

Agriculture and Nutrition in Ghana

Build the Future. Invest in Nutrition Now.

Undernutrition is still a serious problem in Ghana, despite increased food production and availability.

- In Ghana, **8 in 10 children under 5 years of age suffer from some form of undernutrition**, including stunting (short for age); wasting (low weight for height); and deficiencies in iron, iodine, and vitamin A.
- **Seven in 10 women of fertile age suffer from some form of undernutrition**, including iron deficiency anaemia.
- Household food security is a major underlying determinant of nutritional status. Some **3.2 million Ghanaians are food insecure or vulnerable to becoming food insecure**.
- The **causes of food insecurity in Ghana** include poverty and high food prices; poor distribution systems; natural disasters; a majority of livelihoods being undiversified; and the combination of dependence on subsistence and rain-fed agriculture as a main source of income, low yields, lack of market access, and high post-harvest losses.
- **Gender inequality and constraints worsen food insecurity, undernutrition, and poverty**, making them underlying causes of undernutrition and food insecurity in Ghana.
 - Relative to men, women have significantly less access to and control over resources, such as land, capital, and farming inputs, and earn less than men.
 - Men often migrate away from home in search of better economic opportunities, leaving women behind to provide for their families with a smaller resource pool, resulting in greater food insecurity and undernutrition for women and their children.
- **The imbalance between production of food and cash crops contributes to the lack of dietary diversity** and leads to poor access to micronutrient-rich foods, resulting in high rates of micronutrient deficiencies.



Photo credit: USAID/Ghana

Undernutrition reduces Ghana's agricultural productivity.

- **Agriculture is one of the largest sector of the economy**, employing more than half of the adult population. This demands a productive workforce to improve and sustain productivity in agriculture.
- **Anaemia, stunting, and decreased mental ability from undernutrition result in reduced labour productivity**, which hinders agricultural production and derails the progress of development.
 - Anaemia can be caused by iron deficiency from poor diets or iron losses from infections like malaria or hook-worm infestation. Anaemia will cost Ghana more than 1.9 billion cedis (US\$1.3 billion) in decreased worker productivity by 2020. Reducing anaemia by half would instead increase productivity by 505 million cedis (US\$353 million) in the same time period.

- Poor growth in children also hinders the potential of Ghana's future labour force. Ghana will lose 5 billion cedis (US\$3.5 billion) in economic productivity by 2020 if investments in nutrition are not made.

Further gains in economic growth, education, and health depend on progress in food and nutrition security. Urgent actions for improving food and nutrition security requires:

- **Integration of nutrition** in agriculture plans, policies, and programmes
- **Strong political leadership and commitment at the highest levels** to ensure that food and nutrition security programming is integrated into the programmes of the ministries of Health, Food and Agriculture, Trade and Industry, Women's and Children's Affairs, Local Government and Rural Development, Chieftaincy and Culture, Finance and Economic Planning, and Education
- **Strong coordination and collaboration** within and between government and the private sector
- Adoption of a **comprehensive national nutrition, food and agriculture policies**
- **Allocation of more resources** for implementing proven agricultural interventions that affect nutrition

Examples of Interventions to Improve and Sustain Food and Nutrition Security

1. Promote women's access to and control over productive resources such as capital, and farming inputs.
2. Promote consumption of diversified diets to ensure nutrition security.
3. Promote use of labour-saving technologies to enable women to manage caring, reproductive, and productive roles.
4. Promote increased food production and utilisation.
5. Promote diversified farming: high-value crops and small livestock including small ruminants, poultry and fish to increase dietary diversity.
6. Promote small irrigation schemes to support year-round production, especially vegetables and fruits.
7. Promote agro-processing, preservation, storage, distribution of food, and marketing (especially small scale).
8. Promote food safety along the agricultural value chain.
9. Promote agribusinesses to increase income.
10. Expand extension coverage targeting women.
11. Promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food-based approaches.
12. Intensify nutrition and health behaviour change strategies in agricultural interventions.

Main data sources include 2011 Ghana PROFILES, Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2008, Ghana Living Standards Survey, Ghana Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis 2009, and Gender Equity in Agriculture and Rural Development (FAO 2009).

All calculations of US\$ to cedis are based on an exchange rate of 1.43 cedis to US\$1.

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This brief was developed by the PROFILES task team, which comprises technical experts from the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana Statistical Services, University of Ghana, University of Development Studies, USAID, Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA), UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, and is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the Office of Health, Infectious Diseases, and Nutrition, Bureau for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and USAID/Ghana, under terms of Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-12-00005, through FANTA, managed by FHI 360.

