The question at the moment is no longer whether West Africa would be further challenged with a food crisis. Rather, it is how quickly can the food actors act to mitigate the impacts of COVID to a region already suffering from the severe effects of climate, insecurity, and the fall armyworm. The leading actors, including CORAF, are coming together as never before for the interest of smallholders.

“West Africa is in the midst of a food crisis of exceptional magnitude,” says Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of the African Union Development Agency. Speaking at a Regional Food Crisis Prevention Network online meeting in early April 2020, the Honorary President of the Sahel and West African Club mused: “Will we be able to adjust? How strong is our co-operation capacity?”

Listen to his full interview, thanks to SWAC.

Individual countries have adopted stringent measures in a bid to contain the Coronavirus with inadvertent consequences on the food supply chain. Speaking on April 2, 2020, at a virtual meeting of the Regional Food Crisis Prevention Network, His Excellency Sékou Sangaré, ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture said: “We must ensure the free movement of agricultural products and safeguard the smooth functioning of supply chains.”

Like most actors of the West African food system, CORAF is significantly adjusting its programmatic priorities to address the effects of COVID-19. CORAF’s intervention will comprise a digital system to garner, store, and disseminate critical seed related information on the availability of breeder, foundation, and certified seeds in each country. The intended beneficiaries are primarily vulnerable farmers and businesses.

Six years ago, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone were severely hit by an unprecedented Ebola epidemic. In an amazing show of solidarity, actors mobilized to supply the critical seeds to affected communities and help avert a hunger crisis. As West Africa attempts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on smallholders, the question is, what lessons can be drawn from the Ebola experience?

As a moment urban green zones in Senegal have been transformed into a Regional Food Forest, putting an end to deforestation. Farmers and gardeners in Senegal have planted 110 billion trees in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on smallholders.

Overall, the Dakar-based Executive Secretariat of CORAF is in close contact with all its implementing partners to ensure the seamless continuity of its activities. However, while international travels are on hold, CORAF has suspended non-essential in-country travel to project sites for some of its projects. Check what programs are involved!