



Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery Safeguard vulnerable pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households in East and West Africa and the Sahel

©FAO

The issue

In Africa, about two-thirds of the entire continent comprises arid or semi-arid areas land. Livestock keepers, who are pastoralists or agro-pastoralist, inhabit the majority of rural African drylands. Pastoralism appears as one of the most sustainable food systems on the planet. Pastoralists safeguard natural capital in more than a quarter of the world's land area. Pastoralism is a livestock management system and a way of life that provides globally important ecosystem services, which are enjoyed far beyond the boundaries of the rangelands. Herd mobility is central to sustainable pastoralism and can be practiced at different scales depending on local conditions: from short-term localized movements to long-range seasonal migrations, as witnessed in Africa. Pastoral livestock production is crucial to the livelihoods and the economy of Africa's drylands.

East Africa has a population of about 300 million people of which 10 percent are pastoralist and agro-pastoralists occupying nearly 60–70 percent of the land, which are semi-arid and arid lands. COVID-19 is hitting the sub-region hard; given it is already struggling with climate shocks (drought and floods), the worst desert locust invasion in 25 years, conflict instability and macroeconomic difficulties.

East Africa is predominantly comprised of low-income countries¹, with the majority of the poor in rural areas or informal settlements, and many people highly reliant on agriculture and casual daily wages for their survival. A third of East Africa's population lives below the poverty line (AfDB 2019) and most of the countries rank low on Human Development Indices (OPHI & UNDP 2019). Nearly 35 percent of the children under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, while acute malnutrition rates exceed 5 percent (UNICEF, WHO, WB 2020). Conflict and climate induced displacements are high, with 4.6 million refugees and 8.1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (UNHCR. 1 July 2020). This displacement situation is putting a heavy strain on governments and humanitarian agencies alike.

Several countries in the East Africa, particularly South Sudan and Ethiopia, have struggled with ongoing macroeconomic challenges that have driven high inflation rates and declining foreign exchange rates, which have made imports of food and agricultural inputs more expensive and have led to an increase in food prices (FAO, 2020).

The adverse effects of COVID-19 is taking its toll on agriculture and food systems. Investments in agriculture, labour markets, processing, trade (including cross border and informal), markets, and humanitarian assistance are suffering as a

Budget

USD 180 million

Time frame

2021–2025

SDGs



Related FAO Policy Briefs

▶ [Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands](#)

¹ Djibouti and Kenya are exceptions in the region



result. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)² estimates that Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) growth could contract by as much as 2.6 percent due to the crisis, severely impacting agriculture and the whole food value chain.

The livestock sector is the backbone of many East African countries' economies and people's livelihoods, and it is critically taking a hit in Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Ethiopia. East Africa's livestock sector is composed of almost half of the livestock population in sub-Saharan Africa, supporting over 30 million people, the majority of which are being pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities.

According to the 2020 Global Report on Food Crises, 22 million people faced crises (integrated *phase* classification – IPC Phase 3 or above) in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. During 2019 year, these countries held 16 percent of the world's food insecure. An additional 23.4 million people faced food stress (IPC Phase 2) in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan. Between 19 and 20 million, people forecast to be in crisis (IPC Phase 3 or worse) in 2020 year (GNAFC & FSIN 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating this situation and recent projections suggest that actual peak figures for 2020 will likely be significantly higher than previously forecasted.

In West Africa and the Sahel, the pastoral populations are estimated at 20 million individuals in 2013 (World Bank, 2013). The sub-region is faced with a number of crises and structural vulnerabilities resulting in a debilitating effect on pastoral and agro-pastoral populations' livelihoods and food security. Increasingly volatile seasons due to climate change and the proliferation of armed groups, the resurgence of community clashes and the rise of violent extremism have left communities in parts of the Sahel perilously vulnerable. Furthermore, low pasture and fodder availability in pastoral areas – in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal – is currently affecting transhumance and pastoral livelihoods. Moreover, due to several barriers, those populations have generally a limited access to social services, including social protection.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation, given that governments have adopted strong measures to contain the spread of the disease. These measures include lockdowns, physical distancing, closure of schools, primary markets, borders and travel restrictions, which are placing a large strain on economic activities and local agri-food systems.

Even though control measures have been relaxed and softened more recently, the disease is still spreading across the sub-region. All countries are experiencing community transmission, as well as cases arriving from elsewhere.

² ECA, Economic Effects of the COVID-19 on Africa, Presentation, 19 March 2020.

In the short, medium and long-term, impacts on the Sahel's economy, agriculture sector, food security and nutrition are predicted to worsen. According to the World Bank, countries in the region will experience a dramatic economic contraction in 2020, such as Chad (-0.2 percent), Liberia (-2.6 percent) and Sierra Leone (-2.3 percent).

All these factors have severe consequences on agriculture, food security, diets and nutrition in the region. Before the pandemic, over 19 million people in the region faced acute food insecurity (crisis or worse phases of the Cadre Harmonisé) The COVID-19 is set to worsen the situation, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria where the increasing food insecurity has recently led to the displacement of 4.2 million people.

The action

This programme will focus on enhancing the resilience of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist livelihoods in East and West Africa and the Sahel. It aims to prevent the health crisis from magnifying the already existing food crisis. The proposed actions aim at improving agricultural production and strengthening food value chains. This will be done through improving and strengthening the capacity of community institutions, access to formal social protection systems (associated to early warning early action systems when feasible), access to market and finance, value additions, land tenure, access to healthy diets, access and management of natural resources with local conflict management measures. The programme will also foster employment opportunities for pastoralist youth and women in post COVID-19 times, as well as enhance preparedness and response to address desert locust invasion. The main components of the programme are as follows:

1 Safeguard vulnerable pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households in rural and peri urban areas

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will support access to social protection (associated to early warning early action systems, whenever feasible) and will provide cash-plus and cash for work interventions for improving the resilience and the economic inclusion of affected households and communities. FAO will contribute to expanding the access to formal social protection of pastoralist communities, by improving coherence between social protection and pastoralist policies and programmes and providing technical assistance to governments (studies, trainings and establishment of institutional mechanisms), in parallel to current similar projects in Kenya, Mauritania and Ethiopia, whenever feasible. Aligned to national social protection systems, the cash-plus interventions combined with social cash transfer and agricultural interventions will improve productive capacity and food security and nutrition status of the poorest and most vulnerable households. Cash for



work interventions aligned with national social protection systems, will focus on maintaining and rehabilitating water points and rangelands and constructing disease control infrastructures. In addition, FAO will provide animal feeds, water tanks, trucking, borehole rehabilitations, desilting of dams and other livestock inputs to vulnerable pastoralist smallholder households to safeguard and boost livestock survival, health and production. It will provide support to facilitate access to insurance, micro-finance and credit scheme expansions of the livestock and crop index-based insurance schemes in Kenya and Ethiopia to other countries. FAO will prioritise holistic resilience approaches such as agro-pastoral field schools and Caisses de résilience, combining technical, social and financial asset creation, as well as community managed disaster risk reduction. FAO will support commercial or strategic destocking based on early warning information systems. FAO will foster dialogue between communities, governments and other stakeholders for safe access to grazing areas amidst COVID19 movement restrictions.

2 Transformative economic recovery

FAO will support livestock value-chain studies to understand the status and interrelationship between different values chain actors; it will support transformative market orientated pastoral livestock production and build entrepreneurship capacity of livestock value-chain actors to produce for the market and enhance marketable supply of pastoralist livestock and products. FAO will support the establishment of pastoralist cooperatives and unions to access financial services and influence marketing of pastoralist livestock and products. Enhance value addition especially of pastoralist milk, meat, hides and skin, support development of alternatives livelihoods, and will strengthen the capacities of export abattoirs and producers on pastoralist food loss and waste and increased compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) certifications including food safety and disease control. It will further assist countries to develop a regional zoo-sanitary regulation including implementation of harmonized regional standard methods and procedures (SMPs) and standard operation procedures (SOPs) for quarantines, to facilitate trade within Africa. Expansion of information technology (ICT) tools, especially mobile phone-based systems for information flow; capacity building and monitoring of actions on the ground will be supported. FAO will support member states to develop and validate livestock and livestock products' export strategies and facilitate knowledge and information sharing between countries in East and West Africa. FAO will support nature-based solutions to conservation and sustainable management of agro-sylvo-pastoral and natural ecosystems and resources; and will support the uptake of livestock identification and traceability systems (LITS) for management of migration, trade and conflict. Under the economic advisory support, an initiative led by the nationally determined contributions (NDCs)

partnership, FAO will provide countries with virtual technical support to ensure climate mitigation; adaptation and resilience building focused on the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sectors are incorporated in the countries' COVID-19 economic recovery and response plans and it is aligned to NDCs.

As of August 2020 Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria requested to receive this support, and the modalities of implementation are under development by the NDC in partnership with FAO.

3 Building Capacities and Institutions for Resilience

FAO will focus on strengthening the institutional capacities of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). FAO will prioritize actions related to strengthening the resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities and support member states on creating an enabling environment for the management of systemic multiple hazards and risks to inform early warning systems. It will also provide support pastoralist food security and nutrition monitoring and early warning systems and coordination mechanisms with a focus on COVID-19 and desert locust risks communication, zoonotic diseases outbreaks, exacerbation of existing or potential new conflicts, climate change and variability and climate related disasters. FAO will support roll out of animal feed balance sheets, predictive livestock early warning system (PLEWS) and pictorial evaluation tools (PET) as innovation and digital services to inform social protection and economic recovery along the pastoral value chain. The early warning information generated by the tools will support emergency preparedness and anticipatory actions, including preparing ahead for critical seasonal support and putting early warnings systems into action. FAO will also strengthen investment in institutions managing cross border mobility and enhance the implementation of the cross-border memorandum of understanding and agreements on natural resources sharing, trade and animal health coordination with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to ensure peaceful and equitable access to and governance of natural resources.

FAO will provide support to veterinary services for monitoring and early detection to reduce risk and control transboundary animal and zoonotic diseases including COVID-19 and other potential pathogens. FAO will support veterinary laboratories used for the diagnosis of COVID-19 and other potential pathogens to boost future testing in pastoralist areas. It will strengthen national capacity for the surveillance and control of zoonotic diseases including COVID-19 with improved public, private and community-based animal health services. The One Health approach will be central, bridging issues and actions across human health, ecosystem health, plant health and animal health. Support to the development and use of programmatic tools and data that support



consumption of animal products for healthy diets will be provided, such as through the promotion of household milk preservation and the inclusion of dietary aspects in relevant information systems.

Expected results

- 1 Protected livelihoods of vulnerable pastoralist populations in East and West Africa and the Sahel from the disruption effect of COVID-19 and built resilience to future crisis and the impacts of multiple hazards.
- 2 Enhanced the resilience of pastoralist livelihoods, by improving natural resources management, access to market and trade, increased household income, consumption of healthy diets, and better food security and nutrition are improved.
- 3 Improved institutional capacity of RECs and countries on pastoral early warning monitoring and analysis for informed decision-making and social protection systems.

Partnerships

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), *Economic Community of West African States* Commission; G5 Sahel, national disaster management agencies; national meteorology departments; environment and agriculture or livestock Ministries; World Health Organisation (WHO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE); World Food Programme (WFP); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); nationally determined contribution partnership including the Thematic Working Group on Agriculture, Food Security and Land use development partners, pastoralists' organizations, civil society and the private sector in the sub-region.

Programme links

FAO's resilience programme and the Regional Initiative on Building Resilience in Africa's Drylands, as well as the resilience team for Eastern Africa and West Africa resilience strategies and specific FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) that address national priorities, plans and investments. This programme is in line with the FAO's Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme.

Country focus

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroun, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo and Uganda

Contacts

Abebe Haile-Gabriel,
Assistant Director-General/ Regional Representative
for Africa,
FAO Regional office for Africa
RAF-ADG@fao.org

Jean Senahoun,
Senior Economist,
FAO Regional office for Africa
fao-ro-africa@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Accra, Ghana

