



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE  
ANIMAL INDUSTRY &  
FISHERIES

# **How can agricultural advisory services use digital tools to support farmers during the crisis? A perspective from Uganda**

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# How did COVID-19 affect agriculture in Uganda?

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- **Public transport was completely closed**
- **Movement of goods and services was affected**
- **Blanket close-down: General transport restrictions**
- **Agriculture was recognized as an essential service;**
  - was allowed to move, but farmers and traders had to be issued stickers to be accredited;
  - This took time (verification necessary)
  - **One month was lost.**
- **Lock-down came at the beginning of the season;**
- **Input dealers reported more than 40% decline in sales**
- **Resources of extension services had to be diverted, including transport of extension workers**

# Extension services by telephone

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- **Extension service delivery was cut down**
- **Farmers needed advisory services**
- **More advisory services were delivered by telephone to farmers than ever before;**
- **Experience from extension staff in Northern Uganda:**
  - Not more than 10 people could meet;
  - Farmers clustered themselves into such groups and called in;
  - They made appointments in advance, used a good phone with strong audio;
  - Extension agents conducted training to groups over the phone;

# Boost to the e-voucher system

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- **E-voucher system was introduced by the World Bank funded Agricultural Cluster Development Project**
- **Effect of COVID-19**
  - Input dealers were closed, but the input dealers under to this project were allowed to operate
    - were given priority by the government to operate
  - Therefore, access to inputs under the e-voucher system was easier than using any other channel
  - Enrollment increased
  - Crisis helped to persuade farmers to sign up
  - Farmers realized that subsidized inputs under this project were of better quality than the inputs that are provided for free by the Operation Wealth Creation

# E-Extension Symposium

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- **Annual Extension Symposium**
  - was held as a video-conference
  - Participation was high as more than 300 people registered to participate
  - 6 parallel sessions for thematic areas conducted as webinars
  - with average turn-up of more than 70 people (extension agents, NGOs, private sector, academia)

# Quick survey among farmers and extension agents by Makerere University

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- **shows that use of ICTs increased by 11 times during lockdown!**
  - Social media platforms for knowledge exchange
  - Mobile Money services for purchase of inputs
  - Phone calling between farmers and extension agents
  - Radio talk shows
  - WhatsApp platforms created to share information and technology demonstration using advisory videos
  - E-Voucher enrolment increased
  - Mobile phone Apps for input and output marketing