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Fill The Nutrient Gap Zambia

Short Summary Report

The problem of malnutrition and the need for investment in agriculture in Zambia

Why does nutrition matter?

- **Malnutrition remains a serious concern in Zambia.** Over 1 in every 3 children in Zambia is stunted. Reduced incomes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and increased prices caused by the global food crisis are likely to have further exacerbated food and nutrition insecurity for the most vulnerable.
- **Malnutrition is too expensive to ignore.** Zambia Nutrition Profiles (2017) estimated that the economic productivity lost due to childhood stunting amounts to ZMW 181 billion ZMW (USD 18 billion) over one decade.
- **Nutrition is a good investment.** Generally, for every USD 1 invested in nutrition, there is a return of USD 16. Uniquely, nutrition impacts positively on a country's growth through its impact on human capital development in the form of better health, learning in school and productivity as adults.

Background on the Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis: The Fill the Nutrient Gap Analysis estimated the lowest cost of a diet that meets macro and micronutrient needs (the 'nutritious diet') and the lowest cost of a diet that meets energy-only needs. It also estimated the proportion of households able to afford such diets based on food expenditure patterns in both the lean and non-lean seasons for each province of Zambia. Diet costs were calculated for a modelled household consisting of five individuals: a breastfed child, a school-age child, an adolescent girl, a lactating woman and an adult man. The analysis modelled various interventions for their potential impact on cost and affordability of a nutritious diet to compare the potential benefits of programmes and policies aimed at improving nutrition outcomes through diets. For sources used in the production of this brief, please refer to the Zambia Fill the Nutrient Gap Report (2021) available at www.wfp.org/publications/2020-fill-nutrient-gap.

Affordability is the major barrier to accessing nutritious diets in Zambia.

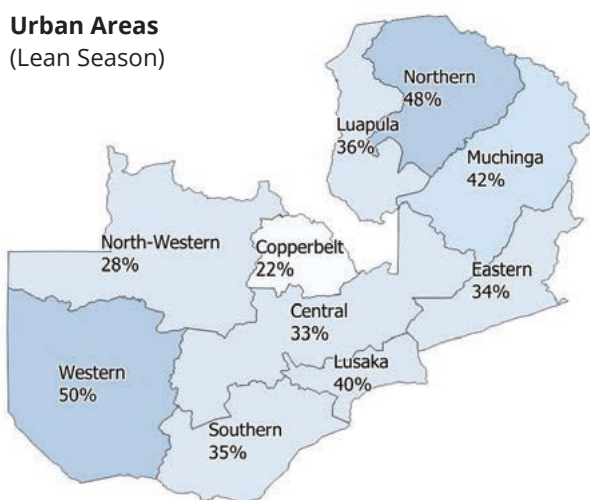
- The Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis for Zambia in 2021, led by the National Food and Nutrition Commission and supported by the World Food Programme (WFP), found that **the lowest cost nutritious diet, covering both calorie and micronutrient needs, cost on average Zambian Kwacha (ZMW) 33 per five-person modelled household per day.** This is three times as much as an energy-only diet which meets just calorie needs.
- Over half the population (53 percent) would not be able to afford this lowest cost nutritious diet,

and one in eight (13 percent) would not be able to afford the energy-only diet.

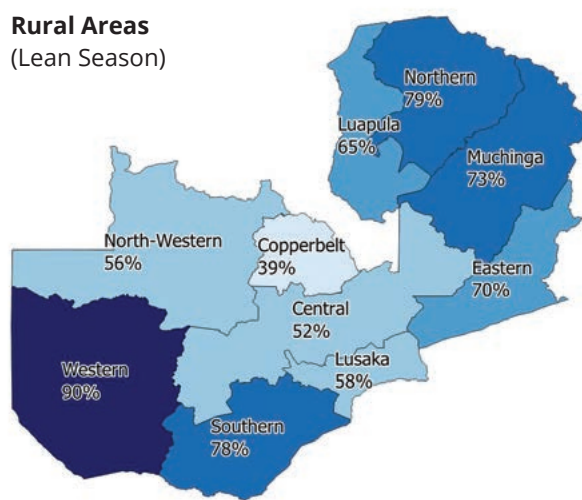
- Non-affordability of the nutritious diet varies significantly between regions and is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, as shown in Figure 1. In rural provinces such as Western and Northern, a third of households could not afford a diet covering only energy needs, and more than three quarters could not afford a nutritious diet.
- Food price inflation creates additional barriers to household access to nutritious diets. Between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of households that would not be able to afford a nutritious diet increased from 44 percent to 54 percent.

Figure 1: The percentage of households that are unable to afford a nutritious diet during the lean season, disaggregated by urban (left) and rural (right) areas

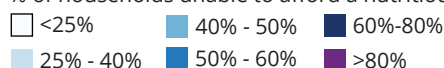
Urban Areas (Lean Season)



Rural Areas (Lean Season)



% of households unable to afford a nutritious diet



In rural areas, up to one third of the total amount of food consumed comes from own production, indicating that household production is a major pathway to support consumption of nutritious foods.

However, agricultural policy has long focused on staple sufficiency. At the national level, food balance sheets show that there is a surplus of maize available in Zambia, while horticulture and livestock production remain insufficient.

Diversification of production provides an opportunity to improve export value of food produced while adding to the availability and affordability of fresh nutritious foods in Zambia.

Many essential conditions are necessary to achieve diversification of production, including mechanisation, agricultural inputs, credit lines, access to markets, digitalisation, insurance, and improved climate information. Recent policies like the Electronic Farmer Input Supply Programme (E-FISP) would have excellent potential to support improvements in agriculture under adequate conditions of financing and coordination with agro-dealers.

If surpluses are sold, diversified homestead food production can not only improve household income and consumption of nutritious foods, but also availability in local food environments.

The FNG analysis found that in the minimum cost nutritious diet, fruit, vegetables and animal source foods contribute the most to covering essential micronutrient needs. In the five-person modelled household, consuming produce from own production can reduce the nutritious diet cost by up to one third. The production and sale of high value non-staple foods can generate additional revenue, helping households to cover the cost of other nutritious foods and, in some provinces, generating surplus income. Smallholder farmers should be targeted by diversification programmes because data shows that household dietary diversity drops as their cultivated land size decreases.

Livelihood support strategies can be an effective tool for improving household purchasing power and strengthening local food systems.

Agricultural programmes like the Food Security Pack (FSP) rolled out by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, provide an alternative to improve incomes for households that are identified as vulnerable but are not labour-constrained. The FNG found that FSPs promoting irrigated agriculture of diverse non-staple foods have the potential to generate more income for household than FSPs promoting rainfed production of staple foods. However, both models of FSP can contribute significantly to helping households produce and afford nutritious diets.

Recommendations from the FNG

Recommendations	Action	Stakeholder identified priority actions	Relevant stakeholders
Agriculture and smallholder farming			
Diversify homestead agricultural production with nutritious crops (including biofortified crops) and small livestock and/or fish farming. Provide mechanisms for creating linkages between producers and established output markets.	Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify human resource gaps in agricultural extension services. Train agricultural extension workers in nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Ensure that extension agents have adequate resources (e.g., transport) to fulfil duties and reach smallholder farmers in remote areas. Train leading community farmers in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and encourage them to train their communities. Build capacity of female farmers to encourage production and consumption of nutritious foods by women of reproductive age. 	Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Private sector across the food system Ministry of Financial and National Planning
	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote two levels of coordination: national to provide direction and provincial/district for implementation. Establish linkages between producers and local markets to ensure revenue-generation. 	Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises
	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove VAT on fresh nutritious foods to incentivize their production. Prioritize small livestock with short life spans and encourage their consumption instead of only their retention as assets. Develop media campaigns for the promotion of healthy diverse diets. 	Zambia Revenue Authority Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry

Recommendations	Action	Stakeholder identified priority actions	Relevant stakeholders
Linking Agriculture and Social Protection			
Coverage of current social safety nets should be expanded, specifically scaling up social cash transfers (SCT) to households with children under 2, and include support to produce fresh nutritious foods in the Food Security Pack.	Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create awareness and increase knowledge of SCT recipients through training and social and behaviour change. Integrate extension support services to recipients of social safety nets specifically for nutritious foods. Scale up the provision of cooking demonstrations on complementary feeding and home fortification to beneficiaries of the Food Security Pack. 	Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Health Ministry of Community Development and Social Services Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate Ministry of Community Development and Social Services cash transfer activities with agricultural activities and extension services. 	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services Ministry of Agriculture
	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote social and behaviour change in nutritious feeding practices for children with disabilities, considering specific needs and vulnerabilities. Mainstream nutrition topics into women's economic empowerment programmes such as savings and lending groups. Increase the value of SCT to cover the cost of healthy diets. 	Ministry of Health Ministry of Community Development and Social Services Ministry of Finance and National Planning



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