

Impact of COVID-19 on Food Systems and Rural Livelihoods in Kenya

COVID-19 Country Report 2 - December 2020

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Introduction

Since 12 March 2020, when Kenya reported the first COVID-19 cases, the Ministry of Health confirmed a total of 45,076 cases and 839 deaths, as of 19 October.¹ Despite the rising number of COVID-19 confirmed infections and deaths in Kenya during the third quarter (Q3) of 2020, the national and county governments relaxed some of the restrictions that had been in place during Q2 aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19. This assessment was aimed at understanding the effects of COVID-19 at household level and attendant policy responses during Q3 of 2020, to inform actions to assure protection of local food systems, rural livelihoods and the supply of adequate, affordable food of acceptable quality to the population.

Context

The assessment was conducted through a rural household survey of a stratified random sample of 96 smallholder agricultural households (34 female-; 66 male-headed) in Kiambu, Kilifi, Kwale, Muranga and Nakuru counties. The sample was obtained from the Tegemeo Agricultural Policy Research and Analysis household survey conducted in 2014, which had a sample size of 7,000 households in 38 counties. This survey was conducted between 5-14 October 2020 and is the second round (R2) of three surveys on the same sample of households to assess the effect of COVID-19 on food systems and rural livelihoods.

Health and disease

About 17% of respondents had heard about a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection in their village or sub-county, while one reported an incidence of infection in the household. These figures were much higher than reported during R1, which were 9% and 0%, respectively. Respondents also reported increased care for the sick and elderly (20%), children (52%) and other family members (26%), and an increase in the burden for household chores (50%). These proportions suggest the burden of COVID-19 is falling on women, as they are the ones that mostly perform the care responsibilities and household chores.

Farming, labour and marketing

Approximately 27% of respondents reported that they or their spouse had decreased participation in farming due to COVID-19, similar to findings during R1. About 46% were unable to hire labour for their farm and their business activities. Wage rate for seasonal work remained largely unaffected, while an increase in the daily wage rate for rural labour was reported by 46% of respondents. This is different from R1, when daily wage rate was reported to have largely remained unchanged. Over 43% of respondents reported a decrease in their ability to

Key findings

- Approximately 17% of respondents had heard about at least one confirmed case of COVID-19 in their village or sub-county, and one reported that a household member had been infected. These figures are higher than reported during Q2 in June.
- Similar to R1, approximately 27% of respondents reported that they or their spouse had scaled down participation in farming due to COVID-19.
- About 46% of respondents could not hire farm labour, while a similar percentage reported an increase in the daily wage rate, which was largely unchanged from Q2.
- Rural people have increased movement in and out of villages and interactions with people from outside following relaxation of policy restrictions in Q3.
- Normal agricultural trading in villages and local markets had not fully resumed.
- Availability of key agricultural inputs and production services improved during Q3 compared to Q2, but nearly half (48%) of respondents reported increased prices for these inputs.
- A substantial proportion of respondents reported reduced availability of fruits (55%), pulses, nuts, and seeds (54%), and white roots and tubers (48%) in local markets, while over 61% reported price increases for these foods; largely unchanged compared to R1.
- 77% of households did not have adequate food to meet family needs, down from 89% recorded during R1.

sell produce at the farm gate and in local markets, while 63% reported a decrease in the number of traders/brokers that came to their villages. This indicates that normal trading of agricultural produce in villages and local markets has not resumed, despite the government's relaxation of some of the restrictive policy measures aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19.

"Since several restrictions due to COVID-19 were relaxed, people have generally become less cautious and employment of labour on farms is picking up. The only challenge is that farmers do not have money to employ much labour because the general economic situation has not stabilised" - Agricultural officer, Nakuru County

Availability of services for food production

Just over 27% of respondents reported a decrease in the availability of key agricultural inputs, while 54% reported no change. Increase in input prices was reported by 48% of respondents. A substantially high number of respondents also reported a decrease in availability of agricultural extension services (55%), credit (56%) and concessionary loans/loan 'holidays' (32%). Except for credit, these proportions suggest improvement compared to R1.

Food and nutrition security

A substantial proportion of respondents reported reduced availability of fruits (55%), pulses, nuts, and seeds (54%), and white roots and tubers (48%) in local markets (Fig 1). Respondents also reported reduction in availability of other foods products – grains, eggs, vegetables, milk, fish, meats and processed foods; 61% reported price increases for fruits, pulses, nuts, seeds, and white roots and tubers, while 30-49% reported price increases for other foods, except processed food for which only 23% of respondents reported an increase in prices. About 77% of households, up from 89% in R1, did not have adequate food to meet family needs (Table 1).

Figure 1: Changes in availability of foods in local markets

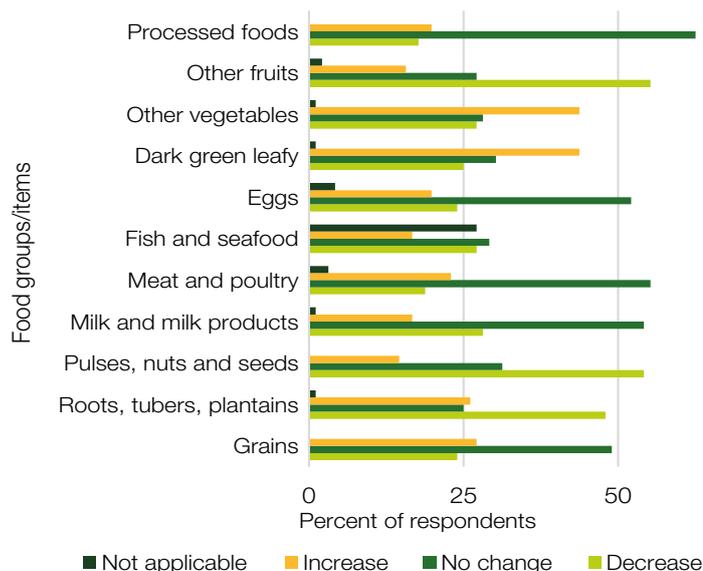


Table 1: Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

Experience	Respondents
Worried about inadequate food	83%
Unable to eat healthy foods	80%
Ate only a few food types	83%
Skipped meals	70%
Ate less	78%
Ran out of food	56%
Hungry but no food to eat	55%
No eating for the whole day	40%
Food not adequate for family	77%

Responses to the threat of COVID-19

Kenya established a broad range of measures and guidelines to control the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the potential effects of both the pandemic and the measures. About 97% of respondents stated that they were observing the guidelines to control the spread of COVID-19. Respondents also reported reduced movement within the village (76%), reduced movement

outside the village (75%) and limited visits by/to relatives (28%). Nearly 67% observed a decrease in the number of traders/brokers coming to their villages. These proportions are much lower compared to those in R1, indicating that the government's reduction of restrictions in movement and gatherings is already altering the behaviour of people regarding their mobility and physical interactions.

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