

Farmers are calling for recovery plans of investment from government to salvage the farming activities that were worst hit by Covid-19 pandemic. When the pandemic hit and government imposed a lockdown some sections of the sector were affected even as overall farming activities had been encouraged to continue operating.

Jean Paul Munyakazi, the Legal Representative of Imbaraga, a National Farmer Organization has said that agriculture was negatively affected by Covid-19 pandemic like other sectors of the economy and there is need for recovery response into this sector.

Observers in the sector have concerns that if no recovery plans for the agriculture sector are made in time the world may be bracing for the worst hunger in more than 30 years.

During a meet the press initiative organized to deliberate on the effects of Covid-19 on the food systems in Rwanda, farmers voiced concerns for an urgent need to revive the sector for a food secure future.

The event held at Lemigo Hotel on this Thursday heard about losses encountered by farmers in the last few months when agricultural products were affected after the closure of hotels, restaurants and travel restrictions. Among the worst affected areas were poultry, horticulture and agricultural exports.

Imbaraga with more than 27,500 farmers in all districts, conducted an assessment that found the sector had been hit hard by coronavirus-related restrictions. This impact might reflect on the food market in the country if nothing is done to reverse the situation.

Joseph Gafaranga, the Secretary General of Imbaraga explained that farmers who lost their produce during this period will be discouraged to venture again into agriculture again if not supported which will affect our food systems.

Dr Octave Semwaga, Director General of Planning at the Ministry of Agriculture assured farmers that the Rwandan government will continue to support farmers as it did during Covid-19 lockdown when it kept active all services of the sector.

During the lockdown farming activities were encouraged to continue operating, farmers continued working only respecting preventive measures, agricultural inputs

like seeds and fertilizers continued to be distributed.

Dr. Semwaga observed that government also bought agricultural produce from local farmers with lack of market and distributed the food to vulnerable families during the lockdown.