

**IMPACTS OF COVID19  
ON THE HORTICULTURAL  
SECTOR IN CAMEROON  
SURVEY RESULTS**

**JUNE  
2020**



**COLEACP**

COLEACP is a private sector interprofessional not-for-profit association. Its members are producers, processors, exporters, service providers, related operators (carriers, freight forwarders, etc.) and importers, who are committed to the inclusive and sustainable trade of horticultural products (domestic, regional and international) from Africa-Caribbean-Pacific countries.

COLEACP manages development programmes in the agricultural and food sectors, financed by donors. It draws on more than 45 years' experience of partnerships and support to both private and public sectors in 50 countries.

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## 1. CONTEXT

RHORTICAM (Réseau des opérateurs horticoles du Cameroun), in collaboration with COLEACP, has carried out a survey for companies and cooperatives in the horticultural sector in Cameroon. The survey will help to assess the impact of the health and economic crisis that is currently affecting the world.

The companies' contributions will also help to identify support needs and will enable COLEACP and RHORTICAM to support these companies, as far as possible, at this time of crisis.

This survey was released between 12 and 24 May 2020.

## 2. REPORT METHODS

The individual responses received to the survey are treated confidentially. This report compiles the aggregated qualitative and quantitative results of the companies. In each section (see point 3), the questions asked are given at the beginning of the section, followed by the answers obtained.

The conclusion covers the main impacts of the health crisis on companies, as well as their main needs to overcome the economic crisis linked to this pandemic.

### 3. SURVEY RESULTS

#### 3.1. Participating companies

Ten companies participated in the survey. These companies are mainly active simultaneously in several production chains, with pineapple being mentioned by most (seven companies are active in this chain), followed by processed products (dried fruits, juices, peppercorns).

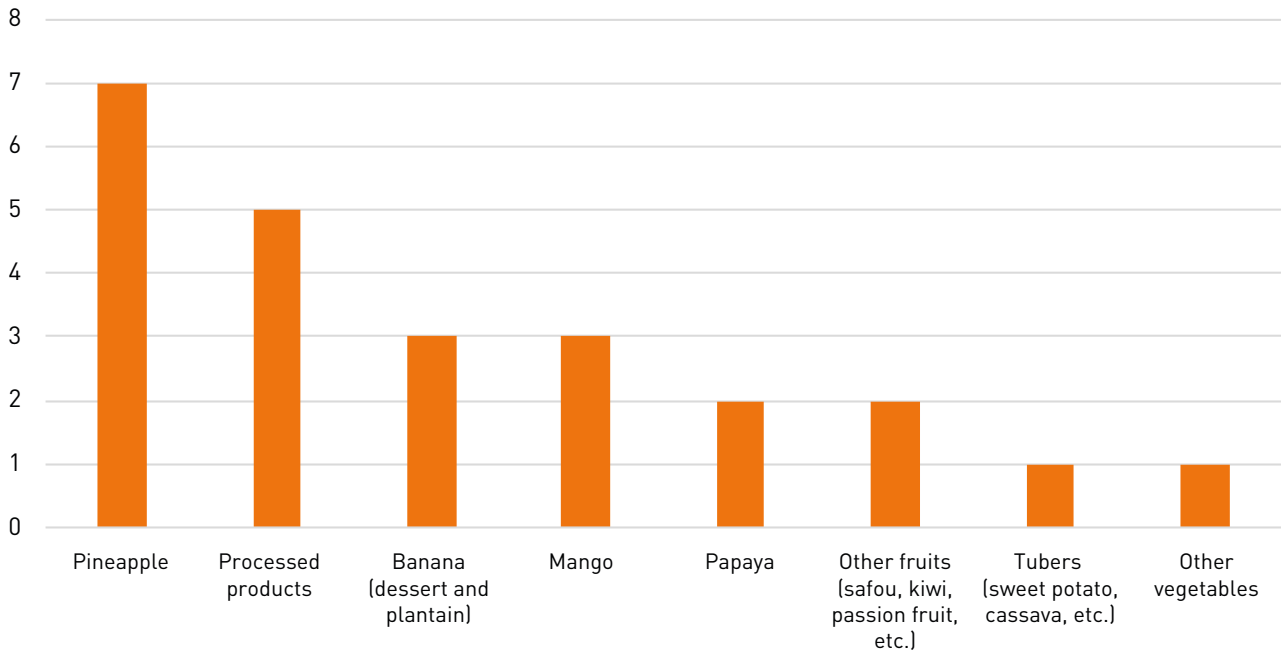


Figure 1: Sectors represented by the responding companies

The majority of respondents to the survey sell their products on the European market (70%); the remaining 30% are active on the local market.

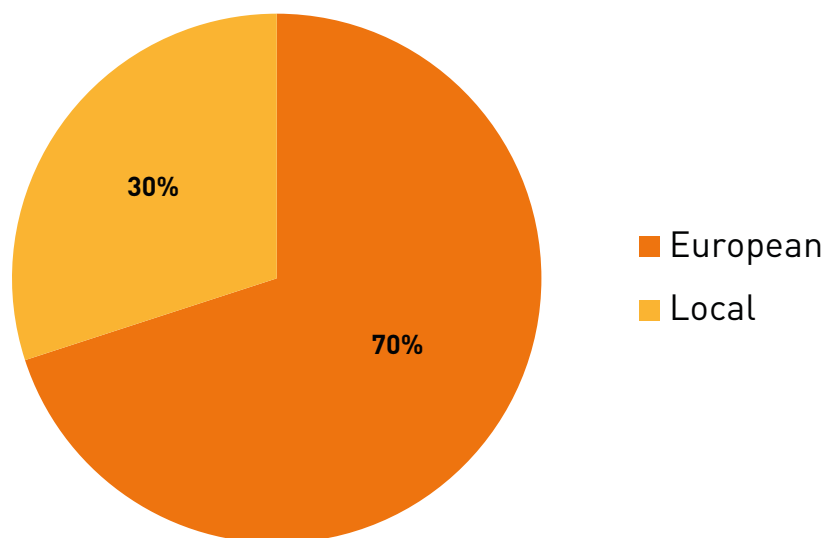


Figure 2: Distribution of companies by market

### 3.2. Impacts on business and sales

Questions asked:

- Are you impacted by the measures taken against coronavirus? (yes/no)
- How does coronavirus impact your business? (multiple choice)
- Do the measures taken against coronavirus have an impact on your turnover? (yes/no)
- How do you estimate the impact of this decline in turnover? (multiple choice)

Not surprisingly, 100% of participating companies say they are impacted by the measures taken nationally and internationally to combat the spread of the virus. The most frequent impacts are a drop in orders from their customers, as well as problems related to the suspension of travel. The list is given below:

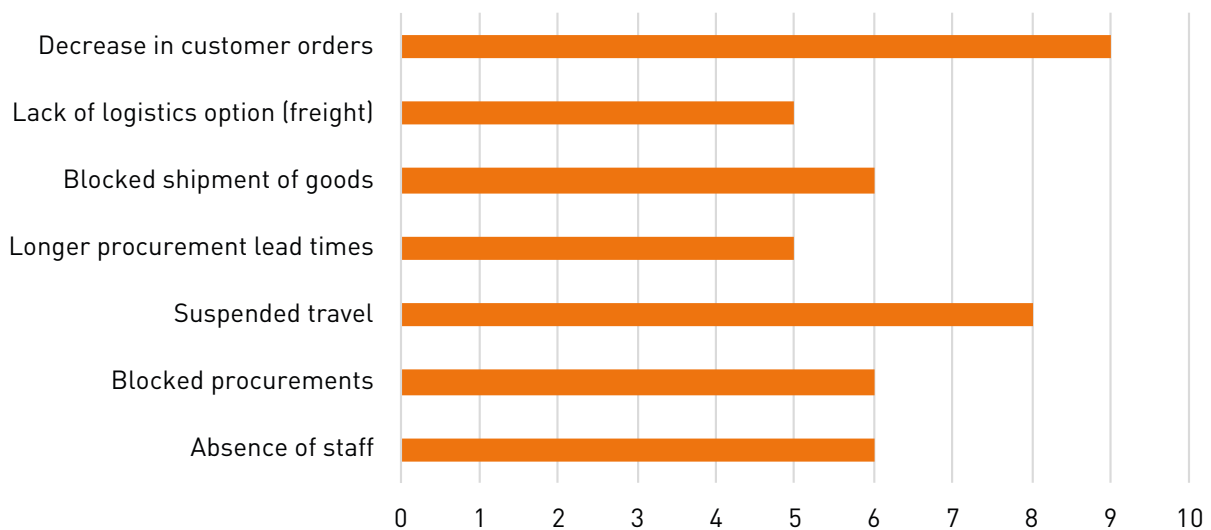


Figure 3: Impacts of COVID-19

The impact on turnover currently reported by companies is a decrease of 30% to 70%, with an average of 50%.

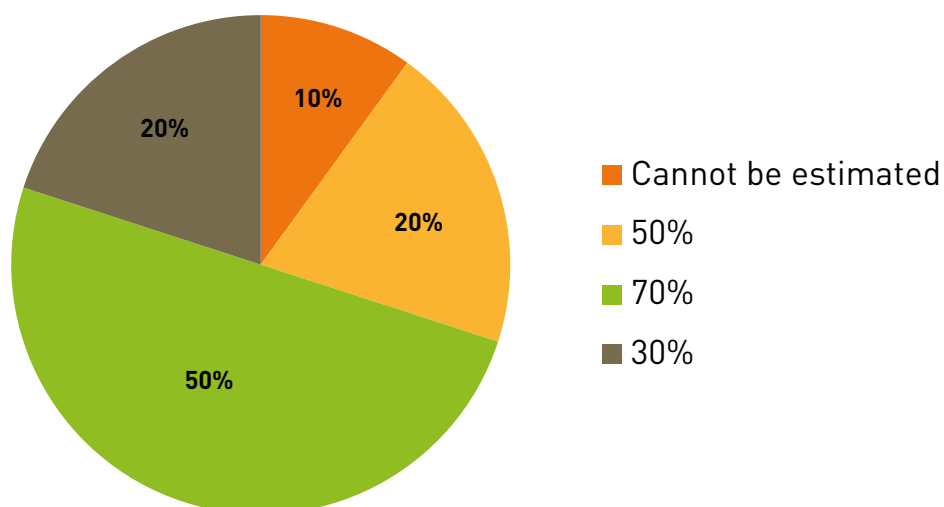


Figure 4: Share of respondents citing a decrease in company turnover

### 3.3. OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED DURING THE HEALTH CRISIS

Questions asked:

- Are you experiencing cash flow difficulties following the COVID-19 health crisis, to pay (...)? (multiple choice)
- Are you experiencing organisational problems as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis? (multiple choice)

The main difficulties encountered by companies are paying suppliers (100%) and employees (80%). The list is shown in the graph below. Some companies also mentioned that, as suppliers to ancillary businesses, they too were experiencing problems of non-payment as a result of the crisis.

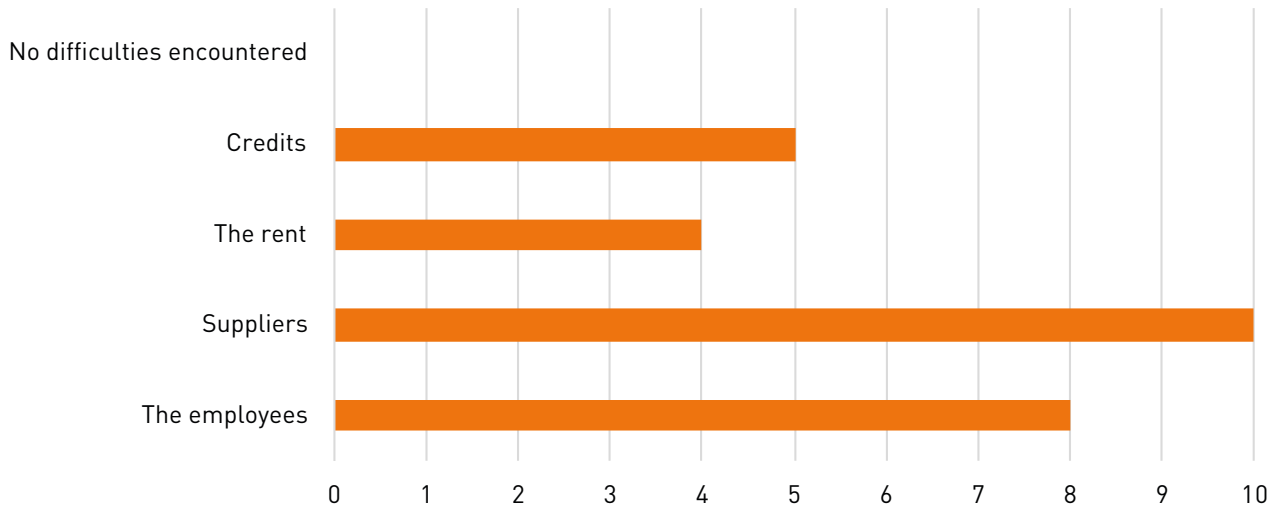


Figure 5: Cash flow difficulties in paying

The main organisational difficulties encountered are related to transport and supply to businesses (80% of businesses impacted).

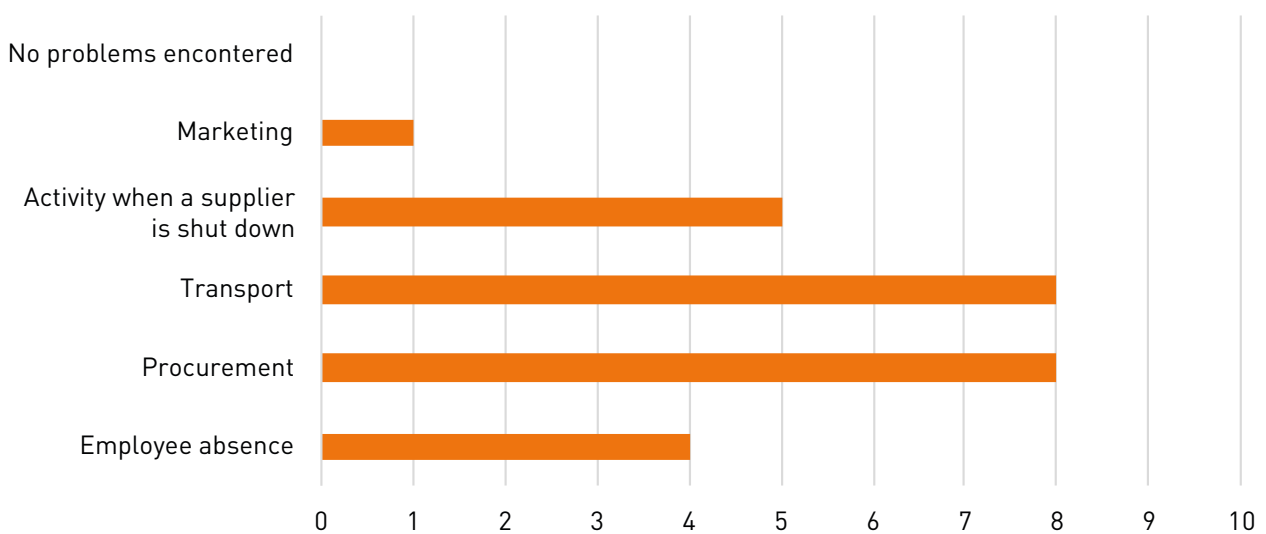


Figure 6: Organisational problems

### 3.4. Impacts on trade and product marketing

Questions asked:

- What is the average weekly unsold volume following difficulties arising from the health crisis? (open question)
- Have you found a marketing solution for this unsold volume? (yes/no)
- If so, what is it? (open question)

Of the 10 participating companies, seven (7) were able to quantify the impact on weekly volume (between 4 tonnes and 22 tonnes per week), two (2) confirmed a decrease in volume (but were unable to quantify it), and one company did not mention a decrease in volume. Some companies also mentioned difficulties in disposing of their pineapple suckers or other plants.

Weekly volume (in tonnes)	
Average	12.5
Minimum	4
Maximum	22

The companies mentioned, in response to an open-ended question in the survey, their reasons for the decrease in volume. The main reason for the decrease in volume is the decrease in the logistical offer.

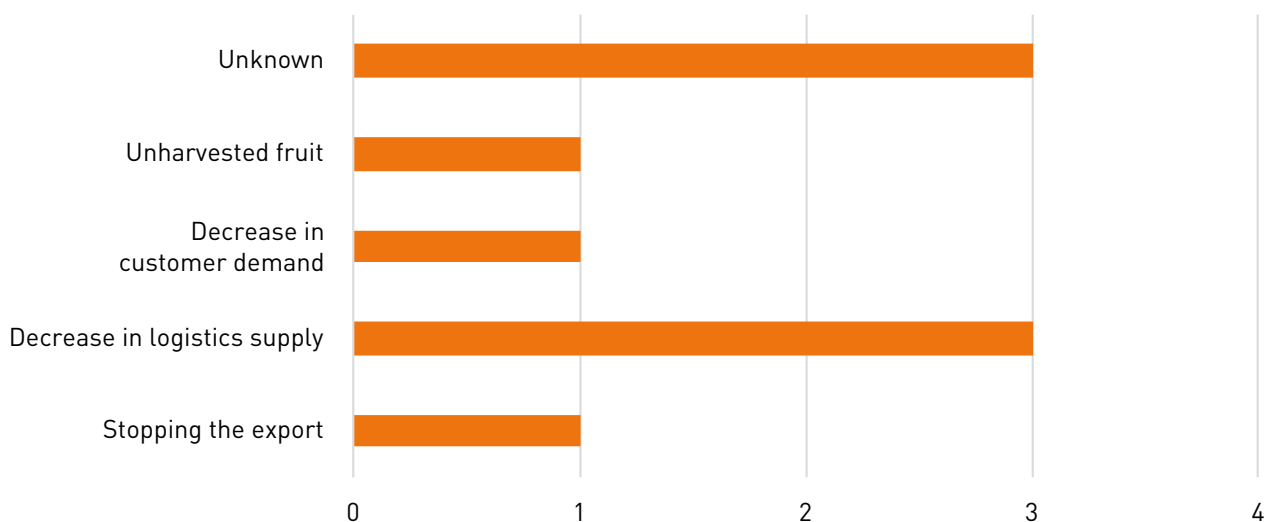


Figure 7: Reasons for decrease in volume

Among the nine (9) companies experiencing a decrease in weekly volume marketed, three (3) companies found alternative solutions: two (2) sold their products on the local market (instead of the European market) and one company processed its fruit into juice for the local market.

### 3.5. Government measures

Questions asked:

- Are you aware of the aid deployed by the government and local authorities? (yes/no)
- If so, which ones do you know? (open question)
- If so, have you already applied for help? (yes/no)
- If so, for what government assistance? (open question)

100% of participating companies replied that they were not aware of the aid deployed by the government and local authorities to alleviate the impact of the crisis on their activities.

### 3.6. Implementation of World Health Organization

recommendations to fight the pandemic

Questions asked:

- Which of these WHO recommendations are known and understood by the majority of your employees? (multiple choice)
- What guidelines have you put in place at your station? (multiple choice)
- What instructions did you put in place at harvest time? (multiple choice)
- What instructions have you given to your subcontractors? (multiple choice)
- What additional measures, if any, have been put in place? (open question)
- What are the potential difficulties that prevent you from implementing certain measures and why? (open question)

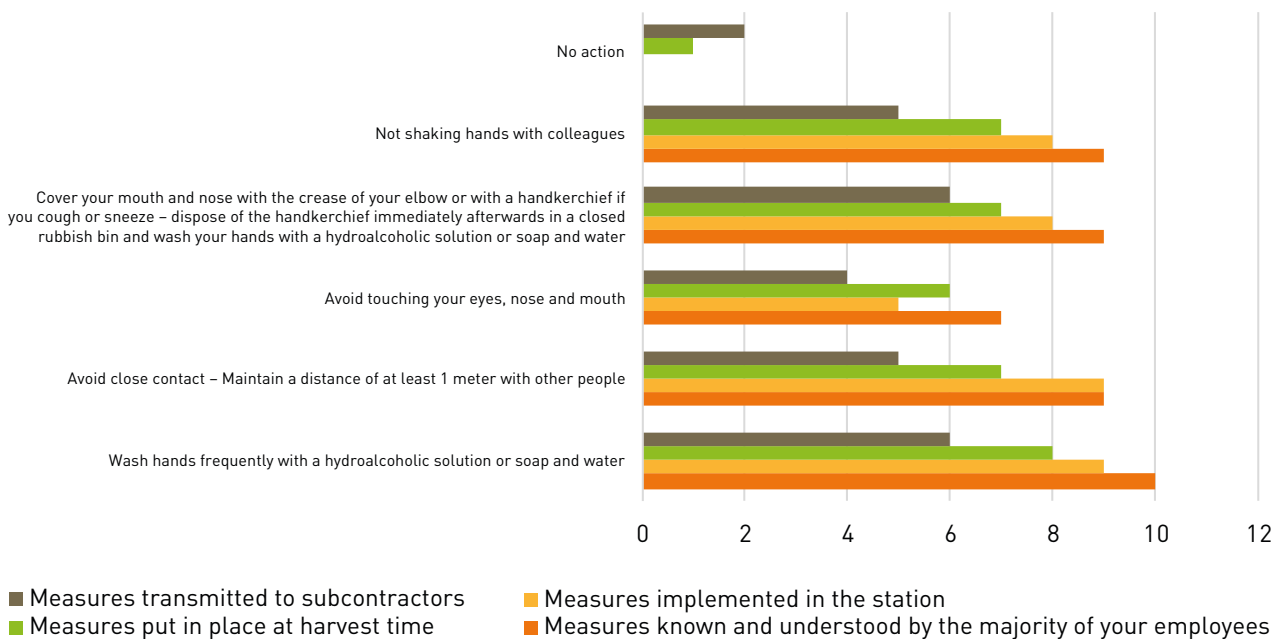


Figure 8: WHO recommendations implemented along the supply chain



The majority of the recommendations are known and understood by companies and their workers (73% of respondents for all measures combined). However, some measures are not applied in day-to-day activities: in the station, on average, measures are applied by an average of 65% of respondents, compared to 60% of respondents applying measures at harvest time, and fewer than 50% of respondents passing on the measures to subcontractors (producers, etc.).

Some companies have put in place additional measures to limit the spread of the virus, including:

- Prohibition of visits within the station
- Limitation of means of transport by motorcycles and tractors
- Regular sensitisation of staff on compliance with the measures
- Disinfection of furniture and packaging materials after each use

The main difficulties mentioned that prevent companies from implementing these recommendations are as follows:

- Lack of financial resources
- Difficulties in accessing community health workers
- Lack of installation of water points on the production site
- Lack of real support for businesses in complying with the government's measures
- Lack of sanction by the authorities for those violating the measures
- Difficulties in controlling the transport of workers

### 3.7. Support desired from COLEACP

Questions asked:

- In your opinion, during the health crisis, what actions can COLEACP take to best support you? (open question)
- In your opinion, when the health crisis is over, what actions will COLEACP be able to put in place to best support you? (open question)

The desired support can be classified into categories, shown in the graph below. During the health crisis, the needs of companies are mainly located at the level of provision of protective equipment, financial support and market access, followed closely by assistance in identifying logistical solutions and raising awareness on barrier gestures.

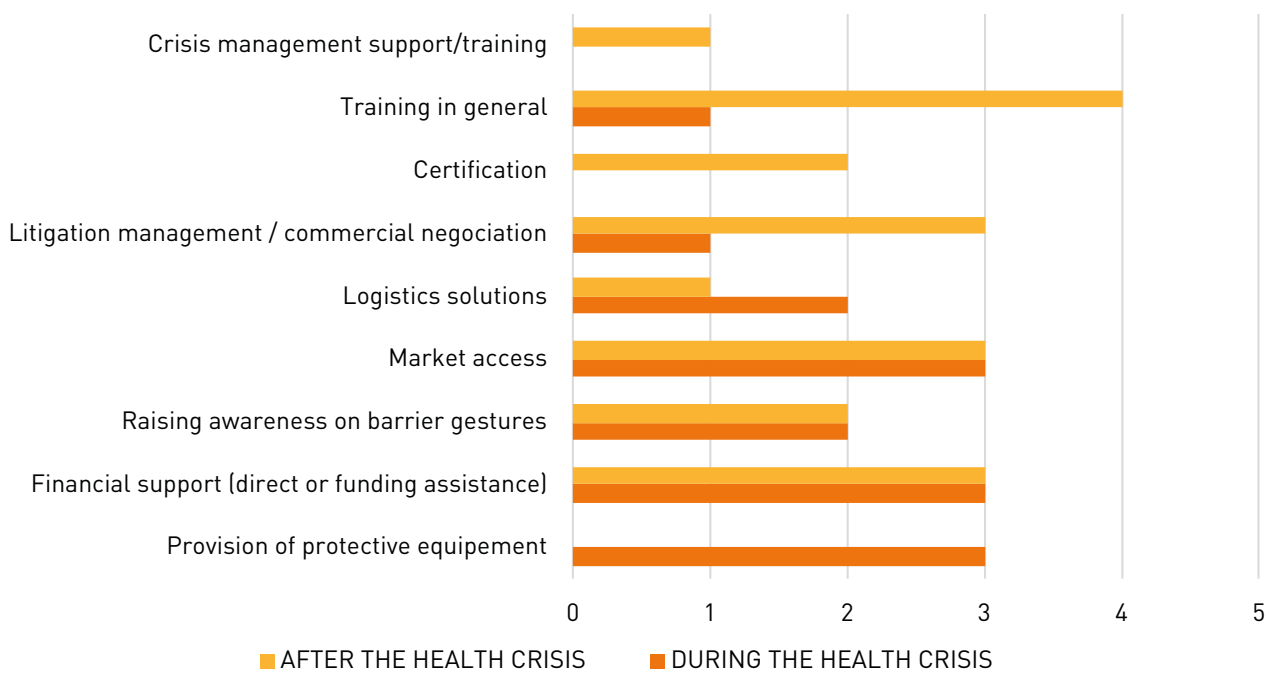


Figure 9: Support desired from COLEACP

Once the health crisis is over, companies would like support in terms of capacity building, particularly in the areas of trade negotiation, dispute management and crisis management. Requests for support during and after the crisis include financial support (direct or indirect) and market access.

### 3.8. Support desired from RHORTICAM

Questions asked:

- In your opinion, during the health crisis, what actions can RHORTICAM take to best support you? (open question)
- In your opinion, when the health crisis is over, what actions will RHORTICAM be able to put in place to best support you? (open question)

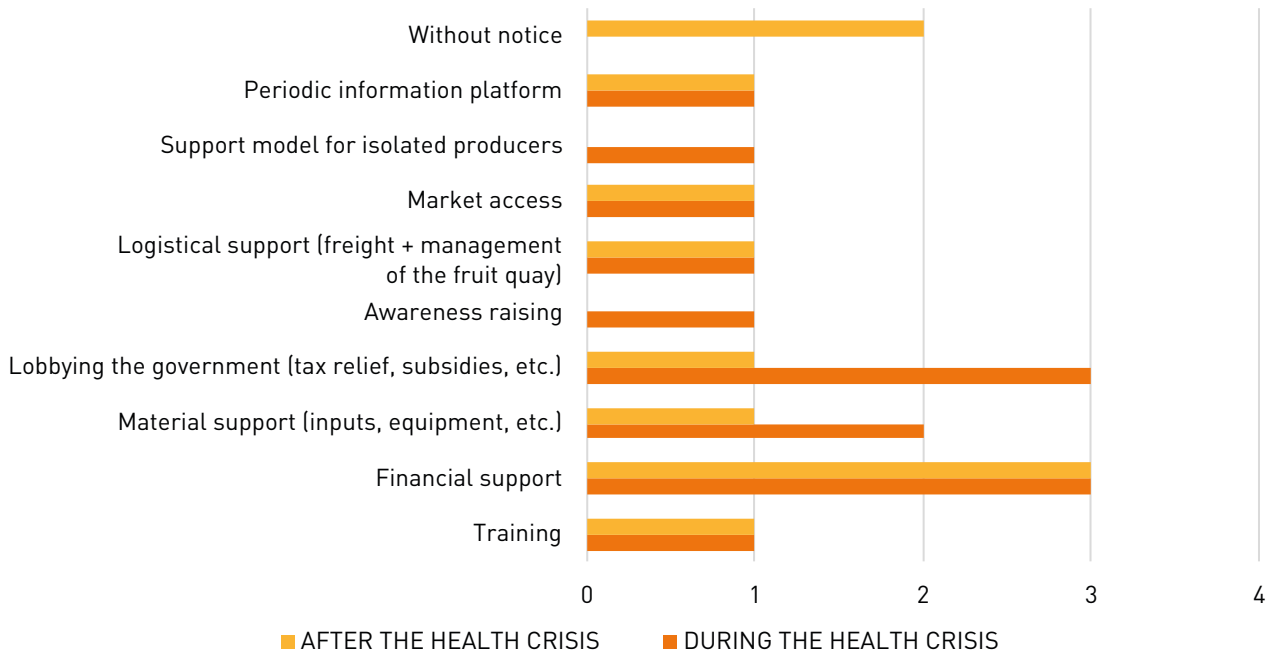


Figure 10: Support desired from RHORTICAM

The support requested on several occasions to help businesses during the crisis includes lobbying the government (tax relief, subsidies for the purchase of inputs, etc.), followed by financial support, and finally support for the acquisition of equipment (group purchase of inputs, equipment, etc.). After the crisis, the main desired support is financial support.

## 4. CONCLUSION ON THE IMPACTS OF THE HEALTH CRISIS AND THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED FOR THE CAMEROONIAN HORTICULTURAL SECTOR

Overall, all participating companies are impacted by the current crisis, whether they are active on the local or the European market.

The main impacts are at the level of customer demand (90% of companies are experiencing a drop in demand), as well as from a logistical point of view (in the broadest sense) on supply chains: from the supply of products (50% of companies mention blocked supplies), to export (50% lack freight capacity to export their products).

The financial impact is an average 50% decrease in turnover for participating companies. The companies are losing on average 12.5 tonnes of product per week as a result of these problems, and only one-third of the companies have found an alternative market (generally local markets). The identification of alternative markets would relieve the companies in this period of crisis.

From an operational point of view, all participating companies are experiencing liquidity problems and are therefore unable to pay suppliers (100% of respondents) or employees (80%). The main obstacles to operations are related to supply (80% of respondents), transport (80%) and to a lesser extent the absence of employees (40%).

Companies are not informed about the government aid available to them. Support from RHORTICAM (information about, and assistance in applying for and obtaining, financial aid) is requested from the companies.

The majority of WHO recommendations (barrier actions) are known and understood by companies and their workers (73% of respondents for all measures combined). However, some measures are not applied in day-to-day activities: in the station, measures are applied by an average of 65% of respondents, compared to 60% at harvest time, and less than 50% of respondents transmit measures to subcontractors (producers, etc.). It seems appropriate to accompany harvesting staff and producers in these measures.

The results of the survey, together with the desires mentioned by the companies, make it possible to identify the following priorities for support:

- **Support from COLEACP:**
  - **Market access:** identifying alternative markets for companies to sell their products.
  - **Commercial negotiation:** the identification of markets must be accompanied by training in commercial negotiation for companies, so that once a market has been identified, company managers can defend their products and the interests of their company.
  - **Crisis management support:** the priorities here are to help companies manage their cash flow and secure their supply chain.
  - **Support for raising awareness on barrier gestures:** those responsible for disseminating good hygiene practices should urgently be trained in good hygiene practices and the dissemination of these messages. COLEACP's online training platform offers a very good tool for this purpose.
  - **Access to finance:** for companies that seek access to finance and have an investment plan, COLEACP regularly identifies financing structures that may be able to respond favourably to their request for financing.

■ **Support from RHORTICAM :**

- **Market access:** identifying alternative markets for companies to sell their products.
- **Information and communication:** information on barrier gestures, reminders of the instructions to limit the spread of the virus, and also on the aid measures put in place for the government; if possible, RHORTICAM may accompany companies in applying for government aid.
- **Advocating to the government:** RHORTICAM is invited to approach the Cameroonian government to defend horticultural companies and promote the obtaining of subsidies or tax relief in times of crisis.





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