

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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### **H.E Josefa Sacko briefs AU's Permanent Representatives Committee on impact of COVID-19 on Food Security in Africa**

H.E. Ambassador Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner (AUC) for Rural Economy and Agriculture on May 14<sup>th</sup>, briefed the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) on measures being taken by the Department to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on food security in Africa.

The brief centered on the status of the food system before COVID-19, the impact of Covid-19 on the food system and the response by her Department in mitigating the pandemic. H.E Sacko noted that the COVID-19 health crisis had brought on an economic crisis that is rapidly exacerbating an ongoing food security and nutrition crisis. She bemoaned the fact that anti-pandemic measures like nationwide lockdowns and border closures compounded food shortages while restrictions on movement and quarantine measures impeded crop calendars and farmers' access to markets.

"It is pertinent that Africa must not move from a health crisis to a food crisis as a result of the worsening trend by COVID-19," she said.

Commissioner Sacko told the PRC that as a response to the pandemic, the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to hold a Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020, to evaluate the implications of COVID-19 on food security in Africa. All 55 AU member states were represented at the virtual meeting which came up with recommendations and a declaration on the five areas that were discussed, namely;

- Social protection: ensuring effective response and inclusive recovery in the context of COVID-19 in Africa;
- Crop calendars and recommended actions during the COVID-19 outbreak in Africa;
- Measures for supporting domestic markets during the COVID-19 outbreak;

- Taking advantage of the mechanism of the newly created African Continental Free Trade area (AfCFTA); and
- Safeguarding input supply chains for small-scale agricultural producers, poultry, and livestock in the context of COVID-19 in Africa.

In a political declaration, the Ministers committed to supporting access to food and nutrition for Africa's most vulnerable; providing social safety nets; minimizing disruptions to the safe movement and transport of essential people, the transport and marketing of goods and services; and keeping borders open on the continent for food and agriculture trade.

Further, Commissioner Sacko informed the PRC that a Task Force comprising AUC, African Union Development Agency –New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), FAO, European Union (EU), African Development Bank (AfDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Bank (WB) and World Food Programme (WFP) has been put in place to oversee the implementation of the actions identified by the Ministers in the Declaration.

Commissioner Sacko also informed the PRC that AU's the Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre (PANVAC) had the capacity to test for COVID-19 and is working for the development of a vaccine.

The PRC commended the initiatives being undertaken by the AUC and recommended the need to put in place a mechanism to coordinate all initiatives of the Commission with a view to mobilizing funds to mitigate COVID-19 in Africa.

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