced income, and led to job losses for over 3.5 million Kenyans employed in the agriculture sector (MAFF, 2020b). Difficulty in accessing markets, combined with reduced consumer spending, is creating growing concerns around food security and the ability of small-scale farmers to survive the crisis. Default rates for credit and insurance premiums are rising due to a disrupted business environment with low returns on investment.

### What are the immediate effects of the crisis and the different sets of measures on agrifood systems?

Although the planting season for key staples ended in May, farmers are still planting short-cycle crops, such as vegetables, although access to inputs has not been easy. Stoppage at the various police roadblocks was a time-consuming exercise. However, agricultural input companies have since been reclassified as essential service providers to allow transport of inputs and machinery, such as fertilizers and tractors, even during curfew. At the same time the authorities are facilitating the movement of workers across the borders by issuing special permits, hence averting possible labour shortages.

The ability to process products, including food, has been significantly affected by the crisis. Industries that rely on imported raw materials and intermediate goods have experienced a disruption in their supply chains and have been forced to source raw materials from other markets at a higher cost (Okoth, 2020). As a cost saving measure, industries/manufacturers have laid off staff in addition to reducing their scale of operations. This impacts demand as the reduced income for businesses affects employment and consumer income.

### Decline in imports and its effects on local markets

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the country's food imports topped USD 1 billion in 2019. Kenya imports a great deal of food produce (cereals, legumes, sugar and

eggs mainly, oranges, lemons, pineapples and mangoes, onions, potatoes and tomatoes), mainly from Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The level of imports from these countries has been significantly affected by the pandemic. Border delays have increased truck turnaround time due to lengthy verification and clearance processes. The Wakulima food market in the capital city of Nairobi, where most produce from the United Republic of Tanzania is usually offloaded for transport to other parts of the city, reports that the number of trucks delivering food from the United Republic of Tanzania has fallen from about 40 to fewer than 10 trucks a day. As a result, the prices of onions and other items have risen sharply as supply falls (Mugo, 2020).

Kenya also imports over 75 percent of its cereals (wheat, rice and maize); these are particularly vulnerable to trade disruptions (KNBS, 2019a). Although the Asian countries exporting wheat and rice to Kenya imposed export restrictions during the early days of the pandemic, there have not been marked shortages or significant price increases for those commodities. This could be a result of a consumer switch to cheaper local food items and depressed aggregate demand due to loss of incomes as people cut down on their consumption of rice and wheat. The horticulture sector has seen a significant slowdown in activity: exporters are shipping only 25 percent to 30 percent of their normal capacity, while international flower exports have dropped by close to 40 percent.

In response to COVID-19, food items are being imported duty-free from neighbouring countries to increase supply and lower prices. However, local producers have complained about the negative impacts of duty-free imports, especially when combined with the overall decline in demand due to COVID-19. The import of eggs from Uganda, for example, resulted in oversupply and a sharp decline in prices. The Federation of Kenya Poultry Farmers (FKPF) has urged the government to ban all imports of eggs and chicken meat from Uganda to raise prices for local farmers (Mutua, 2020b). The changes in import policies seem to favour consumers more than they do producers.

Many people in urban areas depend on small shops and open-air markets. These outlets are especially important for people who can only afford to buy food in small quantities. The government closed some of these markets in the early days of the pandemic. Recently, the markets have reopened, with authorities seeking to ensure adherence to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health. However, it has been a challenge to ensure physical distancing and the use of face masks in public. This perhaps explains the recent surge in the number of new COVID-19 cases, especially in Nairobi.

COVID-19 has affected income generation activities for micro, small and medium enterprises due to movement restrictions, which have reduced their access to markets, as well as loss of consumer income and reduced spending. KNBS reported labour force participation at 56.8 percent in April 2020, as compared to 74.7 percent in December 2019 (KNBS, 2020a; KNBS, 2020b). The Central Bank of Kenya predicted that 75 percent of micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) could collapse by the end of June 2020, due to lack of liquidity and the disruption of links to markets (Mutua, 2020a).

### **What are the immediate effects of the health and economic crises and the different sets of measures on people's livelihoods, (acute) food insecurity and malnutrition status, and future prospects?**

Kenya has faced several food security challenges in 2020. The entire East African region has been hit by a desert locust invasion, which has destroyed significant agricultural lands in Kenya's eastern and northern regions. The situation was further compounded by a series of floods

between February and May, which left 285 people dead and displaced another 810 655 people. Crops and livestock were destroyed, further straining food security (Wasike, 2020).

There is little information around how COVID-19 has impacted nutrition. Prior to the confirmation of the first case in Kenya, 26 percent of children under five years were stunted, while 4 percent suffered from wasting (USAID, 2018). Over 27 percent of women of reproductive age have anaemia, while 6 percent of women have diabetes (compared to 5.8 percent of men). Around 11.1 percent of women and 2.8 percent of men were obese (Trading Economics, 2020). With the limited access of safe and nutritious food occasioned by COVID-19, malnutrition is expected to deteriorate (WHO, 2020; WFP, 2020a).

Food shortages and high prices were expected with the advent of the pandemic. However, there have not been serious food shortages or price spikes for the past three months. Food inflation has gradually fallen (March/April: 1.77 percent; April/May: 0.86 percent; May/June 2020: 1.27 percent). This is partly because favourable weather conditions reduced the cost of some food items. Furthermore, the loss of income has forced people to spend their available resources on basic staples (e.g. maize), reducing the demand for other food items.

According to 2018 estimates, the informal sector accounted for 83.6 percent of total employment. The majority of the population depends on casual labour to get by; these jobs have been heavily impacted by lockdown and enforced physical distancing. Thousands of workers, in both the formal and informal sectors, have been laid off or placed on unpaid leave as business strive to stay afloat. As of late May, out of 2.5 million Kenyans employed in the formal sector, approximately 130 000 have lost their jobs and a further 500 000 jobs may be lost by the end of this year (IEA, 2020; Takwimu, 2020).

The work-from-home directive, prohibition of public gatherings, closed bars and the night-time curfew are forcing businesses to close earlier, limiting people's ability to earn. Informal businesses with unstable cashflows are at risk of collapsing. On average, workers across all industries are working fewer hours in a bid to beat the deadline hours for the curfew (KNBS, 2020a).

Declining incomes, along with limited access to social protection, are among the major factors constraining access to food. There are 19.5 million poor people in Kenya, 14 millions of whom live in rural areas, 1.3 million in peri- and core-urban areas, and 4.2 million in informal settlements (mainly slums). Most struggle to get access to food under normal circumstances (KNBS, 2019b); under COVID-19, their struggles have grown significantly more difficult. Some households have been forced to use negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing food consumption, engaging in transactional sex, borrowing money and going into debt to pay for food (UNDP, 2020; Balla, 2020).

The Central Bank of Kenya's monthly statistics on diaspora remittances indicate a decline of 15.6 percent, from USD 259.4 million to USD 219.0 million between January and February 2020. Remittances further declined in April, a reflection of the slowdown in economic activities in Europe and North America, but recovered in March (The Kenyan Wall Street, 2020).

### **Which groups are most likely to be severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and the associated measures?**

Since schools closed in early March, nearly two million schoolchildren have not been able to access meals through the government school feeding programme. The Ministries of Education and Health are currently developing guidelines on reopening of schools beginning in September 2020. In the meantime, child labour, especially in agriculture, has been reported as smallholder household poverty rises (Parsitau and Jepkemei, 2020; Langat, 2020).



The distribution of relief food for the 2.6 million people (based on an estimate given in October 2019) across Kenya's drought-affected ASAL (arid and semi-arid lands) counties has been disrupted by the pandemic (USAID, 2020). The government introduced lockdown in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps on 29 April 2020. There are controlled movements into and out of other refugee camps to protect their vulnerable populations from infections.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 are particularly felt by women and girls, who generally earn less, save less, hold insecure jobs and live in poor neighbourhoods, such as slums, ASAL and rural areas (Maichuhie and Obiria, 2020). Lockdown and restrictions have severely affected wholesale/retail trade, education and jobs in the hospitality industry and informal sector generally, sectors where women tend to concentrate. Over 51.2 per cent of women have been rendered jobless due to the pandemic (KNBS, 2020a). Women are unable to buffer their income losses, due to a lower base in terms of financial assets, real estate and live assets, such as livestock. The capacity of women to support themselves and their families thus has been limited, especially for female-headed households. At the same time, unpaid care work has increased, due to school closures and increased care needs of older persons, among other household responsibilities.

In Kenya, as in most African countries, rural women are the primary food crop producers while men are more involved in animal husbandry or labour off the farm. Increased exposure to COVID-19 in rural areas has significant implications for food production, food preparation and child nutrition (Moseley, 2020). For example, pregnant and lactating women, who need to consume balanced diets (fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy products), will be affected disproportionately as households use their available resource to buy basic staples, such as maize and potatoes. There could also be more child and maternal mortality as consumption patterns change in favour of carbohydrates as opposed to proteins and vitamins, which are relatively more expensive (French *et al.*, 2019).

Women and girls are affected by gender-based violence, which is reported to have worsened due to the effects of the lockdown. Traditional social protection mechanisms for gender-based violence have been affected by lockdowns and school closures, leaving women and girls more vulnerable to increased rates of violence (OCHA, 2020; Odhiambo, 2020).

Although most Kenyans are relatively young, the average farmer is 60 years old (UNDP-Kenya, 2020). Young people tend to be less interested in agriculture and more likely to migrate to urban areas. Consequently, the farming population, being older, is likely to be more vulnerable to the coronavirus.

Travel restrictions, border controls and other government restrictions pose a risk to smallholder production and marketing activities, risking the ability to earn. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the overall cost of transport has increased by 51.7 percent due to COVID-19-related restrictions. This cost is transferred to the farmers in form of low prices for agricultural produce but also through costly inputs (WFP, 2020b).

## FOOD FOR REFLECTION: LONG-TERM POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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**This section aims to prompt thinking and dialogue on the longer-term implications of COVID-19 in terms of managing the food system to prevent a health crisis becoming a food security and nutrition emergency.**

In the long-term, the agrifood system in Kenya should be based on the policy of self-sufficiency in commodities, such as maize, beans, sugar, onions and eggs (Smart Farmer, undated), to avoid the risk of the supply chain disruptions associated with imports. Kenya has been affected by trade restrictions following the food crisis in 2007/08 and again during the current COVID-19 crisis. The

private sector in agriculture, especially smallholder agriculture, has the capacity to boost food production, given a conducive policy environment. Along with the promotion of kitchen gardens, Kenya needs to invest more in smallholder agriculture, including urban and peri-urban agriculture, small/backyard livestock systems and small-pond fishing. Innovative farming technologies are expected to make small farmers more productive and competitive. The stagnation in agriculture needs to be reversed based on the country's agricultural strategy (ASTGS), which calls for enhanced investment in both small and large scale agriculture. Large-scale maize farmers are found in the main maize producing areas of Rift Valley and account for 20-25 percent of the national maize production (USAID-KAVES, 2015). Nearly 85 percent of the wheat production in Kenya is carried out by large- and medium-scale farms in the Narok, Timau and Nakuru regions (Monroy, Mulinge and Witwer, 2013). Commercial farms need predictable and favourable trade and market policies to thrive.

Both buyers and sellers will gravitate to more healthy and efficient systems of marketing in future. Farmers will increasingly sell their product through online platforms. Kenya is known for introducing automated teller machines (ATMs) to sell milk and similar outlets are likely to be introduced for other food products. An automated facility that dispenses chilled, pasteurized, ready-to-drink milk that is sold unpackaged, the ATM eliminates packaging and lowers retail prices for consumers. In 2019, various software developers developed an app that connects farmers directly to markets to reduce the post-harvest losses of fruits and vegetables arising from inadequate access to markets (FarmBiz Africa, 2018).

The government plans to encourage e-commerce in the context of COVID-19 while maintaining safety and hygiene standards. Kenya has pioneered a cashless ecosystem through platforms like M-PESA, which has been the basis for online marketplaces, and benefited from high network connectivity (85 percent of people with internet service have a 3G network) (Republic of Kenya, 2020).

Digitising procurement platforms to provide transparency, broaden access and level the playing field for manufacturers is a priority for the government's post-COVID-19 economic recovery plan. Ministries, departments, and agencies will be supported to develop a digital procurement platform with the objective of lowering barriers to entry and broadening the pool of potential suppliers.

Unlocking the value of Kenya's green and blue economy<sup>2</sup> and agricultural economic zones is critical to recovering agricultural growth in the post COVID-19 period. Already, global manufacturers are reconfiguring their supply chains in response to the pandemic. Kenya also plans to: i) position the country as a green manufacturing hub; ii) undertake a national tree-planting campaign to generate jobs and carbon offsets; and iii) kickstart standard carbon offset exports. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative is partnering with county governments, the African Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency to establish rural transformation clusters in Kenya's six regional economic blocs. These clusters or 'Agricultural Economic Zones (AEZs)' will serve to integrate the entire value chain from production, processing, logistics, and marketing activities across the economic blocs established by counties (Republic of Kenya, 2020).

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<sup>2</sup> A green economy aims to reduce environmental risks and to achieve sustainable development without degrading the environment. A blue economy envisions the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth.

### What are the implications for the humanitarian and development community in the medium-term?

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and other development partners will be called on to provide greater support to smallholders and pastoralists (e.g. through subsidies, technology, market access) so that they can expand their production to feed themselves and to supply surplus produce to the rest of the country, given the uncertainties surrounding food imports. Measures are being taken to ensure that the response to COVID-19 does not further affect food and agricultural production (e.g. restrictions on movement have already affected labour supply) but more needs to be done to increase domestic production.

The biggest risk for food security, however, is not a lack of food availability but the ability of consumers to access and pay for food. As lockdown measures and other COVID-19-related disruptions lead to an economic slowdown and recession, a growing number of people are losing their livelihoods and experiencing a sharp decline in their incomes.

Addressing this risk will require:

- Expanding social safety nets to avoid an increase in hunger and food insecurity;
- monitoring food availability and prices in major regional/country markets on a regular basis to enable early detection and response to problems in the value chain;
- intensifying urban farming (e.g. vegetable-sack gardens, poultry, rabbit farming), especially among women and young people in slums to promote continued food production by vulnerable groups and shield them from future emergencies that might disrupt food systems;
- enhancing value addition and minimizing food losses and waste

## INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

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### Implications of the crisis and related policies for conflict and ongoing social tensions

As in the rest of the world, the impact of COVID-19 in Kenya has stretched beyond the sphere of healthcare with major implications for economic development. According to the Cabinet Secretary for National Treasury and Finance, Kenya's economic growth could decline to 2.5 percent in 2020, or even to 1.8 percent, as a result of the pandemic. Although there are administrative and governance challenges to managing the spread of the virus, concerted efforts are underway, including medical screening, quarantine, contact tracing and treatment, with very positive results (Kihui, 2020). The enforcement of movement restrictions has largely been successful and the movement of essential goods and services has been facilitated by the establishment of the National Emergency Response Committee (NERC).

The NERC is the Cabinets' ad-hoc committee on health and inter-ministerial technical committee on government response to the pandemic. Key stakeholders represented in the NERC include the Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, Transport, Infrastructure, Defence, ICT and Innovation and Interior and Citizen Services, the National Treasury, the Council of Governors and the Executive Office of the President. The NERC's mandate is to coordinate all government efforts to manage the impacts of COVID-19 on health, the economy and the livelihoods of Kenyans. NERC works closely with partners including the UN country team, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) and the Agriculture Sector Network (ASNET). ASNET is now recognized as the apex body representing the private sector in agriculture in all government response meetings.

A few studies have looked at the impact of the virus. For example, a report by KEPSA – Business perspectives on the impact of Coronavirus on Kenya’s economy – identified the cancellation of business-related travel as one of the key ways that businesses will be affected by the coronavirus. A study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDO) – Articulating the pathways of the socio-economic impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the Kenyan economy – found that the COVID-19 is likely to have adverse socio-economic impacts on the health and livelihoods of families and communities. Unless policymakers adopt an inclusive approach to lessen the adverse impact, most vulnerable groups are likely to experience a lapse in progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNDP, 2020).

At the sectoral level, the Ministry of Agriculture has established the COVID-19 FSWR to address all emerging issues related to food and nutrition security. The FSWR has identified three areas for focus in the coming weeks: 1) ensuring the availability, accessibility and affordability of food and water; 2) providing support to farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk including inputs and extension; 3) maintaining agricultural output and value addition for large producers and export markets. The FSWR includes representatives from NGOs, development partners, including the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), farmers’ organizations, traders and the Agriculture Sector Network (ASNET).

All of the UN agencies are working with relevant government ministries and agencies in their specialized areas to prevent and manage the impact of COVID-19. FAO’s office in Kenya is actively supporting the UN country team and the government on all matters pertaining to food and nutrition security. Different teams, including FIRST (the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme) have been asked to support the response to COVID-19. FAO-Kenya is also leading the fight against the locust outbreak, which has been ravaging crops and pastureland since early this year. The WFP, for its part, has been working with the government to ensure that humanitarian assistance is not disrupted by the pandemic.

Key development partners are reallocating finances as most of their normal operations have been disrupted or suspended while the government’s priority is focused entirely on the pandemic. Accordingly, FIRST Kenya has also shifted its attention to the pandemic response. Activities to date include: i) work as member of the Steering Committee of ASNET on COVID-19 response, which includes playing a key role in keeping open the food supply chain and strengthening the network’s role in advocacy and lobby in the agricultural sector. FIRST is fast-tracking the preparation of ASNET’s strategic plan for advocacy and revitalizing agriculture; ii) work as member of the FSWR to monitor the food and nutrition security situation in different parts of the country; (iii) prepare a policy brief and response on the impact of COVID-19; and iv) identify best practices in production, extension and advisory services, marketing, etc. for immediate adoption at the national level.

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