

# URBAN FOOD SELF SUFFICIENCY; LESSONS LEARNT FROM EXPERIENCES OF COVID 19 RESPONSES

Kampala, 26 May 2020

## COMMUNIQUE

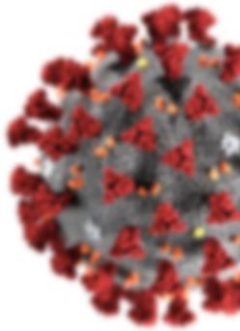
**“Government as the duty bearer should endorse food systems that can enhance Urban Food Self-Sufficiency”**

### PREAMBLE

World over cities and urban areas are characterized by high population of low incomes and wage earners. With the pandemic such as COVID19 urban populations have become highly vulnerable. They primarily depend on wages and earnings from informal jobs and business. They have little or no entitlements including own savings to sustain them away from work. Their earning options were the first casualties of the pandemic. This has posed structural and capacity challenges to municipal leaders and governments that are already heavily laden with the duty to respond to the fast-changing demands as a result of the Pandemic. Food as a first line and front-line defender of human security in viral pandemics such as COVID19, necessitates that governments ensure that food is available, accessible and affordable and not just food but nutritious food.

In regard to the above background, Food Rights Alliance (FRA) and Partners with support from OXFAM, Hivos and Trocaire on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020, convened a high-level online dialogue on urban food self-sufficiency. The objective of the dialogue was to gather Stakeholders’

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perspectives on; impact of COVID19 to urban dwellers' capacity to access food, lessons that can be replicated to help them become food self-sufficient as well as assessing Government's responsiveness plan to COVID-19 on the agricultural sector and its capacity to deliver on its aspirations of making urban dwellers urban food self-sufficient and resilient during and after a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Deliberations in the meeting would inform policy makers and state actors across the spectrum on how to adopt viable preparedness in relation to enhancing urban food security during and after pandemics.

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**RECALLING** that In March 2020 the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a world pandemic. Subsequent to this announcement, many countries implemented various lock down measures – from extreme to moderate including social distancing and banning of public transport system to minimize transmission of COVID-19. In Uganda, cognizant that majority of the Urban dwellers live hand to mouth as a means of survival, his excellency prioritized urban dwellers among the people to support with food handouts. According to World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom in his briefing on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, the Corona virus is predicted to stay with the human race for a long time. This calls for a closer scrutiny on the sustainability of the measures taken by government and explore alternative ways of helping communities attain self-help.

**WELCOMING** the president's categorization of the agricultural sector among the essential services that were allowed to operate during the span of the lock down to enable continuity of food production, we note with concern that there has been inappropriateness in supporting urban dwellers in regards to ensuring food security.

**CONCERNED** that whereas Government rolled out a COVID-19 food relief aid program to the urban dwellers in Kampala and Wakiso districts<sup>1</sup>, there was a discrepancy in regards to ensuring food safety. In April 2020 the Uganda National Bureau of Standards reported that it had withheld over 100 tonnes of COVID-19 relief food which was not meeting the required standards.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Inside the slow, winding government food distribution](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UNBS withholds 100 tonnes of COVID-19 relief food over poor quality](#)

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If this incongruity is not addressed, Uganda could record more numbers related to foodborne diseases and malnutrition. This will also have a great impact on the Government's health budget together with the economy at large.

**RECALLING** that Government has the Constitutional obligation of ensuring food and nutrition security for All Ugandans,

**WE RECOMMEND** that Government through Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) urgently addresses the following issues.

1. Government should enforce implementation of existing policy, legal and regulatory framework that seek to ensure safe food supply across the value chain. Key among these is the Food and Drug Act which is the main law that governs food safety.
2. In reference to the Food and Drug Act; Section 14. We recommend that MAAIF implements a robust tracking system that duly inspects food systems and facilitates operationalizing of related regulatory frameworks. This can be achieved through;
  - I. Improved recall and tracking systems which identify products that do not comply with safety standards, withdraw these and safely dispose them, sustainably safeguarding consumers.
  - II. Establishment of monitoring laboratories at municipal levels to allow for examination of food products for contaminants, chemical and microbiological hazards...this should complement Uganda Bureau of Standards in its monitoring work. The essence is to secure consumers from consuming hazardous foods. in order to control consumption hazards.
3. MAAIF should enhance capacity building and knowledge management on food safety through information, education, communication materials and training programs for food producers, processors, consumers and regulatory authorities.
4. Government through the municipal councils and districts should build capacity of extension workers in urban agriculture and the use of ICT in agriculture. Government training and retooling programs should also be strengthened for both public and non-state actors.

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5. We recommend that municipal councils and districts enhance E-extension, adopting digital tools to deliver content specific extension and advisory services. These digital tools include radio, Television and mobile phone applications.
6. Sensitize and train urban farmers through the above-mentioned digital platforms on improved agronomy and husbandry practices; pests and disease control; water harvesting for production; waste management and utilization; post-harvest handling; food and nutrition security and; Energy conservation among others.
7. Government should enhance synergies amongst MAAIF, public sector and civil society organizations to assist urban farmers and other value chain players in institutional development, access to agricultural credit, and other critical services.
8. MAAIF together with civil society organizations need to hold public sensitization on self-sufficiency and coping mechanisms, changing the current public mindset of aid dependency.
9. Government through public extension workers and partnerships with civil society organizations should build public awareness and capacity of urban farmers to embrace innovative approaches to urban agriculture including backyard farming and water recycling for irrigation.



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