



Tbilissi, 21 May 2020

**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE UN, G-20, AND NATIONAL
GOVERNMENTS
ON COVID-19 AND AGRICULTURE
FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

The Union of European Academies for Sciences applied to Agriculture, Food and Nature (U E A A) is writing to call for a set of internationally coordinated, locally relevant actions to **address the medium- and longer-term impacts of COVID19 on agriculture, food, and nutrition security.**

This UEAA approach is based on the need to correct the major system deficiencies highlighted during the COVID 19 crisis.

MAJOR IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND NUTRITION SECURITY.

This health crisis is creating a serious food and humanitarian crisis, especially for the countries of the South. This raises questions about the survival of the globalization of agricultural markets. Interdependence is likely to be sacrificed and the lack of solidarity between the countries established as a rule.

URGENT NEED TO TAKE ACTIONS

The measures of confinement in particular, provoke a sudden halt of most economic activities and a world recession. It will be the poorest and most fragile populations who will have the most difficulty in coping with the crisis and especially regarding the vital function of feeding.

In line with the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, **the U E A A suggests 4 major areas to be developed and further included in the global strategy to react to this COVID 19 crisis.**

1. Seeking self-sufficiency for strategic products

Numerous development programs in developing countries have made it possible, almost everywhere, to increase food production, but projects must be given a new dimension and greater ambition allowing to increase the **local productions** of wheat, rice, corn, millet, legumes, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, or else traditional and more resilient crops as cassava, cowpea, sorghum, sweet potatoes while respecting the imperatives of sustainable development.

In particular in Africa, the size of the various countries, the richness of the ecosystems and the weak financial capacities existing militate for a policy of continental food self-sufficiency, based on the exploitation of complementarities.

2. Implementing targeted development programs

The budgets allocated by States or International Organizations to develop agriculture today are derisory compared to the hundreds of billions of euros proposed to boost the global economy. An intense investment in Agriculture and food systems is more than necessary, particularly in the countries of the South.

Various scenarios could be implemented but this crisis should be a good opportunity to develop ‘**territorialized food systems**’. Those systems are built on the quality of the products, autonomy through territorial anchoring, sustainable development, industrial and tertiary eco-design, proximity, and local, national and international solidarity.

3. Restoring attractiveness to agricultural jobs.

In Africa, but also in Europe, it is necessary to give back to the professions of agriculture, agri-food industries and services and of the rural world attractiveness they have lost. It is of paramount importance to help young people generations who have a bad image of agricultural professions. It is abnormal that for example, on two continents such as Africa and Europe, the peasants are globally discredited.

In the context of the countries of the South, there is an urgent need to transform job seekers into project leaders and to invest in technological innovation. This implies that a major investment must be directed to **agricultural and agro-food education** and major reforms be done wherever necessary.

4. Strengthening scientific and technical research

Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) are essential in addressing COVID-19 and other global threats and challenges. The revolution in ICT and in biology can help re-imagine the food and agricultural systems to provide food security to the poor, and to transform the sector by reducing its environmental and climate footprints. **Disruptive innovations are needed and more transdisciplinary research should be implemented** to develop more resilience of our agricultural and food security systems in the medium term. On this point, it seems essential to considerably strengthen the exchanges and shared research work between Europe and the countries of the South. Hence a major effort is to be made to invest in such collaborative research between the countries of the North and of the South.

Finally, it is our firm belief that by acting collectively for the common good, we can help human society overcome the multi-faceted challenges to the agricultural and food security system brought on by the pandemic, and place society on a much stronger and more sustainable path of growth and balanced development. The time for action is now.