



# Virtual Workshop #4

“How does a pandemic such as Covid-19 lead to a drastic reorganisation of food supply and distribution chains?”

Co-moderated by **Eva Radek**, Coalitions and Events Officer, Climate Chance and **Anna Faucher**, Co-founder and President, Let's Food Cities.

**Panelists:**

- **Louison Lançon**, co-founder of Let's Food Cities
- **Matseilane Phala**, Aquaculture specialist at the Agro-ecology Unit of the eThekweni Municipality.
- **Souleymane Gaye**, Country representative of Burkina Faso, NITIDAE
- **Walter Coughlan**, Co-founder and Director, The Fair Food Company

Useful Links	
Climate Chance	Check out the work of the African coalitions here: <a href="https://www.climate-chance.org/en/get-involved/african-coalitions/">https://www.climate-chance.org/en/get-involved/african-coalitions/</a> and all necessary information on the virtual workshops here: <a href="https://www.climate-chance.org/en/get-involved/climate-chance-virtual-workshops/">https://www.climate-chance.org/en/get-involved/climate-chance-virtual-workshops/</a>  If you have any questions, contact us at <a href="mailto:association@climate-chance.org">association@climate-chance.org</a>
Let's Food Cities	Check out the website here: <a href="https://letsfoodideas.com/en/">https://letsfoodideas.com/en/</a>  and their recent report here: <a href="https://letsfoodcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EN_-Article-LF-COVID.pdf">https://letsfoodcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EN_-Article-LF-COVID.pdf</a>
Agro-ecology Unit of the eThekweni Municipality	The official website of the eThekweni Municipality: <a href="http://www.durban.gov.za/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.durban.gov.za/Pages/default.aspx</a>



NITIDAE	Official website here: <a href="https://www.nitidae.org/en">https://www.nitidae.org/en</a>
The Fair Food Company	The official website of The Fair Food Company: <a href="http://thefairfoodco.com/">http://thefairfoodco.com/</a>

### **Key-Takeaways**

The COVID-19 crisis showed the weaknesses of existing mainstream food supply chains, which were affected as borders were closed and sales reduced. Establishing direct links between agricultural producers and final consumers, and the importance of local production to meet local needs was identified by all the panelists.

[Let's Food Cities'](#) survey that was launched at the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown, highlighted how Covid-19 showed the vulnerability of food supply and distribution systems worldwide. With over 100 responses, the survey found that one major solution that was put in place by civil society and local governments to counter the negative impacts of Covid-19 on food systems was to create direct connections between farmers and consumers through the distribution of food baskets. These connections were possible thanks to online platforms. Four main policies and actions identified to help better prepare for future crises include : making access to food a human right, keeping agricultural diversity, building strong governance systems and food supply, and interregional cooperation as a tool to anticipate a crisis.

[The Fair Food Company](#) suffered from real impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on their activities, due to reduced revenues from sales. The medium and larger growers were more affected by the loss in sales revenue. The company is working on ensuring the link between farmers and informal suppliers that keeps the model and pricing affordable, in order to anticipate future crises. Maintaining this link is imperative to ensure proactiveness and not just reactions to crises.

Since Covid-19, [NITIDAE](#) accelerated the implementation of their system to support local consumers and local producers by imagining resilience systems and relying on the Guarantee Participatory System (GPS), creating an example of the direct link between producers and consumers referred to earlier. The use of online and digital tools has been a key factor in enabling this system.



**Eva Radek, Climate Chance :**

Events and Coalitions officer at Climate Chance.

Climate Chance is an international organisation formed in 2015, leading up to the COP21 in Paris. It gathers all non-state actors and aims to create synergies between the 9 major groups recognised by the UNFCCC: local governments, organisations, researchers, companies/businesses, women's groups, indigenous people's groups, etc.

[Climate Chance has a website](#), where all information related to local climate action is published both in English and French. There is also a "portal of action" where best practices are gathered, and particularly those from the African continent. The portal is a way of giving access to information and data on climate change and local/regional related issues.

There is also the [Climate Chance Observatory](#), which analyses implemented climate action worldwide, and puts together yearly publications. The objective is to explain concrete implemented action worldwide and in a variety of sectors (energy, transport, adaptation, finance etc.). You can find all the Observatory's work on our website. (case studies, sectoral books etc).

[Climate Chance organises annual summits](#), gathering our various coalitions, each with their own roadmaps. During the Summit we organise workshops for each coalition, where members take stock of climate action in their sectors. Unfortunately, this year the Summit that was planned to take place in Kigali Rwanda, has been postponed due to Covid-19. This been said, we decided to change formats and create this Series of Virtual workshops.

Through the virtual workshops, Climate Chance will continue to mobilise the African coalitions and follow up on the roadmaps.

- The 1st round of Virtual Workshops aims to regain contact with members and co-pilots of all of the coalitions, and to present how the situation has changed due to the pandemic.
- The 2nd round will take place from January, and will focus on moving forward with roadmaps.

Today, the session will be dedicated to the **Agriculture and Food sector**. Acknowledgments to panelists for agreeing to share some of their experience and expertise in the domain. The discussion will be around the following question: **How does a pandemic such as Covid-19 lead to a drastic reorganisation of the food system and distribution chains?**

Co-moderation of the session by Anna Faucher, from Let's Food Cities and Eva Radek from Climate Chance. Introducing the speakers for the day:



- Louison Lançon, co-founder and treasurer, Let's Food Cities
- Matseilane Phala, an aquaculture specialist from the agroecology department of the Municipality of eThekweni
- Souleymane Gaye, the country representative for Burkina Faso at NITIDAE.
- Walter Coughlan, Co-founder and director of the Fair Food Company

### **Louison Lançon, Let's Food Cities :**

Brief presentation of Let's Food Cities: a French-based NGO focusing on fostering city to city cooperation for more sustainable food systems. Work has been led with cities around the world. During the lockdown, the NGO created a special survey on the impacts of Covid-19 on food systems sustainability, the aim being to collect adaptation and mitigation measures taken by local authorities or civil society organisations. Around 100 responses giving a good idea of how food systems were impacted by Covid-19.

Major results of the survey:

- How COVID-19 showed the vulnerability of food supply and distribution systems. As borders closed - showed interdependence of countries

4 main issues came out of the Survey in terms of Covid-19 impacts:

- Lack of foreign labour (especially in Europe, for farmers) due to borders closing
- Food shortage in countries depending on imports
- Other countries (such as developing countries) - food surplus, unable to export, which means food was wasted
- Limited access to food for already vulnerable groups

Witnessed many initiatives from civil society and local governments for the food sector to answer to Covid-19 in the short term. Firstly, many municipalities tried to create a direct link between producers and consumers through food baskets to the most vulnerable. Example: in Marseille and in cities in Ecuador.

Let's Food also witnessed the creation of online platforms by municipalities/CSOs connecting farmers directly to consumers. This can be questioned in case of countries where some people don't have access to the internet.

The third type of initiative that Let's Food found was also an online platform, but one dedicated to connecting producers to job seekers. This mainly flourished in Europe and in France in particular.

Overall, the survey highlighted how some countries are much more prepared for a crisis than others. This gave a good idea of which initiatives need to be structurally integrated into the agricultural food policies in the long time to anticipate these types of crises.

4 main policies/actions to help:

- Making access to food a human right



- Keeping agricultural diversity (cf: Vietnam)
- Building strong governance systems and food supply (cf. Birmingham)
- Finally, interregional cooperation as a tool to anticipate a crisis.

More information on all the outcomes of this survey can be found here:  
<https://letsfoodideas.com/en/questionnaire-covid-19/>

### **Walter Coughlan, The Fair Food Company :**

Introduction to [The Fair Food Company](#) to contextualize their activities, who they are, to better understand their response. Started in 1995 as a non-profit, it emerged into a social enterprise today.

The Fair Food Company has always worked with local farmers. It became an NGO in 2017 and then commercial status from 2018. The social aspect has also been integrated into the company.

Edamame in South Africa is a product launched by the company a few years ago. It is a natural non-GMO plant based source of high protein which is traditionally eaten fresh. One Cup of green Edamame provides 10% of an adult's calcium needs, 16% of vitamin C, 20% iron, 52% vitamin K and 121% of the daily recommended amount of folate. It is a highly appreciated product on the market. 90% of Edamame is cultivated in South Africa and others are from smaller farmers.

The company has also developed a national market. Walter says it may make less profit but the company's goal is to share with local actors and partners.

Concerning the **Covid19 impacts on the company**: Sales revenue was halved, but the company was able to still help suppliers. The challenge is in the last months with the large debt.

Impacts of Covid-19 on The Fair Food Company	
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 70% reduction in staff over 4 months</li><li>- Return to 70% current and improving ahead</li><li>- Risk mitigation</li></ul>



Suppliers (farmers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Low to medium disruption</li><li>- Market challenge - but offset by local demand from communities</li><li>- No evidence of food plies/waste from suppliers</li><li>- Small grower industry observations</li><li>- Inputs limited</li><li>- Slower start-up in vulnerable business models</li><li>- Markets - closed and limited supply</li><li>- Obscured from the knee jerk reaction of supply the sector is unorganised</li></ul>
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Over the Covid 19 period, food was still needed by people, a lot more people were home and not all people had contracts.

Food availability became a buzzword. We were not prepared for this crisis but we will be more prepared in the future. There is a great informal market, and because of the knock on effect of pricing, vegetables were still available but the price increased. It is necessary for us to be pro-reactive and not just reactive.

***“For future pandemics, we must think, how can we ensure the link between farmers and informal suppliers that keeps the model and pricing affordable?”***

**Souleymane Gaye, NITIDAE :**

[NITIDAE](#) is an NGO, with its headquarters in Lyon, France. Work in various countries, mainly West Africa. Main objective of the NGO is to oversee development for both conservation. In Burkina Faso, we have developed activities to develop local production. Covid-19 marked a halt to social and economic activities, there were border closures, and therefore did not facilitate movement between different localities.

Burkina Faso is currently going through insecurity, added to internal conflict which already is affecting the country. So the ability of the population to procure rich and nutritious food was made much harder. Covid-19 was added to previous concerns and highlighted the situation of the population with basic food stops for most vulnerable populations and overall populations.

The issue of blockage due to closing of borders, lockdown in cities, closing of markets created a fracture in the food supply system. Villages and towns outside Ouagadougou have had much difficulty accessing food. Air borders were completely closed, leading to no more trade, business transactions. All movements both inside and outside Burkina-Faso was at a halt. The crisis made visible a lot of fractures in the food system.



The objective of NITIDAE was to help producers regain trust and confidence. As an NGO there was a need to find new ways to help producers regain trust and confidence, and the same with consumers. NITIDAE supported the implementation of new norms and systems for certifying products. The idea is to diversify local production and gather various stakeholders and base themselves on the developed norm. The system really helped us promote the short supply chain and distribution of baskets. The idea being that each territory consumes what they produce. Since Covid-19, NITIDAE accelerated the implementation of this system to support local consumers and local producers by imagining resilience systems by relying on the Guarantee Participatory System (GPS) system and highlighting the various competencies of all sectors with certified organic producers.

A Whatsapp group has been set up, and improved since Covid-19 to put in touch local producers and consumers. The producers were already part of the system but they have now also been connected to retailers. Orders can be made directly from the Whatsapp group and delivered to homes.

NITIDAE also created advice via a platform for producers to access information, best practices, micro-programmes etc.

## Q&A

Do panelists think the system as a whole will change, after the pandemic?

**Walter Coughlan:** It was always destined to change because of the economic pressures on smaller producers. The learnings mean that we have to make changes and now we have finally started talking about what is needed to change.

**Souleymane Gaye:** It is obvious that things will change. Our recent experience showed that we need to change our paradigm, and has shown that everyone is vulnerable

**Louison Lançon:** During the crisis, supermarkets started to buy locally, now they're going back to their old systems of cheaper imports, which is not good. Territorial production as we've seen during this crisis should stay.