

# GAIN KENYA DIGEST



*Ruth Okowa, Country Director,  
GAIN Kenya*

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Message from the Country Director: The Urgency of Dietary Shifts
- Accelerating nutrition commitments: Paving the path to the 2025 Nutrition for Growth Summit
- Improving access to safe and diverse vegetables through the Market Facilitator model
- Accelerating climate change action in Nyandarua County
- Counties develop targeted investment plans to tackle nutrition challenges
- Counties develop targeted investment plans to tackle nutrition challenges
- Co-development of One Nutrition Market Vendor Training package
- Addressing food safety and waste management at mama mboga stalls in Kenya
- Food culture matters: Uniting for sustainable food consumption
- Building resilient communities

## Message from the Country Director

### **Dietary Shifts (DISH) Competition to shift Kenya's eating habits from fast foods to nutritious, farm-to-fork foods**

Kenya is grappling with a triple burden of malnutrition where undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overnutrition and associated diet-related non-communicable diseases coexist. An estimated 23 million Kenyans are undernourished. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2022) revealed that 18% of children under age five are stunted, 5% are wasted, and 10% are underweight. The survey found rates of obesity that were equally alarming—17% of women and 4% of men. These figures are far above global health targets, indicating that we still have a long way to go.

In addition, micronutrient deficiencies, particularly in zinc and iron, are widespread, contributing to conditions like anaemia, which affects 42% of Kenyan pregnant women.

At the heart of this crisis is Kenya's fragmented food system, which struggles with production challenges, inefficient supply chains, and the devastating impacts of climate change. These systemic challenges in food production and distribution are compounded by shifting dietary patterns in Kenya's growing urban middle class, which has seen a shift towards unhealthy, westernised dietary patterns.

The impact of this nutrition crisis on Kenya is profound. The consequences are devastating, contributing to stunted growth, chronic diseases, high education costs due to class repetition and absenteeism, and a drag on our economic productivity. A 2019 study, *The Cost of Hunger in Africa*, estimated that child malnutrition alone cost the country KES 373.9 billion, or 6.9% of GDP, in 2014 alone.

### **The Urgency of Dietary Shifts**

Our food systems need urgent transformation if we are to reverse these trends. The way we produce, process, distribute, and consume food must change. This is where the DISH Competition, an initiative designed to inspire creative, locally driven solutions to improve Kenya's food systems and encourage healthier eating habits, comes in.

The competition is open to a wide range of participants, including policymakers, chefs, food service leaders, food innovators, communicators, and marketers, all of whom are invited to submit their ideas for how we can promote healthier diets.

At stake is a prize award of USD 15,000, which will be divided between up to 15 finalists. In addition to funding, participants will receive 12-months of support, from mentorship to and networking opportunities, helping to turn their ideas into actionable solutions.

You can learn more about the DISH Competition on [our website](#).

**Accelerating nutrition commitments: Paving the path to the 2025 Nutrition for Growth Summit**

Representatives from GAIN, Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUN CSA), Nutrition International, CARE, and World Vision held a consultative meeting with the Principal Secretary (PS) for Public Health and Professional Standards in Kenya's Ministry of Health, Ms. Mary Muthoni. Ms. Gladys Mugambi, Kenya's SUN focal point, and Dr. Sultani Matendechemo, Deputy Director General in the Ministry of Health, accompanied Ms. Muthoni.

The meeting kickstarted the journey toward the global Nutrition for Growth (N4G) summit, scheduled for March 26th-28th, 2025, in Paris. The N4G gathering will bring together governments, international organisations, philanthropies, businesses, NGOs, and other stakeholders at regional and global levels to accelerate progress on malnutrition, and address food insecurity through SMART nutrition commitments and substantial financial pledges.



*Representatives from GAIN, SUN CSA, Nutrition International, CARE, and World Vision, pose for a group photo with the PS for Public Health and Professional Standards in Kenya's Ministry of Health, Ms. Mary Muthoni (centre).*

During the meeting, GAIN emphasised the importance of scaling up food system interventions that promote healthier diets across the country. Some of these interventions include increasing investments in large-scale food fortification, monitoring, and enforcing food standards, developing food-based dietary guidelines, and strengthening nutrition governance. These interventions are crucial to advancing the country's progress toward achieving healthier, more equitable food systems.

The meeting agreed to develop a roadmap to the lead up to the N4G as well as address issues around the Health Sector Strategy, Public Health Summit, and Community Health Strategy and how to position nutrition.

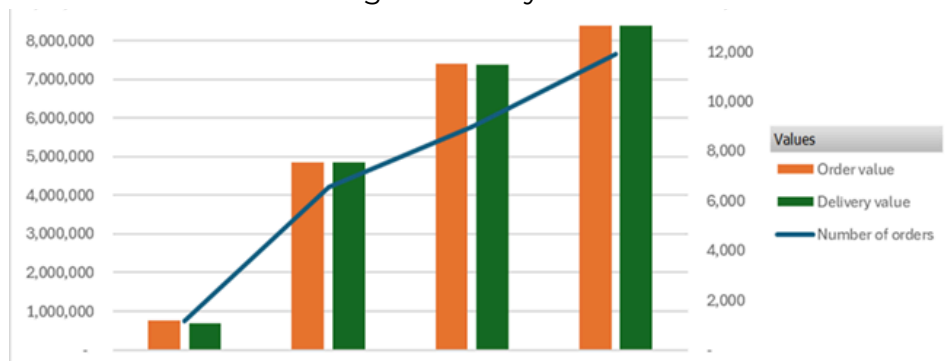
Overall, GAIN will support governments in the N4G stock-taking and formulation of stronger, broader and more implementable country commitments for nutrition.



## Improving access to safe and diverse vegetables through the Market Facilitator model

To guarantee freshness, safety, convenience, and traceability of vegetables sold by mama mbogas (last-mile vegetable vendors) in Kenya, GAIN has developed an innovative vegetable supply chain model - the market facilitator (MF). The model identifies, recruits and trains Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) compliant suppliers then links them to mama mbogas for the supply of safe and diverse vegetables.

GAIN's Vegetable for All project recruited and provided business coaching sessions to more than 80 MFs. They are categorised as Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 MFs own or lease vehicles for supplies and are supplying to over 50 mama mbogas while Tier 2 don't have vehicles and have the capacity of supplying to less than 30 mama mbogas in a day.



This model has bridged the gap between GAP compliant farmers and markets while also enabling last mile vendors to save time during sourcing and hence enabling them to reach more customers and register increased sales. Major improvements noted is the identification and elimination of barriers to market access such as lack of information, access to finance and logistical challenges. To date, the Vegetables for All project has linked more than 60 MFs to 540 GAP compliant farmers/suppliers for sourcing safe vegetables with almost 3,000 last mile vendors within the five project implementation counties sourcing their vegetables from MFs. The project is developing a digital sourcing platform for mama mbogas making them more competitive, efficient, and sustainable in the evolving market.



Mama mbogas.. pose for a photo after receiving waste bins from GAIN



## Accelerating climate change action in Nyandarua County



Participants during the accelerating climate change action workshop

Extreme climatic events pose a major threat to food and nutrition security and contribute to disasters in Kenya. Floods and droughts are of particular concern, with major and moderate droughts occurring more frequently. Other climate-related hazards in Kenya include food insecurity, disease outbreaks, forest fires and landslides.

In September 2024, CASCADE project facilitated a workshop bringing together 31 Nyandarua County officials to accelerate climate change actions.

Among the key interventions identified included: strengthening early warning systems to improve preparedness and response, provide training and awareness programmes at community level and multi sectoral coordination to promote sustainable techniques such as climate smart agriculture, water conservation, reforestation, and afforestation, all geared towards improving resilience of vulnerable populations to climate shocks.

**Counties develop targeted investment plans to tackle nutrition challenges**

Recent findings from a nutrition financial tracking and budget analysis conducted by the CASCADE/ project in Nakuru, Nairobi, and Nyandarua counties revealed that the resources currently allocated for nutrition are insufficient to tackle the nutrition challenges these counties face. It is against this backdrop that these counties participated in a consultative workshop to develop county-specific nutrition investment cases.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from various sectors who identified the most effective, high impact nutrition interventions to address the counties' challenges. Additionally, key multisectoral nutrition indicators were established for each county, with a 2023 baseline and targets set for 2030.

The counties also costed these interventions, providing a clear picture of the additional investments required to close the nutrition gap. These personalised investment cases will serve as a roadmap to ensure that the counties are on track to meet their nutrition goals, with a focus on sustainable, multi-sectoral approaches.



*Ongoing group discussion on impact targets for 2030*

**Co-development of One Nutrition Market Vendor Training package**

*Group photo of county TOTs and GAIN staff*

To effectively equip market committee members and for sustainability, GAIN, through the Food Systems Governance Programme, collaborated with county government officials from the Department of Health (public health officers and nutritionists) to co-develop an innovative One Nutrition Market Vendor Training package that encourages a participatory approach.

The vendor training package comprised of three modules: One Nutrition, Food Safety and Food Waste. Each of the three modules features a practical 'rule of five' that highlights the top five key points market vendors need to remember from the training, making the content more memorable. By the end of 2024, 650 vendors will have been equipped with one nutrition and business knowledge and skills. This initiative is not just about education but about fostering long-term resilience and sustainable growth in local markets.



## Addressing food safety and waste management at mama mboga stalls in Kenya

The Vegetable for All project has successfully trained 7,260 last mile vegetable vendors (LMVs), known locally as mama mbogas, in Nakuru, Kiambu, Nairobi, Machakos, and Mombasa Counties, equipping them with essential food safety and business management skills. This training has empowered the vendors to adopt best practices in personal and stall hygiene, proper sourcing, and safe food handling and storage, significantly mitigating the risk of foodborne diseases. Compliance with food safety regulations has built consumer trust, increased customer satisfaction, and fostered repeat business, enabling the vendors to better manage pricing, control costs, and enhance inventory management, which has led to higher profits. This initiative has also boosted vegetable purchases, with 60% of customers now buying vegetables at least seven times or more a week, and 86% expressing high satisfaction with their buying experience at the LMV stall.

Moreover, GAIN has identified the need for better vegetable waste management at mama mboga stalls to reduce environmental impact and enhance public health. In response, GAIN has provided training for mama mbogas on waste management practices, including sorting waste at the source, segregation, and proper waste categorisation. Additionally, waste bins have been distributed to support these practices, with a focus on ensuring that bins are covered to prevent contamination of vegetables from flies. This initiative not only promotes hygiene and safety at vendor stalls but has also fostered a positive environmental cycle by incentivizing the livestock value chain; livestock keepers now collect vegetable waste to use as animal feed, supporting a circular economy approach and sustainable waste management.



*Mama mbogas pose for a photo after receiving waste bins from GAIN*

## Addressing food safety and waste management at mama mboga stalls in Kenya

Influencers are revolutionising demand creation by driving awareness and engagement like never before. In an exciting collaboration, FoodFiti teamed up with two of Kenya's leading influencers, Awinja (Jacky Vike) and Wilbroda (Jacquey Nyaminde). These dynamic personalities connect authentically with their followers, making their recommendations impactful. GAIN collaborated with these parent influencers who resonate with low-income consumers audience segment, creating engaging content focused on edutainment, health, and lifestyle. They addressed the challenges parents face in feeding their kids nutritious meals, emphasizing portion sizes, taste, nutritional benefits, and vegetable diversity. This real-life context made FoodFiti's message feel more authentic and relatable, resonating with an impressive audience of 3.8 million people across social media platforms through two impactful videos!



**Awinja Nyamwalo - Jacky Vike**

Posted by Jacky Vike

12 Jul ·

Watoto wangu mnawashtua why? hizi ni gani 😊  
Nyi hukulaje mboga mingi Ugali kidogo ama Ugali  
kubwa mboga kidogo? [FoodFiti #KwaM...](#) See more



*How do you eat your vegetables? Influencer video*

**Food culture matters: Uniting for sustainable food consumption**

Culture influences our daily behaviour and extends to numerous areas like our relationship with food – how we think, feel and value food. Our global food system has shaped societal preferences in favour of consuming unhealthy and unsustainable foods, fuelling poor health and accelerating climate change. We need radical, accelerated transformation in our consumption habits and across society to combat this.

*The first cohort of the Food Culture Course and facilitators celebrate after successfully concluding the course.*

In response, the Food Culture Alliance hosted by GAIN has emerged as a group of organisations working together to shift preferences and increase society's demand for nutritious and sustainable foods. The Alliance aims to improve knowledge, strengthen collaboration, and drive action towards healthier food choices.

In Kenya, the Alliance delivered the first cohort of the Food Culture Course to existing members. The membership includes organisations in the media and entertainment sector, food, nutrition, climate, cultural sectors, and consumer protection. Participants explored how food culture shapes what we eat and generated powerful ideas to drive demand for local Kenyan foods.

**Building resilient communities: Insights from Resilience Household Investment Feasibility Assessment (RHIFA)**

In collaboration with SNV and Emory University, GAIN conducted a comprehensive Resilient Household Investment Feasibility Assessment (RHIFA) study in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) Counties of Samburu and Isiolo and non-ASAL Counties of Homa-Bay, Siaya, and Bungoma. This study aimed to collect information and evidence for designing scalable concepts to enhance household resilience. The study used a Human-Centered Design (HCD), a methodology that places the needs, preferences, and experiences of end-users at the core of the development process.

Following the RHIFA formative study results, the team identified emerging issues and prioritised six problems for the HCD co-creation sessions. The team chose these problems based on their prevalence, severity, and impact on the health and household outcomes of the target communities during drought and floods. The problems include insufficient access to clean drinking water; lack of knowledge, skills, and resources for farming; absence of community plans and preparedness; lack of access to energy for cooking; inadequate access to sufficient and good quality food; and lack of knowledge on how to save resources.

Cultural practices and gender dynamics significantly influence resilience. Women, who often take on the role of homemakers, bear a substantial responsibility for the family's well-being. However, they are frequently overlooked in decision-making and lack the necessary support for their contributions, which often has negative impacts on the welfare of the entire family, particularly children.



**“Men decide what can be planted because they own the land. People just plant what others are planting, for example, everyone plants maize, beans, or ground nuts during the same season, there is not much diversity.”**

*Resident, Bungoma County*

”



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

Communities in ASAL regions often lack sufficient resources such as storage facilities to save for future needs and barely get by with what is available. Despite recognizing its benefits, saving surplus in times of plenty is rarely considered. These communities heavily rely on their livestock which often perish during droughts due to a lack of water and pasture.

**“We lack the resources to help ourselves, such as food or water. Most of us don’t have resources, so we spend most of our time fending for our children.”**

*Resident, Samburu County*

”