

Tanzanian small-scale farmers receive support to improve food security

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will provide funding to assist 6,240 vulnerable small-scale farmers in rural Tanzania impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The IFAD grant will help farmers access inputs, provide market linkages and access agricultural and market information to improve their productivity and increase their resilience.



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Growth in Tanzania's agricultural sector was projected to decline from 5% in 2019 to 2% in 2020 due to the recent locust infestation and the Covid-19 pandemic. The decline in growth has resulted in a number of negative impacts including the high cost of inputs and limited access to markets with small-scale farmers bearing the brunt.

Through its Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF), IFAD will provide US\$882,841 as part of its Covid-19 response in Tanzania. At this time when the Covid-19 crisis threatens to push another 500,000 Tanzanians into poverty, the grant aims to minimise the impact on livelihoods, resilience and food security. It will target farmers - half of whom will be women and 30% youth, as well as agro-dealers, off-takers and extension officers in Dodoma, Njombe, Simiyu, Singida and Unguja regions.

Despite the myriad of challenges they encounter, including low yields, crop cultivation remains the main economic activity for most small-scale farmers in Tanzania. To help boost their productivity, the grant will distribute 23,650 kilograms of bio-fortified maize seeds, 14,460 kilograms of sunflower seeds and 971,000 seedlings of fruits and vegetables.

Sustainable food systems

In addition, the grant will help safeguard the gains made under the Marketing Infrastructure, Value Addition and Rural Finance Support Programme (MIVARF) - an IFAD supported project that closed in 2020 – by using its existing agro-input distribution system to reach the targeted farmers.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light the vulnerability of our food systems. To ensure we build a sustainable and resilient food system, we need to recognise the role small-scale farmers play and empower them to access inputs, information and markets for their produce," said Francesco Rispoli, IFAD country director for Tanzania.

Border closures and strict Covid-19 protocols have limited access to agricultural markets for many small-scale farmers. To improve this, the grant will support the National Food Reserve Agency purchase maize grain from the farmers, under its current plan to boost its reserve. The grant will also leverage existing MIVARF platforms to link farmers to additional markets.

Extension services can play a key role in increasing small-scale farmers' productivity. Unfortunately, due to the limited number of extension officers, most farmers are not reached in time. To help bridge this gap, the grant will support the scaling up of the M-Kilimo platform, a mobile-based agriculture application that helps farmers' access extension and advisory services and market-related information at the palm of their hands.

Since 1978, IFAD has financed 16 rural development programmes and projects in the United Republic of Tanzania for a total cost of US\$917.0m, with an IFAD investment of US\$402.5m, directly benefiting more than 4 million rural households.

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