

Closing Remarks at IFAD Innovation Talk No. 8 on “Boosting Intra-African Trade to Build Resilience of Small-Scale Farmers”.

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As Prepared for Delivery

1. Thank you for the introduction. It has been a pleasure to join you today at the first IFAD Innovation Talk of 2022 to discuss how increased intra-African trade can stabilize regional food supplies, increase market resilience and give small-scale farmers greater market access. It has been a very interesting discussion. I would like to close by underscoring only a few points.
2. The first is that, as we've heard today, **despite remarkable development progress in Africa over the last two decades,¹ COVID-19 has taken a toll.** In 2019, the number of extreme poor was estimated to be 439 million, which is more than two-thirds of the world's extreme poor². The share of the population suffering from hunger and food insecurity is also rising. In 2020, one in five people faced hunger in Africa: about 46 million more people when compared with 2019. In fact, nearly 60% of the African population were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2020.³
3. These impacts are strongly felt by rural people, who are especially vulnerable due to poverty, undernourishment and lack of access to healthcare.
4. As we heard today, measures to contain the pandemic and its impact in Africa are reducing trade in a region where countries are highly dependent on global trade. **This leads me to my second point: we need innovative ways to address these challenges.**
5. For IFAD, this means solutions that recognize the role of small-scale farmers⁴. For example, IFAD launched a multi-donor COVID-19 Rural Poor Stimulus Facility in response to the pandemic to improve rural resilience in the crisis. As an example of a Facility project, the East

¹ [How COVID-19 has impacted the SDGs in Africa | Africa Renewal \(un.org\)](#)

² [How COVID-19 has impacted the SDGs in Africa | Africa Renewal \(un.org\)](#)

³ [Policy Brief #93. UN DESA.](#)

⁴ <https://www.ifad.org/en/covid19>

and Southern Africa regional project supports enterprises and smallholder livelihoods through capacity building and ensuring access to inputs, services and markets.

6. Intra-regional trade and trade policy also play a fundamental role in fighting the effects of the pandemic, but policies must be based on evidence and data to assist decision-making. This is how to define the appropriate level for interventions, identify and tackle capacity gaps, and recognise effective institutions for design and implementation.
7. IFAD supports this, hence the importance of tools such as the Africa Agriculture Trade Monitor.
8. As we heard from our keynote speakers, policies, mechanisms and institutions that promote and support intra-regional trade can be active in this regard. They can help stabilize domestic supplies, reduce trading costs, increase crop yields and remove trade barriers.
9. This is why I followed the conversations around the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) today with keen interest. The AfCFTA agreement, has indeed the potential to uplift about 30 million people from extreme poverty⁵, but achieving this will require policy reforms and trade facilitation measures.
10. As we heard from other speakers, some potential transformations needed include the harmonization of trade regimes, unification of currencies, and policies that promote the free movement of people, capacity building and the decentralization of key institutions.
11. **Which leads me to my final point: The changes needed underscore why it is important that we work together.** IFAD is ready to continue providing assistance and contributing to achieve the goals of AfCFTA and our other stakeholders by strengthening collaboration in the region and supporting evidence and science-based decision-making.
12. I would like to conclude by thanking our speakers and our partners at today's event: Akademiya 2063 and IFPRI, as well as my colleagues in the Change Delivery and Innovation Unit and the East and Southern Africa division. Thank you all.

⁵ [The African Continental Free Trade Area \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/)