

HEALTHIER DIETS FOR ALL UGANDANS

ADVANCING NUTRITION BY **MOTIVATING UGANDANS TO CONSUME SAFER AND NUTRITIOUS FOODS**

GAIN Uganda is committed to improving nutrition outcomes through a comprehensive approach that includes food fortification and biofortification, strengthening MSME supply chains, increasing consumer demand for healthier diets, enhancing food safety, and advocating for effective policy reforms.

STATUS OF **MALNUTRITION** IN UGANDA

Food systems play a critical role in ensuring the availability and affordability of safe, nutritious foods. However, several challenges hinder progress:

- **High Cost of Nutritious Food:** According to 2022 FAO/World Bank data, 73% of Ugandans cannot afford a healthy diet ¹.
- **Coordination and Governance:** Ineffective policy implementation and weak governance structures undermine the management of food system.
- **Purchasing Power and Access:** With inflation at 3.32% (June 2024), low-income households struggle to access nutritious food options.
- **Data Gaps:** Incomplete or unreliable data on food systems hampers informed decision-making and the ability to support smallholder farmers effectively.
- **Challenges facing SMEs:** Many SMEs lack access to financing, technology, and infrastructure to supply affordable, nutritious food.
- **Changing Food Preferences:** Urbanization drives demand for processed foods (45%), although 35% of consumers seek healthier options.
- **Vulnerability:** A 2022 World Bank survey indicated that 48% of Ugandans experienced moderate food insecurity, while 11% faced severe food insecurity², particularly in rural areas reliant on subsistence farming.
- **Low Fortification compliance:** Only 30% of food products meet the fortification standards due to limited enforcement and high costs because the majority of the food processors are small and micro, while the policy ensures that big millers fortify.
- **Social and cultural barriers:** The societal norms and beliefs can hinder nutrition practices and low decision-making power for women and girls. For instance, male-dominated decision-making, food taboos, and heavy domestic workloads often limit women's and girls' participation in nutrition initiatives.

Despite progress, such as a reduction in national poverty from 20.3% (2019/20) to 16.1% (2023/24), approximately 7 million Ugandans still live in absolute poverty³. The economic cost of malnutrition was estimated at UGX 1.8 trillion in 2009—around 5.6% of GDP. If left unaddressed, malnutrition could cost Uganda

¹ Uganda - FSCI Indicators - Printable Page - Food Systems Dashboard

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/lrms/brief/in-uganda-low-access-to-essential-goods-high-food-insecurity-with-a-slight-improved-conditions-among-the-poorest>

³ https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/UNHS-2023_2024-PPT.pdf

an estimated US\$7.7 billion (UGX 19 trillion) in lost productivity by 2050. Yet, timely investments in nutrition could yield economic returns of US\$1.7 billion (UGX 4.3 trillion) through increased productivity⁴.

UGANDA FACES A TRIPLE BURDEN OF MALNUTRITION

1. **Undernutrition:** Malnutrition during early childhood results in permanent physical and cognitive damage. According to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022, 26% of Ugandan children aged 6-59 months are stunted (short for their age), 3% are wasted (thin for their height), 10% are underweight (thin for their age), and 3% are overweight (heavy for their height). In addition, only 7% of children (6-23 months) receive a minimally acceptable diet, and 10% meet dietary diversity standards ⁵.
2. **Overnutrition:** Malnutrition affects Ugandan adults through both overnutrition and obesity. Based on the results of the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022, 9% of men and 18% of women are overweight, while 8% of women and 2% of men are obese. Overweight and obesity prevalence is higher among women with higher education (46%) and in urban areas (14%) compared to rural areas (6%).
3. **Micronutrient Deficiencies:** Iron and Vitamin A deficiencies remain widespread, particularly among young children and pregnant women, where iron deficiency causes anemia. The 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey indicated that 53% of children aged 6-59 months and 32% of women of reproductive age in Uganda are anemic.

WHAT MOTIVATES US?

GAIN Uganda aims to **increase the consumption of healthier diets** by improving the availability, affordability, and desirability of safe and nutritious food, while reducing the intake of unsafe food.

1. **Availability:** We work closely with private service providers and SMEs to build resilient supply chains for nutritious food. Through business development, technical assistance, and financial support, we empower SMEs to improve production, processing, distribution, storage, and retail. *According to AGRA's Africa Agriculture Status Report (2019), the African private sector supplies 80% of food consumed on the continent*
2. **Affordability:** In response to widespread unaffordability, GAIN collaborates with private-sector actors to shift business models and reduce the cost of safe, nutritious foods.
3. **Desirability:** To encourage healthy food choices, GAIN Uganda uses evidence-based communication strategies that make nutritious diets attractive, aspirational, and easy to adopt. More than 4 million low-income earners have been reached through these efforts.

⁴ <https://ajfand.net/Volume22/No8/Muyonga22340.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/media/16731/file/UDHS-2022-Report.pdf.pdf>

PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVED ACTION

Reducing malnutrition and improving diets requires engaging with and building alliances between governments, donors, including philanthropists, civil society and youth, producers, academia, UN and development partners, and the private sector to develop and implement new approaches to drive improved action. (Similar to Kenya)

GAIN UGANDA'S WAY



Industrial Food Fortification & Biofortification by enhancing the fortification and biofortification of staple foods to improve nutritional outcomes.



Development of stronger resilient MSMEs by empowering local businesses to deliver affordable and healthy food options.



Demand creation for healthier diets by promoting consumer awareness and behaviour change toward nutritious diets.



Enhancing food safety by improving food safety standards through collaboration and policy advocacy.



Policy Advocacy and Food System Transformation by driving evidence-based policies to create a sustainable and inclusive food system. Inclusive Gender Mainstreaming and Environmental Sustainability by embedding gender equity and environmental sustainability across programs.

Contacts

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