

Timeline

June 2020- June 2021

Study Type

Descriptive / Surveillance

Article Link

<https://app.60decibels.com/covid-19/agriculture>

Research Implemented by IPA

No

How Are Kenyan Farmers Faring in the Face of COVID-19?

Researchers

[Venu Aggarwal](#), [Katie Reberg](#)

Abstract

While only time can tell what the long-term effects of COVID-19 will be on agricultural supply chains and global food systems, the moment to shape our response is now. Through a project that has been generously funded by FCDO's Research and Evidence Division and MercyCorps AgriFin Accelerator, 60 Decibels will survey 500 Kenyan farmers every month between June 2020 and June 2021 to understand their experiencing of living through the pandemic and the support they will find useful. The dashboard will be updated with new data and insights every month.

Partners

[60 Decibels](#), [UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(FCDO\)](#), [MercyCorps AgriFin Accelerator](#)

Key Findings

April 2021 update:

- Nine in ten farming households report being worse off due to the pandemic. 26% of farmers have lost at least one source of income compared to the same time last year. While financial stress has increased over time, it appears to have stabilized somewhat since October 2020. Wellbeing improved from 48% 'much worse' in December 2020 to 47% in February; 'slightly worse' increased from 40% in December 2020 to 44% in February 2021.

- The use of savings and more extreme coping strategies have begun to increase from December 2020 to February 2021 (use of savings: 56% to 71%; sold or pawned asset: 24% to 39%; borrowed money: 32% to 34%), this could be indicative of farmers running out of financial reserves, increasing future financial distress. And while prices of inputs and food have stabilized, the prices farmers receive for crops continues to decrease, putting future earnings at risk.
- 70% say essential inputs like fertilizers and seeds are more expensive than normal. Over 51% purchased less inputs and 51% hired less labour in the last two weeks. Overwhelmingly, the reason for these reductions was cost. Farmers want to sell more but are unable to. 8 out of 10 farmers who sold less because of Covid would like to sell more but are unable. 1 from the other 2 sold less by choice (for example, saving food for their family) and 1 sold less for different reasons.
- Digital means can be further leveraged to support farmers recovery. Despite the potential of digital means, only 36% of farmers increased their use. In fact, 25% decreased their use, primarily because they don't have funds to pay digital or lacked access to a device. Top support farmers are seeking: affordable inputs, access to market - information, transport, buyers, cash. Leniency in existing and new credit would be a welcome respite too.
- Women were less confident in the next month (30% of females were 'very confident' in next month vs. 35% of males), and sold less than male farmers (22% of females sold 'much less' produce vs. 19% of males). When discussing what support they need to increase sales, the top request from women was connection to new buyers (72%) and market information (72%) while men ask for market information (68%). Women asked for cash at a higher proportion than men (44% of females asking for cash vs. 39% of males). Researchers also noted key differences in digital usage, which may affect how female farmers are accessing information and coordinating livelihood activities through digital methods.

October 2020 update:

- Nine in ten farming households report being worse off due to the pandemic. Financial stress is increasing over time.
- More respondents are reporting a) severe worsening of financial wellbeing - 54% said their situation was 'much worse' in September compared to 34% in June, b) loss of income sources - 47% reported losing a source of income in September compared to 31% in June, and c) greater reliance on low risk and stringent coping strategies - use of savings has grown from 59% in June to 80% in September, while the sale of an asset has grown from 11% to 38%.
- Relaxing of national curfew has meant farmers are making fewer adjustments to their core farming activities - hiring labour, purchasing inputs, harvesting and selling produce. In particular, hired labour has improved from 94% of farmers reporting a decrease in June to only 45% in September. The adjustment that has persisted is the sale of produce - 77% of farmers decreased sales in June and 57% continued to make this adjustment in September.
- The majority are optimistic for the short rain season. However, the extent of confidence is waning as the rains approach. Only 23% of farmers are 'very confident' that they will

be able to undertake farm activities as usual next month, compared to 57% in July.

- Cash remains the top requested support month-on-month as coping strategies get exhausted and financial strife persists. Emergency financial loans could also help farmers cope today and support recovery in the future.
- Access to affordable inputs. 72% say essential inputs are dearer than usual. Farmers are facing a difficult choice: either purchase less inputs and put their harvest at risk, or purchase at the higher price and risk losing money this season. Localized delivery of, and lenient loans for, high quality inputs would help farming households cope with COVID-19 shocks.
- Majority of farmers want to sell more but are unable to. Six in ten farmers sold less produce to cope with COVID-19 but only two actively made the choice to do so. The other four wished they could sell more but did not have the option to do so. Farmers are seeking connection to new buyers, market information and transportation support.
- Digital means are currently underutilized as a support and recovery tool. Despite the potential of digital platforms to provide financial liquidity, increase access to agricultural information, and increase market access, only 36% of farmers (40% women and 32% men) have increased their use of digital products during this pandemic. In fact, 23% decreased their use. Top barriers included farmers not having access to a device, limited trust in digital products, lack of funds to purchase internet/airtime bundles and network-related issues.

Link to Results

Results are updated after every survey round, and are available on [this dashboard](#).

Impact Goals

- Build resilience and protect the financial health of families and individuals
- Build resilient and adaptable businesses and employment opportunities

Project Data Collection Mode

- CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing)

Link to Public Data

<https://app.60decibels.com/covid-19/agriculture>

Results Status

Results