

FOOD FLOWS ANALYSIS WORKSHOP REPORT

Hall;

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“The Impacts of COVID-19 Responses on the Political Economy of African Food Systems”

Food Flows Analysis Workshop



14 July 2021



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COVID-19 and African Food Systems

[Food flow analysis workshop programme](#)

[\[click link above for Zoom meeting\]](#)

Date: Wednesday, 14 July 2021

Time: Ghana: 11.00-14.00, Tanzania: 14.00-17.00, SA: 13.00-16.00

Agenda

Workshop chair: Joe Mzinga

Team: Marc Wegerif, Moenieba Isaacs, Luitfred Kissoly, Louis Hodey

SESSION 1:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Framing presentation (Moenieba) | 10 mins |
| 2. Mapping (Daniel Mbisso) | 15 mins |
| 3. Initial country analysis | 60 mins |
| <i>Country teams will present feedback on the changes they identified in the four elements of supporting production, food Markets "supply chains", production processing, consumer behaviour, nutrition outcomes and broader impacts.</i> | |
| - Tanzania | 15 mins |
| - Ghana | 15mins |
| - South Africa | 15mins |
| <i>Q&A and general discussion</i> | 15mins |
| 3. Health break | 10 mins |

SESSION 2:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 4. Breakout rooms | 25 mins |
| <i>Team members to please assign to the breakout groups below before the meeting to save time the food flow team will be responsible for the chairing and report back. We kindly request representatives from each country teams made up of social partners and researchers to be in each breakout group.</i> | |

BREAKOUT 1: Political Economy	BREAKOUT 2: Emerging impacts and factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we connect the evidence across our 3 countries on food flow with social reproduction and political economy? • What are the differences across our countries - and reasons for these? • What are we missing? <p>We want to relate this to an overall political economy analysis so asked you to consider the following issues in your deliberations. This should assist in identifying the winners (bigger gainers) and bigger losers. Please consider how changes have affected different forms of social differentiation and the related power dynamics across factors including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class (those with wealth and ownership and those who labour and are in poverty) • Race and perhaps ethnicity. • Gender relations • Corporate versus informal and small business • Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the emerging impacts and factors on the food flow? • What are the differences across countries? • What are we missing? <p>There are impacts and factors listed below that we have already seen emerging that we hope you will explore. You are not at all limited to these, rather treat these as prompts to stimulate your thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport disruptions affecting inputs and market access. • Switch to more use of and marketing through digital platforms. • Impacts from reduction or closure in tourism, restaurants and hotels. • Try to identify the short and long-term changes and impacts.
Chair: Marc	Chair: Luitfred
Report back: Louis	Report back: Moenieba
<p>Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Akosua Darkwah 2. Carmen Mannarino 3. Cynthia Sunu 4. Dzifa Torvikey 5. Joe Mzinga 6. Marc Wrgrif 7. Louis Hodey 	<p>Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maia Nangle 2. Nkanyiso Gumede 3. Daniel Ankrah 4. Emmanuel Justine 5. Editrudith Lukanga 6. Jonathan Julius 7. Dzodzi 8. Moenieba Isaacs 9. Luitfred Kissoly

5. Report back: what we have evidence of & how we understand it **20 mins**
 Break out room 1 Louis
 Break out room 2 Moenieba
 General inputs

6. Next steps **10 mins**
Consolidate plans to deepen gathering & analysis



1. Food flows analysis: An overview

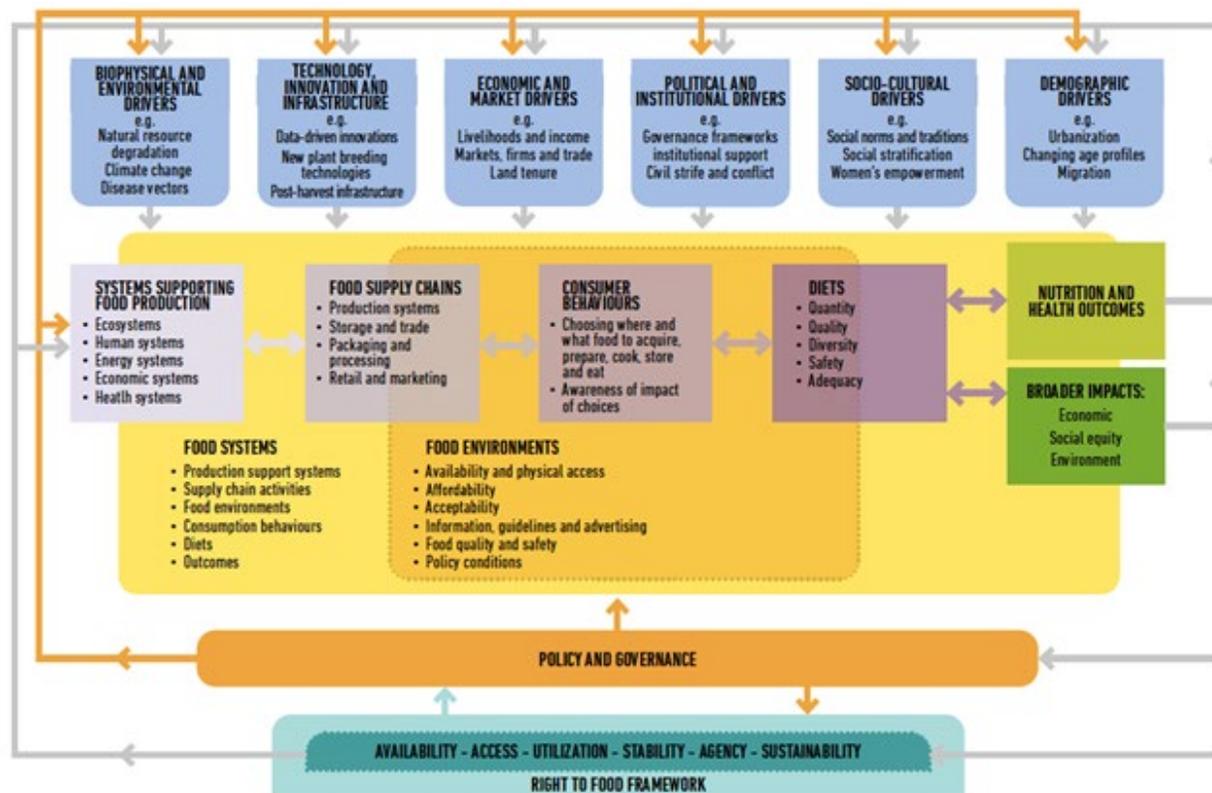
Analysis of food flows should consider:

- Production requirements and efforts. This entails analysis of data on and experiences of input availability, volumes and costs, and production volumes and prices (bearing in mind the need to use uniform measures when making comparisons, while respecting the use of the various, different measures);
- Efforts to process and market food, including the supply chains involved. This entails analysis of data on and experiences of processing; trading; and selling food at markets;
- Consumer behaviour. This entails analysis of data on and experiences of buying and consumption, including in relation to prices and volumes, and affordability of food, as well as eater behaviour as reflected in dietary choices; and
- Nutrition outcomes and broader impacts. This entails analysis of data on and experiences of food accessibility, particularly in relation to prices, food insecurity, poverty levels and unemployment/reduced incomes.

The research seeks to interrogate how the functioning of these four aspects of the food system has changed under Covid-19, and the factors that have driven these changes, including the regulatory and other measures introduced in response to the pandemic. It also seeks to identify which stakeholders have benefited and which have lost out as a result, and the kinds of emerging impacts which are being experienced. The study further interprets the shifts in food flows from a political economy perspective. It examines how food flow changes have affected social differentiation and the related power dynamics across factors of class, wealth, ownership and labour, and in relation to: poverty and marginalisation; race and ethnicity; gender relations; the corporate vs informal continuum; and location. The methodology deployed has included baseline interviews; food system diaries (which are a form of participant observation); in-depth interviews; geo-spatial mapping; and interrogation of secondary data sources, including newspaper reports, price data sets and market data.

This research has been accompanied by a literature review of food system issues relating to diet and nutrition; human, cultural and other rights to food; and issues of food security and sovereignty. This review also considers the politics of food systems.

The discussion of food flows at this webinar related to the nature of and changes in a circuit of food production, distribution and consumption, which comprises a part of the larger food system. This aspect of the food system is represented in the diagram below by the central block which is delineated by red dashes.



2. Food flows analysis: Mapping

Food flow mapping shows the geographical context in which various kinds of food are produced, distributed and sold. It identifies key food items/crops; key trading areas and end markets. It maps the scale and flows of trade, including for export, providing the names of the relevant markets and communities, as well as the GPS coordinates of the various supply and trading areas.

In mapping fish flows in South Africa, a number of key fishing communities and selling points have been identified, including at Saldanha, Lambert's Bay, Langebaan and Struisbaai. The provisional map shows the movement of fish in a number of area but should be expanded to address the issue of exports. Meanwhile, mapping of food flows in Ghana is under way.

A key goal of the mapping, which identifies source areas and destination markets, is to show how food flows were disrupted, halted and changed under Covid-19. In some cases, there were temporary stops or changes in the nature of the flow – for example, when transporters wanted cash up front; when fear of contracting the virus stemmed activities; or when official restrictions prevented the distribution and sale of goods. The different impacts and the reasons for these should be clearly shown in the mapping.

In addition, the production of two sets of maps, showing food flows before and after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, may neatly illustrate the changes in food flows which have taken place.

3. Country analysis

3.1 South Africa: Preliminary findings on food flows under Covid-19

3.1.1 Fisheries

Production

A number of key changes were noted:

The prices of key inputs, such as hooks, bait and petrol rose (although fuel prices later dropped, which was beneficial). Imports of pike for bait ceased and the local bait which was used instead proved quite unsuccessful. This problem illustrates how fishing even on a small-scale level is integrated into a global market.

In the first weeks of hard lockdown from March 2020, there was a lack of clarity about who was able to go to sea and access to permits was limited. Some artisanal fishers were initially not classified as essential workers and were unable to acquire the appropriate permits.

Initial restrictions on travel prevented fishers, who move with the migration of fish from district to district and province to province, from undertaking their work. It seemed that the regulators lacked a clear understanding of the travel needs of fishers and did not understand the impact the rules on movement were having.

Even after the rules were changed to allow more movement, the night curfew prevented fishers from travelling in the small hours of the morning to launch their boats early – which led to queues at the launching site and handed a significant advantage to the bigger, more powerful boats which were able to reach the fishing grounds quicker than the small boats (which used to launch earlier in an effort to offset this advantage).

The regulations and system for issuing permits also failed to take account of the issue of contract labour, limiting the movement of workers and restricting their ability to move from one boat to another.

Fishers found it difficult to rent temporary accommodation near fishing sites as landlords and landladies closed their doors for fear of the pandemic.

Reduced demand for some fish, as the market shrank due to domestic and export restrictions, led some fishers to stop fishing entirely.

Little in the way of production support was offered to fisherfolk to cope with the crisis compared with the aid provided by the government to farmers.

The changes in food flows in relation to production were driven by a number of key factors, including:

- General inflation beyond the normal rate;
- Export and import bans and transport disruptions, as well as restrictions on travel and movements;
- A decreasing return on investment as input costs rose for owners; but a need to work to earn a living for crew members; and
- Reduced demand for certain kinds of fish as consumer purchasing power fell.

As the food flows shifted, a number of winners and losers emerged:

- Online marketing platforms, such as Abalobi, and those who sold to them seemed to gain as fish prices rose;
- Communities lost a valuable source of nutrition when fish which would otherwise have been used to feed local people was sold elsewhere for more money to those who could afford it;
- Owners of some of the bigger boats which were able to reach the fishing grounds quicker seemed to gain compared with the smaller ones, which were unable to start early under curfew conditions;
- Contract and vulnerable labourers who were paid on the basis of the work undertaken or for the size of the catch, lost income and even their livelihoods; and
- Some boat owners and crew members gained a bit from reduced operational costs when fuel prices dropped at one point.

Processing, trade and markets

A number of key changes were noted:

The price received by fishers for their catches remained the same and failed to keep pace with the rising cost of inputs.

There was a decline in demand for fish, especially in the first three weeks of hard lockdown from March 2020, when traders, particularly the smaller ones, were unable to travel. Then demand dropped in the longer-term due to job losses and lower incomes across the population.

The transportation of goods was limited and there were relatively few places where fish could be sold under lockdown.

There were some good catches including of snoek, but these were bought up cheaply by big companies with cold storage facilities under a deal struck with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). In this regard, the small-scale/artisanal fishers, which lack access to such storage facilities, were deprived of autonomy in how they traded their catches.

Dependence on the smaller traders known as *langana*, who were unable to travel under hard lockdown, had a negative impact on small-scale fishers. In their place, other traders with significant storage and processing capacity were able to buy fish cheaply when supply was high and prices low, and then profited later when prices for the fish rose.

Although there was some oversupply at times, this fish was not acquired by local feeding schemes but was bought up by the larger traders and companies.

The Abalobi online platform for marketing catches from small-scale fishers lost an important market when restaurants and hotels closed under the hard lockdown, but managed to recover by channelling the fish to larger buyers.

In Langebaan, some fishers who used to sell some of their cheaper fish to the local community now redirected this fish to the online Abalobi pantry, which bought it by weight, preserved it in spices and sold it in the form of roll-mops to more middle-class consumers. The phenomenon indicates a tension between the production and consumption aspects of the food system, between making cheap fish available for community consumption or selling them out of the community to wealthier consumers for a higher price.

Exporting has not been profitable, despite the relatively high prices on the international market, due to the high costs involved. At the same time, China's ban on fish imports has had a significant impact on South Africa's lobster exports. As prices for the crustacean fell as a result of the ban, many were left in water or died in tanks.

The supply of fish from other African countries via informal networks was disrupted due to border closures.

There were a number of drivers producing changes in food flows in relation to processing, trade and sales. Informal processors of Bokkom were affected by the price of fish and the price of salt. A general dearth of fish meant fewer working days and reduced incomes for processors, transporters and traders. Traders were further affected by higher fuel prices and restrictions on their movements under the hard lockdown from March 2020.

As the food flows shifted, a number of winners and losers emerged:

- Fishers lost out as they were forced to sell their catches straight away at relatively low prices, due to a lack of storage capacity. Meanwhile, large firms which could buy in bulk at low prices and then sell for more later gained;
- Women who process fish and are only paid when there is fish to process, lost out. Local women processors were also displaced as larger buyers came in to buy up catches for their own processing;
- The Covid-19 restrictions which prevented some women from going to buy and sell at the harbour, further reduced the role of women in fishing value-chains.
- Women working casually and on contract in the sector lost incomes but were unable to claim and receive statutory unemployment benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), unlike male peers who could claim full employee status; and
- Boat owners and permit/quota holders gained, while crews without such advantages tended to lose out – particularly when owners were able to negotiate buying their half share of the catch so that they could sell it on for a profit.

Consumption

A number of key changes were noted:

High quality nutritious food left local communities as the fish trade become increasingly marketised and the pressure to maximise profits increased for the sellers. As a result, local diets shifted, with some people turning to low-cost imported frozen chicken pieces as a protein source.

There was also a shift in the way that fish were sold. Instead of fish being sold by the bundle, they were increasingly sold by weight, as is the practice in formal markets. As weighed fish went to high-end restaurants, less went to local communities. In addition, the food commons of shared surpluses fell away after it initially enjoyed a resurgence in some places at the beginning of the pandemic.

There was one piece of state support from DAFF in coordination with some large companies: 10,000 food parcels were distributed among fishing communities along the coast.

Consumers were offered fish on credit by some boat owners and spaza-shop owners, although with quite hefty interest payments on the amount due.

Nutrition

A number of key changes were noted: levels of nutritional insecurity rose as businesses collapsed and livelihoods and incomes were lost or significantly reduced; and, in the context of an overall economic decline, socio-economic inequalities became increasingly stark.

3.1.2 Agriculture

Production

A number of key changes were noted:

Small-scale farmers in some areas were unable to buy tools and seedlings because of delays in supply or the difficulty of accessing suppliers, as well as the rising price of seeds which became quite expensive.

The supply of labour was disrupted. It was difficult to travel to work under the movement restrictions and curfews imposed by the government, particularly under the initial hard lockdown; and it was hard to access the required permits to move around. Many immigrant workers returned to their home countries and found it difficult to return. Undocumented workers were afraid to go to work for fear of being checked by the police.

Some workers were afraid to travel on public transport due to the risk of infection – and for good reason, given that many of them reported that relatives or fellow workers had died of Covid-19. In this regard, there was a general call for vaccinations for farm workers, who were at risk from staying on compounds.

The prices of farming inputs rose, as did the price of fuel and toll prices, placing pressure on bakkie and other traders.

Under the initial Level 5 hard lockdown, it was difficult for many farmers to carry on. Some farmers and workers were scared and cut back on planting due to uncertainty about markets and the possibilities for travel.

At the same time, some farmers made gains by switching to crops such okra, kale and sunflower, which could be sold for a good profit as cooking oil prices rose.

Some farmers in agri-parks whose inputs used to be delivered now had to go and fetch them. Although they were provided with vouchers for these inputs, they now had to pay for the time and travel required to collect them. Many farmers complained that the vouchers limited where they could buy their inputs, with certain suppliers, particularly the larger ones, benefiting greatly. However, these suppliers were not such a good fit for the farmers who were supposed to benefit.

There were increased reports of theft of produce and equipment, which was blamed on rising poverty and desperation, as well as the absence of security after guards were withdrawn from agri-parks. One respondent who farmed at a school suffered a theft after the property was abandoned under the national school closures.

Most small-scale farmers received no government support.

The changes in food flows in relation to production were driven by a number of key factors, including:

- Tight state regulations and the way they were implemented, impacting markets and limiting the movement of goods and labour;
- International limits on imports and exports and the movement of goods across borders;
- Price rises for inputs and certain products such as maize on global markets which pushed up prices and benefited only some exporting farmers while raising the cost of food locally; and
- State subsidies and vouchers for inputs, which tended to benefit large corporate suppliers chosen by the government.

As the food flows shifted, a number of winners and losers emerged:

- Employment prospects for contract workers deteriorated;
- Foreign nationals struggled to find work or receive UIF or other forms of compensation;
- Many informally and casually employed labourers and small traders lost incomes;
- Some small farmers suffered high production costs and challenges in sourcing inputs;
- Input suppliers seemed to gain; and
- Larger, better-connected firms with greater capital reserves seemed better able to claim and receive the subsidies on offer and continue operating.

Trade and markets

A number of key changes were noted:

Competition between small-scale and commercial farmers became more visible.

Food prices increased above the core inflation rate, but, in most cases, the farmers did not receive the benefit of these higher prices.

The need for permits to move around made it hard for traders to conduct business, particularly during the initial hard lockdown. Under movement restrictions, small traders could not access the wholesale markets.

After the hard lockdown, it was difficult for small traders to recover since the demand for their goods fell away as businesses closed, and their customers lost jobs and saw their incomes slashed.

Small-scale farmers were unable to access credit for transport costs.

Street traders selling fruit and vegetables were no longer able to access credit to buy their goods from the fresh produce wholesalers at the big markets.

Small-scale farmers and traders reduced the prices of their goods, with some offering interest-free credit, in an effort to keep customers whose incomes had been cut.

Spaza shops and street traders sold less as demand fell away in poorer neighbourhoods.

Demand for luxury food items dropped while demand for so-called “immunity-boosting” foods such as garlic and ginger and citrus rose.

Some small-farmers increased their market opportunities by diversifying, either by connecting with bigger buyers, such as Fresh-Link, which is a major wholesaler and retailer, or by selling more locally, such as to street traders.

Well-connected informal importers and exporters unable or unwilling to cross borders leveraged online platforms such as WhatsApp and transport networks to continue buying and trading.

High demand outside the country in global and regional markets increased inflationary pressures.

The changes in food flows in relation to processing, trade and sale were driven by a number of key factors, including:

- Movement restrictions and permit requirements under the initial hard lockdown which prevented traders from doing business, with a major knock-on effect for farmers;
- General loss of incomes among the population which led to reduced demand;
- Rising food and input prices on global markets; and
- A concentration of ownership and control in the economic system.

As the food flows shifted, a number of winners and losers emerged:

- Poorer eaters could no longer afford to buy enough nutritious food;
- Some large companies took advantage of gaps in the domestic and export markets;
- Large firms and supermarkets reported increased profits and high shareholder dividends;
- Temporary, unregistered and immigrant workers faced increasing job insecurity;
- Street trade was greatly affected under the initial lockdown and then suffered as demand fell away afterwards; and
- A few farmers gained by diversifying and entering new markets, but many lost out as their market became increasingly constrained.

Consumption

A number of key changes driven by reduced movement and incomes were noted: more food was bought online; the diets for those in poverty became increasingly unbalanced; and middle-class and wealthy consumers increasingly cooked and ate at home and increased their purchases of certain food products accordingly.

Nutrition

A number of key changes were noted: levels of nutritional insecurity rose as businesses collapsed and livelihoods and incomes were lost or significantly reduced; and, in the context of an overall economic decline, socio-economic inequalities became increasingly stark.

3.1.2 Conclusions

Artisanal fishers, small-scale farmers, street and bakkie traders and most of their workers were greatly disrupted by the initial hard lockdown in South Africa. It seemed that the government had not considered their interests when designing its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Even when these food actors were officially allowed to operate, they struggled actually to acquire permits.

Many people, especially poorer people, have lost incomes, which has affected their ability to acquire sufficient, nutritious food, and has, as a result, damaged the businesses of producers, traders and retailers

Workers and small traders at the bottom end of the economy, such as temporary, contract, unregistered and immigrant workers experienced the brunt of the income losses during the pandemic.

Local trade, including among small-scale buyers, bakkie traders and street sellers, was disrupted, especially under the hard lockdown, with negative implications for the small-scale fishers and farmers from whom the stock and produce was bought.

Those with capital and equipment such as the owners of fishing boats and cold storage facilities, and those with larger farm machinery, were better able to weather the market ups and downs and labour disruptions experienced under Covid-19.

Access to credit to buy food and acquire transport and supplies became more restricted and more expensive. For example, some food transporters insisted on cash in advance rather than payment on delivery, as had been the practice.

The move to online trade has tended to work to the advantage of the better connected and resourced buyers and suppliers.

There has been tension between the benefit of lower prices for eaters and the need for higher prices for producers.

Overall, existing inequalities and tensions in the food system have been exacerbated.

The unrest which was experienced in parts of South Africa in July 2021 may in part be attributed to growing divisions within the society and a feeling of hopelessness among the many people who are left out of the economy. In this regard, the failure of the main political parties to offer some hope for the future and an economy of which they could be a meaningful part leaves the country vulnerable to continued insecurity and unrest.

3.2 Tanzania: Preliminary findings on food flows under Covid-19

Production

Covid-19 struck during preparation for the long rains, and farmers experienced difficulties in accessing inputs, which also became more expensive. Delays in deliveries of agro-inputs such as fertilisers were caused in part by travel restrictions and business people no longer travelling abroad. In relation to the cost of inputs, the price of fertiliser doubled from about \$291 per tonne to \$571 by May 2021.

No specific programmes were introduced by the government to support production among farmers and other food-system actors after Covid-19 arrived. However, since the appointment of President Samia Suluhu Hassan in March 2021, a number of plans to support farmers have been launched with the support of developmental organisations. For example, the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is developing a \$883 million programme to subsidise inputs and support access to markets for 6,240 vulnerable, small-scale farmers in Tanzania.

In terms of winners and losers, small farmers in a number of regions benefited as prices for certain products fluctuated; but many food system actors, particularly poorer ones, lost incomes due to a lack of state support during the pandemic.

Processing, trade and markets

Under Covid-19, Tanzania registered food sufficiency of 120% in relation to staples such as maize and rice.

Short-lived restrictions, for example, in relation to the closure of hotels, schools and borders between March and June 2020, impacted food flows. More broadly the near collapse of tourism and the hotel industry after international arrivals fell away under Covid-19 and the imposition of lockdown in neighbouring Kenya led to a significant slump in demand for some items such as onions, Irish potatoes watermelon and some vegetables. The effects of this were mainly felt in Arusha, because of its proximity to Kenya and due to the dominance of the tourism sector there, and, to an extent, in Dar es Salaam.

The effects of the lockdown in Kenya were also compounded by regional trade restrictions including the imposition of an increase in import duties of almost 20% which increased logistical and transport costs and led to distortions in supply chains – for example, in the trade in imported mangoes between Dar es Salaam and Arusha, as well as in the regional trade in maize beans. Cross-border trade was also affected by shifts in international value chains.

There was also disruption in the fish trade, with the number of lorries transporting fish for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) dropping from an average of six before Covid-19 to one afterwards. Revenues in one domestic fish market dropped by almost 60%, as buyers from the DRC, Kenya and Rwanda fell away. In Butimba market in Mwanza, business volumes dropped from 1,000 to 200 pieces of fish a day.

In terms of winners and losers, cross-border traders and suppliers to hotels and the tourism sector lost out; while urban low-income consumers benefited as some products became affordable in the absence of alternative markets for the traders.

Consumption

Consumer eating and buying behaviour changed, particularly in response to price fluctuations for key staples such as maize and beans after border restrictions and falling regional demand inhibited the export of these crops to Kenya. For example, in Arusha, the price of maize and beans dropped, as did the price of Irish potatoes after orders from the hospitality sector for this staple fell. However, at a national level, prices for the major crops, including maize, rice, beans, sorghum and round potatoes, exhibited normal fluctuations in line with seasonal patterns. Meanwhile, there was a surge in the price of so-called “immunity-boosting” foods, such as ginger, lemons and onions, due to a rise in demand.

There was a switch to digital platforms for ordering and trading as consumers sought to minimise physical contact. However, the benefits of this shift were unevenly distributed across the food system, with system actors at the bottom of the pyramid who lacked the access to mobile technologies which was required to exploit this new market losing out.

Nutrition outcomes and broader impacts

There was a switch to low quality and less diversified diets, as urban incomes dropped at the same time that prices for agricultural produce fell.

Food accessibility, including in relation to affordability, shifted due to poverty, unemployment and decreased household incomes. Food sales dropped as a result.

The urban poor, who tend to rely on incomes, experienced heightened food insecurity as their purchasing power weakened due to business and job losses under Covid-19.

Households also struggled after the closure of schools and their feeding programmes placed additional strain on domestic food budgets. Most respondents indicated that this had forced them to reduce the quality and/or the amount of the food they acquired and consumed.

As the retail price of key food items fell, smallholder farmers who relied on their agricultural outputs for cash reported a drop in incomes.

3.3 Ghana: Preliminary findings on food flows under Covid-19

Production inputs

Disruptions in global supply chains under Covid-19 affected the prices and availability of imported raw materials. For example, as poultry feed production dropped in Ghana, farmers complained they could not access maize for feed. The result was a rise in the price of poultry products.

Costs of seeds and fertiliser also rose, with consequences for production. The price for subsidised nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK) fertiliser rose from 48 Cedis to 53 Cedis for a 25kg bag, while the price of Urea rose from 45 to 50 Cedis per bag – a significant price hike, although quite marginal compared with the large price increases in Tanzania.

The price of subsidised fertiliser has risen, although it remains lower than the price offered for the product on the open market. The government has blamed the hike on global price rises for this input. However, the hike in the cost of subsidised fertiliser indicates a shortfall in official stocks and a failure by the government to acquire sufficient amounts of the input in advance when the international prices were lower, despite official claims to the contrary. The price rise which has made life harder for smallholders has been opposed by farmers angry at what they see as government mismanagement of the supply.

Farmers have also struggled under new credit arrangements for agro-inputs. Previously they were able to purchase inputs on credit, but since the pandemic they have been required to pay half in advance.

There is mixed evidence on labour costs and availability. In the Western and Upper West regions, for example, labour costs are increasing because of broader economic problems.

Production volumes

Maize production volumes and yields have seen an upward trend, although the area under cultivation has declined, indicating an input challenge, perhaps in relation to fertiliser suppliers.

The area under cultivation for cassava increased in 2020, with a concomitant rise in production volumes and yields. The growth may be attributed to the development of new industrial uses for cassava, such as in the production of beer. In addition, cassava tends to thrive despite the production stress caused by climate change, leading many farmers to plant it as a stop-gap or main crop.

Yam production volumes and the area under cultivation for this staple have increased, although yields fell slightly in 2020. In this regard, it was reported that farmers in the North, which is a major production hub for yam, were reluctant to go to their farms because of fear of contracting Covid-19 – and thus imposed movement restrictions upon themselves.

Rice production and yields have also increased, although the area under cultivation declined in 2020. At the same time, even as production continues to fall short of domestic needs, a significant

proportion of the yield is sold to traders from Benin, Togo and Nigeria for relatively high prices. At present, rice prices are increasing although it is unclear whether this is due to shortages or hardship within the system.

Plantain production volumes and yields have increased, although but the area under cultivation for this important staple declined in 2020.

Supply chain, processing and marketing

As a result of disruptions to the domestic food supply system caused by a partial lockdown, movement restrictions and market closures, gluts of some food items have been reported in parts of the country. For example, poultry farmers complained about egg gluts caused by a drop in orders from school feeding programmes last year – although egg prices subsequently rose.

Food processing for trade, sale at local markets and household consumption has increased.

In addition, new food markets have emerged, as sales have shifted from congested food markets to community retailers and an increasing number of digital food delivery services, which offer mainly middle-class customers cooked foods or a basket of produce bought at commercial outlets.

The research continues to investigate food flows to and from Ghana's major domestic food destination markets, such as: Agboghloshie market in Accra, which distributes food to other parts of the country; Techiman market in the middle belt, which also distributes food to other areas, including tomatoes to the market in Accra; and Wa market in the northern part of the country, which sells produce from other parts of the country, as well as maize, rice and other staples imported from Burkina Faso.

Imports and exports

Trade diversion due to border closures restricted the usual routes for importing and exporting food. Exchange rate pressures and seasonality of crops also shaped the trade under Covid-19. For example, traders importing tomatoes from Burkina Faso, onions from Niger or cassava from Côte d'Ivoire, complained about unfavourable exchange rates between the Ghanaian Cedi and the West African CFA franc.

Exports to Burkina Faso have comprised rice, pawpaw, palm fruit, sorghum, cowpea, gari, bananas, groundnuts, and yellow and white maize. Meanwhile, bananas, cabbages, green peppers, gari, ginger, groundnuts, palm fruit, palm oil and pawpaw are the key exports to Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, Benin, Togo and northern Nigeria. Imports comprise mainly tomatoes and onions from Burkina Faso and onions from Niger.

Under Covid-19, cassava exports declined significantly, while imports increased. Chicken imports also fell, which may be as a result of disruptions in the global trade system. In addition, rice imports declined. Both the imports and exports of tomatoes fell during this period, probably as a result of border challenges. Cooking oil imports also fell. In general, there was a decline in the imports of a number of key foods during 2019, as well as disruption in the export of some products.

Food prices

The price of yam rose sharply from April 2020; there was also a hike in the price of maize from October 2020, as a result of factors including inflation and domestic taxes. The prices of rice, cassava, gari, tomatoes, groundnuts, chicken and salmon have also risen.

The pandemic appears to have been an important factor in driving up food prices in the country. Although the state denies that there is a problem, food inflation spiked in April 2020 as a result of lockdown following a long period of falling prices. Since then, food inflation has overtaken monthly general inflation. At the same time, inflation recently dropped significantly, recorded its lowest rate since the Covid-19 outbreak in May 2021.

Poor exchange rates have also contributed to food price hikes, as the value of the Cedi fell against the major trading currencies in the region, in particular the CFA, after the pandemic spread to Ghana. Although the rate has since remained fairly stable, fluctuations have major implications for trade and for food prices given that the country is a major importer.

Livelihood outcomes

A total of 22 million people were affected by reduced household incomes as a result of Covid-19 in 2020. People reduced the amount of food they ate, with 52.1% of households cutting food consumption as a coping mechanism. Many people have reported increasingly relying on carbohydrate-heavy food, because that is all they can afford. Meanwhile, amid the closures of schools and their feeding programmes which produced knock-on effects for local food suppliers, concerns around food insecurity and child malnutrition have mounted.

Conclusions

- The Covid-19 crisis disrupted Ghana's input and output markets;
- Rising input costs have hampered food production;
- Food trade diversions have taken place and new food markets have emerged;
- There has been increased processing activity for markets and for household consumption; and
- Significant food insecurity and nutrition concerns have emerged as the price of food items continues to increase.

4. Preliminary findings

4.1 Preliminary findings on the political economy of food flows under Covid-19

In analysing food flows and how these have changed, it is important to consider who has shaped the shifting responses and outcomes and who has gained and lost power and wealth as a result. In this regard a number of key questions should be asked:

- How should the evidence on food flow across the three countries under study be understood in relation to social reproduction and political economy concerns?
- In this regard, what are the differences among the three countries and reasons for these?
- What is being missed in the research?

The country teams should consider how changes in the food flows have affected and been affected by their respective political economies and various forms of social differentiation and related power dynamics across factors including but not limited to:

- Class (that is, those with wealth and ownership and those who labour and are in poverty);
- Race and perhaps ethnicity;

- Gender relations;
- The corporate sector versus the informal/small-business sector; and
- Geography.

Breakout discussion

Global increases in prices for inputs and food during the pandemic have affected food prices across the three countries, which have risen.

Ghana's flagship Planting for Food and Jobs programme, which was in place prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, has not been implemented effectively. This initiative, which provides input support to farmers, should have offered a safety net, cushioning producers from some of the impacts of the pandemic and helping to ensure the affordability of food. However, there has been smuggling and corruption in relation to the distribution of subsidised fertiliser under the programme, which has undermined the benefits which it was supposed to deliver.

Food flows in the fishing sector in South Africa are more embedded in a corporatised system than those in Ghana and Tanzania, with much of the catch leaving local communities and being traded via commercial platforms. For example, large firms in South Africa have had an advantage over small-scale producers in relation to capitalisation and fish processing, which they have deployed to buy up stock at relatively low prices and subsequently make significantly profits – at the same time, reducing the role of local processing and the women involved in that. By contrast, women in the processing sector in Tanzania have gained, taking advantage of the additional stock that became available as external buyers fell away and playing a larger role than before, particularly in the western region. In this regard, small-scale fishers in South Africa have perhaps been rendered more vulnerable by the direct and indirect impacts of the government restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic than their Ghanaian and Tanzanian peers.

The South African authorities imposed more stringent and longer restrictions on the movement of goods and labour than the governments in Ghana and Tanzania. As a result, many food producers were unable to farm or fish; and traders, particular the smaller ones, were unable to do business for a protracted period.

Fear of the virus has prevented many people from engaging in production and trading activities. For example, in the Upper West region of Ghana residents moved around less although there was no lockdown. Self-imposed restrictions as a result of high levels of anxiety about the spread of the virus also affected the populations in Tanzania, despite government denialism about the pandemic throughout 2020, and South Africa, where restrictions were also externally imposed by the government.

The research faces considerable challenges in sourcing relevant data to track the changes in food flows that have taken place under Covid-19. For example, nationally produced indicators for 2021 on imports/exports and production may not be available until later. The issue of tracking activity in the informal sector, which is not captured in official statistics should also be addressed. A number of sources may be deployed to acquire this information. For example, market operators in KwaZulu-Natal may be able to provide data on the produce that is arriving. The food diaries kept by fishers in South Africa may also be useful in providing a picture of the business conducted by *langanas* and small-scale traders, many of whom may be selling from their own houses. However, in the absence of reliable data from before the pandemic on informal trade, it may difficult to track some of the changes in food flows which have taken place. It is also crucial to contextualise the data that is sourced.

For example, data on input and food price changes which is available in South Africa should be linked with data on job losses, unemployment levels and food insecurity in order to provide a macro picture.

It is important to adopt a broad view in attributing the gains and losses experienced by particular groups as a result of the pandemic and the measures adopted in response. As the dynamics play out, people may lose at one end and gain at the other, or even gain or lose for a short period but not over the longer term. For example, in Ghana, particular gains may be offset by larger erosions produced by inflation and high taxes, as well as broad disruption to livelihoods. In a system of rotational markets, traders may benefit when they are allowed to attend, but will lose out on the days they cannot go. While in South Africa, loss of markets may, in some cases, be offset by the discovery of a new market or price rises for certain goods.

Issues of gender need to be highlighted more effectively in the food flows analysis produced by the project. For example, under Covid-19, women in Ghana have continued to benefit from their large role in processing, producing artisanal food products, as well as palm oil for domestic use, although they have remained hostage to buyers in terms of how goods they sell are priced. By contrast, women's role in fish production and processing in South Africa remained quite limited and even deteriorated in line with the growing domination of men in this sector, particularly in relation to access to marketing channels. Although some women obtained permits to fish, men continued to comprise the vast majority of those who were licensed; and women also continued to lose out in the more informal business of processing. More broadly, women's role in social reproduction in the three countries, particularly in relation to looking after and teaching children at home during school closures, increased under lockdown, offsetting gains they may have made in the area of processing.

In relation to issues of class, poor people appeared to have been particularly heavily affected by the disruptions in the food system. In this regard, pre-existing challenges of social differentiation were exacerbated under the pandemic in South Africa, with elites benefiting from the significant socio-economic advantages they enjoyed. For example, fishing boat crews are only paid according to how much they catch. When there is no fishing there is no income, including for the boat owner. But the crew members are affected more because they are living from hand-to-mouth, while the boat owner may have some savings.

In South Africa, immigrants who faced mounting job insecurity and uncertainty around their residential and employment status under the imposition of government restriction have, in general, lost out.

School closures have had a significant impact on food flows as school feeding schemes were halted or ran into financial trouble. In Tanzania, food producers and traders lost an important market when schools and universities, which had been major buyers of produce, closed for about 90 days at the beginning of the pandemic. In Ghana, one of the objectives of the school feeding programme is to increase local production and consumption of food. The school administrators are directed to buy locally. However, as schools closed this trade stopped and local traders were left being owed money by school caterers who were no longer receiving government funds to purchase food. This produced knock-on indebtedness in the food system as the school feeding programme fell victim to austerity. The closure of feeding schemes has also led to severe nutritional deficits and hunger among children.

4.2 Preliminary findings on emerging impacts and factors in relation to food flows under Covid-19

It is important to identify emerging factors affecting food flows and the impacts of changes in food flows. In this regard, the differences among the three countries under study and reasons for these should be interrogated, as well as any gaps in the research.

As a guide to this topic, a number of key themes have already been observed across the three countries:

- Transport disruptions affecting inputs and market access;
- A switch to marketing through digital platforms;
- Impacts from the closure of restaurants and hotels and reduced tourism; and
- Identification of short and long-term changes and impacts.

Breakout discussion

The regulatory responses and lockdowns among neighbouring countries disrupted regional food flows. In this regard, the impacts of regulatory restrictions in Kenya impacted both its domestic market, as well as food supply chains across its borders, including its trade with Tanzania. For example, when major buyers from Kenya stopped purchasing maize at Bayagabosie market in Tanzania, it sent a shock along the whole supply chain, affecting farmers, packers and transporters.

Regional trade was also affected by the imposition of Covid-19 testing and tax regimes along borders. The relatively high costs of the new arrangements severely disrupted the trade in fish from Tanzania to the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda, limiting the movement of traders and leading to a decline in exports.

In Ghana, where food tends to be transported in quite small quantities by bus, rather than in big loads by lorry, lockdown rules restricting mobility which were enforced at checkpoints severely slowed and even halted food flows. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of young people, who have previously been employed in other ways, became involved in smuggling across Ghana's borders with Burkina Faso and Togo. This led to new food flows – for example, rice was now sold at one market near the border with Burkina Faso for the first time.

In Eastern Africa, the relative strength of the Kenyan shilling and the Tanzanian shilling produced relative stability in regional trade under the pandemic. But seasonal fluctuations in the exchange rates for the Ghanaian Cedi, particularly in relation to the West Africa CFA, made it difficult for Ghanaian traders, particularly for those importing tomatoes from Burkina Faso when this fruit became relatively more expensive as a result.

As the movement of goods across the border from Tanzania into Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC became more difficult during the pandemic, traders who had previously dealt in cash increasingly switched to electronic transfers, which incurred transaction-charge costs. This affected the price and flow of goods, particularly exports into the Great Lakes region. In Southern Africa, traders seeking to avoid paying for costly Covid-19 testing at the border when exporting goods from South Africa increasingly recruited agents to buy and transport goods on their behalf, issuing instructions about what produce to purchase and how it should be moved via WhatsApp.

Delays in the delivery of agricultural inputs and lockdown restrictions and controls on labour mobility adversely affected production, packing, processing and transporting activities – and thus

overall food flows. In addition, the imposition of government regulations failed to take account of seasonal variations in the food system in a number of cases. For example, restrictions on the movement of fishers in South Africa prevented them from travelling around the country in pursuit of migrating shoals of fish.

In addition, the system for issuing permits to move and transport goods produced differential impacts in South Africa. Established farmers who were classified as providers of essential services found it quite easy to access the required permits, which, in some cases, were issued by the producer associations to which they belonged. Meanwhile, smallholder farmers struggled to access the paperwork granting exemption from the travel restrictions. In addition, the bakkie traders used by smallholder farmers were also unable to access the required permits readily. All of which inhibited food flows.

Official measures to support food-system actors in adapting to the new market environment under Covid-19, which included the provision of subsidies for inputs; cash transfers and grants for poor people; and tax credits and other forms of employment support, varied among the three countries under study.

In South Africa, mitigation support for smallholder farmer was generally limited to the provision of some input subsidies. However, the priority for many of these producers, who were ready to harvest, was not input support but access markets which they were unable to reach under the government-imposed restrictions on movement and the transport of goods. In this regard, the official intervention was misguided.

More broadly, there was inequitable, differentiated provision of support across the whole food system, from producer to consumer. For example, while some poorer urban residents were able to register for government assistance others could not. In addition, the street traders, on whom poor urban residents depended for supplies of affordable food, struggled to access produce from large markets, including the main one in Johannesburg, under lockdown. In Ghana also, applicants for particular forms of government assistance had to register in order to qualify, which produced differential access to the support on offer.

In South Africa, job losses and business closures led to reduced incomes in parts of the general population, restricting people's ability to afford food – which created knock-on effects across the food system.

Generally, across the three countries, the tougher the lockdown the greater the impact on food flows – although there could a significant lag between the implementation of government restrictions and the effects of these across the food system. In Tanzania, where there was only a relatively light, initial lockdown, the flow of food, such as maize, rice, potatoes and bananas from production sites to the market remained constant and sufficient to meet demand. In Ghana and South Africa, however, the lockdowns affected producers in the countryside, although the impacts of this were quite different in the two cases.

In South Africa, large firms, including the major supermarkets and their suppliers, which control much of the transportation and sale of stock and produce, have been a much bigger factor in shaping food flows – and in a number of ways have benefitted from how these have shifted under Covid-19. While in Ghana, smallholder farmers play a much more significant role, comprising a crucial part of the country's formal food system. In this regard, Ghanaian food flows under Covid-19 have been

shaped by the great variety of responses adopted by the many small players, with the kinds of actions taken and changes created defying easy categorisation.