



Learning Event

The effects of Covid-19 on agricultural production, food markets, growth and poverty in West Africa

February 11, 2021

Concept Note

Introduction and objectives

AKADEMIYA2063, in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the USAID West Africa Regional Mission, will host a virtual learning event focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on production, markets, trade, nutrition and poverty in West African countries. This event, held in English and French, will bring forward new evidence to inform decision making on COVID-19 responses by ECOWAS, the USAID Regional Mission and other actors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected economies through different angles, including, among others, global financial and capital markets, global commodity trade and markets, local supply and demand of goods and services, and local labor markets and employment. Countries were exposed, in a short period of time, to a systemic shock with various medical, social, and economic challenges.

Many West African countries put measures in place to control the spread of the pandemic, including states of emergency, curfews and closed borders which in most cases were progressively lifted. Travel restrictions and constraints to the movement of goods caused logistics breakdowns and labor shortages at different stages along food value chains. The resulting changes have had significant impacts on the supply of and demand for agricultural and food products.

A first implication of Covid-19-related restrictions are disruptions in local staple markets which are likely to affect the cost of food consumed by the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population. The effects on food availability and prices as well as changes in incomes may consequently have impacts on dietary patterns and behavior, ultimately leading to deterioration of nutrition status in the form of micronutrient deficiencies, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Price uncertainty and disruption in the supply side could also affect farmers' incomes.

In addition, potential impacts on agricultural production range from market access constraints for crops and inputs to mobility restrictions affecting farmers and agricultural workers. Collecting timely and accurate information on production systems and food supply is very challenging in this time of crisis, presenting difficulties to planners to anticipate the impact of the disease on production and undertake appropriate measures to prevent a food and nutrition security crisis.

Finally, the collapse of global economic output has caused serious disruptions to global trade and markets. Restrictions and lockdown measures put in place to control the spread of the disease have induced changes in global primary commodity markets which can have repercussions on national economies, trade flows, growth and poverty.

AKADEMIYA2063, as part of its mission to support the knowledge and evidence needs of African countries, has developed a broad database, innovative analytics, and communications tools on the impacts of and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall goal is to provide decision makers within and outside of the public sector with research-based **evidence on actual and potential short and medium-term effects** of the COVID-19 pandemic to inform the design of policy responses and other coping interventions. Analytical outputs organized under four workstreams—on mapping community vulnerability, tracking food price changes, predicting production disruptions, and examining the implications of global trade disruptions—are made available on AKADEMIYA2063's **COVID-19 web portal** to guide the responses of governments and other key actors.

The regional learning event organized by AKADEMIYA2063, ECOWAS, and the USAID West Africa Regional Mission intends to **draw lessons from analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 in West Africa to guide current and ongoing policy responses**. The overall objectives are to:

- (i) Enhance our understanding of the pandemic's multiple ramifications in West Africa;
- (ii) Track its current and future dynamics; and
- (iii) Identify policy and program recommendations for ECOWAS and member states.

AGENDA (all times GMT)

2:00 – 2:15	Introduction and welcoming remarks
	Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063 Daniel Moore, Mission Director, USAID West Africa Regional Mission Sékou Sangaré, Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, ECOWAS
2:15 – 2:45	Assessing community vulnerability to COVID-19
	John Ulimwengu, Africawide ReSAKSS Coordinator
2:45 – 3:15	Tracking staple food price changes
	Mbaye Yade, ReSAKSS-West Africa Regional Coordinator, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
3:15 – 3:20	Break
3:20 – 3:50	Food production systems disruptions
	Racine Ly, Director, Data Management, Digital Products and Technology, AKADEMIYA2063
3:50 – 4:20	Macroeconomic effects of global trade disruptions
	Ismael Fofana, Director, Capacity and Deployment, AKADEMIYA2063
4:20 – 4:30	Closing: Final thoughts and way forward
	Chris Shepherd-Pratt, Policy Chief, USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security Alain Sy Traoré, Director, Agriculture and Rural Development, ECOWAS Commission

AKADEMIYA2063 COVID-19 workstreams

AKADEMIYA2063's COVID-19 analysis employs a variety of methodologies to generate knowledge to help guide the responses of governments, development partners and other key actors. We examine the effects of COVID-19 and their implications for African countries and communities through four workstreams:

- 1. Mapping community vulnerability to identify potential major hot spots:** Limited resources require that responses to the pandemic prioritize the most vulnerable communities where the effects are likely to be particularly severe. We use data from multiple sources to pinpoint local communities in countries where chronic vulnerability renders the population uniquely susceptible to the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. The team overlays indicators on food security, health, and other dimensions to create a composite indicator of overall vulnerability at the subnational community level. This overall vulnerability indicator addresses the propensity of a community to be exposed to the spread of COVID-19 as well as its capacity to control the pandemic and take care of infected people.
- 2. Tracking food staples price changes:** During the evolving COVID-19 crisis, food price data is vital not just to provide a picture of current developments that affect people's ability to maintain healthy diets and the revenue of farmers but also to inform efforts to predict the short- and medium-term effects of the crisis. We collect price data from country sources at a granular level, focusing on local staples that are widely consumed by the poor and vulnerable. The team examines geographic differences within countries, investigates price transmission between markets, and gauges the likely impacts of COVID-19 on prices by comparing predicted with actual prices.

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- 3. Food production systems disruption:** COVID-19 is expected to have wide ranging impacts on production systems. Under this workstream, we use innovative remote sensing, big data and machine learning techniques to develop near real-time predictions for 2020 production levels prior to harvest. We compare predicted 2020 production with that of a previous year (2017) to flag likely disruptions and identify areas of concern.
 - 4. Global trade disruption and the effects on economic growth and livelihoods:** The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting African economies through many avenues, including its impacts on global markets. This workstream focuses on the effects of global commodity trade disruptions on trade, growth and poverty in African countries. We use existing single-country Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models for economywide analysis combined with microsimulation models for poverty analysis. The effects of COVID-19 are evaluated by comparing the socio-economic impact of changes in predicted 2020 prices for 46 key primary commodities before and after the onset of COVID-19.

Preview of findings

Analysis under each workstream has provided insight on the current and potential effects of COVID-19 in West Africa on agricultural production, staple food price trends, nutrition and food security, trade, growth, and poverty in the short and medium terms through a variety of impact pathways. Analysis under the first workstream characterizes existing patterns of vulnerability at the regional level and suggests that vulnerability to the crisis is most acute in parts of the Sahel, with pockets of high vulnerability in other areas as well. Vulnerability to hidden hunger is also examined by analyzing the likely impacts of COVID-19-related food price changes in several countries on consumption of key micronutrients.

Staple price analysis carried out under the price tracking workstream sheds light on the varying behavior of prices in different types of markets during the pandemic. For example, in several countries, during the movement restrictions, staple food prices initially fell in surplus areas but rose in deficit areas compared to expected trends; as the crisis continued, food price rises became more widespread. Price analysis is complemented by millet and sorghum production analysis carried out under the production disruptions workstream, which predicts 2020 output and yield levels in several countries and identifies areas expected to show significant differences in production compared to 2017 levels. Finally, analysis under the global trade disruptions workstream examines the effects of COVID-19-related changes in commodity prices and global market access on West Africa's imports and exports and simulates effects on growth and poverty. The findings suggest negative growth effects and increased poverty in most of the region, although some countries could be affected positively by favorable commodity price changes.

AKADEMIYA2063 receives funding from AfDB, BMGF, BMZ, FCDO and from USAID through the Feed the Future Policy LINK under Cooperative Agreement 7200AA19CA00019. The views expressed in our publications and websites do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government or that of our other investors.

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