Big Data Platform
NEWS DIGEST
22/09/2020

SUMMARY

Food chain disruptions ........................................................................................................... 2
  Tibetan farmers pushed off the land by Chinese government........................................... 2
  Town in Spain suffering water shortage since spring...................................................... 2
Impact on commodities and food prices .............................................................................. 3
  China increased banana imports from Southeast Asia.................................................... 3
  Unstable pork production pushes prices downward in the UK........................................ 3
  India’s government raises minimum support price for six rabi crops............................. 3
Countries’ response .......................................................................................................... 4
  Ghana set to diversify its agricultural exports from cocoa to other crops....................... 4
  Tennessee Department of Agriculture provides financial support to agricultural businesses 4
  Chicago grant program funds farmers of color............................................................... 4
Regional focus ..................................................................................................................... 5
  AFRICA – New research highlights impact of COVID-19 on food security in Kenya and Uganda 5
  AFRICA – Food and horticulture exports from East Africa decrease during pandemic........ 5
**FOOD CHAIN DISRUPTIONS**

Due to the poor condition of the water supply line in a municipality in north western Spain, farm workers and inhabitants are suffering from water shortages since the spring, which the local authorities have not done much to ease in the meantime. In China, the treatment of the Uyghur people in the Xinjiang region (which workers’ rights organizations have branded as coercive labor) has been reciprocated in Tibet, where around 500,000 farmers during the first seven months of 2020 were pushed to leave the fields and transferred into low paid jobs, including textile manufacturing and construction in military-style training centers.

**Tibetan farmers pushed off the land by Chinese government**

China is pushing a growing number of Tibetan rural labourers off the land, and into military-style training centres where they are trained to become factory workers, mirroring a similar program addressed to the Uyghur population in the Xinjiang region. According to Tibet’s regional government, over half a million people were trained as part of the project during the first seven months of 2020 (15% of the region’s population): most of them end up in low paid work, including textile manufacturing, construction and agriculture.

[Link](#)

**Town in Spain suffering water shortage since spring**

A municipality in north western Spain is currently left without running water every night in order to facilitate the filling of the water deposit, due to a shortage that is affecting the town, and which is blamed on the poor condition of the supply lines. The local authorities have not distributed water bottles to the inhabitants yet, or sent a tanker trucks to fill the deposit, despite the fact that the municipality has been suffering from water shortages since the spring.

[Link](#)
IMPACT ON COMMODITIES AND FOOD PRICES

Three food prices updates in South Asia and Europe: China’s decreased demand for banana imports has dragged down the prices for this fruit, while a shift in sourcing determined reduced imports from the Philippines and Ecuador and enhanced imports from other Asian countries (such as Cambodia and Vietnam). The UK’s low pork production (compared with last year) is pushing prices down, while India’s government has increased by 6% the minimum support price for six rabi crops (including lentils, wheat and barley), after many farmer groups protested against the two agriculture reforms passed by the parliament.

China increased banana imports from Southeast Asia

Starting from May, China’s demand for bananas decreased by 30% to 50% year-on-year, and this alone has dragged down banana prices. Furthermore, the cautious approach taken by the Chinese banana importers at the beginning of the global coronavirus pandemic drove a shift in sourcing: imports from the country’s largest suppliers, the Philippines and Ecuador, declined largely (mainly due to a reduced production in these countries), while Vietnam and Cambodia are among the banana suppliers growing their market share in China.

Unstable pork production pushes prices downward in the UK

For much of 2020 pork production has been lower than last year, which contributed to the firmness of the farmgate prices. Between June and July the production has temporarily increased, which led to a softening of the farmgate prices, but then they continued to drift downwards in August and September, as the production volumes decreased again.

India’s government raises minimum support price for six rabi crops

India’s government has increased by 6% the minimum price for buying six rabi crops (including lentil, gram, barley, safflower and rapeseed): for example, the minimum support price of wheat, the biggest crop of the rabi season, has been hiked by INR 50 to INR 1975 per quintal. This decision was taken after the parliament approved two agriculture sector reform bills, which raised protests from farmer groups in the states of Punjab and Haryana.

[Link 1 – Link 2]
COUNTRIES’ RESPONSE

Ghana is trying to diversify its agricultural exports from an overreliance on cocoa, by establishing an authority that is capable of overseeing the production, sales and marketing of several crops, such as coffee, rubber, cashew, palm oil, coconut, shea and rubber. In the United States, on the other hand, the government of Tennessee will financially support several agricultural businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic through the Coronavirus Agricultural and Forestry Business Fund, while the Illinois Department of Human Services partnered with a nonprofit organization to assist farmers of color in the Chicagoland area to enhance food production and distribution.

Ghana set to diversify its agricultural exports from cocoa to other crops

According to Ghana’s deputy minister of agriculture, the country’s government is set to achieve a milestone in agriculture with the introduction of an authority that will oversee the production, sales and marketing of six major crops in the country after the successful implementation of the Planting for Food and Jobs Initiative’s food crop module. This new authority will lead the diversification process of Ghana’s agricultural exports from the overreliance on cocoa to other crops with similar economic benefits, such as cashew, palm oil, coconut, shea, coffee and rubber.

Tennessee Department of Agriculture provides financial support to agricultural businesses

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture has recently announced the Coronavirus Agricultural and Forestry Business Fund, which draws on the financial resources made available by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help ensure the stability of the food supply chain and agribusiness economy in the state. The recipients will be awarded based on four categories: business disruption, pandemic response, supply chain enhancement and increased meat processing capacity.

Chicago grant program funds farmers of color

The Fresh Food from Farmers of Color Fund is a collaboration between the Illinois Department of Human Services and a nonprofit community infrastructure organization in Chicago. This USD 650,000 grant will support black, indigenous and farmers of color in the Chicagoland area to increase food production and distribution, in order to tackle the disproportionate lack of access to fresh and affordable food in Chicago’s black and brown communities.
REGIONAL FOCUS

The coronavirus pandemic had determined a curtailed agricultural production in East Africa and a reduced demand from the European importers, which eventually determined a reduction in fish, avocado and horticulture exports from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Furthermore, a new survey carried out by the scientists of the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International has recently underlined that the number of people suffering from food insecurity in Kenya and Uganda has increased respectively by 38% and 44%.

AFRICA – New research highlights impact of COVID-19 on food security in Kenya and Uganda

The scientists of the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (a UK-based inter-governmental organisation for scientific research on agriculture) have recently conducted new research highlighting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on food security in Kenya and Uganda. They have found out that the proportion of food insecure people increased respectively by 38% and 44% in these countries, and that the regular consumption of fruits decreased by around 30%, compared to before the crisis struck.

AFRICA – Food and horticulture exports from East Africa decrease during pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic determined a decrease in the volumes of Kenyan horticultural produce, as a result of the massive reduction in demand for flowers in Europe, while fish and avocado exports from Uganda and Tanzania have been suffering from the reduced capacity and increased freight rates. However, as the world continues to manage the pandemic and the markets start to open up, food and horticulture exports from East Africa are expected to slowly rebound.