



3. To improve food handling (food safety and wastage) across the entire food chain, the following are recommended:

- (i) MTIC & MoLG should facilitate the enactment of by-laws to promote establishment of household storage facilities (granaries, modern storage facilities);
- (ii) The Department of food and nutrition security in MAAIF should be elevated to Directorate level and charged with establishment and maintenance of national strategic food reserves in all regions of the country through PPP arrangements;
- (iii) MAAIF, MTIC and MoH should fast track implementation of the aflatoxin Action Plan
- (iv) MAAIF and MIA should enforce appropriate transportation of food;
- (v) MoH should strengthen the food and health inspection mechanisms in markets and eating places;
- (vi) MoGLSD should design and promote food donation volunteering programs for households, corporate organizations, and other institutions;
- (vii) OPM should design and implement a national logistics food collection and distribution program.

4. To improve coordination and partnerships, the following are recommended:

- (i) OPM should develop a system of food redistribution from surplus to deficit regions;
- (ii) OPM should establish a functional M&E system for zero hunger

(iii) MoFPED should establish a well-coordinated implementation and financing mechanism for development partners, private sector and civil society, as well as enhance communication and dissemination of IEC;

References & Useful links

1. NPA, (2017). Towards a Hunger-free Ugandan Society: Policy Implications for Increasing Food and Nutrition Security. Policy Paper for the Presidential Economic Council (PEC). Kampala, NPA
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Conclusion

Whereas the country's policy, legal and institutional framework is sufficient to address issues of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS), there is need to enforce the various food and nutrition provisions in the current legal framework to facilitate the country's progress towards ensuring zero hunger for all.

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Towards a Hunger-Free Ugandan Society: Policy Recommendations for Increasing Food and Nutrition Security

Hunger in Uganda is a serious national challenge. The demand for food in the country has outstripped the supply because of rapid population growth rate at 3% per annum outpacing food production, which has stagnated at 2% for over a decade. A big portion of the population, especially children is unable to access adequate food. Food security is uneven within the country. Some areas are faced with food surplus amidst scarcity in other areas. This has not been leveraged due to lack of appropriate food redistribution mechanisms. High food losses are experienced across the food value chain. This has been exacerbated by the lack of emergency national food reserves. In addition, a majority of Ugandans are unable to consume the minimum (2,200 kcal per day) Required Dietary Intake (RDI) for light physical activity. This policy brief highlights the hunger problem in Uganda, analyses the causes and provides recommendations towards achievement of a hunger-free society.

Introduction

Uganda is committed to ending all forms of hunger and malnutrition. In line with the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) target "to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030", the Uganda Vision 2040 proposes to improve the hunger and nutritional status of its citizens, particularly among young children.

... 10.9 million people were experiencing acute food insecurity as of January 2017

The nutritional quality of the foods consumed in the country is low. The outcome is that the prevalence of undernourishment remains high with nearly 40% of Ugandans being classified as undernourished, and 16% of the households chronically undernourished.

The richest 20% of the population have 19% of their children stunted. This is worse in the rural areas with an average of 1,841 kcal compared to 2,030 kcal in urban

areas in FY2015/16 (NPA & WFP, 2017). The diet is largely composed of staples (cereals, roots, tubers and matooke) as over 60% of the daily caloric intake is staples. This is attributed to limited knowledge and limited availability of the foods with the required nutrients.

Despite various efforts by Government, the extent of hunger in Uganda is still a serious problem. As of January 2017, about 10.9 million people in Uganda were experiencing acute food insecurity, of which 1.6 million were in crisis. Only 4% of the Ugandan households were food secure for the five years from FY2009/10 to FY2015/16, with 80% of them having suffered transient food insecurity (NPA & WFP, 2017). Over 64% of Ugandans cannot afford the desired 3 meals per day. Hunger is high among primary school going children with

... 66% of primary school going children are not accessing any meal while at school ...

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Hunger in Uganda is mainly due to food insecurity resulting from low agricultural production and productivity and low incomes. Currently, there are significant crop yield gaps between on-farm yields and those attainable at research stations. This low productivity is partly due to erratic weather patterns characterised by severe and frequent droughts and floods. The majority of Ugandan households are subsistence farmers and rely on rainfall for agricultural production. Nearly nine out of every ten households report suffering reductions in food production due to weather-related shocks. Low productivity also affects incomes of the poor which escalates their vulnerability to hunger.

This situation is higher in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas and is highest in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country. Whereas stunting among under-five year old children reduced from 32% in 2009/10 to 29% in 2016, currently, about 1.8 million children aged less than 5 years are stunted—this is still high.



Causes of Hunger in Uganda

a) Food Insecurity

The underlying causes of food insecurity include: high post-harvest losses; poor food safety; low household incomes; unregulated cross border trade in food products; and lack of household and national food reserves. The few available food reserves are small and are private sector owned. The traditional food reserve mechanisms at household level collapsed. In addition, the unregulated cross border food trade has encouraged the inflow of foreign traders in food products to purchase food from the gardens which exposes the households to food insecurity as they are tempted to sell almost everything. This is made worse by the lack of food distribution and redistribution systems.

It is estimated that between 20% and 30% of crop yields in Uganda are lost through post-harvest handling and that the losses in fruit crops (such as mangoes, oranges and pawpaw etc.) could reach up to 80% of total production if this problem is not addressed.

b) Low Household Incomes

Access to food is determined by either the ability to produce sufficient food for own consumption or the ability to purchase food in the market. The average share of food in total household expenditures was in the range of 55%-61% over the 2009/10-2013/14 period with the poorer households spending a higher share of their income on food. Given such large shares of food expenditures in the household budgets, any changes in food prices are bound to have immense consequences for overall household welfare. This implies that domestic food prices are an important determinant of access to food. Therefore, increasing household income is key to improving food security.

c) Nutrition Deficiency (Limited Dietary Diversification)

Ugandans are unable to consume the minimum Required Dietary Intake (RDI) of 2,200 kcal for light physical activity. On average they are consuming only of 1,860 Kcal per day. A majority of Ugandans' food consumption comes from calorie-rich foods that are generally low in protein and micronutrients. Staples (cereals, roots, tubers and matooke) are the most consumed food stuff in Uganda which, except beans and ground nuts, are generally low in nutritional density.

d) Limited Nutrition Knowledge

Limited knowledge about what constitutes a balanced diet partly explains the observed nutrition deficiency variations in the country. For instance, while households in the Northern and Eastern regions are more food insecure

they have higher food diversification as compared to the Central and Western which are more food secure. This reflects cultural and nutrition knowledge gaps.

Policy Recommendations

Moving towards "Zero-Hunger" requires policy shifts to meet the following targets: i) achieve 80% food security in the country by 2025; ii) achieve 75% nutrition security across all age groups and geographical locations; iii) improve food handling (food safety and wastage) across the entire food chain; and iv) efficient coordination and partnerships.

1. To improve food security through deliberate efforts to enhance production and productivity, the following are recommended:

- (i) MAAIF should:
 - Promote the uptake of generated technologies of crops, livestock and fisheries through farm demonstrations, exhibitions, etc to improve agricultural productivity, value addition, food security and incomes of the farmers;
 - Recruit, facilitate and continuously train agricultural extension workers in all parts of the country to properly address the recurrent and emerging issues;
 - Establish and maintain pests, vector and disease control infrastructure and facilities;
 - Strengthen capacities for surveillance, early detection, reporting and response to crop, livestock pests, vectors diseases;
 - Promote climate smart agriculture by strengthening surveillance, forecasting and early warning systems in order to reduce the impact of natural disasters; and disseminating appropriate climate smart agricultural practices and technologies to farmers;
 - Establish demonstration fields on good agronomic practices at sub-county and parish levels to stimulate learning and adoption of the technologies;
 - Develop the basic production, harvest and post-harvest management and marketing skills of the farmers so that their products meet the market quality attributes;
 - Develop the agricultural inputs distribution policy and the Seed Policy and together with MTIC fast-track the passing of the Counterfeits Bill to ensure quality of agricultural inputs;

(ii) MWE should promote:

- **Appropriate and affordable irrigation technologies** by establishing on-farm irrigation demonstration plots at national, district, sub-county and community levels;
- **Household-level water harvesting through rooftop, surface runoffs for backyard irrigation;**

(iii) MTIC should:

- **Develop and enforce regulations for cross border food trade** to enable effective control of food exportation and importation during food shortage.

- **Develop and maintain physical marketing infrastructure** for product value addition and post-harvest handling;

(iv) MAAIF and UNBS should:

- **Develop and enforce grades and standards to cover a wider range of products** so that food products are able to meet consumer quality requirements;

- **Enforce regulations on quality assurance of agricultural inputs** including fertilisers, seeds, seedlings and stocking materials and agricultural chemicals.

(v) The Departments in-charge of water for agricultural production and irrigation in MWE and MAAIF should be combined and elevated to a Directorate under MWE to eliminate the institutional conflicts and overlaps that hindered the operationalisation of the irrigation policy and master plan;

(vi) Provide NARO with the necessary human, equipment, financial and logistical support to enhance its capacity for production of breeder and foundation seed to meet market seed demand;

(vii) Enhance the existing Agricultural Credit Facility (ACF) to increase access to agricultural finance beyond agro-processing; and

(viii) Increase household incomes through poverty reduction measures.

2. To improve nutrition security across all age groups and geographical locations, the following are recommended:

(i) Introduce and enforce mandatory industrial food fortification of maize flour, wheat, cooking oil and salt;

(ii) UNBS and UIRI should train and support Small-scale millers with appropriate technologies for fortification.

(iii) MoFPED should provide tax incentives and affordable financial services for fortification equipment and fortificants to industries;

(iv) Cabinet should fast track the enactment of the Food and Nutrition Bill to regulate food fortification, as well as the National Bio Safety Bill, 2017 to operationalise the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy (2008);

(v) MoH should undertake routine micronutrient supplementation for children under five years and women of reproductive age (Vitamin A, Iron and Folic Acid, Zinc);

(vi) MoH and MoGLSD should promote breast feeding at least up to 2 years, developing institutional maternity related policies and establishment of workplace childcare facilities;

(vii) MoH and MoGLSD should undertake national community mobilization and awareness programme on consumption of nutrient rich foods and dietary diversification.

(viii) Improve dietary diversity by introducing new food varieties in communities where they do not exist and designing region specific food packages.

(ix) MoES and MoGLSD should undertake national mobilization and sensitization of parents and communities on the modalities of feeding their children while at school;

(x) MoES & MAAIF should promote establishment of school farms (or gardens) and provide support in terms of agricultural equipment and other inputs to produce food to supplement parents' efforts and train children in agriculture best practices;

(xi) Sub national government should facilitate productive use of redundant school land and at the same time increase food availability to schools through community and private sector partnership;

(xii) MoES should develop and integrate knowledge and skills package on food and nutrition security for learners and teachers into national curriculum;

(xiii) Sub national government should design and disseminate age and physiological specific dietary IEC packages and institutionalize training and sensitization programs from district to sub county levels for dietary specific needs across the life cycle.