KENYA

KENAFF FARMERS' NEEDS BASED SUPPORT

Presenter

Kenya National Farmers' Federation - KENAFF

Description

The COVID-19 pandemic came at a time when Kenya as the rest of Africa is still grappling with serious pre-existing burdens of climate change and food insecurity. In Kenya, the pandemic coincided with the planting season. Many farmers planted crops in anticipation of rains, unfortunately, there were prolonged dry spells in localized parts of the country.
More recently (During the months between March-May 2020) heavy rains set in, causing floods and mudslides in some areas, pointing to possible poor harvests or even crop failure given Kenya's reliance on rain-fed agriculture and the dominance of smallholder farmers who produce 80% of the food consumed in the country as well as the African continent.

Relatedly, many countries in Eastern and Central Africa notably Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Tanzania Djibouti, Eritrea, Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are still struggling to manage desert locust invasions that could ravage vast acreages of crop fields. The situation has worsened as a result of disruptions in food supply systems and access to agricultural inputs and food caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fulfilling her mandate to represent, articulate, protect and promote the interests of farmers, owing to the emergency crisis brought by the triple effects of COVID-19, Climate Change and the locusts' invasion, the Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF) developed an emergency response plan to support farmers respond to COVID-19, Climate Change and desert locusts' invasion and, ultimately, adapt and build resilience. The implementation of this plan is ongoing and will be for the next 16 to 22 months. The emergency response plan had four components namely: Information dissemination and knowledge sharing, USSD, market facilitation, Model Kitchen Garden/ Farmer Field School (FFS) and need based support.

Adaptation and resilience under the emergency response mean farm families are food and nutrition secure; able to access and engage in reliable markets; prioritise the participation and well-being of women, youth and persons with disabilities and able to withstand internal and external shocks on their enterprises.

As part of its commitment to enhanced livelihoods, KENAFF is working with various partners to support farmers build resilience against COVID-19, climate change and market challenges. Some of the adaptation and resilience work KENAFF is doing with farmers includes the promotion of sustainable home gardens for enhanced household level food and nutrition security, provision of basic inputs and liquidity support for the establishment of apiculture projects, tree, fruit tree and vegetable nurseries, kitchen/home gardens, FFS, support to youth and women groups, support to VMGs, fodder plot establishments, intensive sharing of information and knowledge on COVID-19 mitigation, adaptation and resilience building across several farmer friendly media (local radio and TV) but also on social media (Twitter), USSD and the KENAFF Farmers' Voice newsletter (online) and website, training and supporting rural entrepreneurship; training on and promoting farm forestry; setting up a network of Farmer Field Schools and creating awareness and sensitising farmers on Vision 2030, the Big Four Agenda, ASTGS, the Warehouse Receipt System, Regreening Kenya Initiative and SDGs.

KENAFF also organises farmers into groups and associations and strengthens their organisations from the grassroots. Strong and well managed farmers' organisations have the capacity and resources to organise members for production as well as access to inputs and technical advisory services.

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Ultimately, such farmers are able to negotiate market dynamics from a stronger position; a win-win for all actors along the value chain and, indeed, for the country.

In the new reality of a global health pandemic, KENAFF turned to technology to support farmers and keep agriculture open for business. The explosive and rapid spread of mobile phones across Kenya offered an opportunity to enhance service delivery for our members and farmers amidst the pandemic. The specific objective was to establish and manage a national USSD code for communicating with farmers on a wide range of issues including containment and management of COVID-19, support services for farmers, seasonal weather forecast, technical advisory services and market intelligence and information. To this end, KENAFF set up and developed a farmer self-service (KENAFF Self-care USSD Code *501#).

The global pandemic has hit farmers with disruptions in health, food security, transport, finance and demand. Of immediate concern is the disruption to food systems and impact on food security. Farmers and households, that are already food insecure need a boost for resilience building. Labour has been suddenly restricted in many regions due to quarantine measures and loss of workforce from COVID-19, farm systems resilience, agriculture system connectivity have all been affected. There is a new competition for critical inputs, especially water, due to increasing emphasis on public health and sanitation systems; there are impacts of supply chain and processing disruptions on animal welfare. COVID-19 has further exposed existing economic inequality and relative resilience of agricultural systems, as well as other social network systems reliant on agricultural income generation and stability. From the insights collected in the emergency response plan by KENAFF, four broad strategies are the most effective to help farmers go beyond surviving this crisis and also thrive in the long term. These are: Establishing integrated, climate-smart production systems with food crops, cash crops and agroforestry; exploring new markets and value addition to generate better returns, more income streams and new commercial channels; expanding alliances for investment, innovation and equitable value distribution, enhanced food safety from farm to fork as well as engaging consumers and shift to digital tools and platforms. These insights are informing the development of a KENAFF response strategy through the COVID-19 Response, Adaptation and Resilience building (KENAFF CORAR) with 7 components through which the Federation shall raise funds to support smallholder farmers all over Kenya cope with the new normal imposed by the pandemic.

Results

The farm-system-for nutrition approach through the promotion of sustainable home gardens for enhanced household level of food and nutrition security has gone a long way to address the nutritional needs of small holder farm families in rural Kenya. Awareness of balanced diet, nutrient content in different foods and leveraging agriculture for nutrition has made it possible to boost immunity of farming families amidst the pandemic.

KENAFF lobbied for farmers, farm inputs and farm produce to be given the status of "essential services/essential service providers" during the COVID-19 shutdown, a recommendation that was granted by the government.

A USSD code environment targeted at farmers in Kenya was developed that provides easily accessible and farmer-focused information and knowledge on COVID-19 mitigation, adaptation and resilience building, weather data (better farming) and technical advisory services (better farming) reaching thousands of farmers in rural areas.

Through the market facilitation component, value chains alliances have emerged providing farmers with a steppingstone for future growth. Such include partnerships entered into between counties that have potatoes as a priority value chain and the National Potato Council of Kenya (NPCK) for market support services, MOU entered between counties with dairy as a priority value chain with the Kenya Livestock Breeders Association (KLBA) for quality assurance during dairy cow sales, framework partnerships on sweet potato vine trading and cassava cuttings established between counties.

Climate smartness

This project is focused on the use and empowerment of agro-climate information for decision-making processes, which is key for Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA). Starting from this knowledge, the prioritization and implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices has been developed, focusing on farmers' real needs, their advantages and disadvantages, as well as on their real climate threats.
In general terms, this project is very complete and we observe a great quantity of strategies aimed at the development of CSA, focusing on all the pillars (adaptation, mitigation, productivity and food security). Because of this, it is recommended to maintain their functioning and sustainability over the long term and, if possible, use their example in order to scale and address larger population.
Likewise, it is recommended to work on strategies for facilitating climate financing that would make it possible to accelerate the transformation of the production systems to be more resilient to the climate.