

UNSUNG HEROES

HOW SMALL FARMERS COPE WITH COVID-19



International
Trade
Centre

ALLIANCES
FOR ACTION

TRADE IMPACT
FOR GOOD

Unsung Heroes

How Small Farmers
Cope with COVID-19

About the report

The global pandemic has hit small farmers with disruptions in health, food security, transport, finance and demand. It has also increased the cost of doing business. Smallholder farmers, already dealing with the effects of a climate and price crisis, are taking emergency measures for resilience. At the same time, they are preparing long-term strategies to regain competitiveness.

This report relays the message of smallholder farmers on COVID-19 impact and recovery. It provides insights on what support they need from all value chain actors.

It builds on 14 interviews with partners of the International Trade Centre's Alliances for Action programme.

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Digital image on the cover: Farmer in Jimma, Oromia, Ethiopia (Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union).
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Foreword

This report offers a glimpse into farming communities at the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis, whose story largely has been in the shadows.

These farmers produce the food that sustains us and contribute to global food security. Meanwhile, they deal with challenges linked to a triple livelihood crisis triggered by climate change, volatile commodity prices and the COVID-19 global pandemic.

We share their stories through the testimonials of farmer organizations, as well as buyers and institutions that support them. Their insights highlight the critical need to set up emergency responses, while honing competitive growth strategies through alliances.

Our role as an institution is to help small firms in developing countries become more competitive, trade more profitably and improve their livelihoods and quality of life. We operate within a framework of inclusive and sustainable development, guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We have drawn these stories from our Alliances for Action programme and network, which we have developed and refined over time. Alliances for Action encourages collaboration among smallholder farmers, cooperatives, artisans, brands and consumers in order to build more sustainable, inclusive, collaborative and competitive value chains at every step.

This approach makes a tangible impact, by empowering producers and small companies and by promoting climate-smart practices, value addition and product-market diversification. The results are leading to better trade and growth, shock resilience and higher incomes.

The perceptions presented in this report come from longstanding partners who agreed to share candid accounts of a sensitive crisis situation because they have a relationship of trust with the International Trade Centre (ITC). Their openness enables us to learn about real hopes and concerns and to understand what practical, immediate and lasting solutions are needed.

Here is the key: Resilience for today and growth for tomorrow. ITC is fully committed to supporting smallholder farmers and small enterprises to ensure resilience and growth through adversity. Let's join forces to create a network of actors looking to sustainably transform their economies and elevate their quality of life.

To navigate this crisis successfully, we must reform our 'business as usual' scenario through collective action for global and local impact.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dorothy Tembo'.

Dorothy Tembo
Acting Executive Director
International Trade Centre

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Acronyms

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars, and all references to tons are to metric tons.

CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CLAC	Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers
FUN	Farmers Union Network
ITC	International Trade Centre

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