

THE RIGHT TO FOOD

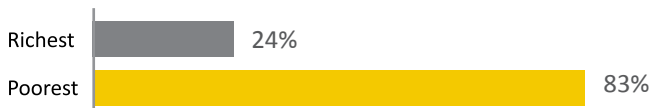


During its last Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2011, Uganda accepted a recommendation to “implement policies to support food production, access to credit and school meals programs linked to local food production.” Uganda is yet to take adequate steps to implement this recommendation and many continue to be deprived of the right to food.

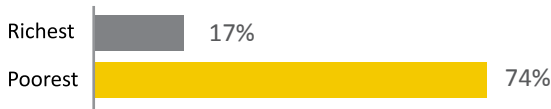
ALMOST A THIRD OF THE POPULATION IS UNDERNOURISHED.

10.3 million people are undernourished and the prevalence has been rising (FAO, 2016). Half of households restrict themselves to two meals a day (UBOS, 2014). The most recent available data shows almost half the population as food energy deficient (i.e. their diet did not provide minimum energy needed) (WFP, 2013). Those living in poverty, women, and children were the most food insecure. Children in the poorest wealth quintile were twice as likely to be stunted or underweight as the richest. One quarter of women-headed households were food insecure, compared to one fifth headed by men (WFP, 2013).

Energy Deficient (percent of population), by wealth quintile, 2011



Low Dietary Diversity, less than four of the seven required food groups consumed (percent of population), by wealth quintile, 2011



Source: WFP, 2013

CLIMATE SHOCKS CONTRIBUTE TO CHRONIC FOOD INSECURITY AMONG SUBSISTENCE FARMERS.

Just under three quarters of the rural population is engaged in subsistence agriculture (UBOS, 2014). Climate change and weather variability has a huge impact on the ability of subsistence farmers to produce their own food. Only 2% of arable land is equipped for irrigation, meaning the vast majority of farmers depend on rain-fed agriculture. In a 2015 survey, 81% said that weather had seriously impacted their agricultural activities in the past year (CGAP, 2016). Northern Uganda is particularly prone to drought and erratic rainfall. In an earlier survey, nearly three quarters of households in northern Uganda had suffered drought and almost all (94%) said it led to a decline in food production (WFP, 2013).

Households with no other source of income than subsistence farming are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity because they lack any financial buffer. Crop failure or poor harvest means they have no surplus to sell, which, in turn, impedes their ability to purchase supplementary food. Mechanisms for coping with such shocks often involve reducing food intake (WFP, 2013).

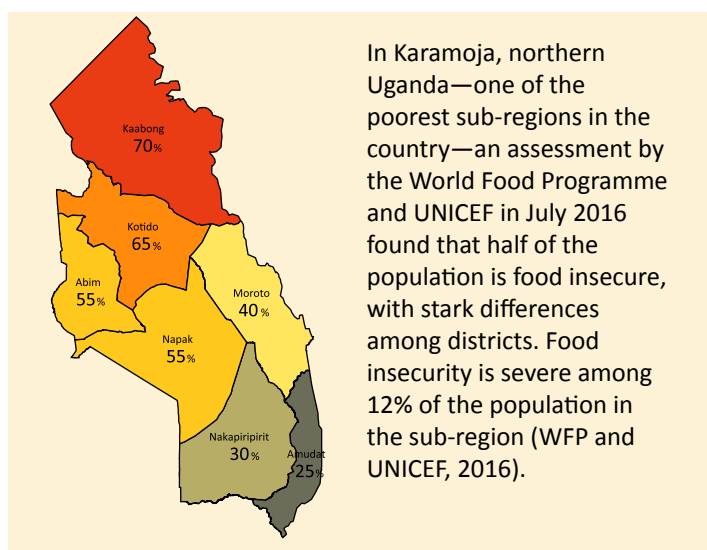
High Household Expenditure on Food, over 65% of total (percent of population), by livelihood type, 2011



Low Dietary Diversity, less than four food groups consumed (percent of population), by livelihood type, 2011



Source: WFP, 2013



In Karamoja, northern Uganda—one of the poorest sub-regions in the country—an assessment by the World Food Programme and UNICEF in July 2016 found that half of the population is food insecure, with stark differences among districts. Food insecurity is severe among 12% of the population in the sub-region (WFP and UNICEF, 2016).

INCREASED COMMERCIALIZATION OF FARMING POSES BOTH OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR FOOD SECURITY.

Uganda is taking steps to commercialize the agricultural sector, for example by increasing the cultivation of cash crops and expanding agro-processing activities. The Second National Development Plan (NDPII) seeks to decrease the number of subsistence farmers by half. Commercialization can raise agricultural productivity—crucial for reducing food insecurity. However, as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has noted, it also presents risks, including overspecialization, unsustainable agricultural practices, and vulnerability to food price volatility (DeSchutter, 2009).

UGANDA MUST STRENGTHEN EFFORTS TO SUPPORT SUBSISTENCE FARMERS.

The United Nations Human Rights Council has affirmed that state support for subsistence farmers is a key element to realising the right to food (A/HRC/RES/16/27).



As spelled out in the Voluntary Guidelines on the Realization of Right to Food, this support should include access to technical assistance; reliable credit; critical farm inputs; and agricultural extension services (FAO, 2004).

Nevertheless, there are a number of shortcomings in the way that policies and plans to support subsistence farmers have been designed and implemented in Uganda. Programs focused on improving subsistence farmers’ access to technology—including climate smart technology—have been poorly managed, for example. The National Agriculture Advisory Service has repeatedly been re-structured; now, key portions are implemented by the Ministry of Defence and limited to distributing basic inputs such as seeds (MFPED, 2016). There is no agricultural finance policy (Ladu, 2016) and credit programs that do exist are ineffective. The Agricultural Credit Facility is focused on medium and large farms and only funded 405 projects since 2009 (BoU, 2015). One survey found only 5% of farmers had attempted to borrow from a savings and credit cooperative in the past 12 months (CGAP, 2016).

SPENDING ON AGRICULTURE IS LOW AND DOES NOT TARGET SUBSISTENCE FARMERS. Despite being a priority sector in the NDP II, the agricultural budget has been shrinking; it stands at 3.22% of the total budget—far below the Maputo Declaration target of 10%.

UGANDA LACKS A COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM. The UNAP calls for the adoption of school feeding programs. Lack of food impacts performance and has resulted in high dropout rates, especially for girls (MoESTS, 2015). However, national policy still requires parents to provide school meals (MoESTS, 2015). Due to food insecurity, especially in regions like Karamoja, most families are unable to meet basic nutritional requirements. This has led many students to go without meals. One study found that less than a quarter of students in eastern Uganda regularly had breakfast (Hedwig, 2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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.
- Increase the allocation to agriculture 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.
- Establish a National Agricultural Bank to improve access to affordable credit to small-scale farmers.
- Pass a harmonized policy on agriculture extension services focused on climate smart technology and provide for participatory monitoring and accountability.
- Establish and earmark funds for a national Public School Feeding Program to improve school attendance and nutrition among students across the country.

ABOUT THIS FACTSHEET SERIES

This factsheet was prepared by the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) and the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) in light of Uganda’s appearance before the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review in 2016. The six factsheets in this series accompany the joint submission on economic, social and cultural rights endorsed by 41 non-governmental organizations.

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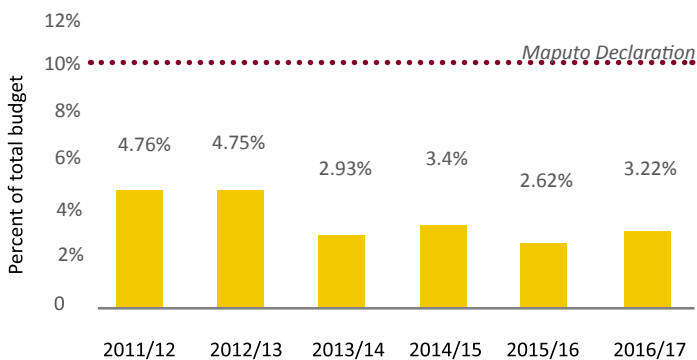
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Budget Allocation to the agricultural sector (% of Total Budget), 2011/12-2016/17



Source: MFPED, various years

Of the allocated budget, little goes to services directly targeting subsistence farmers. For example, funding to agricultural extension services, which train farmers on improved cultivation methods, is only 4% of the overall agricultural budget (MFPED, 2016). Poor funding undermines the effectiveness of programs; 19% of households surveyed in 2016 had accessed agricultural extension services, but this dropped to 14% for women-headed households and to 12% for households with farms less than two acres, for example (IFPRI, 2016).

LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORTS THE RIGHT TO FOOD IS NEEDED. Actions to realize the right to food go beyond the agricultural sector, as recognized in Uganda’s Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP). However, the draft Food and Nutrition Bill—which would coordinate programs under the UNAP—has not been passed.