

(Urban) Farming, Food Justice and Co-Research on Covid-19 lockdown impact on local food systems

Participatory Community Research with farmers in Indonesia, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe



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Mfuleni Farmers at Heart

The two co-researchers of the covid-19 impact on local food systems- project Mama Hazel (left) and Nozibele (right) provide essential work: they are farmers in Mfuleni township 40 km from Cape Town. They are also trainers for home gardening and collect vegetable seeds for a local seed bank. Their coping strategies to the Covid-19- lockdown: preparing new vegetable gardens and opening a food bank.

Picture source: Nomonde Buthelezi

What is the background of this project?

The covid-19 pandemic has spread worldwide at rapid speed, forcing national governments to make decisions that also have a significant impact on local food systems. Border closures are isolating countries from international commodity imports. Farmers face challenges in harvesting and selling their produce. The lock-down is forcing people to rethink their daily food needs. This is especially true for vulnerable communities in the Global South, which neither have the financial means to stock up on food during the lock-down period nor easy access to shopping facilities during curfews. In light of this extreme situation and related supply shortages, local value chains are central to prevent hunger crises.

"The increasing number of confirmed covid-19 cases worldwide is a cause of great concern. But we don't want to be just a mere figure in this crisis. We want to share what we farmers can do to maintain our local food systems after the lockdown."

So Mrs. Nomonde Buthelezi, an urban farmer from a township in Cape Town, who initiated this research on 31 March 2020 by approaching Nicole Paganini, whom she knew from a former research project on urban farming. Nicole is affiliated with the Centre for Rural Development (SLE) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, which responded promptly and positively. Only four days later, five partner regions had confirmed their participation to document farmers' 1) challenges, 2) coping strategies, and 3) innovations that arise during the Covid19- pandemic.

This cooperation did not come out of nowhere but is based on past co-research projects in Indonesia, Mozambique, and South Africa. A new partner from Zimbabwe joined. Local universities and NGOs that cooperated with SLE before are also involved. All cooperating

partners are willing to strengthen the existing relationship and to contribute to joint research projects in the future.

Everyone contributes drawing on their own strengths. Mr. Tandu Ramba from Motivator Kondoran in Toraja, Indonesia, has a lot of experience with digital tools and proposed the [KoboToolbox](#) for data collection. All involved partners including research farmers use this tool by now. Mrs. Fezile Ncube from Hope Tariro Trust in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, mobilised village animators of her community development programme to take part. Mr. Kustiwa Adinata from JAMTANI, Java, Indonesia, was able to mobilize more than 100 farmers in the second round of data collection. Mr. Alberto Luis from ABIODES in Maputo, Mozambique, helped to overcome technical barriers by conducting phone interviews with participating farmers. Mrs. Nomonde Buthelezi from Cape Town, South Africa, mobilised marginalized farmers that aren't affiliated to NGOs to do justice to the pledge of "leaving no one behind".

What are the users' expectations with this project?

Researchers of the involved universities (see biopic on page 4) wish to publish a research paper after completion of the project. The NGOs (see also page 5) of the five regions want to support farmers to become active and self-reliant citizens and to strive for effective improvements of local food supply in their respective region. Farmers want to maintain their income by selling their crops and livestock, and expect to find innovative solutions for better integration into local food value chains – also post-covid-19.

All members of the research communicate regularly through WhatsApp-groups. The data are shared through the KoboToolbox. If data are published, they are anonymised and handled according to good scientific practice. Prior to publishing photographs or quotes including names in social media and prior to passing on this data to news agencies, the right holder is asked permission. The right holder is the person who took the picture or provided the information. Other people in the picture also need to give their permission.

What are the objectives of the project?

The aim is to work with producer groups in Cape Town (South Africa), Masvingo (Zimbabwe), Maputo (Mozambique), Pangandaran/Cilacap (West and Central Java, Indonesia), and Toraja (South Sulawesi, Indonesia) to document the impacts of the restrictions related to the regional and national response to the covid-19- health-crisis. The project's focus lies on the impact on local food systems as experienced by small-scale farmers and city dwellers in vulnerable communities. The research is farmer-led, which means that scientific knowledge and farmers' experiences are integrated, and scientist and farmers team up as co-researchers on equal terms in order to learn from each other. The co-research follows also the principle of producing balanced outcomes. Practice-oriented solutions to support farmers' livelihoods are as important as scientific evidence on coping strategies to the covid-19 restrictions.

The co-research specifically aims at

- documenting the impacts of the lockdown/restrictions on local food systems in marginalised communities;
- documenting the impacts of the lockdown/restrictions on production and marketing of farm produce;

- analysing price developments, availability, and access to food during the lockdown;
- providing a platform to discuss coping strategies and innovation in food-insecure communities;
- developing a vulnerability assessment, which includes further observations such as solidarity ties, fears, and the impact of social distancing;
- creating evidence how the crisis affects local food systems and developing policy recommendations detailing which solutions for local, equitable food systems contribute to greater sustainability post-covid19

The research has an action-oriented component and provides support for feasible innovations which are to be developed by the co-researchers during the data collection. These simple innovations might include coping strategies, such as

- permits for producers to go about their day as needed;
- access to necessary inputs;
- transport and logistics, fridges/storage, food preparation and kitchen space;
- hygiene training and procedures for harvest to the point of sale/donation, access to necessary equipment and consumables;
- financial support or preferential procurement for food aid, food hubs/banks in vulnerable areas.

Data are collected on a weekly basis on April 4th, April 10th, April 14th, April 21st, and April 28th. In each region, a minimum of 25 farmers is targeted to fill the survey form. During the second stage of the project in May or June, we will jointly discuss solutions to improve local food systems for farmers and producers, and also explore funding opportunities to put these solutions into practice.

Schedule and budget

Involved scientists and farmers volunteer their time to collect and analyse the data. Some work, however, has to be done by paid professionals. External funding is also required for communication and coordination in Southern Africa as well as for implementing small innovative projects.

1 phase	2 phase
1 April to 29 April 2020	1 Mai to 30 June 2020
Monitoring of the impact of the covid-19 lockdown/restrictions on local food systems	Crisis as opportunity: solutions to improve local food systems

Budget

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airtime Southern Africa: 300 Euro • Local coordination Southern Africa: 600 Euro • Translation: 500 Euro • Data cleaning: 500 Euro • Local coordination and airtime Indonesia: financially supported by Bread for the World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 2,000 Euro per food region through crowd funding for innovative solutions: 10,000 Euro
1,900 Euro	10,000 Euro

When will the project be a success?

Success factor 1: Complete time series and comprehensive data from farmer co-researchers in five food regions documenting their challenges and coping strategies.

Success factor 2: Results are shared in local communities, and local authorities are provided with factsheets and policy briefs.

Success factor 3: Good practice examples on sustainable, fair and equitable local food supply in vulnerable communities are shared in press and social media.

Success factor 4: Funding for phase 2 (implementation of innovations for sustainable, fair and equitable local food supply) is secured.

Success factor 5: A joint research paper is published to share the results and insights with a wider academic audience, and to present innovations for sustainable, fair and equitable local food systems post-covid19.

Biopic:

The “(Urban) Farming, Food Justice and Co-Research on Covid-19 lockdown impact on local food systems - Participatory Community Research with farmers in Indonesia, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe” is carried out by an international and interdisciplinary group of researchers and scholar activists with many years of experience in community-led research. The field survey is coordinated by the Centre for Rural Development (SLE) of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU). We are affiliate to the Institute for Geography and the Institute for Social Development of the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the Institute for Critical Food Studies, the Center for Policy Analysis and Department of Geography of the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM) in Maputo, and the Department of Agriculture at the Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar (UNHAS). Field coordinators are the Hope Tariro Trust, Masvingo, The Motivator Kondoran of Toraja Church, the farmer organisation JAMTANI, Abiodes and Cape Town.

Project Lead: Silke Stöber, HU-SLE, Germany

Research Coordination: Nicole Paganini, HU-SLE, Germany

Research Team:

Kustiwa Adinata, JAMTANI, Indonesia

Nomonde Buthelezi, Urban Research Farmer, Cape Town, South Africa

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Alberto Luis, Abiodes, Maputo, Mozambique

Fezile Ncube, Hope Tariro Trust, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

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Tandu Ramba, Motivator Kondoran, Indonesia

Nedim Sulejmanovic, FU, Germany

Haidee Swanby, Institute for Critical Food Studies, UWC, South Africa

Daniel Tevera, Geographical Department, UWC, South Africa

Participants from farmer communities and NGOs:

	<p>Cape Town: An independent collective of small-scale urban farmers who cultivate a variety of vegetables in food gardens within the townships of the city. Main challenge: the lock-down led to a collapse of the existing markets and impede farmers' access to their food gardens. In addition there is weak access to food in the confined area of the townships. As a result, hundred thousands of city dwellers face severe food insecurity.</p>
	<p>Masvingo: A group of farmers that farms in vegetable gardens to supply local markets. The farmers are affiliated with the non-governmental organisation Hope Tario Trust, with whom they exchange new production methods on a daily basis. Main challenges are price fluctuations and water shortages due to climate change. Both pose an increasing threat to an already vulnerable and food-insecure population.</p>
	<p>Maputo: Urban farmers who grow lettuces, cabbages and other vegetables in the green belt of the town. The farmers are affiliated with the University of Mondlane and Abiodes.</p>
	<p>Toraja: A group of farmers who are affiliated with the Motivator Training Centre of the Church of Toraja, which has collaborated with small-scale farmers for 20 years and has recently accomplished a research project on necessary adaptation of farming practices in light of climate change. Most of the population in the area is involved in small-scale agriculture and produces a variety of commodities (rice, cocoa, coffee, vanilla, vegetables, etc.). The land ownership is generally less than 1 ha.</p>
	<p>Java: Farmers of the farmer association JAMTANI (37,000 members) who are involved in sustainable farming in selected areas of Indonesia. JAMTANI members are small-scale farmers, who cultivate in Java on an average farm size of approximately 0.5 hectare per family. Besides rice production, fish farms (like in Nusakambangan Island), vegetable gardens and farmers' forests are important sources of livelihoods. JAMTANI's focus lies on promoting sustainable agriculture and farmers' rights.</p>

Contact Persons:

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ABIODES
ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA
DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL

