



Environment Digest 17

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Lockdown and the small-scale informal producers

Informal food producers play an important role in feeding communities and alleviating poverty. Most of them sell their produce in informal market chains to supplement their insufficient household incomes. During the lockdown they have no market for their produce, and have encountered serious challenges in accessing agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-05-05-farmers-keep-faith-in-potatoes-as-covid-19-lockdown-continues/>

<https://www.plaas.org.za/food-in-the-time-of-the-coronavirus-why-we-should-be-very-very-scared/>

Government assistance

The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, has announced financial assistance for small-scale farmers, with priority given to those who are already in the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) programme. These are farmers who are already well off, in comparison to the subsistence and informal producers who would struggle even to apply for such assistance. The assistance is limited and is obtained through a complicated application system, which most intended beneficiaries in this particular sector would struggle to complete.

<https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-thoko-didiza-announces-interventions-assist-agricultural-sector-during-coronavirus>

The Department of Environment, Fisheries and Forestry has extended aid in the form of food parcels to fishers who have not been able to sell their catch. Furthermore, Minister Barbara Creecy has announced the extension of fishing permits and seasons as a response to COVID-19.

<https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-barbara-creecy-updates-measures-taken-sector-during-coronavirus-covid-19-lockdown>

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/lockdown-relief-more-than-10-000-food-parcels-to-be-given-to-small-scale-fishers-20200503>

Beyond COVID-19

The challenges encountered by the small-scale and informal food producers go beyond the COVID-19 crisis. The broader challenge is the lack of policy implementation to support and strengthen small-

scale and informal producers and build resilient domestic markets; and to ensure sustainability in food access at affordable rates and in places where it is most needed.

<https://www.plaas.org.za/covid-19-the-impact-on-small-scale-fishers-a-perspective-from-ocean-view/>

<https://www.fishingindustrynewssa.com/2020/04/03/fishing-is-an-essential-service-including-inland/>

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-05-04-agricultural-commodity-export-restrictions-unlikely/>

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