



## PREVENTING A FOOD CRISIS: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

As COVID-19 has spread throughout the world, it has rocked economies to their core. This is especially true in developing countries, where safety nets and structures for resilience are nascent, fragile or do not exist. Feed the Future is leveraging its food security and nutrition programs and partnerships on the ground to help vulnerable communities respond, stop the health crisis from becoming a food crisis, and speed recovery. These are some of their stories.



### Smarter Policies for Stronger Recovery

Good policies come from good information. In many cases, policymakers in developing countries are making decisions based on limited information about trends on the ground. At the same time, the challenges that COVID-19 pose are unlike any other crises they've faced, so relying on past policy responses doesn't work. And, as we've seen in the U.S., regional cooperation is critical to the success of COVID-19 control and response efforts. We're helping fill these gaps using our existing networks and programs.

- The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa - an influential USAID partner in Africa - recently convened 28 secretaries for agriculture to discuss challenges and reinforce the importance of facilitating trade and regional cooperation. Feed the Future is also collaborating with partner organizations to forecast how policy responses affect countries, their people and economies to help us all make better-informed decisions.
- In East Africa, Feed the Future is supporting measures to keep food and agricultural inputs moving across borders and from ports to inland countries. This includes strengthening safeguards for cross-border trade and protocols, using early warning systems to strengthen resilience, and addressing measures that restrict the flow of goods between countries.



*Nelia is at home preparing a meal using lablab legume leaves harvested from legumes she intercropped in her maize field for extra nutrition for the family.*

*Photo by Land O'Lakes Venture37 and Cine International Limited*



### Getting Seeds to Farmers

Farmers don't just rely on markets to sell their harvests -- they also rely on them for seeds and inputs to grow again. Measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 are affecting these markets. So, Feed the Future is helping farmers get the seeds and inputs they need to avoid missing the next growing season. This not only provides farmers with income during the pandemic, but keeps local food supplies and prices more stable so other families can eat too. This is an area where our work and progress on seeds is proving valuable during the pandemic.

- For example, we've supported the regional development community in Southern Africa to harmonize and align seed policies and regulations across countries. This has created a regional market for seeds and

increased farmer access to quality seed. With more options to choose from, and more quality seed flowing across borders, farmers are better able to access what they need to keep growing during this difficult time.

- In Rwanda, Feed the Future is providing vulnerable farming families with seeds to grow drought-resistant crops as well as nutritious ones like sweet potatoes and vegetables so they don't miss a season and can grow more nutritious food to fill gaps during the crisis. The program is also making tractors available to farmers who are experiencing a labor shortage due to COVID-19 and is providing post-harvest equipment and advice to help them protect and store harvests.



## Reaching Rural Areas

When we think of COVID-19, we think of cities. But rural areas are affected too. They can be especially hard to reach, but are where the majority of people live in developing countries. As such, they're expected to be the areas with the highest numbers of people falling into poverty due to COVID-19. Feed the Future is helping get information out to rural areas so they can get ahead of virus spread and share information, advice and resources for protecting themselves and keeping all aspects of food systems running during this time.

- With supplemental funding we have commissioned Scientific Animations Without Borders through a Michigan State University-led Feed the Future Innovation Lab, to develop and share information with communities about how to keep farming safe during COVID-19 and reduce its spread. Particularly important in rural areas as more urban dwellers migrate to them. The messages will be shared in ways that cross borders, cultures and literacy levels, to ensure they reach the most vulnerable. It's a great example of how we're leveraging the expertise and strengths of the U.S. university system to respond.
- In Senegal, women are banding together to mobilize local funding to protect their communities from COVID-19. Since March, they have repurposed 68 women's groups to pool resources for hygiene and sanitation supplies for their communities. Feed the Future originally helped them establish these groups to share nutrition and horticulture information and fund their own agricultural projects. So far, they've bought soaps, gels and bleach and installed 650 locally-made hand washing stations, benefiting over 3,000 people in six villages. Feed the Future is also training local entrepreneurs on how to manufacture soap and other essential supplies. Now that the initial infrastructure and response is in place, local governments are purchasing and supplying the soap, eliminating the need for emergency distribution and further equipping families to protect themselves.



## Going Digital

Many Feed the Future programs that provide information and advice to farming families and mothers are shifting to include COVID-19 information in their usual messages to these groups.

- In Guatemala, Feed the Future developed and launched a mobile application called AgriConecta for farmers in the Western Highlands. Small-scale farmers use the app to get individualized advice to improve production and can search information about markets, trends, prices and weather to make informed decisions. The app originally wasn't going to be released until later in the year, but Feed the Future accelerated development to help farmers overcome challenges posed by COVID-19.

- One Feed the Future program in Bangladesh has gone fully digital, using a mobile application to reach its network of 150+ local service providers. Messages highlight safety, hygiene and social distancing principles for agricultural service providers and producers on their farms.
- And in Ghana, we are helping the government ramp up information campaigns via radio, TV and text messaging to sensitize farmers to COVID-19. Feed the Future and its partners are also developing a digital payment system and training farmers on how to leverage digital technology during this time.



## Making Markets Work During Lockdown

We've all lived it: Social distancing, movement restrictions, businesses shutting down. Innovations that keep markets open safely are proving to be vital during this period -- both for customers as well as business owners and employees.

- Feed the Future is leveraging a previous research investment to fill this need. The Virtual Collection Center is a mobile app that the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems at the University of Florida developed to improve the transparency and organization of buying and selling of goats in Nepal. During this period of social distancing, buyers and sellers can use the app to connect and provide virtual goat inventory updates. Cooperative leaders can use the app to share price information with members and fulfill orders by inviting members to trade events. With digital access to goat markets, buyers and sellers can mitigate COVID-19's economic impacts.
- Following recent restrictions on public transportation in Ethiopia, many poultry farmers experienced difficulty in getting supplies to raise their chickens and reach customers. To help them navigate this new reality, Feed the Future arranged door-to-door delivery of supplies like feeding and drinking stations for rural poultry farmers. Feed the Future also began collecting eggs from farms and delivering them to buyers to ensure safe transactions and to keep business moving. So far, more than 50,000 eggs have been sold through this mobile market across four regions. Agriculture extension technicians and agronomists continue to provide support to farmers; door-to-door where possible, as well as via telephone to answer questions and offer advice.
- In Mozambique, USAID has partnered with the Development Finance Corporation to provide loan guarantees to two local banks that unlock finance for companies that help get food from rural producers to urban consumers, such as transportation and storage providers.



## Helping Small Businesses Stay Solvent

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) provide the majority of jobs as well as food in developing countries. They're also the hardest hit by COVID-19 containment measures and need tailored support, including finance, to stay afloat.

- Our Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation program is using a blend of existing and supplemental funding to set up a "Food Security SME COVID-19 Response Fund." It will offer grant funding paired with business advisory services to help the small companies it currently works with as well as companies that have graduated from its support in the past. The program is selecting six companies for initial support. In addition

to being critical to the food system, these companies also work closely with smallholder farmers and will have ripple effects among that community.

- In Uganda, Feed the Future and a local business services company are helping an entrepreneur pivot her yogurt company to stay in business, provide food locally, and stay safe. She has started marketing on social media and selling direct to consumers (contact free) as supermarket demand is down.



## The Business of Good Nutrition

When crises strike, history shows that nutrition drops, especially among the most vulnerable who already struggle to get adequate nutrition from food and health services. When it comes to COVID-19, not only are health systems in developing countries disrupted, but so are food systems. Nutrition is getting hit from all sides. Feed the Future is helping local businesses step in to fill the gap to keep nutrition strong during this time.

- In Tanzania, fortified flour provides critical nutrients for many families, as well as jobs. Our flagship Feed the Future program is distributing health care kits to a network of millers. The kits include hand sanitizer, locally-produced face masks, gloves, micro-nutrients (for fortified maize) and flour bags so the millers can safely continue production. The program is also working on an awareness campaign to encourage families to continue purchasing fortified flour from these millers to keep their health up during this difficult time.

- In Kenya, as with other countries in the region, the dairy industry is struggling amid COVID-19. Milk and dairy product sales in supermarkets, kiosks, restaurants and hotels are down as people stay home and movement is restricted. Delays in delivery are leading to spoiled dairy products, and processors have had to cut hours and staff while adjusting to decreased sales and increased safety precautions. Through the Alliance for Improved Nutrition and Food Processing, businesses like General Mills had already been providing remote advice and support to food processors in Africa. The Feed the Future program has continued to provide support during COVID-19 to help processors, including dairy companies in Kenya, assess changing market dynamics and determine the best strategy for staying solvent in the short-term and continuing to grow in the long-term. In Kenya, they have helped Aspendos Dairy Limited adapt production to meet growing demand for longer shelf-life milk, find opportunities to fill market needs in new areas, and sell their products online through social media and existing digital platforms and stores. This is helping the company overcome an initial 30 percent reduction in sales due to COVID-19



*Godknows Mkwala works for a small-scale farmer in Zimbabwe, milking a dairy cow that produces 10 liters of milk per day, on average.*

*Photo by Fintrac Inc.*