

RUFORUM Webinar Series (2020)

Introductory Note for Webinar 5

Date: 29 July 2020

Time: 14.00-16.30 East African Standard Time

Building a Regional Collective Response to Invasive pests and transboundary crop-livestock diseases

Globally, the trends and patterns of crises is unceasing. It is as though the world is in an alarming downward spiral. An increased intensity, frequency and spatiality of invasive species of transboundary nature has been in the rise. These have now included transboundary plant pests and diseases, transboundary plant insect pests, transboundary plant diseases, and transboundary invasive weeds. All these have caused significant effect on global agriculture though the magnitude and threat distribution across countries and regions are not well quantified. Earlier studies conducted in the USA show that these epidemics and pandemics have inflicted an economic and environmental damage cost to the tune of US\$120 billion annually, with pest insects alone causing crop losses estimated at US\$13 billion annually in addition to about US\$1.2 billion that farmers spend on insecticides. Recent analysis by CABI on the economic cost of five invasive alien species shows that smallholder farmers in six eastern African countries lost an estimated US\$1 billion annually and this trend is projected to continue for the next 5-10 years or longer. Owing to the fact that Africa's food security is dynamically driven by the production and agricultural stability of smallholder farmers, taking coordinated and strategic interventions at a regional and international level is no longer an option but an issue of immediate need.

The Africa region amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic situation is similarly dealing with an incursion of transboundary pests, desert locusts, and earlier devastating attacks by the fall armyworm that affected and continue to affect food security of about 300 million people. Further, other invasive species such as the larger grain borer, a pest with ability to damage stored grain to pulp (originating from Central America), potato cyst nematode, microscopic soil dwelling roundworms destroy potatoes worldwide, and fruit flies species of *Bactrocera zonata*, *B. dorsalis* and *B. latifrons* that are native to Asia are devastating the horticulture sector. *Bactrocera dorsalis* has affected Africa's exports to Europe and other emerging markets in North America. In the recent past, Africa has also seen an increased presence of the citrus psyllid, *Diaphorina citri*, a devastating vector that nearly caused a total collapse of the citrus industry in Florida, USA. Additionally, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) has been reported in dromedary camels in Eastern Africa as well as in North Africa. Further, there are frequent epidemics of transboundary livestock disease such as African swine fever, foot and mouth disease, peste des petits ruminants, Rift valley fever and anthrax (especially in wild life) that decimate livestock populations and curtail trade in livestock products from Africa with the rest of the world.

The above noted invasive plants, pests and diseases continue to mount pressure on Africa's agriculture, environment and livelihoods. Projections point to a further devastation over Sub-Saharan Africa. The drivers of these dynamics are increased trade activities, movement of people, plants and animals, which are further

accentuated by conflicts and crises, globalisation and climate change as well as reduced resilience in production systems due to decades of agricultural intensification. As these trends are unlikely to change in the near-term. Thus it is critical and urgent that Africa as a region mobilizes itself to tackle these challenges including the marginally discussed challenges of bioterrorism.

Evidence from regional initiatives undertaken by CABI, ICIPE, and FAO within Africa point to limited capacity within the continent and in particular at country level to detect and implement management measures. Phytosanitary capacity and systems in the continent is considerably low especially in conflict and post-conflict countries as well as in many countries that are rapidly increasing their trade volumes with other countries in and outside Africa. Early action in detection and control, stronger phytosanitary capacities and systems, continental and nationwide surveillance, and integration of invasive species threats into national disaster response, interdisciplinary-cross border research to develop novel solutions and collaborative resource mobilisation are needed. These grand actions require systematic, coordinated, consolidated, proactive and sufficiently financed national, regional and international effort. No country can successfully tackle these challenge alone owing to the transboundary character of epidemics and pandemics and interconnected ecosystems as well as porous borders of many African countries.

This webinar on building a regional collective response to invasive pests and transboundary crop-livestock diseases seeks to deliberate on: (i) Intensity, costs and further threats from invasive pests and diseases in Africa region: science basis and the impact so far; (ii) Regional policy interventions and institutional support mechanisms (AUC, DLO, RECs, SROs, AOAD); (iii) Building collective financing for regional level response; and (iv) Strengthening Africa's capacity for confronting invasive pests and diseases in the 21st Century. Integration of research actors including universities appear imperative and urgent.

Panelists

1. Hon. Vincent Ssempijja, Minister of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries, Government of Uganda, Kampala-Uganda
2. Prof. Jean Jacques Mbonigaba Muhinda, Executive Secretary ASARECA, Entebbe-Uganda
3. Dr Wafula Kinyanjui, Animal Expert, IGAD Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD), Djibouti
4. Prof. Ibrahim Adam El-Dukheri, Executive Secretary, Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development, Khartoum-Sudan
5. Prof. Hamadi Boga, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock, Nairobi-Kenya

Discussants:

1. Prof. John H. Nderitu, University of Nairobi, Kenya
2. Prof. Lise Kristen, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Moderator: Ms. Diana Akullo Ogwang, AUC-DREA, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia

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