

A woman in traditional African attire, including a colorful headwrap and a yellow tank top, is walking through a field. She is carrying a wooden staff with a hoe head over her shoulder. The background is a lush green field with trees in the distance.

# COVID19 Additional threat to Food Security in Afrika

**A Rapid Response Public Policy proposal**

## COVID-19- Additional threat to Food Security in Afrika

Afrikans are starving during lockdowns

### A Rapid Response Public Policy proposal

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The opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors.

This publication is the first out of three series, exploring potential solutions to eight key challenges facing food security in Afrika.

**Part 1**, focuses on COVID19, agriculture and water, because these three are interlinked. COVID19 cannot be tamed without access to water and practicing effective washing of the hands with soap and water. COVID19 has a catastrophic impact at global scale, on food security, lively hoods and supply chains, that are threatening our lives;

**Part 2**, Climate change; and

**Part 3**, Armed Conflicts/Health/Population growth including Urbanization.

#### Note to the readers:

Throughout the article it was decided to use the original name of the continent, 'Afrika'. In respect to the Afrikan people and as a sign of support to end her past and present colonisation.



#### Afrika for Afrikans Initiative\*

\* First and foremost, the original way to spell the Black and beautifully endowed continent is "Afrika" with a "K". However, following the invasion of the continent and enslavement of the people several years ago by imperial colonial thieves from the western world, a new name was given to the Black continent and that name is known today as "Africa" with a "C".

The Kemetic or Alkebulan history of Afrika suggests that the ancient name of the continent was Alkebulan. The word Alkebu-Ian is the oldest and the only word of indigenous origin. Alkebulan meaning the garden of Eden or the mother of mankind.

<http://www.informafrika.com/information/why-do-some-people-spell-africa-with-a-k-afrika-vs-africa/>  
<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/original-name-of-africa-and-the-history-of-its-name/ar-BB165Q52>

## “Afrikans have a lot to teach others, worldwide. Wealth doesn’t only come from financial gains.”

COVID19 has shown us how vulnerable countries and the whole world is, when facing a pandemic like COVID19. With the Globalization the virus was easily able to infect the whole world within a couple of months. Afrika, who has long relied on developed world aid, saw how these countries’ well built systems collapsed. Unlike Afrikans they had no previous experience on how to handle a pandemic at this scale.

In Afrika, people are not only threatened by the virus, but during the lockdowns, they are also threatened by hunger. Foreign aid, masks, food, money has arrived to the countries but it has not reached the citizens. Example in Congo<sup>1</sup>, who received over 300, 000,000 USD million loan from IMF, not a single Government Initiative to tackle COVID19, has been launched to this date in Congo.

Afrikan citizens have an advantage compared to the rest of the world. They don’t wait to be taken care of by the Governments. They are taking action at the community level. By youth groups, volunteers and community members, who are rapidly building up co-operatives and other channels to secure the food distribution system for those in need in the times of crisis.

It is clear that the foreign monoculture farming<sup>2</sup> companies are playing an important part in increasing food insecurity in Afrika during Pandemics like COVID19<sup>3</sup>. Not only are they unable to get organized, to ensure the safety<sup>4</sup> of their workers to harvest, the other evidence of the unsustainability of this type of farming is that most of the crops are exported outside the continent.

The lands used for Monoculture<sup>5</sup> are often taken from the local communities, leaving the people already in vulnerable positions. They have no more land left to grow food. We might reconsider the presence of these farms in the future. To become well prepared for future pandemics, these lands should be returned to the communities. Empower and facilitate Smallholder farming, family farming and build local co-operative systems in place. Becoming more resilient when facing future pandemics and preventing famine in the future. It is important to note that one lesson learned from COVID19 is that Localization is essential to prevent future food insecurities. Produced locally, sold locally by several small farmers and through cooperatives. Securing first the needs inside Afrika Continent, before exporting it outside.

### Monoculture farming Pros and Cons\*

Pros	Cons
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specialized production</li> <li>2. Technological advances</li> <li>3. High efficiency</li> <li>4. Greater yields of some produce</li> <li>5. Simpler to manage</li> <li>6. Higher earnings</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pest problems</li> <li>2. Pesticide resistance</li> <li>3. Soil degradation</li> <li>4. High use of fertilizers</li> <li>5. Environmental pollution and climate change</li> <li>6. Water demanding</li> <li>7. Overproduction of commodity crops</li> <li>8. Declining biodiversity</li> <li>9. Dangerous for bees</li> <li>10. High risk of harvest loss</li> <li>11. Fossil fuel dependent</li> <li>12. Not climate smart</li> <li><b>13. Difficult to Harvest during Viral Pandemics while respecting social distancing and hygiene**</b></li> </ol>

\* Source: <https://greentumble.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-monoculture-farming/>

\*\* Authors addition to Cons.



# Food Insecurity

It is no longer a secret that Afrika is well endowed with Natural Green Land, lowlands (Water Land) and great forest that is suitable to sustainable agriculture that will yield scalable food production. However, despite this huge potential, Afrika poses to be the most undernourished and hungriest place in the world.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, 239 million people in the region were undernourished in 2018. Since long before the COVID-19 pandemic, these chronic food crises have been driven by a variety of factors, including economic shocks, climate change, plant pests and diseases and conflicts. Indeed, areas that are severely affected by climate change—particularly the East region, the Horn of Afrika, and southern Afrika—have many food insecure people and communities. In East Afrika, inter communal violence and armed conflicts are perpetuating instability and tensions, particularly in South Sudan, and are the driver of large refugee populations in neighboring countries, such as Uganda. In Nigeria, the region's most populous country, the number of undernourished people was estimated at more than 25 million in 2018—up by 180 percent over the past decade despite huge natural and economic resources.

Food insecurity poses a global threat before COVID-19, before entering 2020; the number of hungry and malnourished people around the world was already on the rise due to an increase in conflicts and climate change impacts. Today, over 800 million people face chronic undernourishment and over 100 million people are in need of lifesaving food assistance according to FAO.

The COVID-19 has worsened the situation, due to the cascading chain of disruption in almost all sectors. The Coronavirus, COVID-19, risks even undermining the efforts of humanitarian and food security-related organizations seeking to reverse these trends. As former International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Director General Shenggen Fen writes,

## **“COVID-19 is a health crisis. But it could also lead to a food security crisis if proper measures are not taken.”<sup>7</sup>**

Even though Afrika is the last Continent to experience the outbreak of COVID-19, it has realized a major direct impact on the supply and prices of staple foods that cause breaks in food supply chains leading to food shortages, and food price spikes especially in places affected by the virus. It has led to disruption of markets and prices due to fear of the virus and the containment policies set by the Government in affected countries.

For instance, during the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the pandemic led to a rapid increase in the prices of food in countries affected in West Afrika. Also in 2007/2008 during the financial recession, there were export restrictions, market speculations and the panic behavior of investors which led to a hike in prices of staple food.

A high proportion (90%) of Afrikan countries rely heavily on imported food for its population and Afrika is the fastest growing population in the world with an estimation growth rate of 0.8% to 1% every year.

The Corona virus has worsened the situation, due to so many COVID-19 restriction policies across borders which face disproportionate risk from supply chain failures.

Furthermore the impact of farmers leaving their farms to follow due to the disruption of supply chains like fertilizer and other inputs will delay planting and harvesting that may ultimately impact developing country economies.<sup>8</sup>

Although it is too early to ascertain the overall effect of COVID-19 in Afrika, reports gathered so far have shown that COVID-19 has impacted the global economy, especially the Afrikan Economy.

The economic shocks, such as disruption of trade, restrictions of movement, and investors' speculations have reduced food production and availability.

The time for action is now; Afrika leaders should call on partners to step up support for their food security agendas to avoid a potential food shortage and higher prices which may impede access to food. It is time to take an immediate and long-term action to strengthen the food system in Afrika by supporting safety nets and productive programs that will yield high food production later on.

Countries like Chad, Zambia, and Nigeria have started taking steps in responding to food emergencies and restoring life. In Chad, a government project with support from development partners is providing food kits, distributing seeds for future harvests to help households that may go hungry due to COVID-19. Interventions like these will help address not only the immediate need for food, but also preserve the productive capacity of smallholder farmers who might start eating their seeds to stave off hunger than double the annual average of the last several years—so that it has a reliable supply in the event of a food emergency.



# A Call for Action!

For this reason, food security in Afrika demands a robust and collaborative approach driven by the local realities of smallholders and rural food systems, agricultural agencies, development partners and community stakeholders.

Food security is possible to achieve when the right action and collaborative efforts are taken. Just as Olivier de Schutter, special rapporteur of the United Nations on the right to food, stated: "If most poor countries are still very vulnerable, it is because their food security depends too much on food imports whose prices are increasingly high and volatile". Since the 2008 food crisis, it is indeed true that volatility of food prices has become an important feature of the global food system.

Hence, here are compiled five (5) recommended policies and action plans to follow in order to have food self- sufficiency in Afrika.

## **a) Establish links between large-scale agriculture and small-scale farmers.**

According to Food and Agriculture Organization ( FAO) findings, there are over 300,000 industrial mega farms and over 1 billion family farms. The 4 billion human beings who make up the rural societies can alter through their migrations the demographic balance. The necessary increase in agricultural production must not ignore the implications for rural societies. A massive exodus from the countryside to the cities will cause enormous problems since cities, industries, and services cannot accommodate rural people properly.

Hence converting large-scale to small-scale farmers is of key importance.

Returning large monoculture lands to the local communities, would help to address the food security problem promptly. It will make Afrika Continent more resilient and equal to the citizens, facing COVID19 Pandemic. Small holder farmers/Family farms can work efficiently as co-operatives and arrange food distribution with the local youth and volunteers. It would also relieve the stress of the Urban communities, where social distancing in Slums is impossible.

**b) Development partners and the Government should invest in rural agricultural programs.**

Investing on the rural sector can help rural people become more self-reliant, help cushion the effect of COVID-19 in the indigenous communities mitigate the impact of severe food shortage, increase rural prosperity, ensure more sustainable food systems and food security.

**c) Support Agricultural organizations, trade associations and marketing boards.**

The Agricultural sector is complex and interconnected, supporting one area and leaving another area unattended will still be counterproductive due to the fact that the value chain process should not be neglected. This has to do with input supply, production, processing, storage and marketing/distribution. Supporting these functions with sound policies will increase food production that will lead to food security in Afrika.

**d) Review import duties on food ingredients and trade policies.**

Afrikan countries should review Import duties and some trade policies which need to be adjusted as international commodity prices rise and fall to enable the national population to access competitively priced foods in the local market. These will also encourage investors to import more food in Afrika which will stabilize the price of food commodities.

**e) Implement loans Schemes and prioritize land rights for smallholders.**

Greater percentage of Smallholders farmers in Afrika don't have access to finance to support and strengthen their farms which is one of the greatest challenges faced by smallholders.

Development partners and policymakers need to take the lead in encouraging lending by banks to help farmers get finance for their crops before the season starts. Loans or capital to enable farmers to become self-sufficient. Also the rights to own a land in Afrika have been a daunting obstacle over the years. If Afrika should be things of food security and poverty reduction.<sup>9, 10</sup>



# How To Harvest Food And Not The Virus

## **Rapid Response Public Policy proposal**

African Continent is already suffering from several challenges that are contributing to growing food insecurity in the continent. Challenges are in eight key areas: COVID19 pandemic; Climate Change; Locust; Large Industrial Agriculture; Political corruption and instability; Armed conflicts and war; HIV/AIDS; and High population growth. Many of them are interlinked. What is the one common element, is that they can be addressed by prevention rather than simply finding cures and facilitating “business as usual”. We need rapid measures to put in place to initiate long lasting solutions, which don't make one of the other challenges worse.

### **COVID19 pandemic — cultivation and harvest of the crops**

Working in large industrial farm settings has proven to be dangerous during the COVID19 pandemic<sup>11</sup>. Workers are often transported to onsite, in tightly packed trucks with less than a few centimetres space between two persons.

Evidence shows from Germany how coronavirus was able to infect tens of people in a couple of days after the meat processing facility was opened. What can Afrika do to facilitate cultivation and harvesting of the crops in safe settings? Large agriculture facilities are by far more dangerous than family run small farms. Small family run farmers have the ability to provide food, inside their community, with the aid of youth groups and community run co-operatives.

In the future it is recommended to return lands to the local communities, in order to support Smallholder farming, which can prevent future food security crisis, when faced with current COVID19 pandemic and possible new ones still to come.

## Possible solutions

Facilitated by Empowering two industries suffering from COVID19 pandemic. Safari tourism<sup>12</sup> meets food security. As many governments are working on economical solutions to aid for different sectors, suffering from loss of income, our solution is based on a solution, which is bringing two industries together. (The safety using these tents in the future for tourism is not a concern<sup>13</sup>) Companies in the agricultural sector and governments can join forces and lease tents that are used by Safari tours to accommodate tourists and use these tents for workers who are temporarily located on the premises of the plantation. This solution brings economical benefits both to agriculture and tourism. Replacing aid to subsidies and paying for equipment need it to assure comfortable and less risky premises for the workers.

Self isolating workers for 14 days and arranging fully equipped accommodation during the harvest period.

When a group of workers are self-isolated all simultaneously during 14 days and none of them has become ill during this period of time, it is safe to assume that none of them are carriers of the virus.

With the help of WHO AFRO and Governments working together:

- Testing for COVID19
- Fully paid self-isolation for 14 days prior to the start of the activities. Including coverage of living expenses, food, drinks, medical care, which are paid by the employer ( possibly with government subsidies).
- Fully paid on site accommodations including food, drinks and medicines during the farm work. It is recommended that the period each person is working is 14 days, broken to 5 days work – two days free rhythm.
- New masks and disposable clothes are provided each day.
- Practicing social distancing with other people possibly coming in contact with materials to be shared with the workers. Disinfecting equipment at the end of each day.
- In case of outbreak, preinstalled medical facilities should be available within reasonable radius.

On-site accommodation should be in Safari tents and not in deplorable and undignified conditions. This would help and empower Safari Industries as their tents could be used and Governments and Corporations and pay for the use of them. It is imperative to take into account workers' physical and mental wellbeing, working while separated from the loved ones, should be made as comfortable as possible.

## Rotation recommendations

Each cycle is starting from testing. 2 weeks self-isolation (among family/fellow worker(s) maximum 4 persons together). Working phase 2 weeks. 2 weeks holiday. COVID19 test, isolation, working. People enrolling in a rotational working system are fully paid during all phases. Their family members staying behind during the Work phase should be looked and cared for. Including access to health care.



**“Wash hands –  
Stay Safe”**

## Water against the virus

### **COVID19 and necessity to access to water resources**

Plants and crops need water to grow, today people need water to stay safe. One of the key elements to prevent infection with COVID19 is effective hand hygiene. Afrika already has a problem with drought in many parts. How do we assure that while there is not enough clean water to drink and wash hands, that there is water to hose the plants and crops?

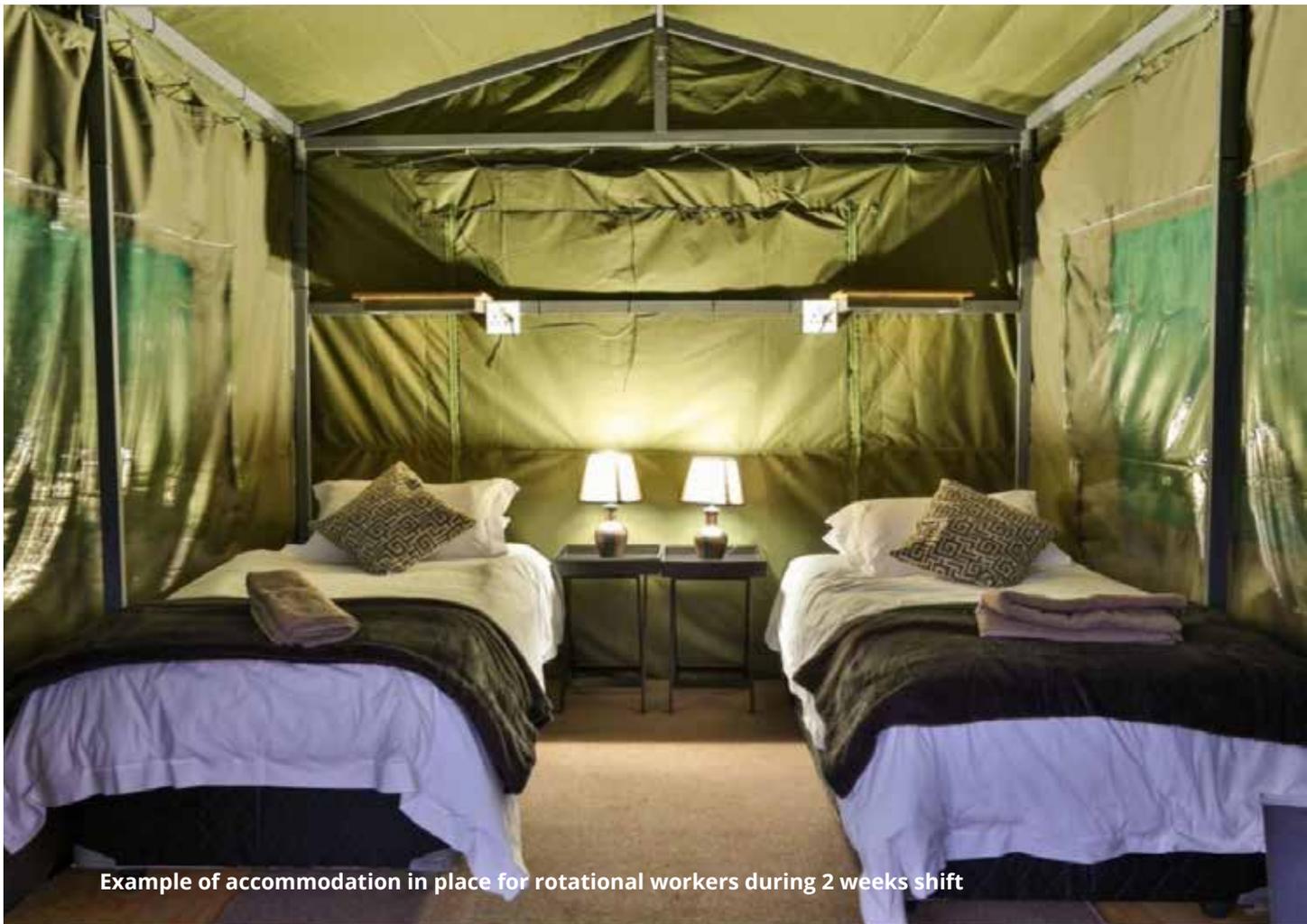
#### **Possible solutions**

Regardless of the current water crisis, large corporations are continuing extracting water from already drought hit countries.<sup>14, 15, 16</sup> Water is a basic human right and should be available for everyone, free of charge. Below are some easily adoptable steps that Governments can do to help:

- Water extraction in Afrikan continent should be prohibited for profit, to facilitate rapid, free distribution to people suffering from thirst and inability to wash their hands.
- Investing in Innovative solutions such as Harvesting of “Mist” technologies and others<sup>17, 18</sup> as an example are already existing. They are portable and easy to assemble everywhere or Warka Water tower invention can provide remote villages with upto 25 gallons of clean drinking water per day. Warka products are already in use, in Ethiopia, Cameroon and Togo.
- Investing in water distribution systems within the continent and exploring new environmentally friendly technologies that don't displace people or harm the wildlife.



Warka Water towers are designed to take advantage of condensation. (Architecture and Vision). <https://www.warkawater.org/>



Example of accommodation in place for rotational workers during 2 weeks shift

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**“It’s time to  
decolonize  
Afrika Continent  
and ensure  
foodsecurity of  
the citizens!”**

**We can’t eat Rubber!**