

N.2 - June 2020

# F@rmLetter

## Growing Ideas

### COVID-19: Resisting Now to Build Back Better



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*The views and opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the position of the World Farmers' Organisation*

## EDITORIAL

# Resisting Now to Build Back Better

by Theo de Jager, President, World Farmers' Organisation

As the COVID19 pandemic turns everything upside-down in our economies and our societies, we experience a major paradigm shift across the globe for which there is no handbook, no pool of experience to source advice from. It does not matter anymore how good we were at our pre-COVID game, because the whole game has changed and the game since COVID19 has zeroed most of our achievements and the roadmap we have travelled up to here. What matters now is our **resilience**, our **ability to innovate**, share and support each other. Farmers have always been good at that.

While **there is no one-size-fits-all solution**, because food systems and production realities differ from region to region, I am profoundly convinced that **if we start by protecting the weakest and most vulnerable people and communities in a system that is open, accessible without any discrimination nor concentration, the interests of all will be covered.**

COVID19, and especially the lockdowns forced the world back to basics and ignited a **new appreciation for the role of farmers in the society**. We must leverage on that. Farmers anchor food security and the rural economies of our countries. We create wealth on a broader basis and a bigger scale than any other sectors of the global economy, but to play that role to its full potential, we need to be granted the space and right means.

When it comes to **financing**, farmers find themselves in a tough position. Markets are disrupted and in many countries farmers have no other option than to waste megatons of produce, like for instance potatoes, milk and meat, and yet, in many countries farmers and their organisations donate more food to desperately hungry families than any other civil society institution, just to fight the hottest flames of the fire.

But back on the farm, the production costs have already been paid, using loans, which need to be repaid. It is not fair that farmers must alone pick up the bill for an international imperative. Many farmers will go bankrupt. Others will try to redirect their operations, redesign their value chains, and restructure their farms. All of that needs financing. It is about adapting or dying, and there is a price to both.



Theo de Jager is the President of the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) since June 2017 and former President of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU, 2013-2018) and the Pan African Farmers Union (PAFO, 2014-2017).

He has farmed in South Africa since 1997 (in the South African Lowveld region) with timber and subtropical fruits (avocados, mangoes and macadamia nuts).

// If we start by protecting the weakest and most vulnerable people and communities [...] the interests of all will be covered. //

## EDITORIAL

So far, countries have tackled the COVID outbreak in a dispersed and fragmented way, causing many disruptions in the value chains at local and international level and affecting food security, we now need an integrated and coherent approach capable to address the global challenges, caused by the pandemic.

It is more than ever important that the international organisations, starting with IFAD, FAO and the World Bank, partner up with farmers' organisations across the globe by making available soft financing, both to cover for losses incurred under lockdown and to restructure their operations, to ensure that the food chains keep running and that we have a chance to be the foundation for economic reparation. Without such a special financing mechanism many farmers, who can and should be part of the solution, will be doomed to be added to the problem.

At WFO, we are advocating for a **"Resist Now"** and **"Build Back Better"** approach. By **"Resist Now"** we mean providing immediate financial support to the farmers to help them bear the weight of the losses on their investments and keep on producing, without jeopardizing further the value chains and ensuring the food security in their countries. In the meanwhile, a crisis – like the Latin origin of this word shows – also represents an opportunity to learn from the past, improve and innovate. For us, farmers, this can provide an opportunity to **"Build Back Better"**, repairing much of what was broken and designing fairer and more sustainable food systems.

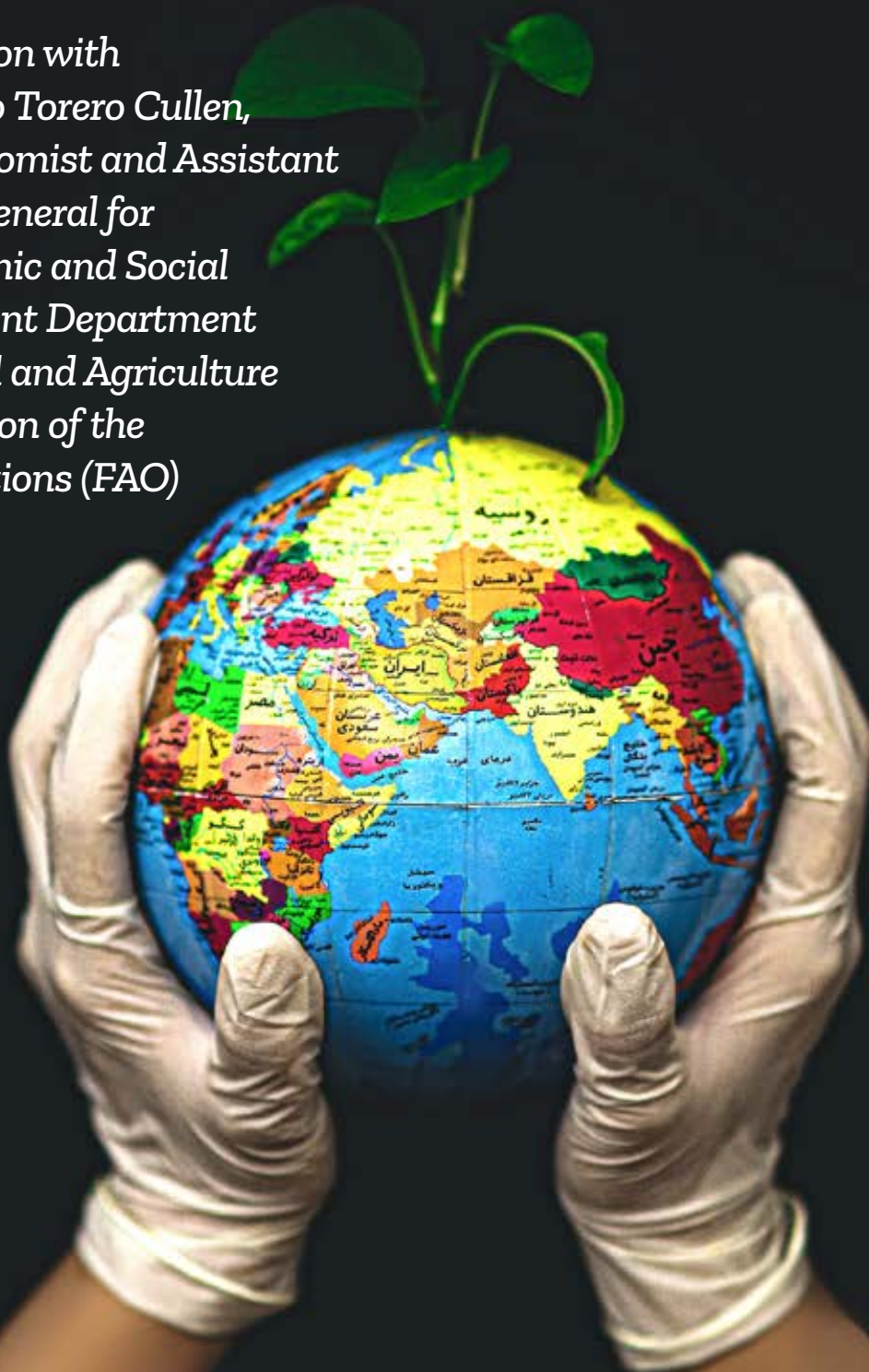
We all want a world without hunger. We all want healthy, nutritious food. We all want a healthy planet, where the climate challenge fight has been won. We all need to reduce food losses and waste. We all need fair trade and a fairer distribution of risk and profit throughout the value chain. We all need decentralisation and diversification of financing, inputs, production, processing and distribution of food. The time has come for us to show that farmers are the real anchor of the sustainable and diverse food systems we want.





# WFO Talks to Dr Maximo Torero Cullen

*Q&A Session with  
Dr Maximo Torero Cullen,  
Chief Economist and Assistant  
Director-General for  
the Economic and Social  
Development Department  
at the Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations (FAO)*



Dr Máximo Torero Cullen is the Chief Economist/Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department (ES) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) since January 2019. Prior to joining FAO, he was the World Bank Group Executive Director for Argentina, Bolivia, Chile Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay since November 2016 and before the Bank Dr Torero led the Division of the Markets, Trade, and Institutions at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). His major research work lies mostly in analyzing poverty, inequality, importance of geography and assets (private or public) in explaining poverty, and in policies oriented towards poverty alleviation based on the role played by infrastructure, institutions, and on how technological breakthroughs (or discontinuities) can improve the welfare of households and small farmers. His experience encompasses Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia.



As FAO Chief Economist, could you please give us an overview of the long and short-term impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on food supply chains? What are the most important effects you foresee in the short and long-run?

*FAO is most concerned is about people's access to food in the medium and long run.*

*The significant slowdown of all economies of the world and especially of the most vulnerable ones will make countries – especially countries in food crises, dependent on primary commodity exports, and food import-dependent countries – struggle to have the needed resources to buy food.*

*Health and Food go together. The only way to keep alive the food value chains is by assuring health protocols are in place across food value chains. If not, we will move from lockdowns by decree to lock downs because of health reasons.*

*There is a serious concern that producers might not be able to plant this year, or not plant enough, as normally. **If we do not help producers to plant this year, this will translate into a lack of food later this year and in 2021.***

*Up to now we have been successful in avoiding protectionary measures and trade is flowing normally. We need to ensure this continues.*

COVID-19 has upended lives and livelihoods across the planet, wiping most of the achievements and the road we have travelled up to here to deliver the Agenda 2030 promise. What are FAO's priorities to transform the food systems coping with emergencies like COVID-19, while also accelerating the progress of SDG2 and assuring at the same time the food systems are more climate-smart, resilient and biodiversity-friendly?

*FAO has been advocating for countries to: keep international trade open; increase intra-regional trade; scale up social protection programmes; keep agricultural supply chains alive; maintain agricultural activities – to avoid the health crisis turn into a food crisis.*

*So that countries can take informed decisions and lessen COVID-19's impacts, FAO has been providing latest information on food value chains, markets and food prices, and putting forward [analysis and solutions](#).*

*We have also [stepped up our work](#) in food crisis contexts where COVID-19's impact could be devastating.*



**// If we do not help producers to plant this year, this will translate into a lack of food later. //**

*FAO is also helping countries to rebuild better.*

*For example, in Pacific SIDS, FAO will continue to strengthen food systems and make them more nutrition-sensitive and disaster-resilient, be that through boosting local food production, or scaling up climate-smart activities. FAO continues to provide access to quality data – the need for this emerged strongly during COVID-19.*

*FAO, The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, and The Johns Hopkins Alliance recently launched a [food dashboard](#), with data on the food systems of over 230 countries & territories. Just some examples as FAO and partners continue to strive to create sustainable, biodiversity-friendly food systems.*

**The world farmers are standing strong in the middle of the COVID-19 storm: they are not stopping and are keeping up their role of feeding the world, ensuring that their fellow citizens can have access to fresh, nutritious and healthy food. What actions is FAO putting in place to support the world farmers in this endeavour, in terms of assistance to governments?**

*To support farmers and their organisations in the coming months, FAO has been urging countries to allow movement of seasonal workers and transport operators across domestic and international borders whilst respecting health protocols; and putting forward good practices such as: identifying collection centres closer to producers; allowing local markets to remain open, while putting in place strict physical distancing measures;*

*if feasible, relocate markets to larger premises, while ensuring quality and food safety.*

**The Decade on Family Farming was launched one year ago with a clear action plan that promotes the priorities of youth, women, and men in the rural sector. In the current situation of crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, strengthening family farming is more than ever a key element. Which would be according to your vision a concrete intervention for strengthening family farming during the current emergency and beyond? And how would you revise the UNDAF action plan to allow the emergency response?**

*Family farming includes large, medium and small holders. Our priority is to support medium and small holders and micro and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which are part of their value chains. Small holders and MSMEs are the most cash constraint today and where technical support is needed. Access to credit or soft loans assures that small businesses stay open.*

*We also need to create new market opportunities. Accelerating intra-regional trade can create a new demand for food. This needs political commitment and investment to ramp up access to infrastructure and improve food safety. Improving food safety across the value chain can reduce nontariff trade barriers. This is central to promoting regional trade. Africa, for example, could hugely benefit from removal of nontariff barriers. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement is key to this.*



IN DEPTH

# COVID-19 and Food Security: A turning point for global food systems



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IN DEPTH

# COVID-19 and Food Security: A turning point for global food systems

by Martien Van Nieuwkoop,

Global Director, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, World Bank

A once-in-a-century crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has touched every region, industry, and aspect of life. No other crisis has wreaked as much economic havoc. The agri-food sector – from farming down to food processing and retailing – is not spared despite its status as an “essential service.” The impacts of COVID-19 on the food system are of particular concern as they impact most the food security and livelihoods of a large number of poor and vulnerable people.

Farmers and other food system actors (agri-businesses, traders, etc.) play a vital role in ensuring everyone can access safe, nutritious and affordable food. It is imperative that governments, with support from the international organizations and development partners, ensure that farmers have the necessary support — such as social safety nets, connections to markets, access to inputs, and financial support interventions — to continue operating in during COVID-19 and are able to recover and thrive after the pandemic.

The pandemic has increased risk of food insecurity in three main ways. First, COVID-19 has devastated the labor market. Lockdowns, movement restrictions, and reduced demand have resulted in [widespread job losses](#) and pay cuts. Income losses reduce access to food, especially for the poor and vulnerable, who spend proportionally more of their income on food. To make things worse, COVID-19 has an outsize effect on incomes of informal enterprises and workers, who make up a [majority](#) of the agricultural sector.

Second, COVID-19 has disrupted both global and domestic agri-food supply chains. Although the impact on international supply chains has been limited so far and global food markets being [well-supplied and stable](#), breakdowns in domestic logistics, trade, and labor movement constrain [local food availability](#).

Looking forward, disruptions in input supply chains may jeopardize the upcoming planting season. Lockdown measures have led to agricultural labor shortages in many regions, including Europe, East Asia, and parts of India.



**Martien Van Nieuwkoop is Global Director for the World Bank's Agriculture and Food Global Practice.** He leads the formulation and implementation of the Bank's strategy and knowledge in agriculture and food, oversees the operationalization of this vision in regional and country programs, and acts as a senior spokesperson for agriculture and food Bank-wide and globally.



**World Bank Agriculture and Food website [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture)**

## IN DEPTH

Plus, more farmers are reporting increases in input prices, including feed. According to the [FAO](#), low availability and/or high prices of inputs like pesticides could impact 2020 crop production.

Finally, COVID-19 has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in agriculture. COVID-19 complicates agricultural production for regions already struggling because of poor climate conditions, diseases and pests, such as Asian Swine Flu, the [locust plague](#) and drought. In addition, countries dependent on food imports are highly vulnerable to pandemic-induced supply chain breakdowns, protectionist trade restrictions, and currency fluctuations. Exporting countries are also affected: countries with large shares of the domestic production engaged in producing commercial crops destined for exports are suffering from a collapse in demand in importing countries. Finally, as in most crises, [women](#), refugees, and people living in [conflict zones](#) face compounding vulnerabilities.

Given COVID-19's damaging impact on livelihoods and food security, how can countries and international organizations respond? [Scaling up safety nets](#) is a critical first step, with cash support to help people cope

with jobs and income losses, supplemented by food distribution where markets are disrupted and food is not accessible in local markets. Second, it is imperative that countries keep food supply chains functioning. Many countries have declared food an essential service, and some have adopted special procedures ("green channels") to facilitate food transport despite lockdowns. Yet, in some countries, implementation has been variable, calling for a concerted effort to ensure these anomalies are ironed out. Third, farmers need access to inputs, including credit, to ensure they can plant next season's crops.

Finally, in all interventions, vulnerable groups require special attention. For example, leveraging local institutions helps reach small-scale producers and micro-enterprises in the informal sector.

Responding to food insecurity during COVID-19 doesn't end with short-term relief, however. As countries eventually recover from the pandemic, we must consider how to rebuild more resilient food systems. COVID-19 has exposed long-standing flaws in the agri-food sector, including burdens on informal workers, fragile supply chains, environmental vulnerabilities, and the risks associated with human and animal disease.



COVID-19 and food security: [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19)



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Moving forward, leaders in the food system should:

**Prioritize the One Health agenda to mitigate the risk of future pandemics:** Emphasizing that human health is connected to environmental and animal health, the One Health approach incorporates perspectives from many sectors to fight and prevent disease.

**Repurpose agriculture policies and support programs:** The fiscal stress imposed by COVID-19 requires reorientation of ineffective expenditures and inefficient incentives. Governments should take this opportunity to re-invest their public expenditures and create the incentives to build back a stronger, more resilient and sustainable food systems. In particular, reorienting incentives for farmers to invest in soil health would pay handsome long-term dividends by boosting yields, increasing resilience to weather extremes, and reducing climate change.

**Expand the use of digital solutions:** Deploying digital solutions has allowed farmers to access information and advisory services while staying socially distant and market their production to new customers. Shifting toward digital payments and e-commerce platforms can also lower transaction costs.

**Reform market regulations to promote private investment:** Government budgets are strained as it is, and the fiscal stress of dealing with the damage of COVID-19 pandemic will significantly decrease the fiscal space for many years to come. To keep agricultural programs going, it is critical to crowd-in private investment through reforms of policies, institutions and regulations that have been bottlenecks in the past.

**Scale-up shock-responsive safety nets:** A large number of countries have social safety net programs, but many do not. It is critical to establish robust shock-responsive safety nets that cover both rural and urban people in need of assistance as part of a pragmatic risk management system.

**Support livelihood diversification on-farm and off-farm:** A vast majority of smallholders necessarily rely on non-farm incomes. Supporting farming households to diversify on-farm as well as off-the farm will be essential to ensure the resilience of these households to future shocks.

**Invest in better monitoring systems:** Early warning systems to identify emerging crises, and allowing preventive early action requires investment in robust monitoring systems as part of a systemic resilience strategy.

Farmers and other food system actors will play a critical role in responding to food insecurity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Well-targeted support from governments and international organizations can help too. By expanding social safety nets, keeping food supply chains running, ensuring farmers' access to inputs, and prioritizing vulnerable groups, we can collectively mitigate COVID-19's negative effects on the agri-food sector. Armed with a long-term plan, we can come out of this crisis with a stronger and better food system that will serve us well in the decades to come.

// Armed with a long-term plan, we can come out of this crisis with a stronger and better food system that will serve us well in the decades to come. //





A man wearing a white lab coat, a blue surgical mask, and a white hairnet is standing in a slaughterhouse. He is looking towards the camera. In the background, there are metal cages and several large animals, likely pigs, lying down. The lighting is warm and slightly dim.

# **Supporting animal health systems in times of COVID-19: OIE's response**

IN DEPTH

# Supporting animal health systems in times of COVID-19: OIE's response

by Dr Monique Eloit, Director General, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

In a few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our communities and ways of life. With devastating effects on society in nearly all countries of the globe, it has also heavily challenged our food supply chains, livelihoods, economies as well as animal production systems. All are indeed intrinsically linked.

The unprecedented nature of this pandemic and the mysteries around this virus have required new and innovative approaches to tackle it. At a time when much uncertainty remains and much work still needs to be undertaken to understand how the virus entered the human population, one certainty abides: collaboration across sectors is key to respond to this crisis.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has been intensively working with its network of experts and liaising with its Members to better understand the virus and its emergence and to enhance countries' capacity to respond to this multifaceted crisis. In these times where solidarity is more important than ever, the animal health sector has been supporting the response capacity of human health services in various ways while contributing to accompany the animal production sector in addressing critical needs, such as food provision.



Dr Monique Eloit is the Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). Prior to her election, she occupied the function of OIE Deputy Director General (2009-2016). Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, she has also been the Chief Veterinary Officer of France and National Delegate to the OIE (2005- 2009).



## Supporting the public health response to COVID-19 and ensuring a continuum in animal production

Through its mission to set animal health and welfare standards, to inform and to build capacity, the OIE has been fully mobilised to support the work of its partners and to accompany animal health professionals in maintaining sound animal production systems.

Within days, the OIE has put in place an Incident Management System to coordinate its response to COVID-19 internally and with external key partners. It has mobilised several expert groups to provide scientific advice and to develop guidelines on a range of topics. These include identifying research priorities as well as assessing the implications of COVID-19 for animal health and veterinary public health and for trade in animals and animal products.

Following widespread human infection, several cases have been reported in animals (mostly pets), including in mink production systems.

As well as ensuring the dissemination of official information on such events, [a guidance on the rationale for testing animals](#) was developed to support public and animal health risk assessment and risk management. The OIE will continue to communicate timely and verified science-based information to the international community as new knowledge comes to light.

## Facilitating safe international trade of animals and their products

The International trade has been heavily challenged over the last months. Yet, facilitating safe trade of animals and animal products, in line with OIE Standards, is crucial to avoid the interruption of food chains for the most vulnerable populations. In this context, as evidence from risk assessments, epidemiological investigations and experimental studies do not suggest that live animals or animal products play a role in SARS-CoV-2 infection of humans (i.e. the current COVID-19 pandemic is sustained by human-to-human transmission), the OIE [has called countries not to take sanitary restrictions](#) linked to COVID-19 unless there is scientific justification for doing so, in line with the recommendations of its expert group on the topic.

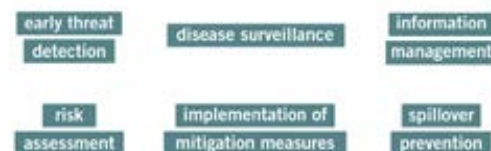
## Preserving the livestock-wildlife interface

Human activities such as intensive deforestation or wildlife trade have an impact on the health and balance of ecosystems. Several recent spillover events linked to poorly regulated wildlife trade, including SARS and Ebola virus, have resulted in severe socio-economic crises. Considering that COVID-19 has possibly originated from wildlife, it is crucial to address the risk of spillover events at the human-livestock-ecosystems interface, whilst preserving welfare and biodiversity. In a recent [statement](#), the OIE highlighted the need to support legal, sustainable and responsible wildlife use. Looking to the future, it has initiated an ambitious work programme to motivate the implementation of good practices in wildlife trade and facilitate the implementation of integrated wildlife surveillance systems. This will aim to produce new guidelines, and if necessary international standards, which will cover transportation, capture, farming, marketing, and consumption of wildlife.

# OIE News on COVID-19



### Ensuring best practices and safe wildlife trade in countries relies on:





## IN DEPTH

### A multisectoral approach

The COVID-19 pandemic has awoken the need for longstanding and sustainable One Health collaboration. From the start of the crisis, existing Tripartite frameworks for emergency management have been used. OIE experts have participated in the WHO's International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee on COVID-19 and have supported the WHO R&D blueprint, which allows the rapid and coordinated activation of research and development activities.

Beyond collaborative research activities, the animal health sector has contributed in various ways towards building a common response to the pandemic in the field and supporting the work of human health authorities. The provision of testing capacity by animal health laboratories or the donation of essential materials such as personal protective equipment and ventilators are some examples.

### Planning ahead

COVID-19 has disrupted our present time so much that it has sent shockwaves into the future, creating greater fragments of uncertainty but also space for innovation. The OIE has been preparing for such an event for several years. Pandemic preparedness and biological threat reduction have been high on the agenda, leading to the establishment of mechanisms such as OFFLU (which would respond to an influenza pandemic of animal origin), a biological threat reduction strategy and several capacity-building projects in animal health emergency management. Experience has shown that collaboration and coordinated action remain essential to address the global change which is reshaping our environment, in terms of climate, human behaviours and land use, for example.

// **The COVID-19 pandemic has awoken the need for longstanding and sustainable One Health collaboration.** //

**Guidelines for safe wildlife trade will result in sustainable and responsible...**

- ✓ ...transport
- ✓ ...capture
- ✓ ...farming
- ✓ ...consumption

**Oie** WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH  
Protecting animals, preserving our future

@  
**OIE Q&A  
on COVID-19**

A photograph of a man, likely a farmer, standing in a cornfield. He is wearing a dark baseball cap, a plaid shirt with rolled-up sleeves, and jeans. He is looking down at a smartphone in his hands. The scene is backlit by the warm, golden light of a setting or rising sun, creating a silhouette effect. Large, green corn leaves are in the foreground, some out of focus. The background shows a clear sky and some distant structures.

**DEMETER: the solution  
that puts digital means  
at the service of farmers**

# DEMETER: the solution that puts digital means at the service of farmers

by Gráinne Dilleen, Communication and Dissemination  
coordinator for the DEMETER project

The challenges posed by COVID-19 for the agricultural sector are well documented. Among others, the lack of availability of seasonal workers, market uncertainty, fluctuating consumer demand and the potential disruption of the supply chain for fertilizers and animal feed have been highlighted. However, this crisis has also demonstrated how the use of smart technologies can help the farmer's recovery while improving sustainability.

**DEMETER** is a Horizon 2020 project focused on leading the digital transformation of Europe's agri-food sector through the rapid adoption of advanced IoT technologies, data science and smart farming. DEMETER adopts a multi-actor approach across the value chain (demand and supply), with 25 deployment sites, 6,000 farmers and over 38,000 devices and sensors being deployed. The project is delivered through twenty pilot projects across arable crops, fruit production and livestock. **These pilots are all farmer-focused with the aim of empowering farmers by driving productivity, providing data for better decision-making and ensuring the efficient usage of inputs.**

For example, one of the pilot projects aims to promote technology, methods and IoT solutions to optimise precision farming practices of Mediterranean woody crops (apple, olive and grape), considering the small farmers' economic constraints. The pilot will result in more efficient usage of inputs such as water, energy, macro-nutrients, and pesticides, increasing the profits of small farmers and decreasing their environmental impact.



Gráinne Dilleen is the Communication and Dissemination coordinator for the DEMETER project.

She is also a PhD researcher at TSSG/ Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland. Her current research is focused on understanding the farmer's decision-making process in adopting smart farming technologies.

“ Although the COVID-19 crisis is a considerable threat to agriculture, it has shown farmers' willingness to embrace technology. ”





## INNOVATIVE IDEAS

It is expected to reduce the spraying losses by more than 20%, the irrigation water consumption by approximately 10%, and the NPK overdosage by 15%. Similarly, part of another pilot project focuses on improving milk quality in dairies as well as animals' well-being and health. This is done by ensuring the optimal feeding of cows by managing animal wellness and measuring crops and soil properties and integrating new technologies into daily operations. This will deliver production costs optimisation, better product quality, improved animal welfare and better farm work organisation.

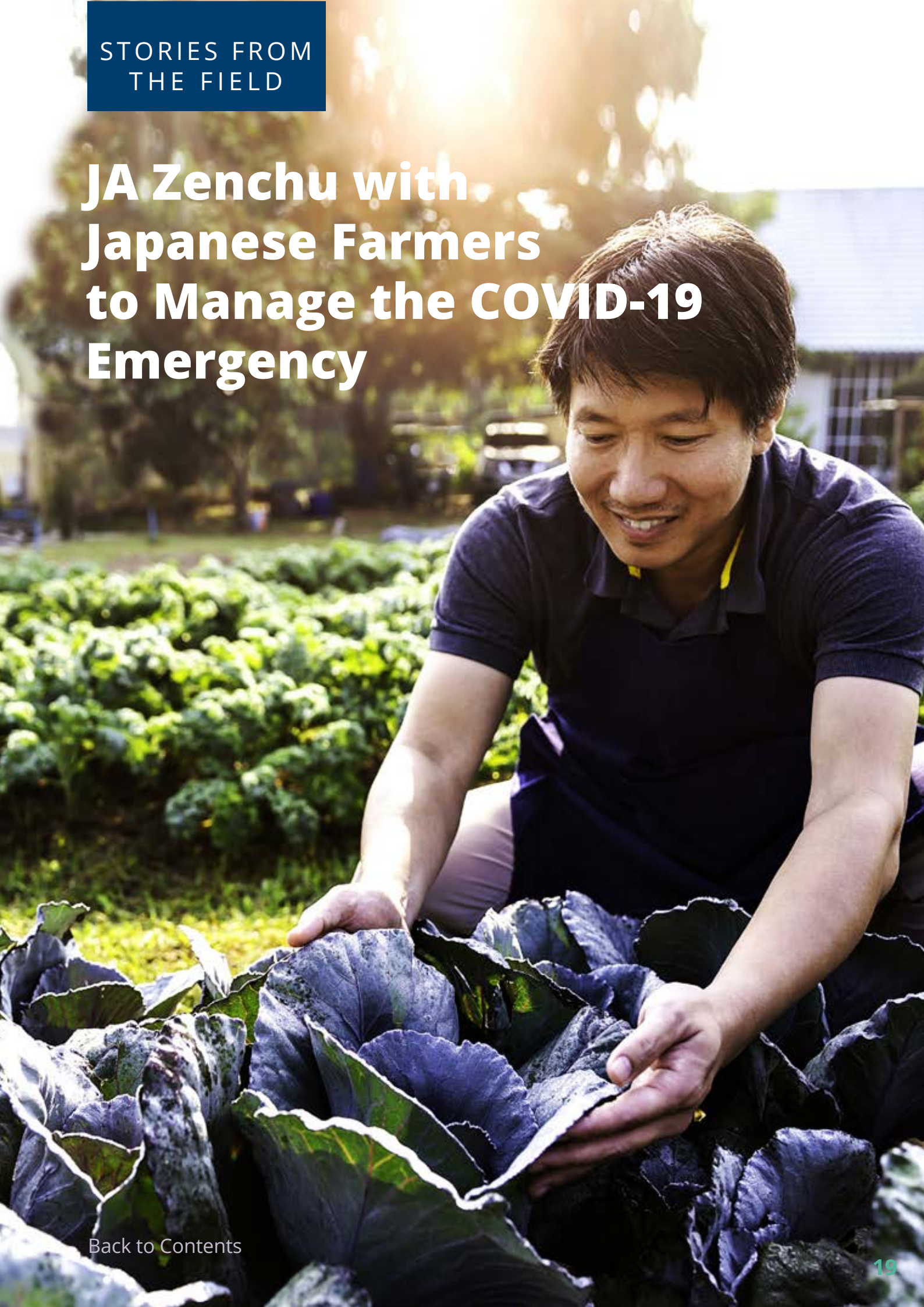
**Although the COVID-19 crisis is a considerable threat to agriculture, it has shown farmers' willingness to embrace technology** to sell produce, perform on-farm tasks and digitally connect with advisers. **DEMETER can help by putting further digital means at the service of farmers and empower them as prosumers, to gain control in the data-food-chain.**



For more  
information, visit  
[www.h2020-demeter.eu](http://www.h2020-demeter.eu)



# JA Zenchu with Japanese Farmers to Manage the COVID-19 Emergency





# JA Zenchu with Japanese Farmers to Manage the COVID-19 Emergency

by Yasuyuki Kobayashi, Manager, International Relations Division, Agricultural Policy Department



JA is a unit of primary agricultural cooperative in Japan in municipal level and most of the Japanese farmers and each JA in the area are like “one team” due to their dependency on JA in their farming and living in rural areas, due to JA’s wide coverage on sales of products, purchases of inputs, banking, life/non-life insurance and so on.

In Japan, the first negative effect in the agricultural sector caused by COVID-19 came to the labour force in February. In vegetable producing areas such as northern part of Japan and high land areas in the middle of the mainland, labour force from China went back to their home due to the lunar new year but this time with nothing to do on farmland they couldn’t come back to Japan due to lockdown throughout China.

In April, with an emergency declared by the government, all the schools were completely closed, and farm products for school lunch come to have nowhere to go. Due to restaurant closure, price leading products such as Brand Wagyu Beef or Japanese Sake were suffering from piles of stocks in the refrigerator, and we were afraid of the possible worst scenario in which slaughterhouses had to reject beef cattle from the farmer.

Followings are how JA Group, with full collaboration with farmers, managed in such emergency.



## Securing Labor force

JA Saku-Asama, famous for highland vegetable and summer escape “Karuizawa” was successful in securing labour force in collaboration with Hoshino Resort, Japanese up-and-coming hotel chain whose origin is in the area. Due to lack of sightseeing guests, 30 staff members of a hotel of Hoshino Resort in the region voluntarily started working in collection/pre-cool/shipping facility of JA for vegetable. It's not only exchange of labour/wage, but according to comment of one of such voluntary workers, who was supposed to work at the hotel restaurant, it was a good opportunity for him to know background stories of ingredients he usually used as locally produced. On the contrary, one of JA staff member who worked with them appreciated their patient and cooperative work, which he thought was fostered through their daily work in the service industry.

## Provide food for school lunch to residents

JA Matsuyamashi in the capital city of orange producing Ehime Pref. purchased 4.3 tons of potatoes and cabbages from the School Lunch Office of the city and sold them for free to urban residents in the area. Some of them might be facing economic hardship caused by COVID-19. JA Member farmers have sold them to the Office, but they had nowhere due to school closure. That was based on the agreement with municipal government for disaster management.

## Wagyu Beef Promotion Campaign

JA Zenchu, with national-level federations of economic activities, banking and insurance conducted a big promotion campaign of brand Wagyu beef. 5,000 citizens who applied and won web lottery were presented Wagyu beef for free to release piles of stocks in refrigerators in beef producing area. That also widened recognition among people on farmers' contribution to food security and beautiful products. It finally became a platform for the government to carry out similar measures under COVID-19.



**Yasuyuki Kobayashi is Manager at the International Relations Division for Agricultural Policy Department.** He joined JA Zenchu in 1999 after graduation from university and is now in charge of international trade negotiations and co-operation with farmers groups in Asian countries.





# Are European Young Farmers finding the new normal?



# Are European Young Farmers finding the new normal?

by Mariana Debernardini, Sustainability Liaison,  
European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)

As industries have grinded to a halt, factories shut down, and homes turned into offices, schools and day-cares, the work of farmers tending to their land continued, full steam ahead. The agri-food sector, and all actors within it, ensured that grocery shelves remained stocked as consumers rushed to fill their pantries to feed themselves and their loved ones. As I write this article, hotels, restaurants and catering (HoReCa) kitchens across Europe are beginning to dust off their equipment and resume services. The public is slowly returning to a life that echoes the pre-COVID-19 world, and it is clear that it is a new normal we are all embracing. **For many young farmers, this new normal is already a reality as plans have been interrupted, contracts re-defined, and business strategies put to the ultimate test.**

What does it mean for a young person to take over a farm? There is a common misconception that the process is easy, especially for those whose parents are already farmers. The reality is that **it can be an arduous and expensive process** involving loans, debts and endless administrative paperwork.





## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

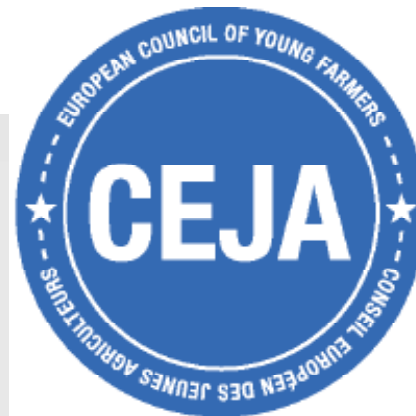
The pandemic has accentuated such difficulties by interrupting installation and investment processes. For example, one of our young farmers from Wallonia pointed out how installation administrators are not sure of the conditions which young farmers must meet in order to access installation aid today, nor are they certain that budgets will be available after January 2021. It is crucial that **young people are empowered to take-over farms** as soon as they are able, given their energy to adopt sustainable new practices and business models.

In the absence of the HoReCa sector, **many young farmers have chosen to sell directly to consumers** by establishing new e-commerce systems, creating drive through farmers markets, finding new customers in and around their area, and **moving activities online**. In Germany, wine producers have started online wine tastings where people can pre-order packages of wine and then log on to a meeting; while schools in Finland have begun “Facetime with a Farmer,” to keep educational activities going.

The future of our food systems is in the spotlight, both glorified for its resilience during this pandemic and scrutinized for its impact on the environment. In the shadow of this conversation, is the next generation of farmers, **whose early careers will be shaped by the devastating impacts of the pandemic**, and who will be tasked with assuring a more environmentally sustainable sector that is as or even more resilient in delivering food during crises. This is why it is crucial to facilitate their take-over process, listen to their needs, and **help them find their new normal**.



Mariana Debernardini is the Sustainability Liaison for the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) and Farming Systems Ecology Group at Wageningen University and Research. She has been working and studying young farmers for the past two years and holds an MSc in Organic Agriculture from WUR.





# What do African and Asian Farmers tell us on COVID-19 and Climate Change?







## What do African and Asian Farmers tell us on COVID-19 and Climate Change?

by Tiina Huvio, Programme Director, Food and Forest Development Finland – FFD, MTK's agri-agency, leading the Climate Change Strategy for the AgriCord Alliance

In the face of COVID-19, smallholder farmers and forest producers face the challenge of how to balance between short term shocks and longer-term risks such as climate change. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has again revealed new vulnerabilities in the production systems and along the value-chains but has also shown the importance of forest and farm producer organisations to respond in times of crisis being close to communities in rural areas who hardly get attention from their governments or the international community.

These critical issues were discussed during an International Web conference on Multidimensional Resilience, organised by AgriCord, FAO's Forest and Farm Facility, Food and Forest Development Finland, Pan-African Farmers Organizations and Asian Farmers Association on the 11th of June, with more than 500 registered participants.



**For more  
information**

[www.agricord.org](http://www.agricord.org)

[www.ffd.fi/  
ajankohtaista](http://www.ffd.fi/ajankohtaista)



## DIALOGUES

Representatives from farmers' organisations, AgriCord, EU, WFP, FAO and IFAD were brought to the table to establish priorities in building the resilience of smallholder producers, supply-chains and food systems.

The debates were fed by a survey conducted with 74 farmer organizations from 24 countries in Asia and Africa which revealed that COVID-19 response should not only focus on short term interventions but aim at more structural changes building just and sustainable food systems and demand attention to agricultural and forestry sector to build resilient landscapes. Ensured access to finance and liquidity is key for farmers' organisations and cooperatives to avoid the collapse of value chains and food systems.

The same applies to climate funding. Despite funding available for climate, farmers feel that they are left aside. A sustainable transformation can only be achieved if farmers are into the driver's seat and supported by local knowledge, research and technology. Farmers – men, women and youth – must be part of decision making and implementation.



**Tiina Huvio is a specialist on agriculture, forestry and rural development.** During her career, she has worked for FAO, the Finnish and Danish foreign ministries. Since 2013 she works for Food and Forest Development Finland (FFD) as Programme Director.





# **Read the writing on the wall: Emerging opportunities for Africa's food systems**



## Read the writing on the wall: Emerging opportunities for Africa's food systems

by Ndidi Nwuneli, Founder of Nourishing Africa, FOLU Ambassador

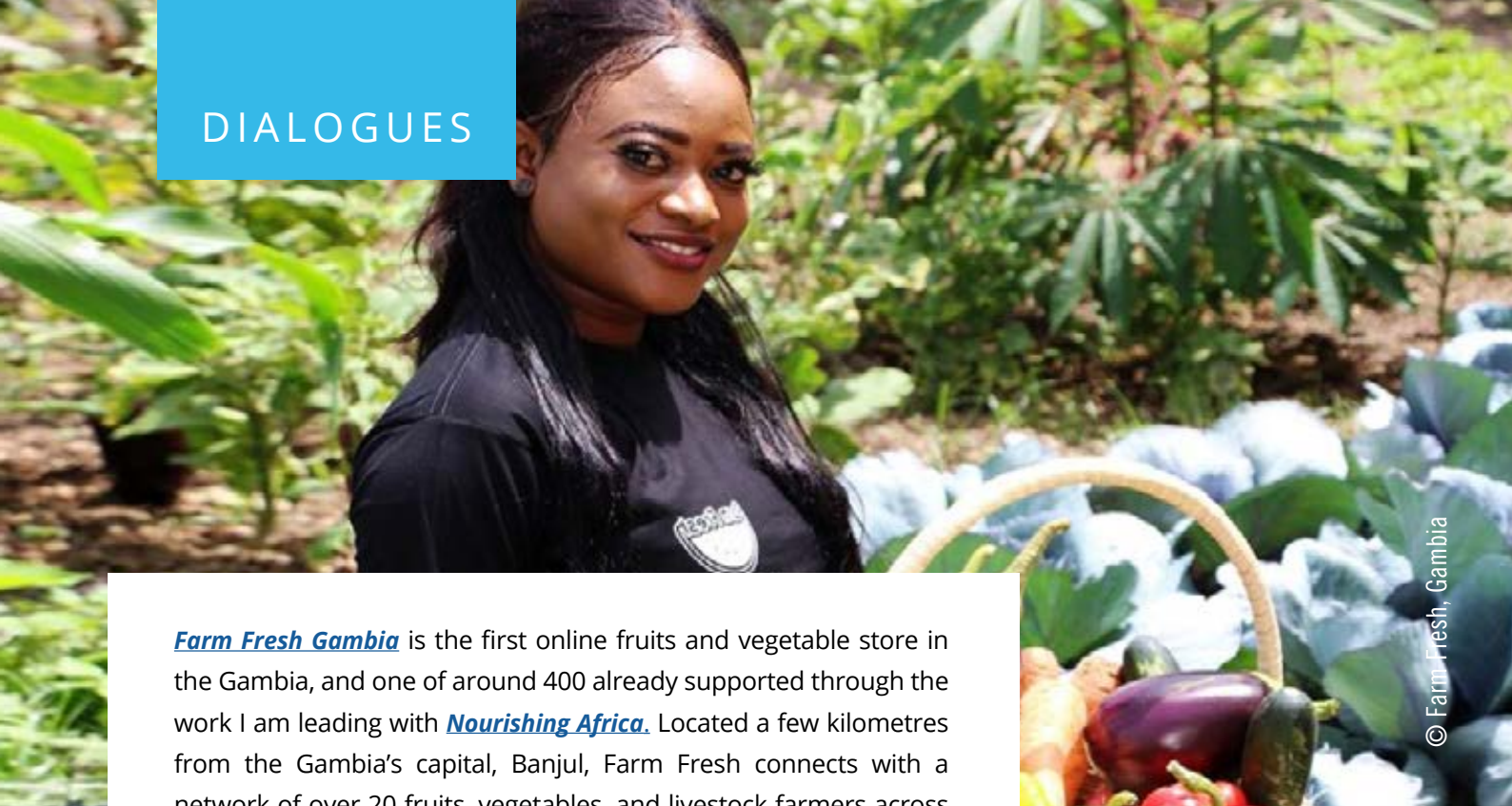
This year has revealed the startling lack of resilience in many systems across our world as well as the interwoven challenges of living together in society. It has deeply and profoundly questioned both security and justice, leaving many hungry for change. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed severe deficiencies and fragilities in our food systems, especially across the African continent. Evidence from the sub-Saharan African region points to growing stress, with a lack of proper logistics, technology, and safety nets – leaving many agri-food companies slowing production or forced to shut down.

But just like seeds, a crisis can help sift out the resilient, the resourceful, and the brave – offering a glimmer of hope for tomorrow. COVID-19 has shone a light on some of the opportunities of Africa's food systems and opened our eyes to those who feed us. Now, more than ever, we must treat farmers as essential workers – supplying them with the appropriate information, protection, and support. As [\*recent research from the Food and Land Use Coalition \(FOLU\) highlights\*](#), following a [\*Call to Action\*](#) to prevent a global food security crisis, this means strengthening the extension services to support farmers and building resilience along the entire food supply chain.

Governments play a pivotal role in scaling the enabling environments needed to connect stakeholders and provide access to key markets for farmers and consumers but so too does the private sector.

// With the right policies and interventions, African entrepreneurs can drive the transformation of food systems and ensure that the continent can feed itself. //



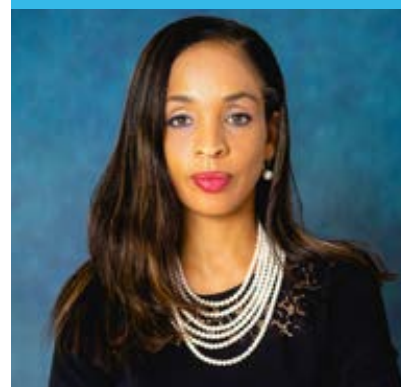


© Farm Fresh, Gambia

***Farm Fresh Gambia*** is the first online fruits and vegetable store in the Gambia, and one of around 400 already supported through the work I am leading with ***Nourishing Africa***. Located a few kilometres from the Gambia's capital, Banjul, Farm Fresh connects with a network of over 20 fruits, vegetables, and livestock farmers across the country, particularly in the rural areas – and is one of many companies that has managed to adapt through the pandemic. Farm Fresh has seized the opportunity to continue pushing its business to the Gambian public and online sales and delivery have increased by 400% during the crisis as a result. Farm Fresh now offers delivery services only and has shifted focus to aggressively promoting their products online.

Often referred to as the “hidden middle”, Farm Fresh Gambia and other small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up **80 per cent** of food supply on the continent and are the true drivers of growth and innovation in Africa. Nourishing Africa's online hub for agriculture and food entrepreneurs aims to support over one million agri-food entrepreneurs and their businesses across the continent. It bridges the knowledge, skills and resource gaps that have resurfaced through this crisis and scales action from farms all the way to forks.

I believe that **with the right policies and interventions, African entrepreneurs can drive the transformation of food systems and ensure that the continent can feed itself**. But we must read the writing on the wall and emerge stronger through local, regional, and global collaboration. Only in this way can we ensure the health and prosperity of our people, planet and ultimately our hearts.



**Ndidi Nwuneli is Founder of Nourishing Africa, Co-Founder of Sahel Consulting, Co-Founder of AACE Foods, and Founder of LEAP Africa, as well as a FOLU Ambassador.** FOLU is a global community of organisations and individuals committed to the urgent need to transform the way we produce and consume food and use our land for people, nature and climate. The World Farmers' Organisation is one of the Core Partners.



For more information, visit  
[www.foodandlandusecoalition.org/](http://www.foodandlandusecoalition.org/)

# **How modern agriculture can combat food insecurity**





# How modern agriculture can combat food insecurity

By Giulia Di Tommaso, President & CEO, CropLife International

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The COVID-19 crisis reminds us of the importance of fighting food insecurity. Food travels through a complex supply chain linking farmers to consumers, and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how fragile that process can be. From food waste and loss to empty store shelves, the disruptions to the supply chain caused by the pandemic are visible and highly impactful to people worldwide.

Unfortunately, food insecurity is nothing new. Despite significant progress in recent decades, today, more than [820 million people regularly go to bed hungry](#). Of these, about [135 million suffer from acute hunger](#) largely due to man-made conflicts, climate change and economic downturns. The COVID-19 pandemic could double that number, putting an additional 130 million people at risk of suffering acute hunger by the end of 2020.

Over the past decade, the plant science sector has developed innovations that support sustainable agriculture and food systems transformation. Plant science has contributed positively to increasing yields and preventing hunger. By increasing crop productivity, biotech crops protected 183 million hectares of forests and natural habitats from being brought under cultivation, helped capture 27 billion kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub>, and reduced pesticide applications by 8%.

// Modern agriculture and sustainable systems can help reduce food loss and waste, while also preserving water, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and providing climate change solutions. //

## DIALOGUES

In the recent pandemic, the plant science industry has made new resources available so farmers can maintain physical distancing and public health requirements while caring for their crops. We ensured uninterrupted access to crop protection products and improved seeds. Digital tools like satellite imagery for virtual field inspections, and apps that calculate pest and disease pressures, as well as digital consulting with technology providers, have also been made available to farmers, the silent heroes, so they can choose and rely on digital tools so they can continue to maintain their crops through the pandemic.

We will continue to stand by farmers and work together with the value chain to meet the immense challenges during and after the COVID-19 crisis whilst continuing to address longer-term issues such as climate change, the growing world population and the need to protect precious biodiversity and natural resources.

**Modern agriculture and sustainable systems can help reduce food loss and waste, while also preserving water, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and providing climate change solutions.**

Only by working together can we face the post-COVID environment, address the potential for similar situations in the future, and win the battle to feed the world and support a healthy planet, ensuring that no one is left behind.



**Giulia Di Tommaso is President and CEO of CropLife International.** She has over 30 years of global career including senior executive roles at Unilever and as CCO & CSO with Ferrero. She was a strategic advisor to FAO on private sector partnership engagement and led international agreements on climate change, food loss & waste and smallholder farmers.





