



SA FANRPAN digest

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In this issue we cover the following topics:

1. New AFRICAP Publication: Impacts of COVID-19 on Diverse Farm Systems in Tanzania and South Africa
2. The Food Systems Research Networks for Africa (FSNet-Africa) project

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FANRPAN DIGEST

FANRPAN Digest is a bi-monthly report that is produced by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) through the Agricultural Industry Trusts Division. The NAMC is the South Africa node coordinator for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). The publication aims to communicate developments as they happen within the FANRPAN and the NAMC. This issue focuses on two topics: (i) New AFRICAP publication: Impacts of COVID-19 on diverse farm systems in Tanzania and South Africa; and (ii) The Food Systems Research Networks for Africa (FSNet-Africa) project.

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1. NEW AFRICAP PUBLICATION: IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON DIVERSE FARM SYSTEMS IN TANZANIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

By

**Ndumiso Mazibuko, PhD and Matsobane (BM)
Mpyana**

1.1. Background

On 2 September 2021, the South Africa and Tanzania AFRICAP researchers¹ published an article titled “Impacts of COVID-19 on diverse farm systems in Tanzania and South Africa”. The article highlighted that emerging information on the interactions between the COVID-19 pandemic and global food systems proves how the pandemic accentuates food crises across Africa. Less clear, however, is how the impacts differ between farming systems. The researchers based their research on 150 key informant interviews with farmers, village leaders and extension officers in South Africa and Tanzania. The research aimed to identify the effects of COVID-19 and associated measures to curb the spread of the disease in farming production systems and the coping mechanisms adopted by farmers, and explore their longer-term plans for the adaptation.

1.2. Research study

The research focused on a diverse range of production systems, from small-scale mixed farming systems in Tanzania to large-scale corporate farms in South Africa. The findings highlight how COVID-19 restrictions have interrupted the supply chains of agricultural inputs and commodities, increasing production storage time, decreasing income and purchasing power, and reducing labour availability. Farmers’ responses were heterogeneous, with highly diverse small-scale farming systems and those less engaged with international markets least affected by the associated COVID-19 measures. Large-scale farmers were most able to access capital to buffer short-term impacts, whereas smaller-scale farms shared labour, diversified to subsistence produce and sold assets. However, compounded shocks, such as recent extreme climate events, limited the available coping options, particularly for smaller-scale and emerging farmers. The study presents an empirical analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the local farming systems and adaptation strategies employed by farmers in Tanzania and South Africa.

The study presents findings providing evidence of substantial effects on agriculture and food security as a result of COVID-19, through indirect channels of influence leading to (i) income losses and reduced demand, (ii) supply chain disruptions, (iii) altered consumer responses and dietary shifts, and (iv) interruptions in international and national trade. The study highlights the need to understand the characteristics of farm systems to better equip and support farmers, particularly in the context of uncertainty.

1.3. Conclusion

It is proposed that policy actions should focus on: (i) providing temporary relief and social support and protection to financially vulnerable stakeholders, (ii) providing job assurance for farmworkers and engaging an alternative workforce in farming, (iii) investing in farming infrastructures, such as storage facilities, digital communication tools and extension services, and (iv) supporting diversified agro-ecological farming systems.

2. FOOD SYSTEMS RESEARCH NETWORKS FOR AFRICA (FSNET-AFRICA) PROJECT

By

Nomantande Yeki and Brian Makhele

2.1. Introduction

With the effects of COVID-19 expected to continue through to the near future, the pandemic has worsened the food situation for Africans who are already living with or are at risk of severe food insecurity. This situation is causing delays in our commitment to achieving zero hunger, a key Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

2.2. About the project

Over the next three years, the Food Systems Research Networks for Africa (FSNet-Africa) project will strengthen food systems research capabilities and translate evidence into implementable policy solutions and practical interventions supporting the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for Africa. This goal will be achieved through leading systems analysis research on climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive and poverty-reducing food system solutions designed and implemented in partnership with relevant food systems stakeholders.

FSNet-Africa is a collaborative initiative between the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of Leeds in the UK, and the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). This initiative is a research excellence project funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) through the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) – United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) partnership.

Early career research fellows (ECRF) have been selected from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. The participating institutions in these six focus countries are the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST; Ghana); University of Zambia (Zambia), University of Dar es Salaam, and Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania); Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST; Malawi); University of Nairobi (Kenya); and University of Pretoria (UP) and University of the Western Cape (South Africa).

FSNet-Africa has created structured opportunities for up to 20 fellows who obtained their PhDs within the last 10 years (majority female) in the focus countries to conduct impact-focused interdisciplinary research, build lasting research networks, and develop their

skills to design and implement gender-sensitive research with non-academic stakeholders. The project has also set up carefully matched, formal mentorship relationships between fellows and established scientists in the UK and Africa to form interdisciplinary research triads in order to create long-term collaborations and networks. Researchers will participate in a series of structured events during the three-year project.

2.3. Conclusion

How should sustainable development be achieved for all while dealing with the effects of COVID-19, such as disrupted food systems? The food systems topic is particularly timely given the scale of current challenges facing the world today and the need to ensure that food systems are strengthened. For this to happen, those involved in the policy-making process need to be supported with evidence-based research.

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