

Malnutrition in Uganda

We've Already Paid Too High a Price

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Agriculture and Nutrition Fact Sheet

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Agriculture is the foundation of national development and is essential to protect and promote food security in Uganda. However, despite increased food production, the rate of malnutrition in Uganda is still unacceptably high because many households in Uganda are food insecure and lack access to food.

- Malnutrition in Uganda can take many forms, including chronic malnutrition (stunting, or low height-for-age), underweight (low weight-for-age), acute malnutrition (wasting, or low weight-for-height), anaemia, vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency, and low birth weight (< 2.5 kg).¹
- Almost one-third of children under 5 and 1 of 3 women suffer from malnutrition in Uganda.¹
- Children who are malnourished are at greater risk of infections (such as diarrhoea and pneumonia), which in turn increases the risk of malnutrition. Malnourished children also have a greater risk of developing chronic diseases (such as diabetes and heart disease) in adulthood.^{2,3}
- Food insecurity is a significant underlying cause of malnutrition in Uganda. The causes of food insecurity in Uganda are multifaceted, often a result of poverty, landlessness, high fertility, natural disasters, high food prices, lack of education, and the fact that a majority of Ugandans depend on agriculture as a main source of income. Gender inequality only worsens food insecurity and poverty.



Photo credit: Jessica Scranton, FHI 360

Malnutrition reduces Uganda's agricultural productivity.

- A healthy and productive workforce in Uganda is needed to improve and sustain agricultural productivity. Poor growth in children hinders the potential of Uganda's future labour force. Iron deficiency anaemia and stunting result in reduced labour productivity, which hinders agricultural production and slows the progress of development.^{3,4}
- Malnutrition due to stunting, iron deficiency anaemia, iodine deficiency, and low birth weight will cost Uganda more than 19 trillion Ugandan Shillings (US\$7.7 billion) in lost productivity by 2025.⁴
- Investing in nutrition now would lead to economic gains in the future through increased productivity exceeding 4.3 trillion Ugandan Shillings (US\$1.7 billion) by 2025.⁴
- Agriculture systems can inadvertently harm household nutrition if:
 - A women's role in child care is compromised due to her workload
 - Workload increases without an increase in calories consumed
 - Men and women are exposed to hazardous conditions that affect their health, including unsanitary conditions
 - Food prices increase, causing families to eat fewer varieties of foods

Agriculture and nutrition are interdependent. Nutrition can be improved through increased access and availability of food at the household level, and improved nutrition increases agricultural productivity. The agriculture sector can support nutrition by:

- Ensuring a legal and policy framework for improved nutrition, including:
 - Reviewing and integrating nutrition in the Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP) and in the National Agriculture Policy.
 - Developing guidelines for integrating nutrition in sector, district, and sub-county plans, policies, and agricultural activities.
- Providing strong political and technical leadership and commitment to nutrition within the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries and strong coordination with other ministries, including the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education and Sports; the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development; and the Ministry of Local Government.
- Allocating more resources for implementing proven household-level agricultural interventions that can improve household food security and nutrition.
- Strengthening the capacity of agricultural extension workers to implement household-level agricultural interventions, including integrating nutrition into pre-service and in-service training curricula for agricultural extension service providers.
- Putting in place a monitoring and evaluation framework to track implementation of nutrition interventions for development, including nutrition as an impact and outcome indicator for agriculture programs, and food and nutrition security indicators in the 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey and National Household Expenditure Survey (NHES).

Some Strategies to Improve Nutrition and Sustain Food Security

- Promote women's access to and control over productive resources, capital, and income generation.
- Promote the use of labour-saving technologies to enable women to manage competing priorities and their caring, reproductive, and productive roles.
- Promote opportunities to train women in agro-processing at the household level.
- Increase wages for male and female agricultural workers and ensure that men and women receive equal pay for equal work to increase families' ability to buy nutritious foods.
- Ensure safe working conditions for agricultural workers, including proper sanitation.
- Provide opportunities for diversification of household income.
- Promote the adoption of high-yield nutritious crops, including biofortified staples like iron-rich beans and orange sweet potatoes.
- Promote small livestock production, including small ruminants.
- Ensure food, especially staples such as millet, sweet potatoes, sorghum, matooke, and maize, remain affordable for families.
- Intensify nutrition and health behaviour change interventions within agricultural interventions, with a focus on men and influencers of behaviour at the household and community levels.



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