



AU-IBAR Consultative meeting on Impact of COVID-19 on the Animal Resources Sector in Africa and Identification of Mitigation Measures

Date: Thursday 21st May 2020

Time: 09:00 CVT (GMT-1) |
10:00 GMT | 11:00 WAT (GMT+1) |
12:00 CAT (GMT+2) | 13:00 EAT (GMT+3) | 14:00 MUT (GMT+4)



AU-IBAR CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ANIMAL RESOURCES SECTOR IN AFRICA AND IDENTIFICATION OF MITIGATION MEASURES

HELD ON 21 MAY 2020; 13HRS (EAT)

COMMUNIQUE

Introduction

AU-IBAR convened an Online Consultative Meeting on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Animal Resources Sector in Africa and Identification of Mitigation Measures on 21st May, 2020. **In attendance** were 150 participants from 50 countries (of which 47¹ were African Union Member States (MS)), 5 Regional Economic Communities (RECs)², Representatives of specialized regional institutions in animal resources (including livestock, fisheries and aquaculture³), Representatives of the European Union (EU), African Development Bank (AfDB), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); Representatives of Continental and Regional Agribusiness Associations and animal resources value chain actors⁴, Representatives of other AUC technical agencies (AU-PANVAC, AU-PATTEC and Africa CDC), AU-IBAR staff and Consultants. The List of Participants is appended.

Opening remarks were made by

- The Director of AU-IBAR Prof. Ahmed Elsawalhy who detailed the mandate and achievements of AU-IBAR since its inception in 1951 in animal resources development in Africa. He particularly cited the critical role AU-IBAR has played, in convening and organizing stakeholders, resource mobilization, building

¹The following Member States were represented: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Comoros, Congo, Republic of the Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

²The RECs that participated were: ECCAS, IGAD, COMESA, UMA and SADC

³Regional Institutions represented: PROPAC and CORET

⁴Continental Associations that participated included: AAP, AWARFA-N, AYL-FAIN, CAOPA, 2A2E-V, 2A-VSB and LVFO

institutions and strategic partnerships, human resource development and technical backstopping, for more coordinated and effective response to some of the biggest challenges the continent's animal resources sector has faced in the past including epidemics.

- The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Republic of South Africa who is the current Chair of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, Her Excellency (H.E) Ms Angela Thoko Didiza, made reference to the Declaration on Food Security and Nutrition passed at the AU Ministers of Agriculture virtual meeting convened on 16 April 2020. In it the Ministers urged MSs and stakeholders to better expound on the ramifications of COVID-19 and articulate coordinated mechanisms for bringing it under control at all levels.
- The African Union Commission (AUC) Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture H.E. Ambassador Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko commended AU-IBAR for leadership in convening the Meeting. Highlighting the unprecedented loss of jobs that could plunge millions of Africans back into extreme poverty, and the possibility that African could for the first time experience a recession, she reiterated the importance of the agriculture sector for addressing the impacts of COVID-19. This calls for an understanding of the socio-economic impacts and implementation of appropriate mitigation measures in the agricultural sector on which most of Africa's economies are dependent. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which represents the single biggest market globally, rationalizes a continental approach. Ambassador Sacko emphasized the AUC commitment to implement continental actions and called upon partners to provide support to ensure food systems are resilient to prevent a food security crisis. She called for solidarity and coordination as no single country can address the crisis alone.

Presentations by AU-IBAR and Stakeholders

A background presentation by AU-IBAR highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on Africa's Animal Resources Sector. The presentation outlined key weaknesses and factors that have rendered the animal resources sector and actors dependent on it vulnerable to the COVID-19 containment measures, and identified some of the emerging issues as the sector responds to COVID-19 measures. The Presentation called for a coordinated continental approach to addressing COVID-19 and future crises.

The background presentation was followed by statements from the RECs, Member States, and several Continental Animal Resources Platforms on impacts observed and mitigation measures undertaken at the different levels.

- **The RECs** emphasised the need for coordinated multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches at regional level to protect the contribution of the animal resources sector to the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable populations, as well as protection of input and food supply chains. The RECs proposed the development of guidelines, in line with COVID-19 containment, to facilitate cross border trade in animals and animal resourced products. The RECs highlighted the need for quantitative assessments to better understand the impacts of COVID-19, and to provide an evidence base to inform planning and implementation of effective mitigation measures. The RECs also underscored the need for learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, to strengthen disaster preparedness as the pandemic highlighted weaknesses and gaps.
- **Member States** highlighted that while COVID-19 containment measures of necessity focus on preserving human health, inadvertently impacting negatively on economic sectors, the animal resources

sector provides essential services warranting greater attention and investment. The pandemic has served to bring focus on a number of issues: the sanitary/phyto-sanitary, food safety and hygiene issues intricately linked to consumption of the animal resourced foods; the high cost of production on the continent versus cheaper imports now less available due to global movement restrictions; the weaknesses in feed, veterinary, insurance and other supply chains; and inadequacy of infrastructure across the animal resource value chains. MSs noted the need to protect the important role that the animal resources sector plays in livelihoods, in supporting women and in providing meaningful employment to stem youth migration. MSs called for utilizing the pandemic situation as an opportunity to re-think and re-engineer the sector to improve efficiencies and harnessing of its potential contribution to socio-economic development and growth. MSs called for support for greater bi-lateral, regional and continental cooperation to access inputs including raw materials, investment finance, support for trade corridors, addressing of food gaps through development of food chains, and exchange of technologies and information. Member States also shared best practice, providing experiences that have protected and undergirded continuity and growth of the sector in some countries. Some MS highlighted mitigation measures implemented including establishment of committees for food security, measures to allow movement of goods essential to the animal resources sector, and plans for long term interventions.

- **Continental Platforms** including women, youth, apiculture and fisheries representative associations provided a strong lens on the adverse effects COVID-19 has had on practical aspects of the sector, and emerging innovations as sector actors responded. In a sector that is highly dependent on movement of persons and goods, the impact of the pandemic was quickly felt among vulnerable population. Fishing is particularly affected, and while production has continued in most other AR sub-sectors, there have been disruptions in feed and other supply chains and transfer of products to markets, leading to increased post-harvest wastage. Trade and marketing of livestock and livestock products has also been affected. Eroded animal based livelihoods and loss of employment, along with sharp rises in food prices, has led some actors to resort to environmentally non-sustainable coping mechanisms such as charcoal burning and hunting. The abrupt disruption of institutional support, and diminished access to agricultural extension services and veterinary and public health services has greatly impacted the sector. Actors particularly decried the reduced public funding to the animal resources sector and premature termination of donor-funded projects due to re-allocation of budgets to the health sector. The apiculture association stressed the yet untapped potential the sector offers for food and nutrition security, health and well-being; and together with the youth association, espoused the need to harness youth energy through business development, and including youth in strategic planning and forward thinking to re-shape a more energised, innovative and business oriented sector. Women representatives elaborated the loss of income as processing and value addition activities were curtailed with disruption of supply and demand chains, and called for measures to ensure health and safety of women and children actors in the animal resources value chains. The association of veterinary regulators called for a greater investment in managing the link between human, animal and environmental health (one health approach); the need for affordable and reliable internet as a critical business service, and innovative and harmonized telemedicine guidelines to make veterinary services readily accessible.

Cooperating Strategic Partners (IsDB, AfDB and the EU) shared the focal areas of their stimulus packages to support African countries address COVID-19 impacts; and outlined how MS, RECs and animal resources sector actors can access the packages. EU announced that women, youth, pastoralists and environmental issues would be priorities, with funds accessible at country level. AfDB with a package of over \$10 billion, is focusing on rapid access to credit, with priority given to public health, and averting a food crisis. AfDB urged MS to advocate for animal resources to feature among national priorities for the sector to qualify for funding under its stimulus package. The IsDB shared its three Phase Strategy: \$1.2 Billion for

emergency preparedness; \$2.8 Billion for Medium Term to boost trade and SMEs in priority value chains, with a focus on supply chains; and \$8 Billion to build resilience and revitalize economies.

AU-IBAR commissioned consultants, Prof. Ahmed Eltigani Sidahmed & Prof. Cheikh Ly, presented the methodology and tools to undertake a Rapid Assessment in order to ascertain and provide indicative quantification of the impacts of COVID- 19 on Africa's animal resources sector; to document responses and recommendations on mitigation measures. These tools will be administered to MS, RECs, value chain and other actors across Africa's AR sector, and the results of the assessment validated continentally.

Recommendations and Way Forward

Priority Actions to Better Understand the Impacts of COVID-19, and Protect the Continuity and Contribution of Africa's Animal Resources Sector to Socio-Economic Development and Growth

- MSs and RECs to include/maintain recognition of the animal resources sector as a provider of essential and frontline services and goods in the fight against COVID-19, and maintain full budget support for the sector;
- MS, RECs, AU-IBAR and other stakeholders to mobilise resources to ensure the contribution of the animal resources sector to livelihoods, food and nutritional security is protected and supported;
- Strategic funding partners to recognize the critical contribution of the animal resources sector to food and nutrition security, livelihoods, income generation and employment and prioritise continued and increased funding to the sector
- There is an urgent need to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on economic sectors for evidence based decision making, AU IBAR to fast track the Rapid Assessment to document and quantify (where possible) the impacts of COVID- 19 on the animal resources sector with cooperation of MSs, RECs, all sector actors, and strategic partners;
- Given the high mobility and human interaction in the animal resources sector, and the handling of animals and perishable goods, protocols be developed to ensure safety of actors and enhance implementation of sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures and food safety and hygiene

Approaches to Strengthen Mitigation of COVID-19 Impacts

- Coordinated actions in the animal resources sector across the continent to be initiated under the leadership of AU-IBAR;
- MS and RECs to adopt and implement policies, strategies and legislation on One Health.
- Prioritization of funding to buttress and protect input and food supply chains, enhance diversification and transformation of products and marketing channels
- AU-IBAR and RECs to establish strategic actions (particularly at regional level) that engage the youth and women in inputs and services;

Accessing COVID-19 Stimulus Packages and Embedding More Strategic Long Term Approaches

- MS to elevate animal resources as a priority and frontline sector for addressing and mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 in order to mainstream the sector to attract support from stimulus packages to help recovery and build resilience;
- Involve African youth at the forefront of post COVID-19 animal resources development to provide jobs, and support innovation to generate technologies that support new ways of doing business;
- Fast track trade, RECs and MS to promote E-commerce as a means of reducing the impact of COVID-19 on trade and marketing of animal commodities;

- Animal Resources sector stakeholders to harness lessons learned from the crisis and rethink and re-engineer for a more robust and energised animal resources sector post COVID-19

In her closing remarks, H.E Commissioner DREA Ambassador Sacko commended the Meeting as an important platform that has generated useful insights to inform action in the agricultural sector which is at the frontline in mitigating COVID-19 impacts. The animal resources sector assessment and analysis will serve the whole agricultural sector and provide a precedent for other assessments of COVID-19 impacts. The pandemic is evolving, with an urgency to address co-lateral economic issues. The Assessment will provide information and an evidence base for shaping mitigating measures and recommendations to enhance allocation of resources. The Commissioner lent support to the call by AfDB, which is a Member of the continental Task Force to address COVID-19 impacts, urging Member States to prioritize the livestock sector. H.E concluded by assuring delegates that the output from the Meeting and the Rapid Assessment will feed into the Ministerial Meeting on inter-African trade to be organized in a month to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA.