

GAIN KENYA DIGEST



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Message from the Country Director

A Healthier Future: Increasing Vegetable Consumption for Better Nutrition in Kenya

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) 2019, about 3.9 million deaths worldwide in 2017 were attributed to not consuming enough fruit and vegetables. In addition, an insufficient intake of fruit and vegetables was estimated to cause around 14 percent of gastro-intestinal cancer-related deaths worldwide. To help tackle these alarming statistics, fruit and vegetables should be a must-have in our daily diets.

The WHO recommends that adults should consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, excluding starchy vegetables. Despite a 46 per cent increase in Kenya's GDP over the past 15 years, vegetable consumption has remained far below the WHO's recommended daily intake of 400g of fruits and vegetables per person. This worrying trend underscores the urgent need to increase vegetable consumption across the population, due to micronutrient deficiencies in Kenya.

Diversifying vegetable consumption is paramount in addressing the malnutrition crisis and reducing the burden of various health-related diseases in the country. These nutrient-rich plants play a pivotal role in improving overall dietary patterns and combating micronutrient deficiencies.

Dark green leafy vegetables, such as *managu* (black nightshade), *terere* (amaranth), kale and spinach are powerhouses of essential vitamins and minerals, like iron and calcium and vitamins A and C. Diverse vegetables also offer a range of antioxidants, fibre, and micronutrients vital for maintaining good health. Eating a rainbow of green, yellow, orange, red or purple fruit and vegetables can help keep us healthy, while adding variety, taste, and texture to our diets.

Vegetables, especially African leafy vegetables, are well adapted to local climates, and are more resilient to diseases compared to other vegetables. They grow very fast, especially the amaranth, African nightshade, cowpea, and spider plants, and can all be harvested three to four weeks after planting. Vegetables don't need a lot of space to produce hence can be established behind our kitchens, balconies or verandas using locally available materials such as pots, plastic containers, or old tyres.

Nutritionists recommend that half of your plate should contain a range of fruits and vegetables. I call upon all Kenyans to include consumption of diverse fruits and vegetables in our daily diets for a healthier, better nourished, and economically productive Kenya.

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GAIN Kenya hosts GAIN Board and Senior Management Team

GAIN Kenya office was privileged to host GAIN Board for their mid-year review meeting and engagements with staff and stakeholders from June 17-21, 2024. GAIN Board Chair Ann Tutwiler, Executive Director Lawrence Haddad and members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) held an informal interaction session with GAIN Kenya Office staff aimed at networking and celebrating the good work the team is doing to improve access to healthier diets for all Kenyans. Additionally, the delegation visited [FoodFiti](#) sites where GAIN is implementing the Vegetables for All project, and SMEs and markets that GAIN has been partnering with to learn more about our work in Kenya and the impact of our projects.



GAIN Board members and Senior Management Team members interacting with last mile vegetable vendors during their visit to FoodFiti Zones in Kenya.

The Board members and SMT also met GAIN Kenya donors to discuss ongoing programmes and the current challenges and opportunities within Kenya's food systems and also held a consultative dinner with stakeholders in the food systems space. Machakos County in Eastern Kenya hosted part of the delegation led by the Board Chair and the ED with a courtesy call to Governor Wavinya Ndeti of Machakos County after visiting various project sites within the County. Discussions centred on the ongoing and potential collaboration areas between GAIN and Machakos County Government in improving access to healthier diets for all. Governor Wavinya Ndeti lauded GAIN for the support in making Marikiti Market in Machakos a model market in Africa and supporting projects geared towards improving the nutrition of the people of Machakos County. On his part, Dr. Haddad thanked the Governor for being a champion of better nutrition in the country and for the continued support to GAIN's projects in the county, including the just completed cold room installation in Marikiti Market.



Group photo of GAIN Board members and GAIN Kenya staff



Participants during the Kongamano conference



Building climate resilience for smallholder farmers through agriculture insurance



GAIN Head of Policy and Advocacy, Charles Opiyo, gives opening remarks during the climate resilience workshop

The first ever Sub-Saharan Africa Kongamano - Governance and Resilient Markets Conference held in Nairobi

In Kenya, informal food markets are not just shopping venues but vital hubs that sustain urban and rural food supplies and support the livelihoods of millions. These markets are crucial in making food accessible and affordable. However, they also face significant challenges such as poor sanitation, inadequate infrastructure, governance wrangles, and limited regulatory oversight. All these can affect the quality and safety of the food sold, ultimately impacting public health.

It is on this backdrop that GAIN hosted the first ever Sub-Saharan Africa Kongamano, a four-day Pathfinding Governance and Resilient Markets Conference, in Nairobi from April 23-26, 2024. The conference brought participants together to inspire, co-create knowledge, share evidence and practices, and better connect food system networks. Over 70 representatives from the Kenyan national and county governments, market committees, regional food system actors, donors and organisations like UN-Habitat, Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, GIZ, FAO, Rikolto, ICLEI Africa CARE in Kenya, and the World Health Organization were present. Among the objectives of the conference was to showcase a selection of GAIN's resilient markets and food systems governance participatory interventions 'in practice' to promote South to South learning with counterparts from Asia

At the end of the conference, GAIN Director of Programme Services, Saul Morris led the delegates in a learning visit to Marikiti Market in Machakos County and in paying a courtesy call to the Deputy Governor (DG) of Machakos County Government, Hon Francis Mwangangi. The team updated the DG on the Kongamano 2024 discussions and the need for the Government of Kenya and county governments to lead multisectoral engagements and actions to transform traditional food markets to deliver safe and nutritious food for all Kenyans.

Floods, prolonged drought, hailstorms, pests, and illnesses are among the obstacles that smallholder farmers encounter. Agriculture insurance can help farmers become more resilient to climate-related shocks and alleviate the burden of food insecurity. GAIN, through the CASCADE project, is working with the national government to accelerate the implementation of the National Agriculture Insurance Programme through a public-private partnership. The initiative targets smallholder farmers especially women to increase awareness and uptake of insurance while boosting investments in the agriculture sector. Towards this end, the project facilitated workshops to capacity build agriculture officers on agriculture risk management training package and consolidation of historical weather data and yield which are essential in the design of insurance products. The insurance products are available and retailed by private service providers for small holder farmers to insure their crops.

Nutrition Financial Tracking and Training (NFTT) for increased nutrition financing

As part of advocating for better financing for nutrition, CASCADE project supported Nyandarua and Nairobi Counties to conduct Nutrition Financial Tracking and Training (NFTT). The training sought to analyse financial resources allocated to nutrition specific and sensitive initiatives.

This activity was an important process as it contributed to Budget Analysis and Financial Tracking exercise in Nakuru and Nyandarua Counties, to establish nutrition budget flow, processes and identify the source of nutrition finances. This will help inform budget advocacy and investment case development for better nutrition financing.



Dr. Joseph Lenai, Head of Preventive and Promotive Health Services, delivering his remarks during the NFTT workshop, respectively.

The activity was held in May 2024 and brought together fifty stakeholders including County Executive Committee Members (CECMs), County Finance & Economic Planning Department, County Nutrition Coordinators, Department of Agriculture and development partners such as UNICEF. County leaders indicated the relevance of multi sectoral investment to nutrition and evidence to set threshold for county sectors to finance nutrition. The activity deliberations informed development of a budget brief which will be used as an advocacy tool.

Enhancing food safety through capacity strengthening of food testing laboratories



Group Photo for the workshop participants – DNLS-NPHL, private and government food labs, and regulators.

In May 2024, the Division of National Laboratory services (DNLS) in collaboration with the CASCADE project held a capacity building workshop for government, private and county food testing laboratories on sampling and laboratory-based skills. Participants included representatives from Nairobi, Nyandarua and Nakuru Counties, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Interfield Laboratory, Unga Limited, and Happy Cow Limited. In his opening remarks, Dr John Kiiru, the Senior Deputy Director Health Management Services at DNLS, reiterated the critical importance of this training, particularly in combating food contamination and addressing micronutrient deficiencies. He urged participants to elevate food safety standards by focusing on issues such as food residues and pesticides and advocating for the formation of consortiums among laboratories to tackle these challenges collaboratively.

Moving forward, the stakeholders present agreed on several resolutions aimed at advancing food safety practices nationwide. These include reviewing existing laws, enhancing sampling accreditation, and integrating county governments into food safety matters through improved budgetary allocations and onsite training. Additional focus includes biosafety management, stakeholder sensitisation on antimicrobials and pesticide residues, and the establishment of an integrated reporting system for streamlined data management.

The CASCADE project will continue supporting laboratories to produce reliable results, to improve the decision-making capacity of competent authorities, and enhance food safety and nutrition in the Kenya and the project target counties. The project engages Private Service Providers (PSPs) to strengthen their implementation of existing nutrition-related policies through offering accessible and affordable products and services to consumers.

Sensitisation of County Executive Committee Members of Agriculture and stakeholders on the food systems transformation process and the Food Systems Dashboard

GAIN in collaboration with the National Food Systems Technical Working Group organised a three-day meeting with County Executive Committee Members (CECMs) of Agriculture in all the forty-seven counties. The meeting provided an in-depth understanding of the food systems transformation process and emphasized the importance of cascading the transformation to the county level.

During the meeting, the CECMs received a comprehensive overview of the Food Systems Transformation action plan. Charles Opiyo, Head of Policy and Advocacy at GAIN, presented the Food Systems Dashboard to the participants. This tool contains relevant data that the County Executives and other stakeholders can use to make informed and evidence-based decisions at the sub-national level. The team recognised the Food Systems Dashboard as a valuable resource for addressing some of the data challenges facing food systems in Kenya.



Charles Opiyo, Head of Policy and Advocacy GAIN Kenya, taking participants through a presentation on the Food Systems Dashboard.

The sensitisation meeting was followed by a series of consultative meetings with twenty county governments aimed at engaging county government chief officers and other stakeholders to embrace a food systems approach within their fiscal and policy planning processes. These consultative meetings were tailored to address the unique needs and aspirations of each county, fostering alignment with the overarching food systems transformation goals. Participants gained insight into the UNFSS 2021 process and learned about Kenya's specific food systems transformation pathways.

Navigating the public policy process for improved nutrition outcomes



Joshua Laichena, KIPPRA facilitator explaining the legal framework for public policies in Kenya,

Effective policymaking demands a thorough blend of evidence-based strategies, stakeholder involvement, and a keen awareness of public priorities. It is a process that must constantly be futuristic and objective, immune to the momentary notions of political landscapes.

The CASCADE project in collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) delivered a Public Policy Making Process (PPMP) training for County Executives, implementers, and Private Service

Providers (PSPs) from Nyandarua, Nakuru, and Nairobi Counties. This initiative exemplified the project's commitment to rigorous policy development. During the one-week course, the participants immersed themselves in discussions centred on policy conceptualisation, development stages, and the elaborate dynamics of policy analysis. They also delved into understanding power struggles inherent in policy-making processes, underscoring the need for informed decision-making that transcends political pressures.

Key outcomes from the training included equipping participants to define public policies, rationalise their significance in the public sector, and articulate how political dynamics influence policy outcomes. Moreover, the course emphasised evaluating policy efficacy and measuring its direct impact on citizenry, bridging the vital link between research insights and actionable policy implementations. With the acquired knowledge on articulating how political dynamics influence policy outcomes, evaluating policy efficacy and measuring its direct impact on citizenry, the county officials are now poised to conduct needs assessments to pinpoint specific areas necessitating further policy training and support in their respective counties.

The CASCADE project continues to forge alliances with county governments to foster robust partnerships that facilitate the development and execution of the selected nutrition-related policies. This strategic alignment highlights a shared commitment to addressing malnutrition issues through informed, sustainable policy solutions.

Whereas it is challenging to navigate the complex terrain of public policy, focus on the imperative of evidence-driven, forward-thinking approaches that resonate with public needs can drive more conversations and actions towards shaping a healthier, more resilient future for all Kenyans.

“This training is timely as it comes just as we are about to begin a new fiscal year and planning period, therefore, we can be able to plan and budget adequately for nutrition related policies implementation; and even development or review in cases where some policies don't exist or are overdue. We hope to receive a follow up training on public policy monitoring tools to be able track our progress”

Dr. Joram Muraya, former Director Nutrition and Wellness Nyandarua County.