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Grade 8

Introduction

As we entered the year 2020, every South African was filled with joy and excitement to see what the year had planned for them. We were all propelled with joy and hope under the new leadership of our president Mr. Ramaphosa, but 2020 had other plans. In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a global pandemic. Before then, we all thought this disease was not so serious as we had other outbreaks before. Now we were faced with a disease so deadly and easily spread through any form of contact. One of the biggest worries was the supply of food to people during the lockdown, and farmers played a big role in this.

Positive and negative impacts of Covid-19 on farmers

When the president announced a national lockdown, farmers were faced with the decision to either stay at home or be at risk and work. The risk came from the fact that farmers rely on interacting with people, staff, and the market. The good news for farmers was the high demand for food, which meant more orders were coming for food. Farmers were regarded as essential workers, which made people recognize their importance to society. Some people could not afford to buy food, and it was uplifting to see farmers fulfilling their social responsibility to the needy and poor by donating leftover fruits and vegetables. This brought joy to people and made an impact on poor communities.

A big challenge was the cost of buying PPE, such as sanitizer and protective gear, which was not in the budget. Farming operations with people working closely with each other had to get rid of some of their workers to allow for social distancing. This negatively affected the workers and their families due to the loss of income. For farmers who had damaged equipment or tractors just before lockdown, there was a lot of stress as movements were restricted, and most mechanics were closed during the lockdown. Perhaps this was a time for farmers and workers to gain new skills by learning to fix equipment themselves. One of the greatest lessons learned was to save money for storms like these in future.

What measures are currently in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in agriculture?

Adhering to strict protocols has helped people during this difficult time. Sanitizing hands and work equipment, wearing protective gear, and screening regularly has become the new normal that farmers have had to adapt to. The storm is not over yet but slowly and surely, we are getting there. Hope and prayer is our weapon to give strength.

How can you improve on the current protocols for preventing the spread of COVID-19?

I believe we should continue to play our part by wearing our masks at all times, washing our hands for 20 seconds regularly, sanitizing things or equipment in our environment (school, work, home), getting tested, and keeping social distance. We should embrace technology by using online shopping and phone apps to reduce physical contact between people. We should also do more to educate people about covid and other diseases to prevent a second wave or a similar thing in the future.