



Mozambique: How to ensure continuous food production during COVID-19?

COVID-19 has invaded the world and is wreaking havoc in every country. Without a doubt, the loss of human life is the hardest part and leaves many families with deep pain and anguish about the future. Vulnerable countries, such as Mozambique, are hit even harder. Mozambique, like other developing countries, is dependent on income from exports of raw materials (gas, ruby, etc.), tourism and remittances. Given the current situation, the Program Food Security through Climate Adaptation and Resilience in Mozambique (FAR) is facing multiple challenges.



Sunflower seeds

The programme FAR is financed by the Swedish Embassy and implemented by Swisscontact in collaboration with several implementing organizations (IO's). The team has outlined actions to take during and after the emergency, as well as in the reactivation phase (medium- and long-term vision).

It is important to highlight that programmes like FAR that deal with food security issues are highly relevant in such a period of crisis. Through the Implementing Organizations, which have a strong presence in the territory, the programme can react timely to mitigate the multiple effects on food production and adapt according to the needs that arise.

David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), has warned of the upcoming disastrous situation: "We are on the verge of a 'malnutrition pandemic'. The number of people suffering from severe hunger could double by the end of the year to over 250 million people...". No one knows who will take care of the field if crops will be lost and if food will be lacking. The priority objective of the FAR programme is to improve food security and resilience through climate adaptation and resilience in Mozambique. This objective is ever more valid in the face of this new reality.

Systemic approach – also in times of crisis

The FAR programme is convinced that a systemic approach to food security is relevant not only in "normal" times, but also and especially in times of crisis. It emphasizes the importance of taking market dynamics and trends into account when providing support to restore the livelihoods and businesses affected by the crisis. Swisscontact considers that it is important not to disrupt market incentives for producers and partners. They are essential for a timely post-crisis economic recovery.

The IO's are continuously revising and adapting their activity plans, resize training/capacity building events and other activities in which larger groups would participate. They have identified the activities that can still be carried out in the current situation as well as the activities that can only be carried out after the COVID-19 and set the priorities.



IO's field staff are still working in the field but limited to one-on-one meetings to monitor activities, for example, demonstration plots that require continuous follow-up. Furthermore, there are group meetings with small groups (a maximum of ten persons). In all these activities the prescribed measures, such as social distancing and handwashing, are followed. Planned field days, training and capacity building activities cannot take place. Although not all training activities have been cancelled, the groups were downsized to 10 participants. Therefore, more training events are needed to reach the same number of beneficiaries.

Implementing Organisations (IOs) of FAR Mozambique:

- Swisscontact (Lead)
- African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP)
- International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)
- Kwaedza
- United Purpose
- Access to food and climate resilience through market systems (AFOC-MSD)

Support farmers to continue production

The aim is that producers continue their activities, for example, in the case of growing vegetables. They are enabled to do so with direct as well as indirect support from the IO's via the lead farmers, local field facilitators and the Agrodealers. The work done with the agro-dealers during the first two years of the programme will enable the lead farmers to continue agricultural production by means of temporary guidance via WhatsApp, telephone, sending brochures and guides.

Educating farming communities in rural areas on COVID-19 measures is critical. The existing agriculture technology transfer initiatives can be easily used as a platform to promote such measures – i.e., combining health and agriculture messages effectively. This would further allow food-insecure countries such as Mozambique to continue “business as usual”, without interrupting their farming operations and comply with measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19 among their communities.

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