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- TheHub@MercyCorps.org

Tech-Based Solutions for Smallholders during COVID-19

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Submitted by [Nicholas Sewe](#) on 21 Aug, 2020. Last updated on 26 Aug, 2020.

The East Africa region faces disruptions to food supply chains resulting from the efforts to contain COVID-19, which is threatening the food security of millions of people. These disruptions are further compounded by the ongoing conflict in some areas, floods, and desert locust invasions. Amid these unprecedented challenges, [AgriFin](#) is adapting its existing programming and rapidly deploying strategies and partnerships to address the COVID-19 pandemic and desert locust invasion threats digitally. The AgriFin model aims to keep farmers at the center of each decision made. Over the last months, AgriFin has partnered with [60 Decibels](#) to gather insights specific to how these myriad challenges impact the lives of smallholder farmers, ensuring that any intervention or solution that AgriFin may develop with partners is viable and farmer-centric.



A farmer using a smartphone to access bundled digital services to improve their business.

AgriFin is working with its network of tech partners to get farmers the solutions they need. Across three countries, AgriFin and partners are reaching nearly 15 million people with critical information and services.

Ethiopia

AgriFin has partnered with the [Agricultural Transformation Agency of Ethiopia \(ATA\)](#), and [Croplin](#), to support multiple activities. This includes distribution of COVID-19 information through IVR and creating mass awareness of ATA's SMS survey on locust to more than five million smallholders. Mercy Corps Ethiopia coordinated with AgriFin to develop the WhatsApp hotline being launched this week. Using the hotline, farmers can easily report desert locusts in their areas and access up-to-date maps and top-tips.

Kenya

Through our public information campaign and response hotline for farmers and rural populations on television, WhatsApp and SMS channels, we have provided Shamba Shape Up TV programming (weekly episodes in English and Kiswahili aired June - September) on integrated COVID-19, desert locust and agriculture concerns to 6 million viewers, via Citizen TV in Kenya.

We are also supporting [Wefarm](#), in partnership with [IDEO.org](#) and [Producers Direct](#) to conduct a rapid iteration design and dissemination of COVID-19 awareness and prevention messaging tailored for farmers. This project aims to ensure farmers of all ages are urgently equipped with accessible and actionable guidance on how to tackle COVID-19 via SMS, Facebook Groups, Visual Aids, and Radio now reaching 3 million farmers across East Africa.

Nigeria

In partnership with [Viamo](#) – Nigeria's leading IVR channel and [Airtel](#) – one of Nigeria's leading mobile service providers, AgriFin will support the gamification of key hygiene and COVID-19 behavior change messages in Nigeria's 5 most common languages.

AgriFin is committed to seeing farmers through these crises. Our priority areas for the next 4 months are:

- Drive data sharing and behavioral research with [Busara](#) to ensure we meet the needs of the populations we serve (stay posted for our impact reports and key learnings in November!)
- Help our partners' digital solutions for medium and longer-term remote support for farmers and rural populations.
- Work with partners to drive adoption and active use of communications channels as individual, community and country needs to evolve.
- Leverage the larger AgriFin programming work to help drive much-needed liquidity into food systems around our partners

Read more about our COVID-19 and Desert Locust response [here](#).

Special thanks to the [Mastercard Foundation](#) and [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [CISCO](#) and the [Skoll Foundation](#) for supporting our efforts.

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