

# Fertilizer sector

## Methodology

Photo: Fanose Mekonen

## Rapid assessment of the fertilizer sector in Ethiopia

**The rapid assessment of the fertilizer sector is conducted to raise awareness on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the fertilizer sector in Ethiopia, at federal and regional levels, through a survey and focus group discussions (FGDs). The rapid assessment covers the full range of fertilizer sector functions and supply chain operations. Its outcomes are used to create a 'Fertilizer Alert' document that outlines the critical challenges facing the sector. This 'Fertilizer Alert' allows partners to inform decision-makers in government, development practitioners, research, and farmers' organizations, on where the impact of the crisis is felt the most, and to contribute to the development of immediate actions required to address the identified challenges.**

The rapid assessment has adapted a methodology that was already in use by various sectors, including the seed, sesame and horticulture sectors, and which was developed by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WC DI). The methodology and steps followed are presented below.

### Step I: establishing a panel of experts

A panel of experts comprising all the relevant stakeholders is established, including representatives of government, development practitioners, research organizations, service delivery providers, transport services, and farmers' organizations. The panel includes at least four people for each stakeholder group and takes into consideration the geographical distribution of the experts.

### Step II: developing the survey guided by the core processes in the supply chain

The topics addressed in the survey cover the full range of functions and supply chain operations of the fertilizer sector. The team identifies the most affected functions and potentially vulnerable interactions in the

supply chain, and determines the immediate action and interventions required. In the context of rapid assessments in the fertilizer sector, the following functions are included: service delivery, production systems, market development, revenue generation and re-investment, coordination and governance, and farmers' use. The functions are identified based on the sector model developed by AidEnvironment<sup>1</sup>, and adapted by WC DI<sup>2</sup> for a variety of sectors. The survey elaborates a total of 30 questions, with several questions addressing supply chain components and interactions within each sector function.

### Step III: running the survey

The survey includes no more than 20 questions per panellist. Due to their involvement in different functions of the sector (e.g. marketing, services, governance, finance and regulation) or activities of the supply chain, questions are tailored to each stakeholder group. This means that the responses are relevant and informed by experience. Whether the stakeholders operate at federal or regional level is also taken into account, which allows the team to gain insights into regional variations. Collectively, questions cover all functions of the sector, complemented by a specific group of questions related to outcomes, e.g. income generation, and food and nutrition security. Responses vary within a scale running from 'severely negative impact' to 'highly positive impact', with 'no impact/business as usual' as possible choices. Respondents can also indicate if a question is not applicable. The survey is conducted online. Survey participants receive a link to the questionnaire, which they can fill in on their mobile phone or laptop.

1] Aidenvironment has developed the model of sector transformation, that consider agricultural sectors as a whole, and thus requires holistic and coordinated approaches as well as systemic solutions in the landscape, the market and governance space ([link](#)). 2] WC DI elaborated the sector transformation model and applies it in its work supporting the transformation of various agricultural sectors such as seed, dairy and horticulture ([link](#)).

#### Step IV: identifying alerts based on survey results

On receiving the responses to the survey, the results are processed, transforming the level of impact into numeric scores; for each question, the frequency of the various scores is calculated. This is complemented by the calculation of a stakeholder-weighted average score, meaning that the average score for respondents in each stakeholder group is computed, and then the average of the stakeholder groups concerned is calculated. The average score per stakeholder group is also calculated. The team subsequently develops a dashboard based on the outcome of the survey; the results for the individual questions, but also those linked to supply chain operations, services and sector functions, inform the identification of alerts. Questions with a large number of respondents indicating a high negative impact are identified and grouped into specific alerts. Alerts can be linked to individual activities in the supply chain, or to more general operations and services in the supply chain or functions of the sector.

The team subsequently develops a first narrative for each of the alerts identified. This document describes the impact of COVID-19 on the functioning of the fertilizer sector and stakeholder(s) concerned, and provides an input for the FGDs.

#### Step IV: identifying immediate challenges through focus group discussions

Each FGD brings together six to eight experts, physically (observing social-distancing measures) or virtually, to review the results, propose actions, and identify stakeholders responsible for taking the initiative and driving action. Their expertise in relation to practical experience in the sector determines their participation.

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They identify stakeholders and potential initiators and drivers of the action. FGDs are organized at regional levels, capturing variations in the country.

#### Step V: developing the draft 'Fertilizer Alert'

Based on the outcomes of the FGDs, the team develops a first outline of the narrative for the individual alerts. Each alert includes a description of the area impacted, the immediate actions required, the stakeholders concerned, and the relevant organization responsible for taking the initiative and driving action. The draft 'Fertilizer Alert' document is consolidated during a virtual meeting involving high-level and federal stakeholders. In this manner, ownership of the assessment is promoted, and commitment is sought for the actions proposed.

#### Step VI: finalizing and sharing the 'Fertilizer Alert'

Following the high-level meeting, the team finalizes the narrative for the 'Fertilizer Alert' document. This is published and used for awareness-raising and advocacy efforts, and is widely shared in relevant traditional and social media.

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