



CSOs STATEMENT FOR WORLD FOOD DAY

GLOBAL THEME:

Leave No One Behind: Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life.

**POSITION
PAPER**

Oct 2022



Preamble

The preparation of this position paper has been realized through the collective contributions of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) including, Food Rights Alliance (FRA), Slow Food Uganda, World Vision Uganda (WVU), Community Restoration Initiative Project (CRIP), Right to grow, Care international, SEATINI Uganda. The views and opinions expressed in this position paper are a result of an analysis of the country's food systems,

policies and frameworks, sector budget allocations, National Development Plan III, PDM and experiences of the above organizations in the Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries sector. These have further been orchestrated by the continuous engagements they have undertaken in a bid to improve the sector performance.

This year's theme has come at the time when a section of the country is going hungry while others are malnourished, the

country is suffering from Climate Change impacts, high levels of consumption of unhealthy diets, Increase in number of people with Non Communicable Diseases. World food day 2022 draws World's attention to the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the global food Agri-food

systems, the loss of livelihoods, increased food insecurity and inequality and the need to transform Agri-food systems. Therefore, the WFD theme is in line with the government's approach to increase local production and ensure food and nutrition security for the country.

Background

Recalling that, Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims at ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. The SDG Report (2017) indicates that Goal 2 addresses a fundamental human need access to nutritious, healthy food, and the means by which it can be sustainably secured for everyone. Therefore, Access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health. Food that is not safe is not food and definitely not nutritious as the same becomes dangerous to Human Health.

It's on this basis that, We the CSOs in Uganda on this day the 16th October 2022, join the rest of the world to celebrate the World Food Day under the theme, "**Leave No One Behind: Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life.**"

We commend the government of Uganda for all the initiatives put forward to ensure access to adequate and safe food for all through the enactments of different legal frameworks and various Government programmes, plans, strategies, models

at national levels aimed at increasing production, productivity, value addition and marketing.

We also commend the government for the commitments undertaken at the regional and international levels, for example by implementing the SDG goals, 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, Given the theme for the WFD, we would like to draw the attention of the government on the following issues within the food systems in Uganda which we categorically believe if not addressed, this theme will not be achieved in Uganda. We therefore call upon everybody and every institution to rise up to the occasion of addressing these issues in order to mitigate occurrences that are most likely to happen if no or limited action is done to turn talking into sustainable action.

CSOs CONCERNS.

Hunger: There are people who are still faced with hunger in Uganda. This year IPC report 2021 indicated that nine districts in the Karamoja region are classified in IPC AFI Phase 3 (Crisis), with about 41% of the population (518,000 people) facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC AFI Phase 3 or above) between March and July 2022. Daily Monitor of 25th July 2022, reported that about 900 people have died of hunger in Karamoja and part of Lango sub region.

The issue of hunger should be a point of worry, because as a food basket, we should not even be hearing of food insecurity in the country more so losing lives to hunger amidst food wastage.

Malnutrition: The Global Hunger Index ranked Uganda among the least well-nourished countries in the world with 5% of the households experiencing poor food consumption and 16% at the border line. The prevalence of undernourishment remains high with nearly 40% of individuals in Uganda being classified as undernourished, and 16 percent of the households are chronically undernourished.

This implies that Ugandans are unable to consume the minimum Required Dietary Intake for light physical activity which is 2,200 kcal and are consuming only an average of 1,860 Kcal per day¹.

Currently, about 1.8 million children aged less than 5 years are stunted. At this pace, by 2030, approximately 11% of the population under five years will be stunted. It's estimated that the anemia levels increased from 49% in 2011 to 53% of children 6-59 months old and 33% of Women of Reproductive Age in 2018.⁷ COVID 19 and it.

IMPACT: Malnutrition (stunting) of children during their first years on earth determines their entire life's health, and in most cases it leads to low productivity translating into ineffective human resource, reduced incomes and increased poverty. For instance, in 2013, the total cost of under-nutrition was estimated at about 5.6 per cent of Uganda's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), consisting of 4 per cent of GDP loss of labor productivity; 1.6 per cent in health and 0.5 per cent in education.

Consumption of unsafe food: Although there are no current statistics generated for the last 6 to 8 years, it is estimated that 1.3 million people in Uganda get affected annually by Unsafe Food and 10% of the population falling sick after eating contaminated food and 420,000 people including 125,000 children under five dying due to consumption of Unsafe food, #Safe Food is indeed everybody's business.

¹Based on the USAID framework for HDDS for measurement of household food access, the 'average HDDS in the richest 33 percent of households can serve as a guide for setting the target level of HDDS' (Swindale and Bilinsky, 2006); from the UNPS, the average HDDS for this group was estimated at 9.2.

According to Uganda National Bureau of Statistics 400,000 people die out of 10% of Ugandas population who eat unsafe food on a daily basis and leave 1.5 million Ugandans to suffer from diseases caused by consuming unsafe foods annually.

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 73/250 which notes that;

“there is no food security without food safety and that in a world where the food supply chain has become more complex, any adverse food safety incident may have global negative effects on public health, trade and the economy”. It also emphasizes that improving food safety contributes positively to trade, employment and poverty alleviation.

IMPACT: Ministry of Health in 2016 estimated that food borne diseases constitutes about 14% of cases treated every year. The most common conditions being typhoid, brucellosis, bacillus dysentery and cholera². The 2015 WHO report on the global burden of foodborne diseases presents the first-ever estimates of disease burden caused by 31 foodborne agents (bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins and chemicals) at global and sub-regional level, highlighting that more than 600 million cases of foodborne illnesses and 420 000 deaths could occur in a year³.

The use and trade of agrochemicals in Uganda: We are concerned about the increasing use and promotion of

agro-chemicals (Pesticides, Herbicides, Commodity chemicals, Fertilizers, among others) that are being used in Uganda and yet some of these agro-chemicals have been banned and/or classified as highly hazardous and “probably carcinogenic (cause cancer and other diseases to end users).

We specifically note that based on the European Commission Regulation No 1107/2009, more than half (59%) of the 41 Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) identified under current official registration for use in Uganda are currently not approved for use across the European Union.

Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that due to the continued use of hazardous agrochemicals, the resulting impacts on human life and the planet are likely to be contrary to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and threaten our food security

IMPACT: Agro-chemical use is associated with increases in human illness, including increased health expenditures related to illness and time lost from work due to sickness. The recorded diseases associated with the use of some agrochemicals include; obesity, diabetes, Alzheimer’s, dementia, Parkinson’s, asthma, chronic bronchitis, autism, erectile dysfunction, and psychological disorders as a result of chronic exposure to the banned pesticides.

²MOH (2016). The National Burden Food-Borne Diseases Pilot Study Report. Kampala: Ministry of Health.

³WHO REPORT 2007-2015 FOODBORNE DISEASE BURDEN EPIDEMIOLOGY REFERENCE GROUP

Food Loss and Wastage: Food loss and waste has remained high due to poor post-harvest handling leading to up to 30-40% food loss in grains and 30-80% for vegetables and fruits⁴. In beans, up to 15% of losses occur at the farm level and 10% losses at the marketing level.

Existence of Aflatoxins in foods: Several studies in Uganda have indicated that the populace is exposed to consumption of aflatoxin-contaminated foods. The levels of aflatoxins in the foods ranged from 0 to 55 ppb with a mean total of 15.7 ppb. A cross-sectional study conducted in South-western Uganda in five districts of the region indicated that the most commonly consumed foods namely; groundnuts, cassava, millet, sorghum flour and eshabwe (sauce obtained from milk) were contaminated with aflatoxins. Aflatoxin contamination of foods and feeds in Uganda poses a serious problem to the health of people and domestic animals including liver cancer, low birth weight, stunted growth and immune suppression in children.

According to Partnership for aflatoxins control in Africa (PACA), in Uganda, aflatoxins related illnesses are estimated to cost the government an additional \$910,000 on health services annually. This happens because aflatoxins related diseases increase demand for medical supplies and technical personnel at government-funded health centers, thus generating a negative fiscal impact, (C-SAAP study conducted from 2014 to 2017).

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⁴FAO, WFP and IFAD. (2019). Food loss analysis: causes and solutions – The Republic of Uganda. Beans, maize, and sunflower studies. Rome.

(HHPs) identified under current official registration for use in Uganda are currently not approved for use across the European Union. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that due to the continued use of hazardous agrochemicals, the resulting impacts on human life and the planet are likely to be contrary to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and threaten our food security.

Limited regulations on production, Marketing and Consumption of Trans fat foods among the populace: Trans-fats in food products is manufactured by adding hydrogen to vegetable oil, which transforms the oil into a solid fat. In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) ruled that artificial trans fats consumption is associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease mortality and called on governments to remove trans-fats from the global food chain by 2023. Its consumption has since decreased but different socioeconomic groups show unequal intake levels of trans-fats with the poorest people being affected most since food made with trans-fat is cheapest.

IMPACT: A research carried out by WHO in 2018 shows that there were nearly 300,000 new cases of ovarian cancer in 2018 and more than 184,000 deaths worldwide. Previously, dietary intakes of industrial trans fatty acids have been associated with a higher risk of breast cancer. Consuming trans fats has previously been shown to increase the risk of coronary artery disease. In addition, positive associations between intakes of trans fatty acids and prostate cancer and

colorectal cancer have been reported in the scientific literature⁵.

Limited regulations on production, Marketing and Consumption of Sugar sweetened foods and Beverages among the populace: While healthy foods are lost, the consumption of fast food in Uganda is increasing. Increasingly infants are being fed on artificial formula; at over 30%.⁶ instead of breast milk. This seemingly cheap and convenient transition to unhealthy fast food is resulting into dire risks related to increase in overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable disease notably diabetes, Cardio-vascular diseases (CVD) and Cancer. It is estimated that, 33% of annual deaths are attributed to the five leading NCDs; notably cardiovascular diseases, Cancers, Diabetes and Trauma⁷.

Despite this, Uganda's food environment encourages in community food advertising of sweetened beverages, oily and fatty food, and there are no policy regulations. In some instances, the aggressive advertisement of unhealthy foods and sugar sweetened non-alcoholic beverages prepares their mind of children as future potential clients. This practice predisposes children to increased obesity, a renown NCDs risk.

IMPACT: The consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with increased energy intake, higher risks for poor oral health and weight gain and therefore also with increased risks for various non-communicable diseases. Globally, 5.6% of children under five years

⁵The Independent, July 24 2020

are obese; in Africa 5.2% of girls and 3.7% of boys 5-19 years old are obese. The 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) found: 4% of children under five years, and 16% of adolescent girls were obese, a rise from 2.4% of boys and 2.1% of girls in 2014.

Weak legal framework on Food agenda: In Uganda the main law that governs food is the Food and Drug Act (1964). In 1993 the drug element was transformed into the Drug Act under the National Drug Authority (NDA). This left the food element of the Food and Drug Act hanging. No amendment has been made to this date on what is now referred to as the Food Act. The current Food Act does not address technological developments in the food industry such as food additives and contaminants and packaging.

IMPACT: With the existence of an obsolete food law. Uganda relies heavily on other laws, which include the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) Act (1983). Under this Act UNBS has the mandate to formulate and enforce national standard specifications for commodities and codes of practice; promote standardisation in commerce, industry, health, safety and social welfare and provide testing and calibration services to facilitate both regulatory and promotional roles⁶.

Absence of National Strategic Food Reserves Hence Food Loss and Wastage:

Concerned that, Uganda has no strategic food reserves despite the constitutional obligation and commitment to establish national food reserves as a measure of addressing food insecurity (GOU, 1995). Contrary to this constitutional obligation, the government privatized the existing food reserves and are currently used as ware houses by private operators. The country is missing out on the great opportunities that national food reserves present to the social, economic and political stability of the country. It further robs of government the confidence in the quantities, quality and timely response to cases of acute food scarcity.

The food reserves balances production and consumption of the critical foods of minimum requirement in the country. It has the ability to limited timely and adequate (quality and quantity) response in cases of calamities. It further constrains the management of food inflation.

It should be noted that the Government committed to the establishment of food reserve under National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy XXII under the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. COVID-19 exposed the fragile situation of Uganda and the need for the food reserve.

⁶See UBOS & ICF (2018). 10WHO. (2018).

⁷Non-communicable diseases country profile – Uganda. Geneva: World Health Organization.

⁸Uganda National Bureau of Standards Act 1983: Establishment and functions of the Bureau Act1, section 2, part (1) The functions of the Bureau shall be to: (a) formulate national standard specifications for commodities and codes of practice as may from time to time be required; (b) promote standardization in commerce, industry, health, safety and social welfare; (f) enforce standards in protection of the public against harmful ingredients, dangerous components, shoddy material and poor performance; (h) provide for the testing of locally manufactured or imported commodities with a view to determining whether such commodities conform to the standard specification declared under this Act

IMPACT: Failure to have food reserve in the country, has left the country with millions of people going hungry in Uganda, Hunger and malnutrition have persisted despite the country being resourceful and food secure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

a) Develop and implement a contingency plan for food insecurity including the reestablishment of the National strategic food reserves with a clear role of the State in the governance of these reserves.

b) Enhancing voluntary compliance to food standards by building the capacity of farmers and markets to self-assess and deliver quality-assured food should be treated as priority.

c) Enforce the use of only compliant food safety infrastructure in the food system including the use of food graded technologies and packaging materials.

d) Issue an immediate ban on use of glyphosate, and Glyphosate Based Herbicides (GBH) in Uganda and all internationally banned agro-chemicals. This should be guided by a clear roadmap and action plan developed in consultation with key stakeholders including CSOs.

e) Regulate the quality and importation of agricultural chemicals into the country and their distribution.

f) A robust legal framework for example that impedes farmers from using unsafe/banned chemicals should be established and implemented to enhance the safety of consumers and also making sure that farmers comply to these safety standards.

g) The government should set policies that offer coherence between trans-fat restrictions and trade and investment commitments, risks and opportunities.

h) Government should invest in research and development of safer alternatives which may include replacing trans-fats & partially hydrogenated oils preferably with polyunsaturated fats and oils from Sunflower, corn, soybean, and flaxseed.

i) The Government should enact the apex country food law to streamline the structural governance (institutional and legal) of food and nutrition in the country including coordination of planning, budgeting, financing and tracking of performance.

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