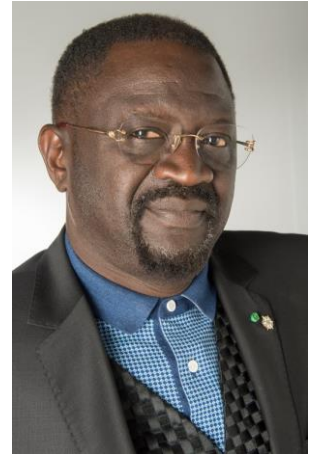


Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to go into a severe recession this year, its first recession in 25 years, got worried the World Bank in its latest Africa's Pulse report¹, dated April 08th. Unlike other areas in the world, covid-19 first manifested itself in Africa in a major economic crisis, even before the arrival of the surge in health systems.

*The global covid-19 crisis notably disrupted food supply chains and triggered a food security crisis in the African continent. As such, we asked our IFGR member, **Dr. Papa Abdoulaye Seck** to bring us his view and suggestions on the agricultural question in Africa.*

Dr. Papa Abdoulaye Seck is the former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Senegal, and current Ambassador of Senegal republic in Italy. He kindly agreed to share the paper submitted to the French Academy of Agriculture², of which Dr. Seck is a also member. A second platform will follow next week.



We must remember the negation of the formula according to which "Man is the measure of all things" because he is still struggling to turn uncertainty into risk. Uncertainty is experienced and risk is managed, the latter being the probability of an adverse event occurring.

"Climate change, with its priceless array of unfortunate consequences, questions our very existence."

From our belvedere and with our telescopes, we can see that:

- Climate change, with its priceless array of unfortunate consequences, questions our very

existence. It is even the source of a certain fatalism, despite scientific progress;

- Food crises have not yet disappeared from our radars, in spite of the capital of knowledge and technology generated on a daily basis by humans;

- The construction of productive, sustainable and equitable food systems is becoming more complex because of the erosion of biodiversity and the disappearance of ecosystems due to environmentally-destructive agricultural practices and human irresponsibility.

This digression refers to an indomitable obviousness: the world is rich with his hard-to-grasp choreographies.

¹ Available on : <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33541>

² Available on : <https://www.academie-agriculture.fr/academie/presentation/english-presentation>

Containment instead of work, to get out of the rut

Like the rest of the world, we are currently in Italy in a country heavily affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Considering the very difficult situation, we have never failed to prescribe, to our compatriots, relatives and employees, serenity, vigilance, courage and respect for recommendations scientific and measures enacted by the public authorities.

"if this pandemic persists, then, consciously or unconsciously, we will question our common will to live together."

The relevance of this assertion was confirmed following an implausible scene recently experienced in the "Eternal City", Rome. Indeed, on leaving a bank, a pedestrian almost ran away so as not to cross our path. His signal was clear and noticeable: if this pandemic persists, then, consciously or unconsciously, we will question our common will to live together. After this sequence, at the unusual limit, we crossed Rome to return home, with the strong impression of being in a new city: useless traffic lights, closed shops, an Olympian calm in the streets, people in disguise, etc. In this tense atmosphere, we are far from knowing and decoding all the secrets of our evolutionary universe. Faced with this hustle and bustle, it goes without saying that, at any time, this great champion that is human can be forced to radically change their posture, attitudes and behaviour and choose confinement instead of work.

What about African agriculture's response to the food needs of contained populations?

We are faced with a double equation: defeating the invisible enemy at all costs and ensuring an adequate response of the productive capacities of our ecosystems to feed people, now and over the long term. For the African continent, the current situation could have repercussions on the performance of our agriculture and on the satisfaction of our needs. And, let us never forget that we are a net importer of agricultural products.

Incidentally, we must remember the 2008 crisis and the "hunger riots", which it induced in several African capitals, in order to rationalize our reflection on the future.

For our part, any action relating to the African agricultural sector must consider the following elements:



Global food supply chains are complex. For example, they include Ugandan cabbage producers

- 1- Investments by small producers are likely to decline due to the inevitable drop in remittances from emigrants;
- 2- The slowdown in the marketing years will imply a drop in income and will be the second factor in reducing investment in family farms ;
- 3- Africa is strongly threatened by a locust crisis, already noticeable in East Africa ;
- 4- The preparation periods for the agricultural campaigns will be shorter than usual;
- 5- Upstream/downstream contracting will be threatened by uncertainty;
- 6- The agricultural industrial fabric will be subjected to severe tests due to the premature end of the agricultural marketing years in some countries, hence the major difficulty in securing the resource to be processed ;
- 7- The international agricultural market will certainly see its efficiency slow down, driven by a downturn for the satisfaction of domestic markets.



African farmers will be negatively impacted by losses in export markets

Faced with all these factors mentioned, African farmers need to review their specifications, as well as decision-makers on their support strategies.

Without being exhaustive, we formulate a few avenues:

- **1st suggestion:** significantly increase input subsidies (seeds, fertilizers, plant products, agricultural equipment) for small producers to secure domestic agricultural supply.
- **2nd suggestion:** reduce the price per cubic metre of water to strengthen irrigated agriculture, increase productivity and better spread production over time and space.
- **3rd suggestion:** develop now a response plan for a possible locust crisis so as not to jeopardize domestic market supply and rural incomes.
- **4th suggestion:** deferring repayment of all bank loans related to the agricultural sector to avoid a loss of solvency of rural actors.
- **5th suggestion:** develop a plan to support the agricultural processing industries to record more value added.
- **6th suggestion:** develop self-consumption in urban areas through the promotion of urban and peri-urban agriculture. To do this, we can think, among other things, of micro-gardening and under-shelter crops.
- **7th suggestion:** strengthen food distribution chains with a view to building bridges between deficit and surplus areas to reduce transaction costs and promote fair pricing.



COVID-19: Latest news of the world by IFGR

Management of coronavirus or Covid-19: confined African population and food needs - 2020.04.27

Doctor Papa Abdoulaye Seck, Member of the French Academy of Agriculture and Ambassador of Senegal Republic in Rome, Italy

Today more than ever, human solidarity is more visible, more legible and more palpable. Is it then a new beginning where each of us is finally aware "that it is what it is only in and through a system"?

Doctor Papa Abdoulaye Seck

Member of the French Academy of Agriculture
Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal in Rome
Former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Senegal



To be continued: we will be seeing Doctor Papa Abdoulaye Seck again next week! With his colleague Jacques Brulhet, they will talk to us about the consequences of the health crisis on world food security.