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**Newsletter** Vol.25

## Optimizing Productivity and Partnerships amid the Resurgence of COVID-19

Dear AR4D colleagues,

### **Information for BoD, Constituents and Development Partners**

*July 21, 2021*—The Government of Uganda, the host to ASARECA Secretariat, on 18 June 2021 announced a range of measures, including a 42-day lock-down to prevent the escalation of the second wave of Covid-19, which hit the country. The measures are meant to de-congregate the population to reduce the spread of the virus.

As of July 21, 2021, the country had registered over 91,162 confirmed Covid-19 patients, representing a spike of over 51% in positive cases compared to the situation in April 2021. The Ugandan Ministry of Health figures indicate that 2,425, people have died of the disease since it was first reported in March 2020. However, most of the deaths occurred during the recent resurgence, thus forcing the government to take these stringent measures. It has also been noted that at least four of the known variants of the virus, including the deadly Delta variants are in the country. Other variants that have been identified are Alpha, Beta and Eta.



Going by the guidance from the Government, and motivated by this severe and scary situation, the ASARECA Management adopted further measures to safeguard staff while ensuring productivity. It is noteworthy that some of the ASARECA staff also contracted the virus, thus contributing to the adoption of critical decisions.

**The Management adopted the following measures:**

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1. All staff were encouraged to undertake the Covid-19 PCR tests to enable the Secretariat make specific informed decisions on the safety and productivity of all the affected and non-affected members. By undertaking this proactive decision, the Management maintained an up-to-date record of the status of its staff. It is noteworthy that all the staff took the test and shared the results with the Management.
2. Based on the above action and the provided PCR results, the Management closed the Secretariat offices to all staff to reduce the risk of exposing the staff via their frequent travels to-and-from home, as well as avoiding mixing with the public.
3. To ensure timely implementation of the activities proposed in the approved FY2021 Annual Work Plan and Budget, the Management re-ignited the use of electronic platforms, mainly Zoom platform and Microsoft 365 tools by all the staff at all levels to continue conducting business.
4. In addition, all key staff have been provided the necessary facilitation to enable them keep working from home, including holding scheduled meetings.
5. To further optimize productivity, the Management convened a virtual joint staff meeting and revisited the Financial Year 2021 Annual Work Plan and Budget. This meeting, which has been proceeded by weekly updates, has led to the isolation of critical activities that are easier done virtually. Some of these activities are achievable through virtual interactions and consultancies.
6. Finally, by enhancing the use of official social media platforms, staff are able to update each on their individual situation and the general situation in the country and the region.

Based on the foregoing, the Management notes that so far we are doing well, notwithstanding the challenges associated with operating remotely. We are optimistic that the measures taken by the Management, and adopted by the staff will enable us achieve our objectives to a good degree.

On this note, I would like to thank all of you our supporters in your various capacities for continued support to the Secretariat to execute its mandate in AR4D. Specifically, we thank the Governments of the ASARECA member countries through the Patron ministers for financial and technical support, as well as for providing political oversight to the Secretariat. We thank the Board of Directors, the Committee of Directors General, the National Focal Persons and all staff of the National Agricultural Research Institutes from the 14 ASARECA member countries.

Last but not least, we salute all our Development Partners for financial and technical support during this tough period. We proudly and confidently single out the European Union for continued resourcing of the CAADP-XP4 Programme which is going miles in strengthening the capacities of ASARECA and its constituents. In the same vein we thank IFAD for managing the CAADP-XP4 Programme.

Mindful that ASARECA is not an island in the Covid-19 quagmire, I take this opportunity to salute you all for your leadership and endeavors to keep hope alive as we weather the storm. For those who have had painful personal experiences with the disease, we can only say, **“We Are Together In This Fight”**. We condole with those who have lost loved ones and pray that you overcome the grief. Together we stand to win. We will keep you updated. Stay safe.

Dr. Enock Warinda  
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