



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

THE UGANDA FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CSO	-	Civil Society Organisation
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GM	-	Genetically Modified
HIV	-	Human Immune-Deficiency Virus
HSSP	-	Health Sector Strategic Plan
ICESCR	-	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDD	-	Iodine Deficiency Disorders
IEC	-	Information, Education and Communication
IMCI	-	Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses
MAAIF	-	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MHCP	-	Minimum Health Care Package
MOH	-	Ministry of Health
NDA	-	National Drug Authority
NFNC	-	National Food and Nutrition Council
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
PEAP	-	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PMA	-	Plan for Modernization of Agriculture
UDHS	-	Uganda Demographic and Health Survey
UFNC	-	Uganda Food and Nutrition Council
UFNP	-	Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy
UHDR	-	Uganda Human Development Report
UNBS	-	Uganda National Bureau of Standards
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	-	World Bank
WHO	-	World Health Organisation

FOREWORD

We are pleased that the factors, which have led to the persistent and sometimes, worsening malnutrition and poor health of our people, have been identified and documented. Malnutrition contributes to poor health, aggravates diseases, and reduces productivity and compounds poverty and its after effects.

The factors responsible for malnutrition include, among others, inadequate food intake and disease, food insecurity, poor child-rearing practices, inadequate water supply and poor environmental sanitation, low education and poverty. These are inter-related factors, which call for multi-disciplinary approaches to remove them. Effective intra and inter-sectoral linkages must, therefore, be put in place to promote co-ordination and resource utilization.

Government is committed to fulfilling the Constitutional obligation of ensuring food and nutrition security for all Ugandans. This Food and Nutrition Policy is, therefore, important as it provides the framework for addressing food and nutrition issues in the country.

The basis of this policy is contained in the “Uganda Food and Nutrition Background Information” and the “Consultancy Report on Nutrition Policy and Strategy: Opportunities for Programming and Impact” of May 2000. Furthermore, the policy has been produced through the efforts of a large number of people from line ministries and sectors, and through a participatory consultative process at district level.

We appreciate the support accorded by the donor community in preparing this policy. Special thanks go to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank (WB) for their assistance. We also thank the members of the Task Force and other stakeholders who contributed to the preparation of the policy document.

We appeal to Government Ministries, Local Governments, national and international agencies, non-government organizations and all other stakeholders, to work closely with the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and the Uganda Food and Nutrition Council (UFNC) to implement the Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy (UFNP).

We, therefore, reiterate Government’s firm commitment to implementing this Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy (UFNP).

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Minister of Health.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda places a lot of emphasis on attaining food security and adequate nutrition for its citizens and the government is committed to fulfilling this goal so that all Ugandans can attain good health, social and economic well – being.

The Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy has been formulated within the context of the overall national development policy objective of eradicating poverty as spelt out in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), and is in consonance with other policies already formulated by government.

Some of the factors responsible for malnutrition, poor health, and reduced productivity, all of which compound poverty and its after effects have been documented. The guiding principles of the Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy (UFNP) include; adequate food is a human right; food is treated as a national strategic resource; the cross-cutting nature of issues of food and nutrition as they affect men, women and children; strategies for responding to food and nutrition concerns at all levels and; the needs of all vulnerable groups being integral to all components of the policy.

In addition, the food and nutrition policy document spells out in details the goals, objectives and strategies to achieve the desired food security and nutrition adequacy in the country.

The overall objective of the policy is to promote the nutritional status of all the people of Uganda through multi-sectoral and co-coordinated interventions that focus on food security, improved nutrition and increased incomes.

The government will realize the above goals and objectives through the creation of a mechanism that will ensure that the food chain, from food production to consumption, is efficiently managed within the overall development strategy.

It will achieve this through building capacities at all levels (households, communities, Local Councils, Sub-counties, Districts) for adequate action to improve food and nutrition security.

It is therefore, imperative for government to set up a legal framework that will enforce the formulation and/or review of the policy, guiding principles, guidelines, legislation, regulations and standards relating to food and nutrition so that the overall strategy of the policy to ensure food security and adequate nutrition for all Ugandans is achieved.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

For over 50 years, there has been concern about the high prevalence of hunger and malnutrition in a world that has the capacity to feed its people. Populations affected are mainly those from poor developing countries, which depend on subsistence agriculture and are predominantly rural.

International treaties and conventions recognize that the right to adequate food is a fundamental human right. Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) both provide for the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living including adequate food. Article 11(2) of the ICESCR recognizes the need for more immediate and urgent steps to ensure the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition.

Many international conferences have been convened to find solutions to persistent food insecurity, famine and under-nutrition in parts of the world. One of the first was the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture held in 1943 with the objective of achieving “an adequate diet for all”. Others like the United Nations World Conference (1974), International Conference on Nutrition (1992) and World Food Summits (1996 & 2002) were follow-up meetings to address the primary problem of inequitable food distribution and the resultant macro- and micro-nutrient malnutrition especially among children and women. The World Summit for Children (1990), specifically convened to discuss issues of child development, gave a specific commitment to improve the nutrition of children.

In 1999, following requests at the 1996 World Food Summit, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights formulated General Comment No. 12 to give a better definition of the rights relating to food in Article 11 of the ICESCR and identify principal important issues in relation to the right to food. General Comment No. 12 elaborates on the meaning and content of the right to adequate food and gives the obligations of states and the international community in the implementation of the right to food at the national and international levels.

Uganda ratified the ICESCR in 1987 and recognises the importance of food and nutrition in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. The National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution provides that the State shall:

- Take appropriate steps to encourage people to grow and store adequate food;
- Establish national food reserves; and
- Encourage and promote proper nutrition through mass education and other appropriate means in order to build a healthy state.

Since the ratification of the ICESCR, Uganda has been party to the commitments and resolutions at most of the international conferences on the right to food and has developed national goals and plans of action such as an Action Plan for Children (1993) that address the right to food. Several national conferences and seminars have addressed various aspects of the right to adequate food. In 2003, a national seminar on the implementation of the right to adequate food in Uganda discussed issues relating to the right to food including the draft of this Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy (UFNP).

Optimal nutrition that contributes to the highest attainable standard of health is also a goal of the food and nutrition policy.

Uganda's national obligation and commitment are to address issues of food security and nutrition and to promote development. Food security promotes good nutrition and good nutrition is key to good health and the socio-economic well being of a population. Food security and nutrition are mutually reinforcing; social and economic factors have overriding influences on either one or both of them. The economic productivity of a population depends on its nutrition and health status.

Government is committed to the good health and nutrition of its entire people. It has, therefore, formulated the UFNP to promote food security and adequate nutrition for the population.

1.2 Institutional Framework

The Ministries of Health (MOH) and Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF), which are the lead ministries in food security and nutrition issues, are mandated by the Constitution to set minimum standards, assure quality and develop relevant policies. The specific mandate of the MOH is to improve the quality of health services and to ensure equity in accessing essential health services with the overall goal of reducing morbidity and mortality. Nutrition is one of the priority components of National Minimum Health Care Package being implemented under the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP). The mandate of MAAIF is to support, promote and guide the production of crops, livestock and fish so as to ensure the improved quality and quantity of agricultural produce and products for domestic consumption, nutrition, food security and exports. MAAIF and MOH are also promoting diet diversification as well as other food-based strategies for a healthy and productive population.

The issues relating to food security and nutrition are multi-sectoral, involving both public and private stakeholders. In order to co-ordinate the various stakeholders, Government established in 1987 the current National Food and Nutrition Council (NFNC). The NFNC also has the function of advising Government on the formulation of the UFNP, providing guidelines on the implementation of the policy, research, monitoring and evaluation.

1.3 Situation Analysis

The population of Uganda is currently estimated at approximately 25 million. About 86% of the population live in the rural areas. Children aged 0-4 years constitute 18.8% and women in the reproductive age constitute 21.2%. The infant mortality rate is 88.4 per 1,000 live births while the under-five mortality rate is 152 per 1000 live births. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is estimated to be 495 per 100,000 live births (UDHS, 2000/2001). Life expectancy at birth in 1991 was 48.1 years. However, life expectancy for females was 50.5 years while that of males was 45.5 years. The average adult literacy rate in 1995 was 62% with the rate for males being 74% while that for females was 50%. The average per capita income is estimated at US \$ 300 (Poverty Status Report, 1999). In 2000, 35% of the population was estimated to live below the poverty line (UHDR, 2000), while the unemployment rate was calculated to be 7.4% in 1997.

The country has an equatorial-type of climate. Almost 80% of the country lies at an average altitude of approximately 1,000m (range 800-1,500m) above sea level. Most of the country receives between 1,015mm and 1,525mm of rainfall per annum, while the Lake Victoria region and highland areas receive over 2,000mm. At times, the rainfall in parts like Karamoja is much less, unpredictable and unreliable. The mean annual temperatures range from a minimum of 10°C-22.4°C to a maximum of 22.5°C-32.5°C.

The country produces a wide range of crops, including cereals such as maize, millet and sorghum; root crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes, bananas and pulses like beans and peas. It also produces animal products from dairy and beef animals, poultry, sheep, goats, pigs, rabbits and edible insects. The inland fresh water bodies provide large quantities of fish. The available foodstuffs of both plant and animal origin potentially offer a balanced diet. Subsistence farmers produce most of the food. Wider use of modern technology could undoubtedly boost production.

However, the country still faces problems of malnutrition and there exists pockets of famine and hunger. There are high levels of childhood under-nutrition and 40% of deaths among children are due to malnutrition. Over thirty-eight per cent of the children below 5 years are stunted, 4.0 per cent are wasted and 22.5 per cent are under weight (UDHS, 2000/2001). Micro-nutrient deficiencies are common, especially vitamin A deficiencies which has a prevalence rate of 5.4%, iron deficiency anaemia is slightly more than 50%, while 10% of the women population are undernourished. The total goitre rate ranges from 60-70%.

The causes of this high rate of malnutrition include inadequate food intake, pre-disposing diseases, ignorance, poverty, taboos, life-styles and the effects of HIV/AIDS. In addition, there is an increasing incidence of diet-related, chronic, non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and heart disorders. Poverty is one of the determinants of malnutrition, so, under nutrition and the lack of enough food may lead to unproductivity.

2. THE FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

2.1 National Development Objective

The UFNP and its associated strategies have been formulated within the context of the overall national development policy objective, which is to eradicate poverty as detailed in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). This is important given that poverty is one of the determinants of malnutrition and the recognition of the vicious cycle between poverty and malnutrition. In addition, the policy is in line with the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), which seeks to ensure food security, create gainful employment, increase incomes and improve the quality of life of the rural people. The policy is also in the line with other national policies, which include: the National Health Policy, Vision 2025, National Gender Policy, Population Policy, National Plan of Action for Children, the Decentralisation Policy, Universal Primary Education and Environment Policy. The policy and strategies are also within the context of international treaties, conventions and resolutions to which Uganda is committed.

2.2 Overall Policy Goal

The overall goal of the UFNP is to ensure food security and adequate nutrition for all the people in Uganda, for their health as well as their social and economic well-being.

2.2.1 Policy Objective

The overall objective of the policy is to promote the nutritional status of the people of Uganda through multi-sectoral and coordinated interventions that focus on food security, improved nutrition and increased incomes.

2.2.2 Key specific objectives

These are to:

- (i) to ensure availability, accessibility, affordability of food in the quantities and qualities sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals sustainably;
- (ii) to promote good nutrition of all the population;
- (iii) to incorporate food and nutrition issues in the national, district, sub-county and sectoral development plans;
- (iv) to ensure that nutrition education and training is incorporated in formal and informal training in order to improve the knowledge and attitudes for behavioural change of communities in food and nutrition-related matters;
- (v) to ensure food and income security at household, sub-county, district and national levels for improving the nutrition as well as the socio-economic status of the population;
- (vi) to monitor the food and nutrition situation in the country;
- (vii) to create an effective mechanism for multi-sectoral co-ordination and advocacy for food and nutrition;

- (viii) to promote the formulation and/or review of appropriate policies, laws and standards for food security and nutrition;
- (ix) to ensure a healthy environment and good sanitation in the entire food chain system;
- (x) to safeguard the health of personnel associated with agricultural chemicals, food processing inputs and products, consumers and any other third parties likely to be affected;
- (xi) to promote gender-sensitive technologies and programmes;
- (xii) to achieve maximum production with minimum effort; and
- (xiii) to promote technologies that are user-friendly to people with disability.

2.3 Guiding Principles of the Policy

The policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- 2.3.1 that adequate food and nutrition is a human right;
- 2.3.2 that food is treated as a national strategic resource;
- 2.3.3 that the policy on food and nutrition is part and parcel of the overall national development policy;
- 2.3.4 that the policy emphasises the cross-cutting nature of food and nutrition as they affect men, women and children;
- 2.3.5 that the policy further seeks to provide a legal basis for the existing food and nutrition structures, sectoral policies and action plans;
- 2.3.6 that the policy details strategies for responding to food and nutrition concerns at all levels;
- 2.3.7 that gender considerations and the needs of all vulnerable groups are integral to all components of the policy;
- 2.3.8 that Uganda meets its national and international obligations as set out in national laws and international conventions, treaties and resolutions on the right to food; and
- 2.3.9 that in the planning, budgeting and implementation of the policy, a Rights-Based Approach, will be adopted to promote and protect the right to adequate food and nutrition and ensure participation of the rights' holders and accountability of duty bearers.

2.4 Strategies

Government is committed to realising the above goals and objectives through the following strategies:

- 2.4.1 creating a mechanism to ensure that the entire food chain, from food production to consumption, is efficiently managed within the overall development strategy; through building capacities at all levels (households, communities, local councils, sub-counties, district levels) for adequate action to improve household food security;
- 2.4.2 establishing the UFNC as a statutory body that will co-ordinate food and nutrition programmes at the national level;
- 2.4.3 integrating food and nutrition issues at local governments and lower administrative units;
- 2.4.4 applying the life-cycle of poverty and malnutrition approach in developing nutrition and health strategies and action plans;
- 2.4.5 developing appropriate nutrition curricula and training materials for the education and training of different development workers in formal institutions and at the local level;
- 2.4.6 mobilising resources to support food and nutrition programmes at the national and local levels;
- 2.4.7 enforcing regulations that safeguard the health of personnel handling agricultural inputs and by-products, as well as third parties likely to be affected;
- 2.4.8 enforcing environmental protection regulations that apply to the food chain;
- 2.4.9 supporting, promoting and guiding the establishment of national food reserves;
- 2.4.10 formulating and/or reviewing policies, guidelines, legislation, regulations and standards relating to food and nutrition;
- 2.4.11 establishing a national food and nutrition training centre;
- 2.4.12 developing human resources that will provide professional guidance in food and nutrition at the centre and throughout the districts; and
- 2.4.13 collaborating with line ministries and government departments, local and international Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector in the implementation of the policy.

3. MAIN AREAS OF FOCUS

3.1 Food Supply and Accessibility

Although the country as a whole is generally self-sufficient in food supplies, food shortages still occur. This is the result of the limited use of appropriate agricultural technology, over-dependence on rain-fed agriculture, lack of markets and market information, inadequate rural financial services, poor feeder roads, poor and inadequate storage and processing facilities, stress food sales and inadequate buffer stocks. These factors are exacerbated by civil strife, low incomes and poverty.

3.1.1 Goal

The goal of Government in the area of food supply and availability is to ensure an adequate supply of, and access to, good quality food at all times for human consumption, income generation, agro-based industries, and local, regional and international markets.

3.1.2 Specific objectives

- (i) To promote and diversify the production of food commodities to meet the nutritional needs of households;
- (ii) to ensure that water, soil and other agricultural resources are well managed so as to improve and maintain the productivity of the land;
- (iii) to encourage and support operational and applied research to improve food production, and to disseminate the research results to the end users;
- (iv) to promote technologies that are appropriate to the farming systems in different agro-ecological zones;
- (v) to strengthen advisory services for the benefit of all categories of farmers;
- (vi) to help the private sector improve food storage, processing, marketing and distribution systems for local and export markets;
- (vii) to monitor the trends of food supply and demand in the country;
- (viii) to encourage income-generating activities that improve the purchasing power of families;
- (ix) to ensure the availability of and accessibility to, user-friendly credit facilities and other inputs that are essential for the modernisation and commercialisation of agriculture;
- (x) to control pests and diseases in crops, animals and fish;
- (xi) to promote the availability of recommended high-yielding seeds, and improved livestock breeds and planting materials;
- (xii) to ensure food security at all times to those who have no access to food due to circumstances beyond their control; and
- (xiii) to ensure food security in times of disaster.

3.1.3 Strategies

These objectives shall be realised through:

- (i) strengthening the land planning services at the national, district and farm level to promote optimum land use;
- (ii) sensitising stakeholders on the laws pertaining to water and soil conservation and the prevention of environmental degradation;
- (iii) designing and implementing sensitisation programmes to popularise the production and use of under-exploited food crop and animal resources to widen the food base;
- (iv) regularly sensitising, educating and training farmers in the use of appropriate technology to enhance agricultural production and food supply;
- (v) mobilising resources for agricultural research geared to improving nutrition;
- (vi) increasing the availability and accessibility of improved planting materials and livestock, and agricultural inputs;
- (vii) mobilising human and other resources for strengthening advisory services;
- (viii) increasing the availability of user-friendly micro-financial services for small-scale farmers, traders and fisher-folk;
- (ix) promoting the establishment and maintenance of food reserves (or funds to be used for staple food purchase) at household, sub-county, district, regional and national levels, to boost disaster preparedness;
- (x) strengthening existing food and nutrition surveillance systems;
- (xi) promoting rain-water harvesting and conservation for agricultural production;
- (xii) developing water systems to promote crop, livestock and fish farming;
- (xiii) strengthening the control of pests and diseases, including epidemics, through collaboration at the district, national and international level;
- (xiv) adopting gender-sensitive and energy-saving technologies and designing relevant programmes to achieve increased production with less labour input; and
- (xv) put in place robust mechanisms to ensure that food is accessible to those who cannot feed themselves for reasons beyond their control.

3.2 Food Processing and Preservation

The use of traditional household food processing and preservation methods such as sun drying, fire drying, salting, fermenting, smoking, roasting and grinding, is on the decline. On the other hand, industrial methods are gradually replacing traditional ones. There are several mills and cottage industries in the country processing maize, wheat, sorghum, millet, cassava, groundnuts and simsim. There are also a number of large-scale commercial plants processing sugar, wheat, tea and maize. Rice de-hullers are becoming common, in line with the expansion of rice production and consumption, while legume and oil crops are processed into oil, food and animal feeds.

The processing and preservation of animal products are generally under-developed. Only 10% of the 900 million litres of milk produced in the country in 2001 was processed (Dairy Development Authority, 2002). Fish processing, however, has increased significantly and a large proportion of the fish that is processed is now being exported.

Large-scale meat processing ended with the closure of the Soroti meat factory. Presently, there are a few, scattered, small-scale meat processing facilities.

3.2.1 Goal

The main goal of Government in the area of food processing and preservation is to promote adequate, safe, high quality and nutritious foods with a long shelf-life for local, regional and international markets.

3.2.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to minimise post-harvest food losses;
- (ii) to increase shelf-life of food;
- (iii) to establish, support and expand appropriate food industries in areas where food is produced;
- (iv) to reduce the reliance on imported food products in the country;
- (v) to promote and add value to primary agricultural produce for both local and export markets;
- (vi) to promote efficient and cost-effective technologies for the processing and preservation of foods and their by-products;
- (vii) to promote the processing of weaning foods using locally-available foods; and
- (viii) to improve and promote indigenous knowledge of food processing and preservation.
- (ix) to promote food fortification with appropriate micronutrients.

3.2.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be realised through:

- (i) assessing the state of the food processing industry and preservation methods in the country;
- (ii) establishing a mechanism for information sharing amongst food industries run by different bodies;
- (iii) improving the basic infrastructure and utilities for purposes of promoting agro-based industries in different parts of the country;
- (iv) strengthening human resource training in the areas of food processing and preservation for different stakeholders;
- (v) promoting appropriate technology based on food processing research findings;
- (vi) establishing integrated industrial linkages in the use of intermediate materials and by-products;
- (vii) documenting, promoting and improving indigenous food processing techniques and their use at the household level;
- (viii) promoting local processing and production of edible oils using locally-produced raw materials, such as palm oil, cottonseed and sunflower;
- (ix) creating avenues for accessing credit for the promotion of agro-industries; and

- (x) promoting fortification of selected foods with those nutrients that are commonly deficient in the diet.

3.3 Food Storage, Marketing and Distribution

To broaden its economic base, Uganda is pursuing an export diversification policy that includes the export of non-traditional crops such as beans, maize, groundnuts, simsim, fruits and vegetables. To ensure food security and to promote nutrition, food must be distributed equitably from the production sites to the consumer. Surplus food should be marketed especially to those areas with food deficits or to those who need to diversify their diets. A mechanism for the storage of surplus food should be established. While food export diversification is being promoted, there is a need to ensure that the food security needs of the population are not compromised.

There may also be need to import some food items, such as iodised salt, to fill food gaps. However, it is common to find foodstuffs, which are of low nutritional value and in many cases are beyond their expiry date.

3.3.1 Goal

The aim of Government in the area of food storage, marketing and distribution is to promote the availability of and access to, affordable, safe and nutritious foods.

3.3.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to increase the coverage of adequate and appropriate storage facilities at household, community, district and national levels;
- (ii) to support the establishment and maintenance of minimum strategic food reserves at the district and national levels;
- (iii) to develop a reliable network of appropriate food transport systems;
- (iv) to develop and expand local and external food markets;
- (v) to strengthen market research intelligence and information dissemination;
- (vi) to establish and maintain data banks on food storage, marketing and distribution; and
- (vii) to encourage the introduction of user-friendly credit facilities for those involved in the food chain.

3.3.3 Strategies

These objectives will be realised through:

- (i) promoting household food reserves;
- (ii) assessing national food losses and establishing or designing national programmes for preventing food losses at all levels;
- (iii) establishing the overall storage requirements for strategic food reserves at all levels;
- (iv) encouraging the construction of appropriate storage facilities at all levels; and

- (v) developing a well-co-ordinated system for collecting, collating and disseminating information on food marketing and distribution.

3.4 External Food Trade

For many years, Uganda has depended on a limited range of cash crops - coffee, cotton, tea and tobacco, in particular - for earning foreign exchange. Due to the fall in prices of these cash crops on the world market coupled with the Government's policy of broadening the export base, food crops such as maize, beans, horticultural produce and oil seeds are now being exported. In addition, semi-processed food products, especially fish, are also being exported.

However, the problem is that food exports are not linked to food production and national requirements, which may give rise to internal food security problems. It is, therefore, necessary to monitor closely food exports in relation to local food production in order to avoid internal food deficits resulting from large quantities of staple foods being exported.

With the liberalisation of the economy, the country now imports a variety of semi-processed foods such as salt, rice, wheat, sugar, milk products and drinks. Some of these are a vital component of the diet. Some are imported because of the deficits in the local production while others are imported to meet the needs and life styles of the urban population.

Some of the imported foods, however, are sub-standard so they tend to be cheap and this may result in unfair advantage over local foods. In addition to importing sub-standard and expired products, there are risks of introducing foreign diseases into the country. There is also the possibility of importing contaminated food such as irradiated powdered milk and tinned meats. At the same time, genetically-modified (GM) food, seeds or livestock, which are still controversial, should be discouraged because of their unknown effects on agriculture, health and the environment.

3.4.1 Goal

The goal of Government in external food trade is to diversify food exports in order to broaden the foreign exchange base, subject to the food security needs of the country being met, as well as the quality and quantity of food imports being monitored and regulated, as necessary.

3.4.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to encourage farmers to diversify and increase food production for export without prejudicing national food security;
- (ii) to monitor and document national food supplies and demand;

- (iii) to monitor the importation of high-quality food items that are essential but which are not locally produced; and
- (iv) to study GM products with a view to establish their feasibility and safety for use in the country.

3.4.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be achieved through:

- (i) strengthening advisory services to farmers in order to diversify and increase food production for export without prejudicing national food security;
- (ii) establishing a mechanism for monitoring and documenting national food supply and demand;
- (iii) strengthening the food monitoring system including the detection and prevention of dumping of sub-standard and toxic food;
- (iv) creating awareness among food importers and exporters and consumers on the quality and safety of food items for trade; and
- (v) supporting research into GM products.

3.5 Food Aid

Uganda has received food aid during times of man-made and natural disasters such as prolonged droughts, landslides and civil strife. This is not sustainable in the long-run. Government must, therefore, develop national alternative mechanisms for addressing such emergency food needs. Food imported under the food aid scheme should be restricted to alleviating temporary food crisis; otherwise continued food aid may lead to dependence on external sources. The quality and safety of donated food is currently also inadequately monitored. It would also be prudent for Uganda to develop capacity to donate food aid to other countries in food emergency situations.

3.5.1 Goal

The aim of Government in the area of food aid is to restrict aid to alleviating temporary food crises and to ensure its safety for human consumption.

3.5.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to alleviate food shortages during periods of food crises;
- (ii) to ensure the good quality and safety of donated food; and
- (iii) to provide food to those who cannot feed themselves for reasons beyond their control

3.5.3 Strategy

This goal and these objectives will be realised by monitoring the inflow and quality of donated food. In the medium to long term, the strategy will also involve government putting in place sustainable mechanisms for meeting emergency food needs from its own

resources. In the long run, Government will also build capacity to donate food to people in other countries facing starvation.

3.6 Food Standards and Quality Control

Consumption of high quality, nutritious and safe food is fundamental in promoting public health, social welfare and productive lives of the population. Food quality control and standards must be applied at all levels in the food chain. The main objective of food standardisation and quality control is to improve public health and standardise quality requirements for both local and international food trade. Food standards and quality control must target chemicals and drugs used in agriculture and food additives used in food processing. They should also cover street food vending and the transportation of food. The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) is the statutory body mandated to set standards, and to co-ordinate and monitor their implementation.

At the same time, food supplements can play an important role in improving the quality of life. There is a high demand for food supplements due to prevailing problems of malnutrition, aggravated by the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Consequently, there are significant imports of food supplements. For this reason, there is a need for their effective control and regulation in order to protect the public. The National Drug Authority (NDA) in conjunction with the nutrition unit (MOH), has the mandate to regulate the manufacture, importation, sale and distribution of food supplements, and it has already put in place the appropriate registration system and quality control measures.

3.6.1 Goal

The major goal of Government insofar as the standards and quality control regarding food are concerned, is to ensure that food meant for consumption is nutritious, safe and that it conforms to acceptable standards. As far as food supplements are concerned, the goal is to ensure that whether they are manufactured locally or imported, they are safe and conform to acceptable standards.

3.6.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to ensure that food meant for human and animal consumption is safe and nutritious;
- (ii) to protect producers, consumers, handlers and traders of food against unfair trade practices;
- (iii) to increase awareness of the need for standards and quality assurance among law enforcement agents, consumers and service providers;
- (iv) to encourage the use of appropriate technology by all those involved in the food chain in order to ensure high quality standards for food and quality control;
- (v) to register and monitor food supplements on the Ugandan market;
- (vi) to regulate the importation, manufacture, sale and distribution of food supplements;
- (vii) to monitor and regulate the promotion and advertising of food supplements; and

- (viii) to ensure effective control over the quality, safety and efficacy of food supplements.
- (ix) to develop guidelines for the formulation of therapeutic feeds.

3.6.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be realised through:

- (i) reviewing, formulating and enforcing food standards and codes of practice, to ensure that food meant for human and animal consumption is safe and nutritious;
- (ii) strengthening UNBS to carry out its role of co-ordinating and formulating food standards and codes of practices;
- (iii) setting up a national certification system to guarantee the quality of food;
- (iv) creating public awareness on food standards and food quality through information dissemination;
- (v) establishing an effective food quality control system throughout the food chain;
- (vi) continuously monitoring and documenting food safety, food quality and related activities;
- (vii) promoting regional and international co-operation in areas of food safety and quality control; and
- (viii) strengthening national capacity to set standards, monitor, regulate and control food supplements.

3.7 Nutrition

Good nutrition is a pre-requisite for adequate growth and development, health, learning capacity, work performance and a good overall quality of life. It is also an indicator of economic well-being.

Under-nutrition is widespread, affecting mainly children who are less than 5 years old, school-age children, adolescents, women in the reproductive age, internally displaced persons and prisoners. The consequences of under-nutrition include increased morbidity and mortality, decreased resistance to diseases, poor reproductive performance and low productivity. While some children suffer transient episodes of under-nutrition, a large number of children go through prolonged or chronic exposures to nutritional stresses as evidenced by the high rate of stunting among children aged less than five (UDHS, 2000/2001)

The factors causing under-nutrition are many and complex. They include inadequate dietary intake, diseases, food insecurity, inadequate maternal and child caring practices, inadequate environmental sanitation, illiteracy, family instability, lack of nutrition knowledge, frequent births, poor weaning practices, low family earnings, and social and political instability. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has further aggravated food security and nutrition problems.

On the basis of its multi-sectoral aetiology, under-nutrition has to be addressed using a broad approach, which minimises the duplication of activities and promotes better resource utilisation.

Uganda is also experiencing a marked upsurge of chronic non-communicable diseases (UDHS, 2000/2001). Some of these are caused by over-consumption of energy-rich foods, smoking, drugs and increasingly sedentary lifestyles. They include hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and gout. Whatever their cause, they lead to high death rates, various disabilities and high medical care costs. This phenomenon of nutrition transition is becoming common in Uganda and needs to be addressed.

3.7.1 Goal

The goal of the Government is to improve and promote the nutritional status of the population to a level that is consistent with good health.

3.7.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to significantly reduce macro-and micro-nutrient malnutrition, especially among children.
- (ii) to reduce under-nutrition among adolescents and women of reproductive age;
- (iii) to reduce the incidence of low birth weight;
- (iv) to encourage and support women exclusively to breast-feed their babies up to six months of age and to continue breast-feeding while giving appropriate complementary foods up to 2 years;
- (v) to promote and support optimum infant and young child feeding practices;
- (vi) to eliminate micro-nutrient deficiency disorders with particular emphasis on:
 - Vitamin A deficiency;
 - Iodine deficiency disorders; and,
 - Iron deficiency anaemia;
- (vii) to prevent and control chronic nutrition-related non-communicable diseases;
- (viii) to promote optimal nutritional standards in institutions; and
- (ix) to promote optimum nutrition for people living with HIV/AIDS.

3.7.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be realised through:

- (i) establishing and strengthening community-based systems for implementing nutrition interventions;
- (ii) creating awareness and mobilising communities for better nutrition at all levels;
- (iii) developing and maintaining an effective and efficient nutrition monitoring system;
- (iv) encouraging improvement in the quality of diets for mothers during their reproductive period;
- (v) developing nutrition communication strategies to facilitate behavioural change for better nutrition practices in the community;

- (vi) instituting measures that will enable mothers to continue breast-feeding during early post-partum period and at places of work including protection of maternity leave.
- (vii) making legislation and enforcement for regulations for marketing of breast milk substitutes and iodised salt.
- (viii) promoting the use of local produce in manufacturing appropriate weaning foods;
- (ix) disseminating information on prevention, early detection and control of chronic non-communicable nutrition-related disorders;
- (x) developing and maintaining a nutrition data bank for planning, monitoring and surveillance;
- (xi) developing and implementing specific intervention programmes for the control of common macro- and micro-nutrient deficiencies;
- (xii) providing food and micro-nutrients supplementation to the most vulnerable population groups;
- (xiii) fortifying some commonly-used foods with recommended micro-nutrients;
- (xiv) incorporating nutrition management in the care of HIV/AIDS patients; and
- (xv) providing effective therapeutic feeding for sick and malnourished children.

3.8 Health

The inter-relationship between health, nutrition and food security cannot be over-emphasised. Only a healthy person is able to produce food while, at the same time, getting maximum benefit from the food consumed.

3.8.1 Goal

Government's goal in this area is to ensure that the population is healthy so as to be able to benefit from good nutrition.

3.8.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to reduce infant and child morbidity and mortality rates;
- (ii) to reduce adolescent and maternal morbidity and mortality rates;
- (iii) to promote the use of safe drinking water and sanitary means of waste disposal;
- (iv) to promote child spacing by using both natural and modern methods of birth control through informed decisions;
- (v) to promote healthy life-styles;
- (vi) to promote immunisation against the major immunisable diseases;
- (vii) to control the major epidemic and endemic diseases namely malaria, HIV/AIDS, intestinal worms, and chest and diarrhoeal infections; and
- (viii) to promote clinical and public health nutrition in the overall health system.

3.8.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be achieved through:

- (i) ensuring that Primary Health Care remains the backbone of health promotion, disease prevention, early treatment and rehabilitation;
- (ii) ensuring that the district and lower levels are the main focus for the delivery of the Minimum Health Care Package;
- (iii) ensuring that children, adolescents, mothers and the elderly are targeted for priority health care;
- (iv) strengthening Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) in order to promote good nutrition and prevent malnutrition;
- (v) formulating and enforcing public health laws and regulations;
- (vi) increasing coverage of safe water sources and proper sanitation;
- (vii) advocating and enhancing community participation in health- and nutrition-related matters;
- (viii) recognising and integrating traditional practitioners in relevant sectors of health care;
- (ix) increasing coverage of and accessibility to, family planning services; and
- (x) intensifying interventions for the control of the top ten causes of morbidity and mortality, with particular emphasis on HIV/AIDS and malaria.

3.9 Information, Education and Communication

Appropriate food and nutrition issues are adequately covered in primary and secondary school syllabi but the primary schools syllabus lacks practical content and application and the subject is mostly taught to girls. At the same time, the human resource capacity in the field of food and nutrition in the country is inadequate at all levels.

Teaching of food and nutrition in higher institutions of learning is inadequate because of the limited number of professionals available and the expensive facilities that are required.

There is widespread lack of knowledge of food and nutrition issues despite the existing channels of communication. At the same time, the development of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials by the different agents is not co-ordinated and the messages are sometimes conflicting.

3.9.1 Goal

The goal of Government in this area is to provide information and develop skills to promote proper food and nutrition practices in both rural and urban communities.

3.9.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to create awareness among the population about the importance of food and nutrition in relation to health and development;
- (ii) to develop a sustainable human resource base; and
- (iii) to develop IEC materials on food and nutrition adapted to local conditions based on nutrition communication strategy.

3.9.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be realised through:

- (i) reviewing and revising training institutions' curricula to improve the food and nutrition education components;
- (ii) encouraging the establishment of demonstration farms or gardens in schools and other institutions;
- (iii) organising food and nutrition promotion activities such as agricultural shows and demonstrations of food preparation;
- (iv) developing and co-ordinating coherent food and nutrition IEC materials from the national to the community levels;
- (v) strengthening information and communication on food and nutrition by promoting literacy campaigns;
- (vi) mobilising communities to identify and solve their food and nutrition problems through mass media, clubs, groups and theatre for development; and
- (vii) establishing a food and nutrition training centre of excellence.

3.10 Gender, Food and Nutrition

Gender relations play an important role in food security and nutrition management in the community. Women labour to produce most of the food but they have no control over food resources. At the same time, they are expected to ensure their own nutritional well-being as well as that of the family. On the other hand, whereas studies have been conducted on the nutritional needs of women, little has been done on the needs of men and the elderly.

3.10.1 Goal

The goal of Government in the area of gender, food and nutrition is to ensure that both men and women achieve optimal nutrition status through improved food security and nutrition, taking into account their reproductive and productive roles in the food chain and in nutrition.

3.10.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to promote the nutrition status of women in light of their reproductive and productive roles in society;
- (ii) to ensure good nutrition status of men;
- (iii) to promote access to maternal and child health services; and
- (iv) to ensure that men and women have sufficient time and knowledge to take care of their nutrition needs as well as those of their families.

3.10.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be realised through:

- (i) ensuring availability and access to an adequate and nutritious diet throughout a person's life;
- (ii) ensuring that employers and employees in both public and private sectors comply with maternity leave laws; and
- (iii) encouraging the provision of facilities for breast-feeding and care of infants at places of work and in the community.
- (iv) ensuring that employees get adequate meals at places of work

3.11 Food, Nutrition and Surveillance

Surveillance systems exist in the MOH and MAAIF, and the Government has set up a surveillance system to co-ordinate and collaborate organisations dealing with food and nutrition. However, the systems are not yet well co-ordinated.

3.11.1 Goal

The Government's goal in the area of food and nutrition surveillance is to have a monitoring system in place that will provide timely information that will be used to stabilise the food and nutrition situation in the country.

3.11.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to ensure that relevant personnel have knowledge and skills in data collection, analysis and utilisation of information;
- (ii) to monitor and evaluate the food supply and demand conditions; and
- (iii) to strengthen systems for providing early warning information on the food and nutrition situation.

3.11.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be achieved through:

- (i) establishing sentinel sites for the collection of data on food and nutrition;
- (ii) training relevant personnel and communities in data management for improving their food and nutrition situation;
- (iii) publishing and disseminating regular reports on the food and nutrition situation at all levels;
- (iv) providing timely information on food and nutrition for rational decision-making at all levels;
- (v) establishing a co-ordinated national food and nutrition information network; and
- (vi) maintaining an effective weather monitoring system covering sub-county, district and national levels.

3.12 Research

Effective promotion of good nutrition has to be based on reliable data. This information has to be generated from research covering both the food supply side (production) and

utilisation aspects. It needs to cover the nutrient content of food, food consumption, food habits and nutrition related disease patterns. Knowledge gaps have been identified in the areas of food security and nutrition. These should be researched and priority research areas should be linked to activities that benefit the population.

3.12.1 Goal

The goal of Government is to have effective research programmes that are geared to the improvement of food security and nutrition in the country.

3.12.2 Specific objectives

- (i) to identify priority areas for food and nutrition research in the country;
- ii) to provide resources and facilities for conducting research at appropriate levels;
- (iii) to build capacity for research in food and nutrition;
- (iv) to identify and carry out research that will provide local solutions to food and nutrition issues; and
- (v) to disseminate research findings.

3.12.3 Strategies

This goal and these objectives shall be achieved through:

- (i) training personnel in research;
- (ii) conducting action-oriented research for the improvement of food security and nutrition of the population;
- (iii) mobilising resources for research; and
- (iv) publishing research findings.

4. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM FOR THE UGANDA FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

4.1 Introduction

The policy has a multi-sectoral dimension and, therefore, its implementation shall be undertaken in a multi-sectoral way. For this reason, there is a need for a co-ordinating body at the national level. This body shall be the “Uganda Food and Nutrition Council” (UFNC), which shall be established as a legal entity. The UFNC shall be linked with the relevant multi-sectoral committees dealing with food and nutrition at the local government level.

4.2 Composition of the UFNC

The Council shall consist of fourteen (14) members as follows:

- (a) The Chairperson having a distinguished personality and experience who shall be appointed by the Minister responsible for agriculture.
- (b) Thirteen (13) members of the Council representing concerned ministries and institutions, and the private sector, as follows:

Ministry responsible for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries;
Ministry responsible for Health;
Ministry responsible for Gender, Labour and Social Development;
Ministry responsible for Planning, Finance and Economic Development;
Ministry responsible for Education and Sports;
Ministry responsible for Trade, Tourism and Industry,
Ministry responsible for Local Government;
Makerere University (to represent institutions of higher learning);
Uganda National Bureau of Standards;
Representative of Civil Society;
The Farmers’ Representative;
Representative from the Private Sector; and
Director of the PMA Secretariat.

4.3 Functions of the UFNC

- 4.3.1 Promote food and nutrition security at all levels;
- 4.3.2 Develop national plans, programmes and projects that shall promote food and nutrition security in Uganda;
- 4.3.3 Develop an effective and efficient mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Policy;
- 4.3.4 Provide guidelines for planning, implementing and evaluating the

Uganda Food and Nutrition Action Plan;

- 4.3.5 Co-ordinate and work in close collaboration with all persons, institutions, sectors and organisations involved in food and nutrition activities;
- 4.3.6 Promote and make the population aware of food and nutrition issues;
- 4.3.7 Promote research on food and nutrition;
- 4.3.8 Mobilise resources for food and nutrition interventions in the country;
- 4.3.9 Serve as an advisory body to the Government on issues relating to food and nutrition; and
- 4.3.10 Carry out such other functions as the Minister may assign to it, from time to time.

4.4 Functions of the District, Sub-County and Community in Implementing the UFNP

The Policy shall be implemented through existing local governments' multi-sectoral Committees. The functions of these committees shall be to:

- 4.4.1 advise the Executive Committees and local governments on food and nutrition matters, at their respective levels;
- 4.4.2 co-ordinate with the UFNC through the local government hierarchy;
- 4.4.3 collect, analyse and disseminate data on the status of food and nutrition in their respective areas;
- 4.4.4 spearhead the formation and operationalisation of food and nutrition committees at lower levels, schools and health centres;
- 4.4.5 lobby and ensure that food and nutrition issues are incorporated in the District and Sub-County development plans; and
- 4.4.6 co-ordinate activities of all government institutions, NGOs and CBOs involved in food and nutrition programmes in their areas of jurisdiction; and ensure that the community is adequately sensitised and mobilised for food and nutrition programmes.

4.5 Funding

The funds of the Council shall consist of:

4.5.1 money from the Government consolidated funds; and

4.5.2 grants and/or donations from the Government and other sources.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UGANDA FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

5.1 The Food and Nutrition Council Act

For the purposes of ensuring the implementation of the UFNP, a Food and Nutrition Act will be enacted. The Act will provide for the establishment of the UFNC as body corporate to serve as the apex body for guidance and the co-ordination of all food and nutrition activities in the country and to guide the Government in all matters pertaining to food and nutrition.

The Act will spell out the powers, functions and administration of the UFNC, for the improvement of food and nutrition management. It will also provide for other related and incidental matters.