

**Food
Culture
Alliance**



Kenya chapter

STRATEGIC PLAN

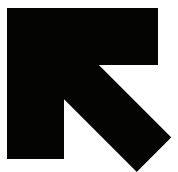
2026 - 2030





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Pearl millet bread and terere vegetable on cover photo by Lydia Limbe



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Food Culture Alliance (FCA) Kenya strategy was developed through the collective leadership and contribution of its member organizations, convened by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). The Alliance recognizes the time, expertise and institutional knowledge contributed by Akili Network, Consumer Grassroots Association, Food and Land Use Coalition, Food Innovation Studio, National Museums of Kenya, Shujaaz Inc and Slow Food Kenya, with facilitation support from Spid Consulting.

The strategy is grounded in cultural research, member dialogue and the lived practice of Kenyans who continue to shape the country's food culture every day. The Alliance acknowledges the cooks, creators, families, food entrepreneurs, farmers, community groups and cultural custodians whose work informs and inspires this agenda.

This document reflects the shared direction ratified by members and will guide external engagement, fundraising, partnership development and coordinated cultural action from 2026 to 2030.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kenya's nutrition and food systems challenges are unfolding in a fast-changing cultural landscape. Malnutrition and diet-related disease remain persistent, while climate shocks and food price pressures shape what households can grow, buy and eat. Some of the foods that can support healthier and more climate-resilient diets already sit within Kenya's own food heritage: indigenous vegetables, legumes, tubers, fermented foods and traditional cereals rooted in local landscapes, communities and histories.

In many urban and peri-urban settings, heritage foods are still associated with poverty, rural life, hardship or the past. Western-style foods, packaged products and highly processed convenience foods have gained stronger associations with modernity, generosity, success and belonging. Food choices are shaped by knowledge, price and availability, and also by status, memory, taste, care, aspiration and identity.

Food culture matters because it **shapes how people think, feel and value food**: what they feel proud to serve, eat and be seen choosing. Nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods will become part of Kenya's future when they are visible, valued and meaningful in contemporary life.

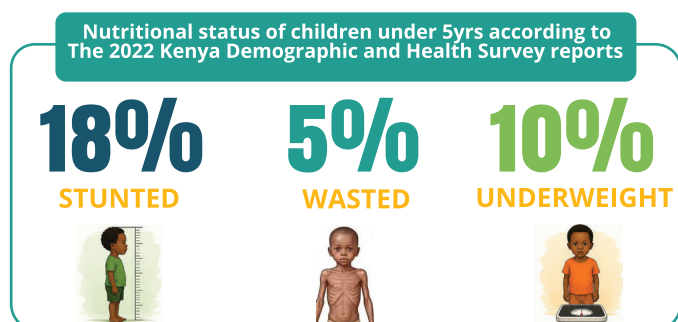
The Food Culture Alliance Kenya brings together member organizations convened by GAIN, with strengths across youth media, family entertainment, heritage, culinary innovation, community mobilization, climate and food systems. As a catalytic alliance, it aligns cultural actors, food systems partners and public platforms around shared priorities so that nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods are repeatedly seen, spoken about, prepared, served and valued in contemporary Kenyan life.

Cultural momentum is already visible. Young people, cooks, creators, families, entrepreneurs and communities are blending roots, memory, modernity and global influence in ways that express identity and belonging. This is **Aspirational Authorship: food as a living expression of roots, memory and becoming**. The opportunity is real, but still scattered across kitchens, creator content, restaurant menus, community practice and cultural spaces.

From 2026 to 2030, the strategy will focus on three priorities: **catalyzing narrative transformation, strengthening food identity, pride and belonging, and revitalising culinary systems through innovation and practice**. These priorities will guide member-led programmes, partnerships, fundraising and learning over the strategy period. The ambition is a Kenya where heritage foods are valued as living resources for health, climate resilience, creativity, identity and pride expressed as living craft carried forward on Kenyans' own terms.

KENYA FOOD CULTURE CHALLENGE

Kenya's food culture is changing within a wider nutrition, affordability and climate context. The country continues to face the triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and rising diet-related disease. The 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey reports that 18% of children under five are stunted, 5% are wasted and 10% are underweight.



Why it matters...

Understanding the Kenya Food Culture Crisis

Many households also face real economic pressure, with poverty, food insecurity and rising food prices shaping what people can afford to buy, cook and eat.

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 highlights how elevated food price inflation has weakened purchasing power and reduced access to healthy diets, especially for low-income populations.

This global food security analysis also shows that nutrient-dense foods such as vegetables, fruits and animal-source foods remain more expensive per kilocalorie than starchy staples, while ultra-processed foods are often cheaper per kilocalorie.

THE AFFORDABILITY TRAP

Nutrient Dense Foods Cost More per kilocalorie.

The economics create a cruel double blind. Nutrient-dense foods such as vegetables and animal source foods cost far more per kilo calorie than basic starchy staples. Ultra-processed foods are, on average cheaper than unprocessed or minimally processed foods. While marketing and culture can position processed and foreign foods as modern, convenient and aspirational. For low-income households, cost, convenience and status all shape what feels possible and desirable.

COST MORE PER KCAL THAN STAPLES



11.9x

Vegetables

Cost more per kcal
than basic starchy staples



9.1x

Animal-source foods

Cost more per kcal
than basic starchy staples



7.2x

Fruits

Cost more per kcal
than basic starchy staples

ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS

47% less expensive

on average than unprocessed or minimally processed foods - cheaper convenient and nutritionally damaging

VS

MINIMALLY PROCESSED FOODS

Often cost higher than ultra-processed food

SOURCE: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2025. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2025*

Against this backdrop, social value becomes a strategic lever. Price, access and convenience shape what is possible; culture shapes what feels desirable, respectable and worth choosing. Nutrition, agriculture and affordability efforts are more likely to succeed when the foods they promote also carry pride, relevance and meaning in everyday social life.

Kenya's own food heritage offers an important cultural and ecological foundation for this agenda. Across Kenya's officially recognized over 60 ethnic communities, generations of culinary knowledge are held in heritage grains, indigenous vegetables, legumes, tubers, fermented foods and many other cooking and flavour techniques that are unique to a region or ethnic community. These foods connect nutrition to place, memory, biodiversity and climate resilience. Their contribution to healthier diets will depend not only on affordability, access, convenience but also a renewed social value in contemporary life.

Quantum Consumer Solutions' 2024 food culture analysis notes that consumption of traditional Kenyan foods such as sukuma wiki, beans and millet has declined, shaped in part by colonial influences and stigma as "food for the poor."

Indigenous vegetables are also often dismissed as rural or old-fashioned, even where they remain nutritious, familiar and locally meaningful.

In many urban and peri-urban settings, Western-style foods, packaged products and highly processed convenience foods are strongly associated with modernity, generosity, and economic achievement. Many heritage foods still carry associations with poverty, rural life, hardship or the past.



Affordability, availability and time pressures influence what people buy and cook. So does status, aspiration, taste, care and belonging. **Food culture shapes how people think, feel and value food:** what families serve to visitors, what young people feel proud to eat in public, what is considered a treat, what appears in school and family rituals, and what is shared through media and digital culture.

Nutrition, agriculture and affordability efforts therefore need a cultural layer. Foods promoted for health, climate resilience or biodiversity gain stronger prospects when they also carry social value. Heritage foods need to be practical and accessible, visible, desired and proudly chosen.

Across Kenya, young people, cooks, creators, families, entrepreneurs and communities are already reworking heritage foods in contemporary ways. Their efforts remain scattered across individual kitchens, creator content, few restaurant menus, festivals, school activities, museum programming, community gatherings, markets and public food moments.

FCA Kenya responds through a catalytic alliance model. By bringing together members whose platforms, knowledge and relationships can reinforce one another, the **Alliance helps nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods become repeatedly seen, spoken about, prepared, served and valued in contemporary Kenyan life.**

THE STRATEGIC INSIGHT: ASPIRATIONAL AUTHORSHIP

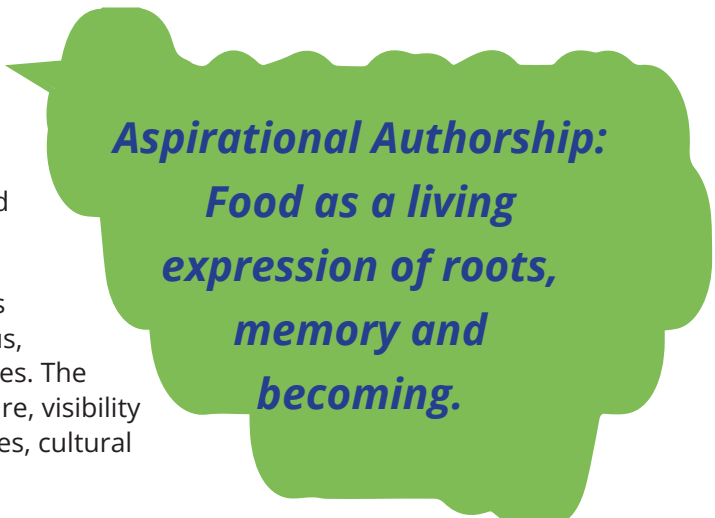
Cultural research conducted between 2023 and 2025 grounds this strategy. Focus group research and expert interviews by Ipsos Kenya, cultural decoding and semiotic analysis by Ananda Partners, and consumption data and trend analysis by Quantum Consumer Solutions helped the Alliance understand the beliefs, values, norms and social signals shaping food preferences in Kenya.

The research confirmed a critical gap : **knowledge alone is not enough to shift preference.** Many Kenyans recognise the nutritional value of heritage foods, yet social meaning still shapes when, where and with whom these foods are served, shared or celebrated. Pride, aspiration and public legitimacy therefore become central to the strategy.

The same research also showed that **younger generation of Kenyans are reworking and reclaiming heritage.** Across homes, restaurants, media, community practice and digital spaces, people are blending roots, memory, modernity and global influence in ways that express identity, care and belonging. Young creators are changing how food is talked about, cooks and food entrepreneurs are reinterpreting familiar ingredients, families are returning to indigenous vegetables, and traditional foods are beginning to appear in more contemporary forms.

FCA Kenya describes this cultural code as Aspirational Authorship: food as a living expression of roots, memory and becoming. It recognizes that heritage is strongest when people can carry it forward on their own terms, through the stories they tell, the identities they express and the food practices they adopt.

The opportunity is real, but still scattered. It appears in individual kitchens, creator content, restaurant menus, community practice, festivals, schools and cultural spaces. The catalytic alliance model gives this emerging shift structure, visibility and scale, while keeping it rooted in Kenyan communities, cultural knowledge and everyday food practice.



***Aspirational Authorship:
Food as a living
expression of roots,
memory and
becoming.***

RESEARCH FINDINGS

01 HERITAGE FOODS CARRY SOCIAL SIGNALS



Heritage foods can carry low social status, especially in some urban settings.

What it means



Food signals class, identity and aspiration. What people serve, buy or post can communicate care, competence, pride or status, and respect.

Our strategic response



Narratives: position heritage foods in stories and formats linked to care, ambition, creativity and modern Kenyan life.

02 KENYANS WANT TO AUTHOR HERITAGE



Kenyans want to author heritage, not preserve it unchanged.

What it means



Gen Z rejects binary choices (tradition vs. modernity). Tradition is being culturally edited. Functional heritage keeps what nourishes and adapts what needs to fit current life.

Our strategic response



Culinary Systems: support food remixing and innovation by drawing on heritage ingredients, preparations methods and culinary techniques. This included recipe innovation and formats that make heritage foods easier to use in homes, restaurants, schools and public food spaces.

03 FOOD PREFERENCE IS SOCIAL, NOT ONLY INDIVIDUAL



Food preference is social, not only individual

What it means



People are influenced by what “people like me” eat, serve and celebrate.

Our strategic response



Social Identity: create visible peer and community moments where heritage foods are chosen with pride.

WHY NOW: THE CULTURAL OPENING

Kenya is entering a moment where food culture change is more possible. Three forces are creating an opening for nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods to gain renewed value in contemporary life.

Young Kenyans are authoring culture in new ways.

Kenya is a young society: DataReportal's Digital 2025 report places the median age at 20.0 years, while UNFPA reports that 36% of the population is aged 0-14. A large share of the country is growing up in a world where identity is shaped through media, digital platforms and everyday cultural signals: language, style, music, food choices and the technologies people use to create and share them.

(DataReportal, 2025; UNFPA, 2025).

Young Kenyans are interpreting, remixing and expressing culture in ways that make heritage feel personal, current and alive

Digital platforms have expanded who gets to shape culture.

Kenya had 15.1 million active social media user identities in January 2025, according to DataReportal. Food ideas now travel through creator content, short videos, peer networks and public debate, allowing a recipe, food memory or modern interpretation of a heritage dish to move quickly across audiences

(DataReportal, 2025).

A wider Afro-Renaissance is reshaping cultural confidence.

Across music, film, fashion, design, tourism and digital culture, African creativity is gaining global visibility. Moments such as Ghana's Year of Return show how heritage, identity and return narratives can be reframed into powerful public movements. This wider cultural confidence creates space for Kenyan food heritage to be seen as part of a modern African future (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2019).

Climate and ecological pressures add urgency. Locally adapted foods such as indigenous vegetables, legumes, millet, sorghum and other heritage crops are increasingly relevant to resilient food systems. Their contribution will be stronger when they also carry social value.

Together, these forces create a cultural opening. The Alliance can turn that opening into coordinated action by aligning narratives, social identity and culinary systems so that nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods become part of how Kenyans imagine, express and practise the food culture of the future.

20 YEARS OLD

Kenya's median age
Young Kenyans are shaping culture in real time

15.1 MILLION

Active social media user identities in Kenya
Digital platforms have expanded who gets to shape culture

HERITAGE CAN BECOME A MOVEMENT

Afro-Renaissance
In Africa heritage is being remixed into modern confidence

VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC AMBITION



Vision 2030

A Kenya where heritage foods are celebrated as living traditions and innovations, not relics. A Kenya where people author their own food culture, blending ancestral wisdom with contemporary creativity to nourish people, planet and culture.



Mission

To tell new stories and encourage food remastery, making heritage foods socially desirable and valued as nutritious and climate-resilient.



Strategic ambition

The ambition is a Kenya where heritage foods are valued as living resources for health, climate resilience, creativity, identity and pride—expressed as living craft, carried forward on Kenyans' own terms.

THE SHIFTS FCA KENYA HELPS CATALYSE

FROM

modernity as leaving heritage behind,

Western and highly processed foods as dominant symbols of progress,

heritage foods as rural, occasional foods for specific traditions,



TOWARDS

heritage as something Kenyans carry forward. The strategy supports Kenyans to author their food future by blending ancestral wisdom with contemporary creativity.

a renewed value for Kenyan food knowledge and local intelligence. The strategy strengthens the social value of foods rooted in Kenyan experience, landscapes and communities.

heritage foods as living innovations in everyday life.

HOW FCA KENYA WORKS

Food culture is shaped across many institutions at once. The Food Culture Alliance framework identifies these institutions as **media and entertainment, family life, education, religion, fashion, sports, other cultural institutions and material goods**. These are the places, settings and channels where food ideas, perceptions and values are formed, maintained and reshaped.

(Food Culture Alliance NIBS Framework, 2025).

This approach builds on Kenya Nutrition Action Plan (KNAP) 2023 - 2027's recognition and culture, norm and multisectorial action by offering a practical food culture for healthier diets.

This catalytic Alliance brings together members whose platforms, knowledge and relationships can reinforce one another around a shared cultural direction. **Scattered cultural energy becomes coordinated food culture change**, helping nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods gain renewed value as functional heritage.

What FCA Kenya brings

- **Cultural intelligence:** The Alliance draws on cultural research, continuous learning, member knowledge and lived practice to understand how food meaning is changing in Kenya. This helps identify the stories, identities, rituals, food practices and social signals that shape preference.
- **A shared framework:** The Food Culture Alliance NIBS framework and the learning from the Food Culture Trailblazer Course give members and partners a common language for society-wide food culture change.

- **Alliance coordination:** Member-led action is aligned around shared priorities so that work across different institutions reinforces the same cultural direction over time.
- **Knowledge and learning:** Practical knowledge products strengthen the field of food culture change. These may include cultural insights, food language guides, case studies, learning papers, training materials, measurement approaches and tools that help us learn what works in our context and helps others apply food culture strategies in their own contexts.
- **Public visibility and influence:** The reach and credibility of members and partners help make food culture a recognized part of Kenya's food systems, nutrition and climate conversations.

Working through existing systems

The model works through existing systems and platforms. Media companies create content. Museums host public learning and heritage experiences. Schools, restaurants, vendors, creators and community platforms bring the work into everyday life. Alignment across these efforts allows member-led action to reinforce the same cultural direction over time.

Focused investments can generate wider and longer-lasting activity. A narrative guide can shape multiple media products. A script competition can seed content that airs beyond the funding period. Museum programmes can become part of permanent institutional practice. Recipe innovations can move into restaurant menus, school meals, homes and digital platforms. Initial support for vendors and creators can become self-sustaining as customer demand, commissions and partnerships take over

How members work together

GAIN convenes FCA Kenya and supports the Secretariat. Members lead and contribute through their own platforms, expertise and relationships, while the Secretariat supports coordination, learning, fundraising, partnership development and alignment across the Alliance.

Governance will be anchored in member ownership, shared priorities and transparent decision-making. Members will contribute through agreed workplans, thematic collaboration and regular learning moments, with more detailed governance arrangements set out in the internal strategy pack.

STRATEGIC LEVERS: NIBS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Alliance **adopts the Food Culture Alliance NIBS framework**, which identifies that food culture is shaped by four interconnected levers of food culture change:

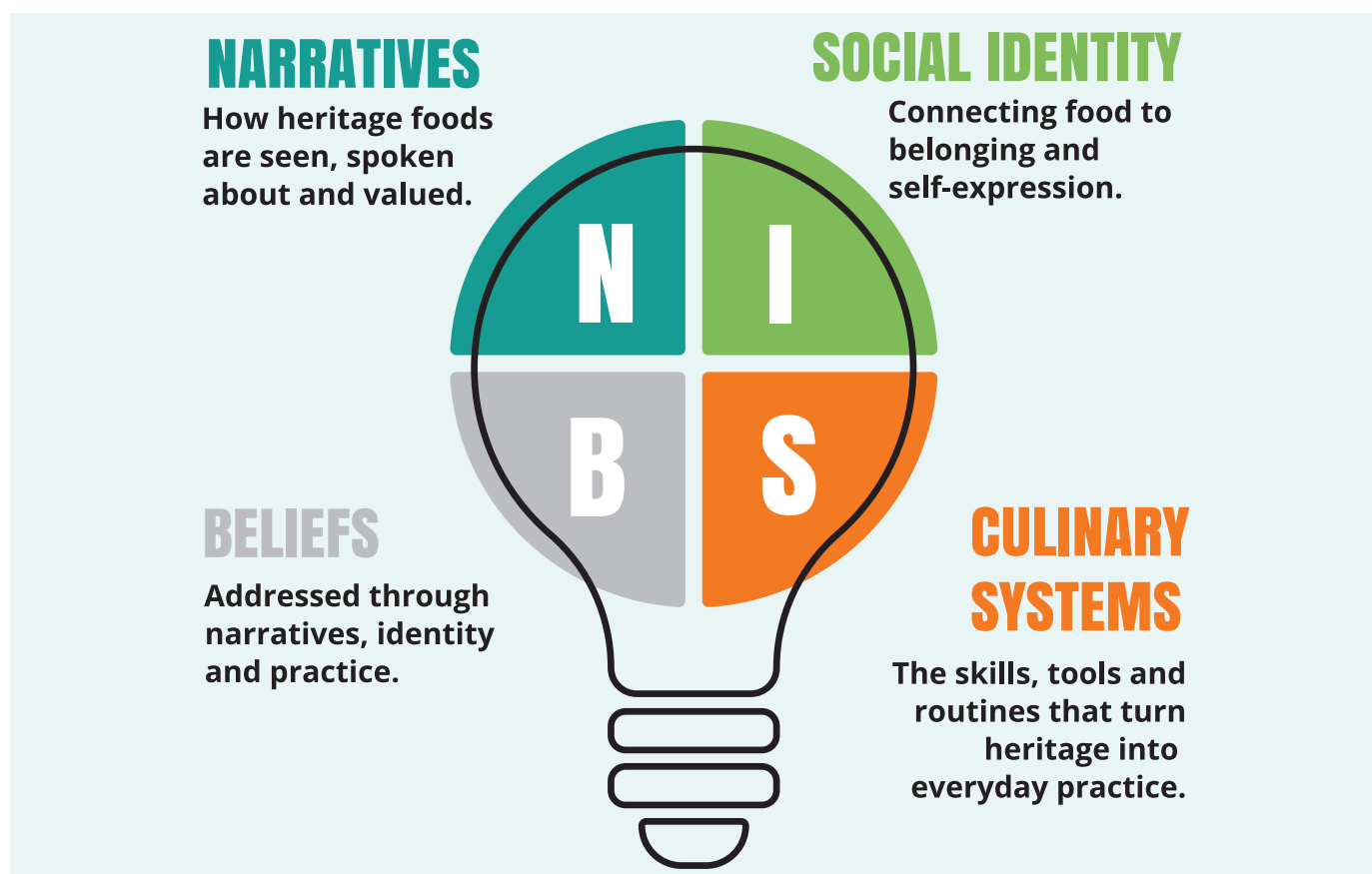
- a) **Narratives** (stories and media representations);
- b) **Identity** (social and cultural belonging);
- c) **Beliefs** (values, norms and taboos), and;
- d) **Culinary Systems** (cuisine, preparation methods, and food infrastructure).

Food preferences shift when meaning is reinforced across multiple dimensions simultaneously, creating a "surround effect" where preference shifts feel natural and inevitable, not imposed.

For this strategy period, three levers will guide delivery: Narratives, Social Identity and Culinary Systems.

This choice reflects Kenya's cultural research, member validation and the Aspirational Authorship insight. Beliefs remain important to how people understand health, taste, care, status and modernity, but they will be addressed through the way stories are told, identities are expressed and food practices are normalized.

Together, these three levers support a shift from food as status signaling toward food as functional heritage: rooted in people and place, expressed through modern identity, and carried forward through everyday stories, rituals and food practices.



Food Culture Alliance NIBS Framework, 2025

Narratives

Narratives shape how foods are seen, spoken about, remembered and valued. Through an Aspirational Authorship lens, this lever reframes heritage foods so they carry values of ‘care’, ‘creative remastery’, ‘rootedness’, and ‘future relevance’¹ through the lens of climate resilience and agency.

Narratives are story systems: the recurring plots, symbols, memories, rituals and cultural cues through which people make sense of food. Relevant story system types include myths and legends, hero’s journey, voyage and return, community histories, celebrations and everyday rituals of care. These stories are told through family entertainment storylines, youth media content, creator collaborations, public conversations, which that show (not tell) Kenyans carrying heritage forward in daily and aspirational settings.

Anchoring the various stories will be narrative guides, where we will draw attention to the words, images & symbols, story formats and rituals that influence whether heritage foods feel ordinary, outdated, vs. special, modern or proudly Kenyan.

Social Identity

Social Identity connects food to belonging and self-expression. It explains why people may choose, avoid, serve, or celebrate certain foods depending on who they are with and how they want to be seen. Some nutritious and climate-resilient foods are not foods that we share with others outside of the immediate family circle.

Visible, shared food culture moments matter here: places where Kenyans see “people like me” openly choosing, preparing, engaging with and celebrating heritage foods in contemporary ways. Symbols and visual cues can help prompt these ideas cognitively and emotionally. This includes heritage experiences such as festivals, school and youth field trips, public food culture moments (e.g., specific public holidays), through networks, community platforms, and member-led experiences. It also means creating space for community custodians, cooks, farmers,

¹ In Shwartz Value theory, these values correspond to the broader orientations of openness to change and self-transcendence.

food entrepreneurs and young digital creators to shape how heritage foods are represented in aspirational and collective (public) events.

Culinary Systems

Culinary Systems are the everyday rules, skills, tools and routines that shape food preparation methods, and social expectations for what ingredients are paired, how food is presented, & shared, how dishes are named, how meals are eaten, and how food is stored. This is where heritage moves from memory into living heritage.

Culinary Systems carry Aspirational Authorship into practice through culture-inspired remastery: the remixing and adaptation of heritage foods, techniques and food technologies for today's settings. Preparation methods, preservation practices, utensils, serving forms, and communal food practices can inspire contemporary culinary innovation, including new consumption vocabulary, pairing, plating, presentation and everyday use.

This can be achieved through recipe innovation, ingredient access, culinary (cooking) practice, cookbooks, digital content, food language guides, menus, and museum-linked food experiences. It can also draw from heritage techniques and technologies such as fermentation, drying, grinding, cooking over fire, as well as traditional kitchen utensils such as gourds, pots, and grinding stones, and preservation and storage techniques like baskets and granaries. Specifically, we seek to integrate the culinary activities listed above across a range of food settings, such as school meals, restaurant and street food, at homes, and digital food culture. The practical emphasis will make nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods easier to cook, serve, talk about and choose.

THEORY OF CHANGE: HOW CULTURAL SHIFTS HAPPEN

Food preferences shift when the meanings attached to food shift across several cultural institutions at once. Nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods gain renewed value when they are repeatedly seen, spoken about, prepared, served and celebrated through media, family life, education, religion, fashion, sports, cultural institutions, public spaces and everyday food practice.

IF FCA:

- Catalyzes national narratives that position heritage foods as symbols of care, innovation and modern Kenyan identity through powerful storytelling, youth media, family entertainment and creator content;
- Strengthens social identity by making heritage foods visible in ways that signal belonging, rootedness and contemporary Kenyan aspiration;
- Members and partners revitalizes culinary systems by supporting culture-inspired food remastery, recipe innovation, new consumption vocabulary, preparation, pairing, presentation and everyday use of heritage foods;

AND ASSUMING

these actions are embedded within the cultural institutions that shape food meaning, including media and entertainment, family life, education, religion, fashion, sports and beauty, heritage sites and digital platforms;

AND members, partners, community platforms, schools, heritage spaces, media actors, cooks, food entrepreneurs and cultural agents activate the work through coordinated programmes, public food culture moments, digital content, training and learning;

THEN

societal preferences will shift, leading to:

- heritage foods gaining stronger social value in contemporary Kenyan life. They become more visible, more desirable and more frequently adopted in the places where Kenyans learn, gather, cook, celebrate, create and make everyday food choices.
- increased visibility, pride and celebration of Kenyan food heritage as a living and evolving cultural asset; stronger demand for nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods; and healthier, more culturally grounded food consumption patterns across generations.

ULTIMATE IMPACT: improved nutrition, enhanced climate resilience and strengthened cultural sovereignty, with Kenyans actively desiring, choosing and authoring the traditions of tomorrow.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

FCA Kenya's strategic priorities are **guided by the Food Culture Alliance NIBS framework**, which identifies four interconnected levers of food culture change: Narratives, Social Identity, Beliefs and Culinary Systems. For this strategy period, three levers will provide the main routes to cultural shift in Kenya: Narratives, Social Identity and Culinary Systems. This choice reflects Kenya's cultural research, member validation and the Aspirational Authorship insight.

Beliefs remain important to how people understand health, taste, care, status and modernity. In this strategy, they will be addressed through the way stories are told, identities are expressed and food practices are normalised.

From 2026 to 2030, FCA Kenya will organise its work around these three connected priorities. Together, they form one cultural programme: narratives shape meaning, social identity builds belonging and legitimacy, and culinary systems turn that meaning into everyday practice. The same trio 'meaning, belonging, practice' can be reinforced across many settings: a storyline, a school event, a museum experience, a creator video, a family meal, a restaurant menu, a vendor offer or a public food culture moment.

Together, the three priorities translate Aspirational Authorship into coordinated cultural action across Alliance members and partners.



Priority 1: Catalyse Narrative Transformation

Through the Aspirational Authorship lens and values of 'care', 'rootedness', 'creative remastery' and future relevance', create story systems: such as myths and legends, hero's journeys, voyage and return, community histories, celebrations and everyday rituals of care. These systems include recurring plots, symbols, memories, rituals, and cultural cues through which people make sense and meaning of food.

These story systems will be implemented through family entertainment, youth media content, creator collaborations, public conversations, museum-linked experiences and cultural storytelling that show, rather than tell, Kenyans carrying heritage forward in ordinary and aspirational settings.

Narrative guides will anchor this priority. These guides will draw attention to Aspirational authorship, including the values words, images, symbols, story formats and rituals that influence whether heritage foods feel ordinary, outdated, special, modern or proudly Kenyan. These guides can serve as practical briefs for members and partners developing media, entertainment, creator, education and public engagement activities.

Strategic result: Heritage foods are remixed in creative ways that are forward looking, gaining stronger visibility and positive meaning in Kenya's media, public conversation (not for the poor, not of the past).



Priority 2: Strengthen Food Identity, Pride and Belonging

This priority seeks to address the social desirability challenges, where nutritious and climate-resilient foods are eaten comfortably within the immediate family circle but rarely shared with visitors, in public or eaten in aspirational settings.

We will create visible places where Kenyans see "people like me" openly choosing, preparing, engaging with and celebrating heritage foods in contemporary ways. Symbols and visual cues can help prompt these ideas cognitively and emotionally, making heritage foods feel proud, collective and desirable.

Members and partners in heritage, education, community mobilisation, youth engagement, cultural curation and public-facing food experiences will be central. Their platforms can create moments across festivals, school and youth field trips, public holidays, creator networks, community platforms, cultural showcases and member-led experiences. This priority also creates space for community custodians,

cooks, chefs, farmers, food entrepreneurs and young digital creators to shape how heritage foods are represented in aspirational and collective settings.

Strategic result: Heritage foods, anchored in creativity, care, belonging and local intelligence, become associated with modern Kenyan identity (rooted identity not divided by status or class)



Priority 3: Revitalize Culinary Systems through Innovation and Practice

Cultural meaning becomes durable when it shows up in practice. Culinary Systems are the everyday rules, skills, tools and routines that shape how food is prepared, preserved, served, paired, named, presented, stored, shared and eaten.

Culinary Systems carry Aspirational Authorship into practice through culture-inspired remastery: the remixing and adaptation of heritage foods, techniques and food technologies for today's settings. Preparation methods, preservation practices, utensils, serving forms, traditional food environments and community food practices can inspire contemporary culinary innovation, including new consumption vocabulary, pairing, plating, presentation and everyday use.

Culinary innovation will be carried through the platforms and expertise of cultural custodians, cooks, culinary schools, food entrepreneurs, vendors, schools, restaurants and community food practitioners. This may include recipe innovation, ingredient access, cooking practice, food language guides, menus, culinary demonstrations and museum-linked food experiences, while opening routes into school meals, restaurants, street food, home cooking, and digital food culture. The practical emphasis is to make nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods easier to cook, serve, talk about and choose.

Strategic result: Heritage foods are tasty and more usable, adaptable and present in homes, schools, restaurants, public spaces and digital food culture.

MEASURING CULTURAL SHIFTS & LEARNINGS

Change will be measured against this change pathway: shifts in meaning, visibility, practice and institutional adoption over time, specifically in media, family life, education, heritage spaces, digital platforms, public conversation and everyday food practice.

The strategy will track four areas of change:

- I. Perception and language:** heritage foods are associated with 'care', 'belonging', 'creativity' and 'future relevance', and associations with poverty, rural life or the past are fewer.
- II. Cultural visibility:** increased presence (i.e., in events, on menus, in digital content) of heritage foods in contemporary media, public platforms, schools, cultural spaces, restaurants, festivals, digital content and family-facing formats.
- III. Creative and culinary adoption:** use of heritage ingredients and culinary techniques by members, partners, cooks & chefs, creators, vendors, institutions and food entrepreneurs in recipes, menus, storylines, learning experiences and public food moments.
- IV. Field capacity:** growth in the number of organizations able to apply food culture strategies through tools, training, research, the Food Culture Trailblazer Course and shared learning products.

Because cultural shifts build through repetition, different forms of progress will be expected at different points in the strategy period. In the first 12 months, evidence is likely to appear through internal changes within the Alliance, such as new partnerships, tools, pilots, content, public visibility and organizational commitments. Within four years, after programmes are operational for 12 months, early signs should begin to emerge in public perception and language, particularly among audiences the programmes reach directly. Over the full strategy period, the ambition is for creative adoption and institutional uptake among various actors, who are able to sustain the work beyond individual programmes. The further reaches of this ambition will grow with deepening resources and a focused set of strategic partnerships.

Measurement will combine quantitative and qualitative evidence through annual plans, funded programmes and the Alliance's learning agenda. Baselines and targets will be set where appropriate, while learning methods will capture how cultural signals spread through stories, symbols, peer influence, rituals and everyday practice.

Learning will be achieved through member reflections, case studies, public learning products and contributions to the wider Food Culture Alliance network. The aim is to build evidence on how food narratives, social identity and culinary systems can support and catalyze healthier diets, climate resilience and food systems transformation.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability will be built through the Alliance's catalytic model, diversified partnerships and growing body of shared knowledge. Existing systems and platforms will be strengthened so that food culture action can continue beyond individual grants.

Media content can keep circulating after production. Museum and heritage programmes can become part of institutional practice with relicensing and advertising fees. Recipe and learning resources can remain in public use. Innovations adopted by schools, restaurants, vendors, creators and community platforms can continue through their own audiences, customers and partnerships.

Over the strategy period, sustainability will be strengthened through a blended pathway of member contributions, funded programmes, strategic partnerships, institutional sponsorships, training, advisory services and other mission-aligned opportunities that support the Alliance's ability to advance food culture change over time.

Training and capacity strengthening, including the Food Culture Trailblazer Course, will support wider adoption of food culture approaches and create future opportunities for fee-based learning and advisory support. Learning products, cultural insights, food language guides, case studies and practical tools will help more organizations apply food culture strategies in their own contexts, growing a wider field of actors able to carry the work forward beyond the core Alliance.

THE PATH FORWARD

The cultural shift described in this strategy is already emerging. Cooks are reimagining familiar foods in contemporary ways. Creators are making heritage ingredients visible in digital culture. Families are returning to indigenous vegetables, traditional grains and local food practices because these foods carry memory, care, taste and meaning.

FCA Kenya's role is to give this emerging shift structure, visibility and scale. Through its members and partners, the Alliance will strengthen the narratives, social identities and culinary systems that help nutritious and climate-resilient heritage foods gain renewed value in contemporary Kenyan life.

By 2030, heritage foods should be seen as living innovations: rooted in people and place, expressed through modern identity, and carried forward through everyday practice. A wider network of organizations, creators, cooks, cultural institutions and food systems actors will be able to apply food culture strategies in their own work, extending the shift beyond the core Alliance.

Kenya has an opportunity to show that nutrition and food systems transformation can move through culture: through pride, desire, creativity, belonging and everyday choice.

**// The future of Kenya's food culture is already being written.
FCA Kenya exists to help Kenyans author it on their own terms. //**

contacts

Food Culture Alliance
Nairobi Business Park | Block B, 1st Floor
Ngong Road
P.O Box 13733-00800
Nairobi | Kenya



<https://www.foodculturealliance.org>



The Food Culture Alliance