

Ethiopia: The impact of COVID-19 and food system responses



COVID-19 HUB COUNTRY NOTE | FEBRUARY 2022

The biggest challenge in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ethiopia is the 10-month-old war in Tigray. The focus of much governmental and public attention, the war and insecurity in other parts of the country have had dire consequences for the health system, and have made COVID-19 prevention and vaccination efforts impossible in many areas.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

[The COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant reduction in economic performance and exerted additional pressures on industrial production.](#)

Construction contributions to GDP growth in 2020 were reduced to 2.0 percent, down from 2.9 percent in 2019. Manufacturing has contributed 0.5 percent to GDP since 2018. The resumption of manufacturing and construction activities toward the end of the fiscal year, with businesses implementing hygiene and social distancing measures, might have contributed to limiting the impact of the pandemic on growth figures for FY2020.

CGIAR COVID-19 HUB RESEARCH RESPONSE AND ACTIVITIES

The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub team has worked with national partners in Ethiopia to identify ways to lessen the pandemic's impact and improve the future resilience of the food system. These efforts were organized under four workstreams (WSs): coordination; assessment and mapping seed supply; consumption, food safety, nutrition, and health messaging; and digitalization.

As part of the Ethiopia team's work, a final COVID-19 action plan for Ethiopia was presented to the Agricultural Research and Innovation Task Force of the Rural Economy Development and Food Security working group (a donor–government sector working group). Other key activities included a review of digital applications and dashboards customized to the Ethiopian context, and the development of two digital platforms:

1. The Ethio Seed Data Hub: This is a comprehensive digital seed system platform covering all aspects of seed production, processing, certification, and distribution. It also monitors seed demand from the district to regional government levels. The platform provides a comprehensive system for cereals, legumes, oilseeds, and vegetables. CGIAR engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote the Data Hub to support the attainment of

the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, Zero Hunger, and country goals related to agriculture.

2. The nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) messaging digital platform: This system is designed to communicate COVID-19, nutrition, and WASH-related messages and aims to tackle misinformation and create awareness. The plan was presented at a joint forum held by the CGIAR COVID-19 Hub, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), and the Ministry of Health. An agreement was reached to institutionalize the platform at EPHI, which will use it for messaging on current and future pandemics. In collaboration with EPHI, work has continued on institutionalizing and piloting the nutrition and WASH digital platform.

Other activities included reviews of a critical informant interview (KII) questionnaire and the results of a literature review and the KII, and a debriefing session. A review of a draft policy for the implementation of the Ethio Seed Data Hub was also undertaken, with working group members as part of the steering committee established by the State Minister to institutionalize the platform at the Ministry of Agriculture. Discussion forums were also held to institutionalize the Ethio Seed Data Hub and the nutrition and WASH messaging digital platform at EPHI.

USE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

WS1's collaboration work sought to better understand the government's priorities and match these with expertise from CGIAR and partners. Institutionalizing the digital platforms at the Ministry of Agriculture and EPHI will ensure sustained use at the national level and contributions to SDG2.

Outputs related to the assessment and mapping of seed supply (WS2) enable stakeholders to access evidence on the supply of seed in terms of who has produced what; the volume of seed in stock for each producer, processor, and distributor; the geographic location of available seeds by actors; and seed demand data by geographic location and actors. This information will help seed producers and suppliers improve their services. Research findings will contribute to the government's decision-making processes. The demand assessment component will help aggregate demand for different types of seed, which will be used for production decisions by seed producers and policy actions at the macro level.

As part of WS3, messages on consumption, food safety, and WASH will continue to be disseminated through different outlets to provide scientific evidence on these issues to the public.

Concerning digitalization (WS4), the platforms, apps, and linked outlets will be used as essential sources of information by various stakeholders, including actors along the seed value chain; various government departments in the Ministries of Agriculture and Health; development partners; research institutions, including universities; and the private sector. The tools are aligned with the country's "digital transformation agenda" and fit well with the current "digital and extension roadmap," which is under development.

CGIAR COVID-19-RELEVANT WORK IN ETHIOPIA

Impact of COVID-19 on dairy value chains

CGIAR scientists combined in-person survey data collected in February 2018 with phone survey data collected in June and September 2021 [to study how dairy value chains in Ethiopia have coped with the COVID-19 pandemic](#). There was little evidence to suggest that the pandemic harmed dairy value chain actors.

Impact of COVID-19 on vegetable value chains

Scientists combined survey data from February 2020 with data collected in March and August 2021 to study how [vegetable value chain actors in Ethiopia have coped with the pandemic](#). Results

reveal that urban retailers have been relatively more affected by the pandemic than farmers and wholesalers. In addition, price volatility was identified by many farmers, wholesalers, and retailers as the most pressing concern for their farming or trading activities.

NEXT STEPS

The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub aimed to tackle one of Ethiopia's most complex problems: seed systems. The following recommendations can support future agricultural transformation efforts in the country:

- Include other inputs such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, mechanization, and market information in the digital seed system.
- Expand the digital system to include livestock inputs such as feeds, day-old chicks, dairy, and small ruminant breeding stock supply systems.
- Link agro-advisory systems to provide advisory services (climate, fertilizer, seed, markets) for seed enterprises and smallholder farmers.
- Using the experiences above and CGIAR resources, work with the government to establish a system to support the development of digital solutions in various sectors.
- The digital platforms developed are not yet validated or piloted. To implement these, support is required to train actors at different levels; drive the system; and finalize implementation modalities, including policies. Capacity building is also necessary for the maintenance of these platforms.



The CGIAR COVID-19 Hub is led by the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health. To learn more, visit www.a4nh.cgiar.org/covidhub/

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