

## AUDA-NEPAD COVID-19 SERIES

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# AUDA-NEPAD and COVID-19 Response to Food Insecurity and Malnutrition

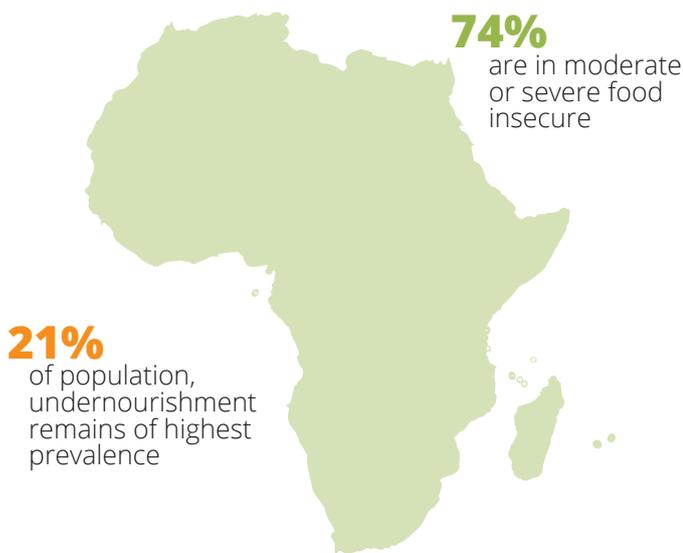
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In the past major risks threatening food and nutrition security were mainly covariate risks including droughts, floods, volatility in market prices for inputs and, more commonly, for outputs as well as crop and livestock diseases (e.g. Avian flu), locust invasion and pests (fall armyworm). The current epidemic of Covid19 outbreak threatens both lives and livelihoods; it has negative impacts on the entire food circular economy from producers, inputs, processing, storage, distribution and consumption.

Whilst most African countries wallow in food shortages, food insecurity, poor nutrition concerns and presently disproportionately exposed to threats of COVID-19 pandemic. There is no doubt that life has changed drastically since the global outbreak. Ultimately, the human impact is already immeasurable especially in Africa where nearly a third of its entire population is already undernourished. The negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic to economies, livelihoods, health, nutrition and the abrupt disruption of food systems and supply chain systems cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, quality food demand is escalating which impacts on food availability, affordability accessibility at all levels (household, rural, urban, national, regional and continental).

This would bring many challenges on human capital development which is secured through good supply of food rich in vital nutrition for



better immune system to prevent human health that enables to fight against diseases such as COVID-19. The COVID-19 is rather unique – in both rapid spread, scale and fatalities - compared to previous natural and manmade disasters, epidemics and pandemics that threaten food and nutrition security, as well as livelihoods and national economies and developments.

The present COVID-19 pandemic health crisis has already impacted negatively on agricultural production in most places, disrupted food systems, food supply chains and thus, global agricultural productivity and food security is reported to be trending downward. Consequently, around the world, many countries are already taking extraordinary measures to not only tackle the COVID-19 pandemic but also ensuring their food security and nutrition sovereignty. As such, countries are already implementing policies that monitor food exports, to ensure they meet local food demand. Therefore, strengthening and integrating Regional and National Food Systems is critical in eradicating food insecurity and malnutrition in the African continent. Furthermore, achieving these objectives will go through the implementation of appropriate tools and policy instruments to address the variety of risks related to agriculture, food and nutrition insecurity.

To date, the impact of COVID-19 on the nutrition status in the member



states is not yet well known or documented. It is expected that reduced income loss and increased job instability will negatively affect the food accessibility, resulting in poorer nutrition intake. The proven track records and experiences from major disease outbreak such as; HIV/AIDS, Ebola, SARS, MERS has impacted negative on food security, particularly, in the affected countries or regions of Africa; especially where malnutrition rates are already high rendering the populations weak with compromised immune systems.

The present COVID-19 pandemic is beyond just a global health crisis, and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), guided by its mandate, is playing a role in assessing the COVID-19 pandemic and responding to its impending impacts on African economies, livelihoods, food and nutrition security and associated productivity at the continental, regional, national and sub-national levels. In the COVID-19 Strategy, account should also be taken of recurring challenges in Africa, such as prolonged droughts, the fall army worm (FAW) across the continent and threats posed by the locust invasion currently dominant in East Africa. Furthermore, these crises are adding further strain to already strained economies and food systems, across Africa.

AUDA-NEPAD Responding to Covid19 in the emergency phase and preparing for the post-crisis period is informing its multisectoral approach integrating strategies and involving stakeholders in order not to repeat food crises mistakes of 2007/8. Dealing with this crisis, therefore offers an opportunity to reorient and rebalance policies and support local actions which can bring together key sectors, promote sustainable food production, ensure social justice, reduce prevalence of undernourishment, sustain school feeding programs, and overall accelerate the transition to more resilient and sustainable food system of the continent.

Strengthening and integrating National and Regional Food Systems is critical in eradicating food insecurity and malnutrition in the African continent. Achieving these objectives will go through the implementation

of appropriate tools and policy instruments to address the variety of risks related to agriculture and food insecurity, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic which under additional pressure and stress the African Countries' agriculture, food production thus their food security and nutrition efforts.

While mitigating against the present global health crisis and the associated socio-economic impacts in Africa, the AUDA-NEPAD is re-programming and refocusing on practical interventions to support the AU Member States in strengthening and sustaining their agriculture, nutrition and food systems. Delivering jointly with the partners, AUDA-NEPAD aim to strengthen the AU Member States ongoing programmes of social protection including safety nets, food supply chains and support smallholder farmers' ability to increase food production and productivity. To diminish the looming disruptions of COVID-19 threats to both regional and national food supply chains, AUDA-NEPAD is working with the AU Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to sustain cross border trade movement of food and agricultural commodities while ensuring compliance with existing food control systems in place and food safety standards. In addition, AUDA-NEPAD is mobilizing all its key strategic partners including the African Union Member States, RECs, Academia, Civil societies, Communities and development partners.



The immediate intervention will be concentrated in the following deliverables:

**1** Develop and/or strengthen the data/information and knowledge systems on food and nutrition security status to allow for evidence-based planning, programming and tracking of actions and results



**2** Accelerate deployment of social protection food safety nets such as food aid / food vouchers for improved nutrition and food security



**3** Deployment of solar PV power systems to light up vulnerable health care facilities and communities to ensure continuity of health services and build productive and resilient capacity



**4** Support the provision of sufficient potable water supplies and sanitation facilities in all societies



**5** Provide vulnerability analysis for food and nutrition security in the face of the COVID-19 threats to monitor vulnerability hotspots to anticipate crises and effectively coordinate responsive mechanism. Support of provision of food parcels/basket to the most vulnerable including school going children who rely on daily school meals



**6** Strengthen nutrition education and knowledge, as well as capacity building for service providers across multiple sectors



**7** Coordinate with the private sector food industries to guide them to produce and supply healthy diversified nutritious food commodities to the consumers



**8** Coordinate and enhance regional food storage capabilities in the face of COVID-19 threats. This work will be delivered with regional economic communities to optimize the availability of food and elimination of measures that would restrict trade and mobility of commodities; while reducing food waste and losses; improve logistics - transport of food between countries and apply AfCFTA



**9** Deployment of innovative food and feed production technologies, to increase food and feed production in the vulnerable communities. Key technologies are hydroponic and aquaponics for food and feed production



**10** Provide information regular updates/outlooks on food and nutrition security for the regions/RECs





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