

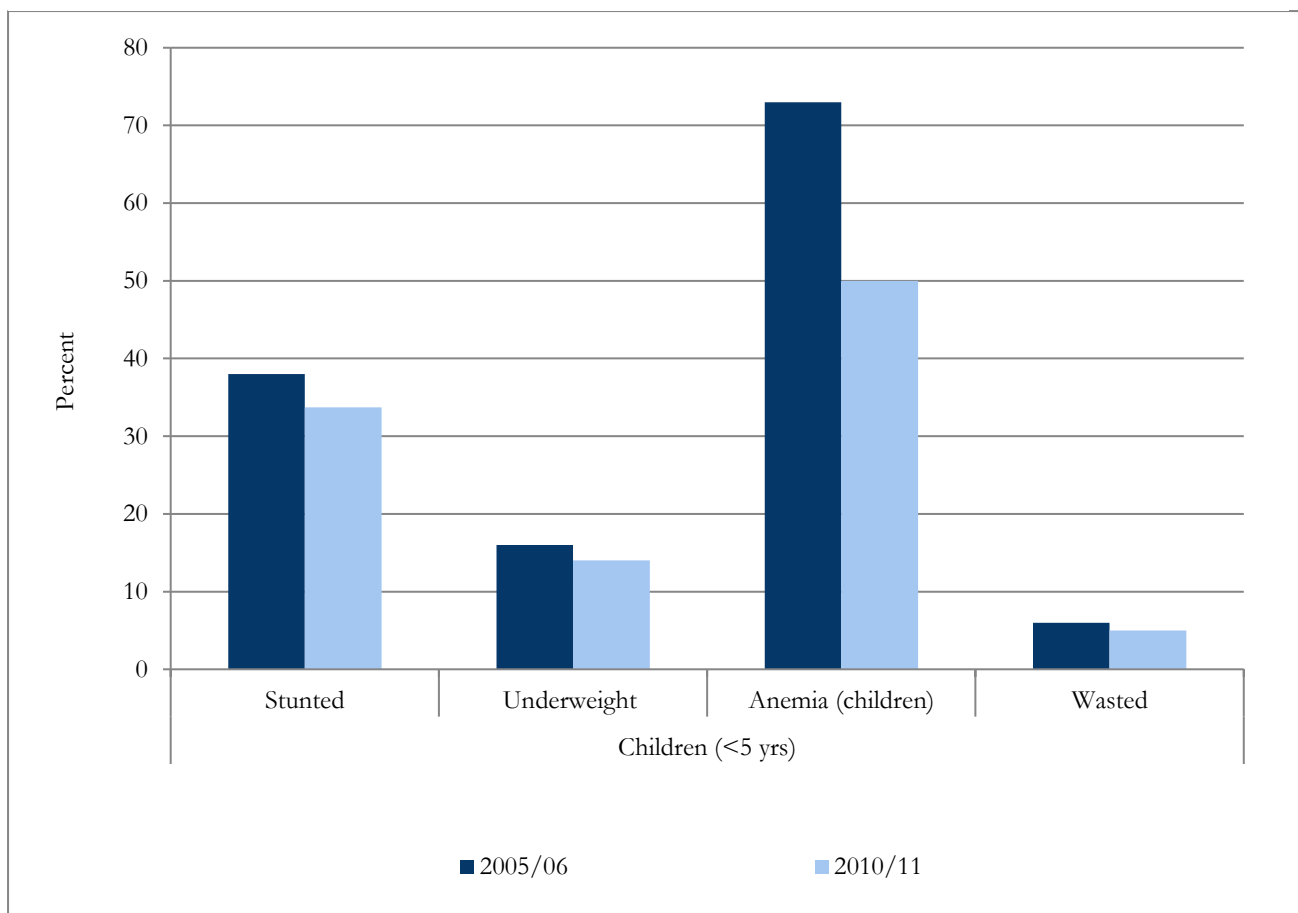


## Strategies to raise agricultural productivity, address gender inequalities, and reduce rural poverty in Uganda

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Hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition pose major health and economic challenges in Uganda. By several measures, the country ranks among the least well-nourished countries in the world. The 2013 Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) conducted by the World Food Program (WFP) in Uganda revealed that about [5 percent of households in the country experience poor food consumption](#), and 16 percent have borderline food consumption, with slightly more varied but still nutritionally inadequate diets (UBOS and WFP, 2013). The global hunger index score for Uganda is 26.4, categorizing the country's level of hunger as "serious" and putting it in 87th place out of 118 developing countries in 2016 (von Grebmer et al., 2016). A 2014 report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) shows that [malnutrition costs the country about \\$899 million](#)

Figure 1: Trends in nutrition outcomes in Uganda, 2005/06-2010/11



Source: [UBOS, 2011](#).

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[annually](#)—nearly 5.6 percent of its GDP. The report further estimates that 15 percent of child mortalities between 2005 and 2009 in Uganda were due to undernutrition.

Understanding the current food and nutrition security (FNS) challenges and opportunities in Uganda can enable policymakers and their development partners to better target investments and implement actions needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal related to food and nutrition security (SDG2). Using FNS data from the [Ending Rural Hunger \(ERH\) project](#) and various national sources, the Uganda ERH case study presents the state of the country's FNS needs, policies, and resources and identifies the priority areas for improving the country's FNS status to achieve SDG2.

### **The status of FNS in Uganda: Major steps in recent years, but inconsistent across regions**

Uganda has been making progress toward improving its FNS status. For instance, the proportion of stunted children (under five years) declined from 38 percent in 2006 to 33 percent in 2011. The proportion of wasted children and underweight children fell from 6 percent to 5 percent and from 16 percent to 14 percent, respectively. In addition, the prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age declined by almost a half (from 49 percent to 24 percent) over the same period. Importantly, poverty has also been on the decline, with the percentage of Uganda's population living below the poverty line falling by more than half, from 56 percent to 19.7 percent over the period from 1992 to 2013 (NDP 2010/11-2014/15).

However, inequalities in food and nutrition security still exist with respect to type of residence (rural-urban), geographic location, and gender. Households residing in rural areas are more food insecure—with lower dietary diversity, higher dependence on staples, and greater prevalence of malnutrition among women and children—relative to their urban counterparts. Rural households have more limited access to food, indicated by higher poverty rates and the greater proportion of households that spend more than 65 percent of their income on food. The northern and western regions of the country are the most food and nutrition insecure and have the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition in women and children. Higher prevalence rates of malnutrition in these regions may be explained by the severity of many underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in these parts of the country. For instance, 44 percent and 29 percent of the population is poor in the northern and western regions, respectively—higher than the national poverty rate of 26 percent. Other potential factors include drought and high prevalence of poor-quality housing and sanitation, which can lead to disease, a major cause of malnutrition ([UBOS, 2011](#); [UBOS and WFP, 2013](#)). Furthermore, the civil strife in the northern region for about two decades has forced many households to relocate from their farms, [hampering agricultural production and thus leaving the people in the region food insecure](#) and malnourished.

### **A large gender gap and high vulnerability to shocks also creates precarious FNS in Uganda**

Gender differences exist in food and nutrition needs in Uganda. Notably, there are more females living below the poverty line than males in the country. Female-headed households appear to be more food insecure relative to male-headed ones. Nearly half of female-headed households in Uganda have low dietary diversity and more than half are energy deficient (compared to 36 percent and 46 percent of their male-headed counterparts, respectively). The gender gap in FNS may reflect dominance of males in access to, control over, and ownership of production resources in Uganda. A study by Ali et al. (2015) reports [substantial gender gap in mean yield](#) (or value of yield) in Uganda—of around 20-30 percent in favor of male farmers.

Food access remains a major challenge to achieving food and nutrition security in the country due to low agricultural productivity and the large gender gap in access to agricultural inputs and other productive

resources such as land, information technology, equipment, irrigation, and financial services. Achieving better FNS in Uganda is also hampered by high vulnerability to shocks (e.g., production shocks, weather shocks, consumption shocks, and price shocks) and limited resource mobilization for addressing FNS needs. For instance, Uganda lags behind the sub-Saharan African average with respect to public and private investments in interventions related to FNS. The national expenditure on agriculture is \$4 per rural capita compared to an average of \$23 for sub-Saharan Africa. A similar pattern is noted in official development assistance to FNS and foreign direct investment to the agriculture sector.

### **International commitments to tackle food and nutrition insecurity**

The government of Uganda has made commitments towards ensuring food and nutrition security in the country as a pathway to improving public health, labor productivity, and economic growth. At the regional and international levels, Uganda subscribes to several FNS agendas with time-bound targets. Uganda was one of the first African countries to concurrently implement the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and the agricultural Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP). Uganda is a signatory to the Malabo Declaration of June 2014 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of September 2015. The Malabo declaration aims to reduce childhood malnutrition (under-five stunting to 10 percent and wasting to 5 percent) by 2025. The SDG2 seeks to end all forms of malnutrition by ensuring access to food for all people by 2030. These agendas outline implementation strategies ranging from poverty reduction, improving agricultural productivity, and building resilient agricultural practices.

### **Uganda's national plans for addressing food and nutrition insecurity**

At the national level, the government of Uganda is currently implementing the National Development Plan (NDP) 2016-2020, a holistic framework for poverty eradication in Uganda. The plan includes FNS-related targets, such as eliminating stunting among children under five years by the year 2040. Examples of strategic plans relevant to FNS implemented under the NDP include the Agricultural Sector Strategy Plan (ASSP) 2015/16-2019/20 and the Health Sector Development Plan (HSDP) 2015/16-2019/20. Although these plans include interventions to provide farmers and agro-entrepreneurs—particularly youth and women—with productivity-enhancing agricultural inputs, extension services, skills and leadership training, and financing, some preliminary program assessments suggest that realizing the programs' objectives will require greater, more timely funding, more expertise and coordination on the part of implementing stakeholders, and better targeting of youth, women, and vulnerable groups.

### **Policy recommendations**

To improve its FNS status, Uganda should address three areas:

1. The need for the government and its partners to stimulate improved agricultural productivity through increased access to productivity-enhancing inputs (e.g., credit, fertilizers, improved seeds). Importantly, accomplishing this goal will involve reducing gender bias in access to, control over, and ownership of productive resources.
2. The need to design and implement interventions that foster resilience in households and communities to income and consumption shocks in order to mitigate the effects of these shocks on FNS. Potential mitigation mechanisms include promoting income diversification strategies in rural areas, developing strong credit and insurance markets for agriculture, upholding and strengthening the food safety net programs (to target mainly women), encouraging savings behavior in rural households, and supporting better on-farm storage facilities to stimulate savings culture and prevent postharvest losses.

3. The need to develop strategies for building a sustainable resource base to finance FNS interventions, for example through attracting foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector (and FNS-related sectors) and embracing a stronger financial commitment to increase public funding to agriculture and other sectors essential to eradicating malnutrition and food insecurity.

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