

# Potato Alert

**#01 October 2020**

Potato alerts identify current challenges and outline urgent actions needed in the potato sector in Rwanda, based on surveys and focus group discussions with various actors in the value chain.

# Rwanda

## Alert 1

Limited mobility restricts access to labour, inputs and extension services, and reduces potato sales

## Alert 2

Hampered access to financial services exacerbates farmers' cash-flow challenges

## Alert 3

Mobility restrictions and government measures have impeded the mechanisms for sector alignment and coordination

## Alert 4

The current 'seed gap' is widening because of a lack of availability of seed potatoes

## Alert 1

Limited mobility restricts access to labour and extension services, and reduces potato sales

### What is the impact?

- Labourers are experiencing hardship due to mobility restrictions and job losses
- Limits on the mobility of labourers across districts have led to significant labour shortages, hindering production practices, such as spraying, harvesting, and pest and disease management
- Lockdown and mobility restrictions have caused disruptions in the volume of sales and pushed farm-gate prices down
- Reduced sales and falling prices have resulted in a sharp decline in the incomes of farmers, labourers, and other actors along the potato value chains
- Extension services at farm level have been/are being discontinued, or changed, hampering farmers' ability to maintain production levels of previous seasons, e.g. in Nyabihu district, advice on crop production has to be provided through public announcements using microphones in the villages, as opposed to face-to-face interactions
- Extension service providers have had to put field activities, such as demonstrations and trainings, on hold
- Ability of producer organizations to provide (extension) services to their members has also been reduced due to mobility restrictions

### What actions are required?

- Investigate alternatives to ensure basic mobility for labourers across the districts
- Facilitate access to markets for farmers who have endured decreasing sales and prices, and remain with unsold produce
- Explore the possibility of increasing regional exports to neighbouring countries, e.g. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda, given the restrictions in local marketplaces
- Ensure value chain actors are aware of existing measures regarding deferment of tax payments and tax exemptions during the pandemic
- Design new extension service models for efficient and better use of expertise during periods of limited mobility
- Seek a better balance between safety measures (e.g. limitations for gatherings and mandatory tests) and field-level activities such as demonstrations and trainings
- Study the viability of extending opening hours at market outlets to improve the influx of potatoes from the field

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**What stakeholders are involved?**

- Government – Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI), Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), district authorities
- Potato cooperatives
- Seed potato companies, e.g. Bramin, Horizon Sopyrwa, Horticulture in Reality Corporation (HoReCo)
- Rwanda Potato Stakeholder Platform (RPSP)

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**Who takes initiative?  
Who drives action?**

- MINAGRI, MINICOM to take initiative and drive action
  - RPSP to initiate dialogue between value chain actors and government
  - Extension: RAB to take initiative; development partners - e.g. Agriterra, SPARK, Holland Greentech - to take action
  - Labour: farmers' cooperatives and local government to take initiative and drive action
  - HortInvest can provide additional support where needed
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*Farmers harvesting potatoes under current COVID measures. (Photo: Agriterra)*

# Alert 2

## Hampered access to financial services exacerbates farmers' cash-flow challenges

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### What is the impact?

- Access to cash and finance during COVID-19 has reduced significantly as a result of the government's measures to contend with the pandemic
- Limited mobility and restricted access to financial institutions have hampered farmers' ability to acquire inputs for production; as a result, many farmers have turned to unreliable, lower quality, expensive inputs
- Value chain actors face challenges in accessing services online given their limited 'digital' skills and unsuitable technology; e.g. Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) offers a digital lending product (MobiGrow) for farmers to access loans but, despite its relevance, farmers have been slow to take up the product
- A surging number of farmers have shifted to other commodity sectors that entail less start-up capital, such as vegetables or cereals, which require inputs that can be easily purchased locally

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### What actions are required?

- Help farmers and producer companies to plan and forecast for production and sales to mitigate the risks of planning only weeks before planting
- Strengthen existing communication channels between public and private sectors for raising awareness on the support mechanisms that are available, e.g. available recovery funds
- Accelerate the transition to digital services for farmers and other actors to access loans or microcredit online
- Enhance farmers' digital skills, especially regarding access to finance, and strengthen their bookkeeping expertise, which is essential for showing the business's financial status
- Encourage financial institutions to offer online services for the potato sector given its importance in times of crisis
- Provide a stepwise approach for all value chain actors to access the existing recovery funds
- Entice value chain actors to move into digital record keeping, as well as start implementing traceability systems

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### What stakeholders are involved?

- Government - MINAGRI, RAB, MINICOM
- Financial institutions - commercial banks, microfinance banks/institutions, Development Bank of Rwanda (BRD), Banque Populaire du Rwanda (BNR)
- Potato cooperatives
- RPSP
- Development organizations and projects
- Holland Greentech

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### Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- MINAGRI, MINICOM and commercial banks to take initiative and drive action (targeting all value chain actors)
  - Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) to take initiative and drive action (targeting farmers)
  - RPSP to initiate dialogue between value chain actors and government
  - HortInvest can provide additional support where needed
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# Alert 3

Mobility restrictions and government measures have impeded the mechanisms for sector alignment and coordination

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## What is the impact?

- The functioning of potato platforms and governing bodies has been severely disrupted due to restrictions in gatherings and mobility; actors (especially farmers) have found it difficult to adapt to meetings held online
- Measures put in place by the government, such as recovery funds, have not reached the potato sector in its entirety
- Actors have expressed a growing concern about key sector issues, including the availability of seed potatoes - already a long-standing issue in the country - in times of a pandemic (see Alert 4, below)

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## What actions are required?

- Strengthen the communication lines (e.g. online) between government and value chain actors via the established potato platform (RPSP) with the aim of sector alignment
- Urgently address key sectoral issues, such as the availability of seed potatoes, and share information at sector level (e.g. market information)
- Encourage financial institutions to provide tailored services, such as crop insurance, to actors in the potato sector
- Ensure government measures and initiatives reach all value chain actors

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## What stakeholders are involved?

- Government - MINAGRI, RAB, MINICOM
- RPSP
- Potato cooperatives
- Development organizations and projects

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## Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- MINAGRI to take initiative
  - RPSP to initiate dialogue between public and private sectors and help drive action within the potato sector
  - Potato cooperatives to drive action
  - HortInvest can provide additional support where needed
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Farmers planting tubers. (Photo: Agriterra)

# Alert 4

The current 'seed gap' is widening because of a lack of availability of seed potatoes

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## What is the impact?

- During lockdown, the availability and affordability of pre-basic material from overseas decreased significantly; consequently, seed labs in the country halted their activities; with the flow of basic and pre-basic material interrupted, seed producers and seed users have been severely affected
- Limited mobility continues to hamper access to seed potatoes, which were already in short supply in the markets before the pandemic
- Seed multipliers' incomes have decreased sharply; some multipliers have gone out of business
- Costs related to high quality seed potatoes have risen sharply due to restricted availability and the difficulty in securing pre-financing. As a consequence, farmers are now purchasing locally produced, low quality, seed potatoes
- Dwindling access to finance impedes multipliers' production of basic and pre-basic seed potatoes for ware growers. As a result, the seed production system finds itself under more stress

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## What actions are required?

- Study alternative ways to transport seed potatoes across the various districts given the current mobility restrictions
- Support the seed production plans of seed potato multipliers throughout the year; for example, by linking them to seed users (demand), and ensuring access to pre-basic seed (supply)
- Accelerate the implementation of private sector-driven seed production models in an attempt to reduce the 'seed gap'

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## What stakeholders are involved?

- Government - MINAGRI, RAB, MINICOM, local government
- Seed potato companies (e.g. Bramin, Horizon Sopyrwa, HoReCo)
- Seed Potato Fund (SPF)
- Financial institutions - commercial banks, microfinance banks/institutions, BRD, BNR
- RPSP
- Potato cooperatives
- Development organizations and projects

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## Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- MINAGRI and MINICOM to drive action
  - RPSP to take initiative
  - HortInvest can provide additional (ongoing) support where needed
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# Dashboard

## Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on operations and services in the Potato sector in Rwanda

(Outcomes of an online survey conducted in July/August 2020)

- Severe negative impact
- Negative impact
- Slight negative impact
- No impact; business as usual

Details	August	Alert
<b>Production system</b>		
Planned acreage of potatoes in 2020	■	
Access to and availability of quality inputs to production for farmers	■	Alert 2
Performance of good agricultural production practices	■	
Post-harvest operations	■	Alert 1
Availability and cost of labour for production	■	Alert 2
Access to and availability of finance for farmers	■	Alert 2, 4
Overall cost of production of the potato crop	■	Alert 1
Quantity of potato produce harvested during the most recent harvesting period	■	
Quantity of potato produce that can be harvested in the next harvesting period	■	
Mobility of farmers to and from points of sale	■	Alert 1
Sales volumes	■	Alert 1
Market prices	■	Alert 1
<b>Producer organisations</b>		
Ability of producer organizations to provide services to their members	■	Alert 3
<b>Value chains</b>		
Sharing of information and coordination of activities among value chain actors	■	Alert 1
Sourcing of raw materials	■	
Potato value-adding activities	■	
Mobility of potato value chain actors	■	Alert 1
<b>Services</b>		
Access to and availability of advisory and information services for farmers	■	Alert 1
Access to and availability of finance for value chain actors	■	Alert 1
<b>Ecosystems</b>		
(Public) infrastructure relevant to the sector	■	
<b>Communities</b>		
On-farm household income	■	Alert 1
Off-farm household income	■	Alert 1
Labourers' income (and expenditures on food)	■	Alert 1
Income of women compared to that of men in the sector	■	
Youth engagement in the sector	■	
<b>Coordination</b>		
Functioning of potato sector platforms and governing bodies	■	Alert 3
<b>Policy and regulation</b>		
Government capacities and (supporting) services to the potato sector	■	
<b>Investment</b>		
Ability of the private sectors to invest in the potato sector and grow/develop their farm or business	■	

### Rapid assessment and Potato Alert

To avoid a food and hunger crisis following the current COVID-19 crisis, urgent action is needed to address key agricultural challenges, including those identified in the potato sector. The purpose of the potato alert is to assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the functioning of the potato sector. The rapid assessment conducted for the current potato alert was carried out in July/August 2020. The survey included 44 respondents covering 10 stakeholder groups. 21 participants from 21 different organizations were involved in focus group discussions. We plan to repeat the rapid assessments on a frequent basis, to identify alerts and determine the immediate action required. Further details on the methodology used in the rapid assessments and potato alerts can be accessed through this [link](#).

### Alerts in other sectors

Similar alerts were produced in June and July 2020, to cover the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the functioning of the seed, sesame, horticulture, and fertilizer sectors. Working with a similar model in various sectors and countries within a specific timeframe facilitates an interpretation and synthesis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food systems at national, regional and global levels, while also providing insights into immediate and practical actions needed to address emerging challenges. It furthermore offers insights into the use of the sector model as a diagnostic tool for supporting strategic development, planning, and monitoring interventions that aim to enhance the functioning, resilience and inclusiveness of specific agricultural sectors and food systems.

### Partnership and collaboration

The rapid assessment of the potato sector is facilitated by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WC DI), part of Wageningen University and Research, in a partnership with SNV Netherlands Development Organisation and implemented in collaboration with partners in the horticulture programme HortInvest (Rwanda). This programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in Kigali.

### Participating organisations

This 'Potato alert: Rwanda' involved representatives of the following organizations in the survey and focus group discussions:

- Government of Rwanda - Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)
- Input suppliers - Horizon Sopyrwa, Holland Greentech, BRAMIN, Seed Potato Fund (SPF) Ikigega, INGABO Plant Health, Agro Processing Trust Cooperation Ltd (APTC)
- Processors - Nyabihu Potato Company Ltd, Hollanda Fairfoods
- Development partners - International Potato Center (CIP), Agriterra, Strengthening Education for Agricultural Development (SEAD) project, SPARK, Delphy, HortInvest project
- Financial institutions - Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB), Banque Populaire du Rwanda (BPR)
- Associations and fora - Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF), IMBARAGA farmers' organization, Rwanda Potato Stakeholder Platform (RPSP)
- Farmers' organizations - COABACYA, Twizamure Cyuve cooperative, Federation of Potato Farmer Cooperatives in Rwanda (FECOPPORWA), Abibumbye Rwimiyaga cooperative, KOAKABIKI, Abakundibireti cooperative, COAPOM, Dukunde ibyiwacu Gatebe cooperative, KAIGA, COAPAB, Best farmer cooperative
- Private farmers
- Retailers
- Transport workers
- Casual labourers' representatives

The potato alert is published within a series of rapid assessments and alerts in multiple sub(sectors) and countries, and is a WC DI Sector Transformation publication.

#### Responsible team:

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