

Guidelines to minimize the effects of COVID-19 outbreak on the grain marketing season



COVID-19 is disrupting global, regional, and local supply chains of many essential goods including agricultural products and inputs. AGRA is determined to ensure that this outbreak does not lead to food insecurity and exacerbate rural poverty.

AGRA partners who are responsible for developing output markets engage in the following activities throughout the agricultural season:

1. Estimating the demand/mobilizing off-takers
2. Production planning
3. Mobilizing input suppliers
4. Mobilizing smallholder farmers and producer/farmer organizations to understand off-taker's quality and quantity requirements
5. Volume-based contracting
6. Mobilizing finance for inputs
7. Develop the supply chain of quality-enhancing technologies
8. Production forecast
9. Pre-harvest contracting/price based
10. Facilitating supply logistics
11. Evaluating the season's performance

The activities mentioned above require direct contact with farmers and off-takers. However, these contacts must be minimized or digitized to avoid human-to-human transmission of COVID-19.

Therefore, AGRA recommends the following:

- 1** Each partner should use off-takers' contact details (telephone and or email) to plan for supply logistics. Partners can also link up with VBAs or leaders of farmer groups to prepare for aggregation, logistics, and settlement/payment (e-aggregation and mobile money). Whenever necessary, face to face meeting with off-takers (one on one, not in groups) with the adequate social distancing can be considered.
- 2** To enhance supply chain efficiency and reduce transaction costs, and meet quality and quantity specifications (especially aggregating enough quantity to fill a truck) is crucial. Off-takers or third-party logistic service providers can deploy vehicles upon confirmation of truckloads that are ready for pick up. VBAs, farmer groups or other other means of crop aggregation in the same vicinity can pursue a joint venture to quickly achieve required volumes.
- 3** The critical market connectors will be farmer group leaders, VBAs, or lead farmers. Local government extension workers will also be instrumental as they can work with government leaders to minimize human interaction while allowing the movement of agricultural produce.
- 4** Liaise with the ministries of agriculture, industry, and trade in your country. Assist them in designing and implementing the contingency plan for output and input markets. They have a wider zone of influence that goes beyond AGRA's footprint. Working with local government will also help adopt local solutions that are in line with the prevailing situation in each location.
- 5** Ensure that each aggregation area has access to water, soap, or other disinfectants, and people are using to wash their hands every 15 minutes.
- 6** Avoid unnecessarily gathering and adhere to local government safety precautions.
- 7** Ensure that people who are involved in aggregating and transporting the produce wear masks and gloves as advised by local health authorities.
- 8** Limit the number of people working or visiting aggregation centers and ensure that no unauthorized people are visiting the aggregation centers.
- 9** Coordinate with other partners to plan for the next season and ensure that farmers have access to inputs and extension on time.