

## BREIFING PAPER ON

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# OBSERVANCE AND AWARENESS CREATION

## FOOD LOSS & WASTE



### BACKGROUND

Food is lost or wasted throughout various stages of the food supply chain. During agricultural production, crops, and harvest can become damaged or spilled, animals may die to disease. Crops, animals, fish or milk may be lost during post-harvest handling, storage, in transportation, processing and consumption. During processing, food may be lost or degraded during washing, peeling, canning and packaging.

During distribution, food may be lost or wasted during transport, at wholesale markets, supermarkets, retailers, and eventually consumers may waste food by throwing or discarding food away.

The COVID-19 has is a wakeup call that our food systems in the world including Uganda are very fragile. There has been a major disruption in the supply chain, due to the lockdown measures in the country, temporary closure of some markets, all these measures

have resulted in loss of markets for producers and distributors making the situation even more challenging. At the end of the supply chain, panic buying and stock piling by markets, which are often key donors to the food banks are struggling to keep their shelves stocked.

With over 132 million people on the verge of being undernourished, 1/3 of the food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year. In a country where Malnutrition is still a great threat especially to the young generation (Children), more than 1/3 of all children (2.4 million) are stunted and the proportion of the food secure population has declined from 83% in July 2016 to 69% in January 2017, with an estimated 10.9 million people experiencing acute food insecurity and of which 1.6 million are in a crisis situation (IPC Report 2017). Globally around 14 percent of food

produced is lost between harvest and retail, whereas there are significant quantities that are also lost and wasted at the consumption level.

In Uganda up to 40% of the Fruit and vegetable goes to waste especially along the supply chain or are lost to disease, pests, and rot, which are all benchmarked from sale of fake inputs on the market which results into Food wastage before production and wastage during production. More than 12 percent of maize grain produced in Uganda gets lost and wasted on the field due to prolonged field drying and late harvest, and another 18 percent is lost during transportation, processing, drying and poor storage. In 2014 alone, the Uganda National Farmers Federation estimated the annual food loss and wastage to have 16 billion shillings, yet it could have been used in time of shortage, or crisis to feed the food insecure citizens.

## Situation Analysis

Food loss and wastage doesn't not only mean that food alone is wasted during the process, however all the resources that are and were involved in the production of the food; water, land, labor, energy, capital and the respective inputs go to waste. It should be noted that it takes 3 liters of water to grow one tomato, and 50 liters of water to produce an orange fruit. Furthermore, wastage and disposal of food as well affects the environment, and the natural resource greatly leading to greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. Food waste that ends up in landfills produces a large amount of methane, a more powerful greenhouse gas. The excess amounts of greenhouse gases such as methane, and chlorofluorocarbons absorb infrared radiation and heat up the atmosphere causing devastating climate change implications.

In Kampala city, solid waste is managed by Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) in collaboration with private companies, statistics indicate that each household in Kampala generates approximately between 0.5 kg to 1.1 kg per capita of solid waste and majority of the solid waste is food left on the plate. Going by Kampala's population estimated at 1.5 million (UBOS), it should be noted that about 750,000kg or 750 tons of waste are generated in Kampala per day, with

majority being the food left on the plates, and food loss especially in the markets contributing up to 37.8% (food waste)- (Kampala Sun-Fight Against Food Waste)

High food losses are result from poor post-harvest handling practices (poor drying and moisture content at time of storage), inadequate and inappropriate storage facilities, limited value addition, filth and contamination, infestation by micro-organisms especially fungus that leads to aflatoxins. The food losses and wastage greatly contribute to and exacerbate hunger situations, poverty and food insecurity in the country. Currently, annual post-harvest loss stands at 17.6% for about 2.8 million metric tons, 12.4% of about 214,000 metric tons, and 13.5% of 230,000 metric tons of maize, millet and rice produced in the country respectively (Food and Agriculture Organization, SAVE FOOD; Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction)

Agricultural production is key especially for a country that benchmarks on the sector to feed, and improve livelihoods of many citizens, have employment levels of 72%. However majority of the food lost and wasted in the country is at the production level. The sale and marketing of fake agricultural inputs to farmers, the findings by the EPRC indicate that imported fertilizers have 1.8 % moisture content, the retail fertilizers have 1.92% and

the re-packed fertilizers having the composition of 2.8% of moisture content, with all such content is higher than the international recommended content which 1.5% thus making those above 1.5% to be counterfeit fertilizers. The fake sale and supply of the agricultural inputs on the market will greatly compromise production, hence greatly leading to food loss and waste before production, thus keeping farmers under siege in poverty and limiting productivity.

In many cases farmers in Uganda leave a lot of edible food in the field, through the timing of harvest which is not optimal, or crop is damaged during the harvest. It is estimated that 15-5-% of post-harvest losses are incurred at the farm level, most especially for perishable and fresh produce. In Uganda alone over 40% of fruits and vegetables are discarded, or lost, with majority of them being lost at the stage of harvesting and post-harvest handling. The post- harvesting systems in Uganda are not quite appropriate, and majority of the food is lost and wasted at this stage. Due to panic sales and markets, small scale farmers are faced with panic harvests, in this case food that is harvested is quite immature, to be of sustainable standards in the market leading to food loss and wastage on the farm. Crop losses are a great measurable reduction in food stuffs available for consumption. It should be noted that

during post-harvest handling; food is lost during cutting and handling is between 1-5%, sun drying is 3-5%, open storage 5-10%, processing 20-30% for the case of Uganda. With the vast majority of farmers having limited knowledge on post-harvest handling, a lot of food is bound to go to waste, and in most cases it is left on the field. Produce transportation to markets, on-farm drying, shelling as well contribute a total estimated losses of up to 30%. For the fruits and vegetables storage and poor market facilities are the cause food losses, however if markets are not organized food wastage can go up to 80% in fruits and vegetables.

Primary processing in Uganda, especially for the small scale mills and factories that process the food, are faced with great food loss and waste. There is a lot of contamination of the food especially during the processing stage, greatly leading to reduction or even loss of the quality of the food. The hulling, pounding, grinding, packaging, winnowing, sieving, and milling, process, for majority of the Uganda food producers is a challenge due to the limited technologies, they possess at hand, and at this stage, the amount of food lost is exceptional.

Food waste and loss in relation to excessive consumption and greed, leading to overweight and obesity. Globally 1 billion people in the world are overweight, however, the

prevalence of obesity and over weight in the country is at 2.3% and 10.4% respectively. Majority of the people eat more than what they bargained for, and with this most of the food is wasted through the gut, making it less usually to the body, hence leading to cases of obesity and overweight within some people. In Uganda, majority of food is lost and wasted on functions and ceremonies, people take more than they are required to have. As it's a norm in Uganda, many people plan to buy a lot of food for their ceremonies, but the worrying aspect is that a lot of food bought to celebrate a specific function ends up being wasted on many occasions. Wasting food means wasting money as a resource, the value of your money is when you buy food and eat it all. It is advisable to prepare smaller meals, putting into consideration the number of people that will consume the food to avoid massive food waste.

There is a lot of food waste at the kitchen/household level, hotels, restaurants, and airlines. With these places up to 70% of fruits, vegetables, food stuffs, cereals are put to waste. This is more evident at household level, where majority of the people buy and stock piles of food in the shelves and refrigerators. Majority of the food purchased by people, is thrown out and discarded as food waste, because of the misunderstanding of date marking, and improper storage

of the food. Food equally gets wasted at home after it has been purchased from the markets or the farms. Majority of the households, restaurants, hotels do not plan for the food they ought to buy to be consumed for a specific time. Many households especially in urban areas store cooked and uncooked food in refrigerators, so many times food is stored in plastic containers which are not efficient enough to preserve the foods stored therein which are easily contaminated leading to food loss and wastage. The power surges in Uganda are not efficient enough to permit having power running for an entire day, and in return this affects the foods kept in the refrigerators, making them prone to contamination hence leading to loss and wastage. By and large many household, hotels and restaurants are unable to keep for a long time due to these reasons. With other foods such as cereals, tubers and roots, and other hard foods are never kept in air tight containers, they are stored in open shelves which leads to drying of these foods, making them inedible. Some food still gets wasted and lost while cooking it. Most households, and some hotels and restaurants cannot afford stainless steel cooking ware, therefore contamination of food at a high risk, which results into food losses and wastes.

## Way Forward

Whereas, Government is tasked and charged with making sure food is not wasted and lost in the efforts of feeding all citizens, efforts should be geared towards educating all food systems stakeholders to strongly prioritize the reduction of food loss and waste. Civil Society, and Government actors should share information on specific loss reduction and waste prevention techniques at every level of the food system. Creating awareness campaigns at the local, national and regional level is key since the food systems spread across all these levels of food production and consumption. This requires improving agriculture extension services, harvesting techniques, improve handling to reduce damage, improve packaging to keep food fresher for longer, providing guidance on food storage and preparation, and improving consumer food preparation skills.

Improving public and private infrastructure for well-functioning and efficient food system. The efficient market chains, storage facilities and processing infrastructure will greatly play an important role in helping to curb food loss and wastage in the country. The government should consider

promoting an enabling environment for the private sector, by ensuring business friendly legal and regulatory frameworks

We are all guilty as charged when it comes to wastage and loss of food in one moment. At least each person has wasted food in one way or another along the food system, it is important that we change our behaviors towards food. Behavioral change is critical, and important along the food system and the supply chain, as every actor involved is accountable to the amount of food lost or wasted. We need to be more aware of the importance of the issue of food loss and waste now more than ever in order to promote and implement our national, regional, continental and global efforts. We need to highly recognize the fundamental role food production plays in promoting food security and nutrition which will contribute to the fight for Zero Hunger, and having Sustainable diets for all.

**As we pause to reflect, please note; Food Loss can be avoided Food waste is unethical, immoral, demonic and therefore should be condemned in the interest of the people and the Planet today and the future ahead of us.**

***“BEFORE YOU WEAR YOUR  
MASK EAT SAFE AND  
NUTRITIOUS FOODS DO NOT  
WASTE ANY FOOD SERVED  
BECAUSE  
THY FOOD IS THY MEDICINE”***



**DO NOT  
WASTE  
FOOD**

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