



FOOD RIGHTS ALLIANCE
POSITION PAPER

December 2021

**CELEBRATING THE
WORLD FOOD DAY**

**“A CALL ON TO UGANDA
POPULACE”**



BACKGROUND

The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement” (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 12 on the Right to Adequate Food). The right to adequate food is a universally recognized human rights which is enshrined in international instruments on Human rights including: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948; the international covenant of Economic, social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966; and the convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 among others.

On the 16th October 2021, Uganda joined the rest of the world to celebrate the World Food Day under the theme, “**Our actions are our future- Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life**”

This theme speaks directly to the fact that our action can either enable us produce food to feed us and maintain our environment to enable further production or affect the environment which will deter us from producing more food hence affecting our lives. It is therefore important to not only promote and protect the Human Right to adequate food but also protect the modes of production of the food.

Status of right to food in Uganda

According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) (2020), Uganda grows several food crops, of which 16 are major according to the Uganda Census of Agriculture (UCA) 2008/09. These include Maize, Millet, Sorghum, Rice, Cassava, Sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, Beans, Cow peas, Field peas, Pigeon peas, Groundnuts, Soya beans, Simsim, Plantains and Coffee. Area under major crop groups in 2019 was as follows: Cereals (3.4M Ha), Roots and Tubers (2.4M Ha), Banana Food (668,000 Ha), Groundnuts and soya beans (896,000 Ha) and Beans (1 M Ha). Area planted under oil crops increased by 27.1 percent while area planted under root crops and pulses reduced by 1.0 percent and cereals by 2.4 percent

The report further indicates that, overall, 50 percent of the food consumed in households comes from own production between 2013 and 2016 though this declined to 43 percent in 2018/19. This has therefore left the state of Food and Nutrition security in Uganda deteriorating over the years. According to the IPC report for the current period (June - August 2020), 23% of the analyzed population (2.6 million people) is facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). 38% of the population is in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and 40% is in Minimal Acute Food Insecurity (IPC Phase 1). Further for the projected period, (September 2020 - January 2021), 17% of the analyzed population (2 million people) is expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). 40% of the population will likely be in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and 43% will likely be in Minimal Acute Food Insecurity (IPC Phase 1).

Around 195,000 children are expected to be acutely malnourished during the course of 2020 in the Karamoja region, refugee hosting districts, as well as in refugee settlements. More than 25,000 of these children will be severely affected by acute malnutrition and almost 170,000 children will suffer from moderate acute malnutrition. Most of these children (more than 65% of the total number of children expected to be malnourished) reside in the refugee hosting districts.

Further, the situation is worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty to Uganda's food and nutrition security among underprivileged household. The IPC report 2020, indicates that, the COVID 19 restriction affected household access to food due to: increased prices of cereals, decline of livestock prices, and general terms of trade for pastoralists.

These restrictions have also reduced labour opportunities, which has affected households' access to income from other sources hence unable to feed their families. This corroborates the study conducted by the Food Rights Alliance and Twaweza conducted during the 2020 lockdown and established that, during the Lockdown, the majority of the population could not afford to buy even basic commodities, 70% of the population was worried to miss a meal at least once a month, while 47% were worried to miss a meal at least five times a month. Upon declaration of the lockdown, only 48% had food stocks that could last them a week, and 21% never had any food stocks. 55% reduced the size of the meal, 27% of the children went hungry, while 16% of the children spent a whole day without eating.

The Pandemic therefore exposed the fragile food system that exist in Uganda as it left majority food insecure. The above backgrounds call upon government's action towards fight against hunger and malnutrition in the country as part of the SDGs.

Government Commitment to Right to Food in Uganda

We commend the government of Uganda for the commitments showed in fulfilling its Constitutional obligation of ensuring food and nutrition security for all Ugandans. These have been envisaged through enactments of different legal frameworks and various Government programmes at national levels aimed at increasing production, productivity, value addition and marketing. Some of these include; The 1995 constitution of the republic of Uganda, The National food and Nutrition policy 2003, the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), Development Strategy and Investment Plan 2011-2015 and Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan 2015/16 – 2019/20 ..

We also commend the government for the commitments undertaken at the regional and international levels, for example by implementing the SDGs, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and the agricultural Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP), and being a signatory to the Malabo Declaration of June 2014 which aims at reducing childhood malnutrition (under-five stunting to 10 percent and wasting to 5 percent) by 2025.

However, despite these commitments, the country has continued to witness sections of the population going hungry, the question left unanswered is; are we getting food to everyone? Are our supply chains efficient and affordable? How can we make food available for everyone? Unless the government answers these questions, the country despite the plenty, will watch its population hungry while ably feeding its neighbours. Some of the barriers to realize this include;

Climate and food security

Climate shocks contribute to chronic food insecurity especially among small subsistence farmers. Climate change and weather variability have had a huge impact on the ability of subsistence farmers to produce their own food, and food for the country. It should be noted that 2% of arable land is equipped for irrigation, resulting into vast majority of farmers depend on rain fed agriculture. The IPC report attributed Food insecurity in the Karamoja region to the pre- and post-harvest losses, that resulted from unexpectedly high rainfall in late 2019 and crop pests, specifically Fall Army Worm, sorghum smut, and meadow-spittle-bug that affected maize and sorghum. This cuts across all regions in the country.

Therefore, Issues relating to climate and whether patterns should not be under ratted when we our government is ensuring food security in the country. We need to look for viable solutions that can be adopted by the community within their means to promote sustainability.

Increased commercialization of agriculture without food security safety measures Progressively, Uganda is taking steps to commercialize the agricultural sector, for example by increasing the cultivation of cash crops and expanding agro processing activities which ultimately widens both the employment and tax bases. The Third National Development Plan (NDP III) of Uganda seeks to decrease the number of subsistence farmers by half. Commercialization can raise agricultural productivity which is crucial for reducing food insecurity. The large scale farmers mainly pursue plantation agriculture mainly in cash crops and livestock. Uganda`s major agricultural commodities include sugarcane, coffee, tea, cassava, maize, beans, ground nuts, rice, and bananas. Coffee and tea are traditional cash crops grown mainly for export, while maize, beans, groundnuts, and rice are the primary agricultural commodities traded locally and within the EAC and COMESA region. However, in some regions of the country, smallholder farmers are venturing into cash crop production. For instance in the Eastern region, smallholder farmers opt to use their land to grow sugarcanes for income generation at the expense of food security.

Impact of COVID 19 on Food security

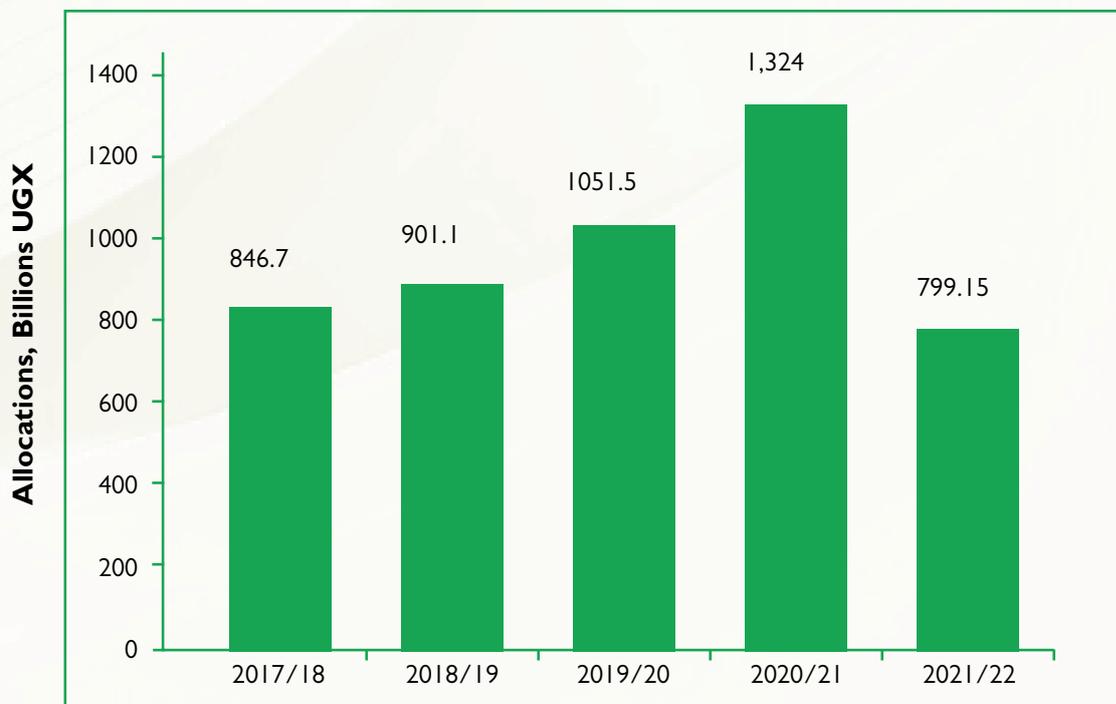
Due to the advent of COVID 19 and its associated preventive standard operating procedures adopted by the government of Uganda such as national lockdown which paralyzed all activities, 6 out of 10 Ugandans had a worsened food intake, 4 out of 10 households reported having planted less, 7 out of 10 were worried running short of food;

3 out of 4 reported increased food prices. Despite of this, Uganda registered a minimal decline in the prevalence of undernourishment in the total population from 41.4% 2015-2017 to 41.0%; 2016-2018.¹¹

Low Budgetary Allocations to the Agricultural Sector and its adverse impact on the right to food

This situation above is as a result of many factors, these include; Low spending to the agriculture sector without specific target to the small scale farmers. Uganda committed to the international instruments like the Maputo declaration and Malabo declaration of 2003 and 2014 respectively which key amongst its commitments was adequate financing of agricultural services in order to enhance food security. However, despite these efforts, of ensuring that Ugandans have right to adequate food and nutrition, Government has continuously failed to prioritize the budgetary allocations to right to food enablers in her budget. For instance, the budgetary allocations to agriculture in FY2020/21 was UGX 1,360 Billion (3.8%)¹² and is set to increase to UGX 1.686 Billion (3.77%) in FY2021/22 budget which is short of the commitment made in the Maputo Declaration. Failure to adequately allocate resources towards the right to food enablers puts Uganda at risk of not achieving the 2nd Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promotion of sustainable agriculture; and SDG 12.3 of halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post- harvest losses by 2030.

Budget allocation to the agriculture sector (% of the total budget) 2017 – 2022



Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development; Approved Budget Estimates FY2020/21 Volume I

Uganda has committed itself to achieve food security and nutrition by signing regional declarations in which African States undertake to commit a minimum threshold of resources towards these two. Under the Maputo Declaration, it undertook to commit at least 10 percent of its National budget towards agriculture, while the Abuja Declaration saw it commit at least 15 percent to health. Neither of these thresholds has since been met.

Limited access to agriculture extension services

Whereas there has been progress in provision and delivery of agricultural extension services, there are several unmet farmers' demands for these services that need to be affectively addressed. According to the Ministerial Policy Statement FY 2018/19, Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (herein after MAAIF) recruited 3,854 (77%) extension workers at district and sub-county levels out of the initial target of 5,000 extension workers. As a result, the current ratio of extension worker to farmer is 1: 1,800 whereas the recommended is 1:500 (the approved structure is 13 officers at district level and 3 extension staff at sub-county level). The 5,000 extension staff were for 116 districts in FY2015/16, but districts have since increased to 128. This is an addition of 12 districts and 94 sub-counties that has led to inadequate staffing levels both at the district and sub-counties (BMAU, 2019). The lack of access to these services negatively impacts on skills transfer and increase in productivity of the farmers at the rural country level.

Heightened Land Evictions that affects subsistence farmers

Government has continued to pursue development policies/programs that force subsistence farmers off the land without arrangements to ensure their livelihood and therefore their access to food. The case of the Kaweri farming communities in the district of Mubende is a good example: The Uganda Government evicted subsistence farmers from land and allocated it to a German firm to grow coffee. Hundreds of subsistence farmers were evicted form land where they earned their livelihood and therefore the right to food. No viable alternative was found for the farmers. This is just one example out of the many that have happened especially in the quest for the industrialization programme that seem to be favored by the government through its programmes at the expense of agricultural land hence threatening food security.

Recommendations/Way Forward

- 1) Implementation of existing policies and strategies that promote agriculture, food and nutrition security aimed at addressing the country's food and nutrition security needs; the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan, the Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan, Agricultural Strategy and Investment Plan, the National Nutrition Planning Guideline for Uganda.
- 2) Given the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government needs to establish national food reserves through strategic re-nationalization of national silos, expediting restoration of cooperative societies, which will provide buffer stock of food in cases of emergencies and pandemic and facilitate access to food especially for the most vulnerable. A good example can be taken from Uganda's neighboring countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda which have strategic food grain reserves that provide food relief to vulnerable people and help in price stabilization during food price fluctuations.
- 3) For constant food supply and ensuring communities are food secure, diversifying the retail distribution systems should be at the center of the food distribution strategies. Traditional markets can be considered key for reaching out to vulnerable people and promoting healthy and culturally appropriate food.
- 4) Agriculture, trade, health, and local government, require to integrate and streamline their sector plans and strategies to promote food security in the country.
- 5) Increase the allocation of finances to agriculture sector to at least 10% of the national budget in line with its Maputo Declaration commitment and ensure programs focused on ensuring food security among subsistence farmers are adequately funded.
- 6) Establish and earmark funds for a national public school feeding program to improve school attendance and nutrition among children and student across the country.
- 7) Enact the Food and Nutrition Act and monitor progress on nutrition indicators annually, seeking to decrease the percentage of children under five underweight in line with national targets

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