



Nutrition and Food Security

Background and Context

Under Commitment 3, the 2014 Malabo Declaration calls to end hunger in Africa by 2025, improve nutritional status and eliminate child under-nutrition. The Malabo Declaration further aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals – in particular, SDG 2, which seeks to ‘... End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030’ (UN, 2017).

Hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition are forms of deprivation that undermine human progress and development and infringe on basic human rights. Malnutrition stifles human productivity and capacity of people at all stages in their lifecycle. In particular, it stunts the mental, physical and social development of children, undermining their future potential, capacity and ability to generate income. Malnutrition traps millions in poverty, inequality and impoverishment. Hunger and food insecurity create instability and increase the burden of providing for the basic needs and rights of citizens. Poor nutrition also raises the costs of healthcare across the lifestyle. The cost of ensuring adequate nutrition, especially during the first 1000 days of life – ie. from conception to the age of two – is usually considerably lower than the cost of not acting.

KEY MESSAGES

Achieving food security and nutrition will help to deliver not only on the Malabo agenda, specifically Commitment 3, but it will also support the achievement of SDG 2. Programmes in food security and nutrition should be implemented through a mix of direct (nutrition-specific) and indirect (nutrition-sensitive) actions that seek to improve overall quality and quantities within the food system, overcoming the impoverishment that traps Africa's potential.

The Challenge of Food Security and Malnutrition in Africa

Despite the commitments made under the Malabo Declaration, Africa is not on track to end hunger and to improve food security and nutrition. According to the 2018 FAO State of Food Security and Nutrition Report (FAO *et al.* 2018), while the proportion of undernourished people as a proportion of the population declined in Africa over

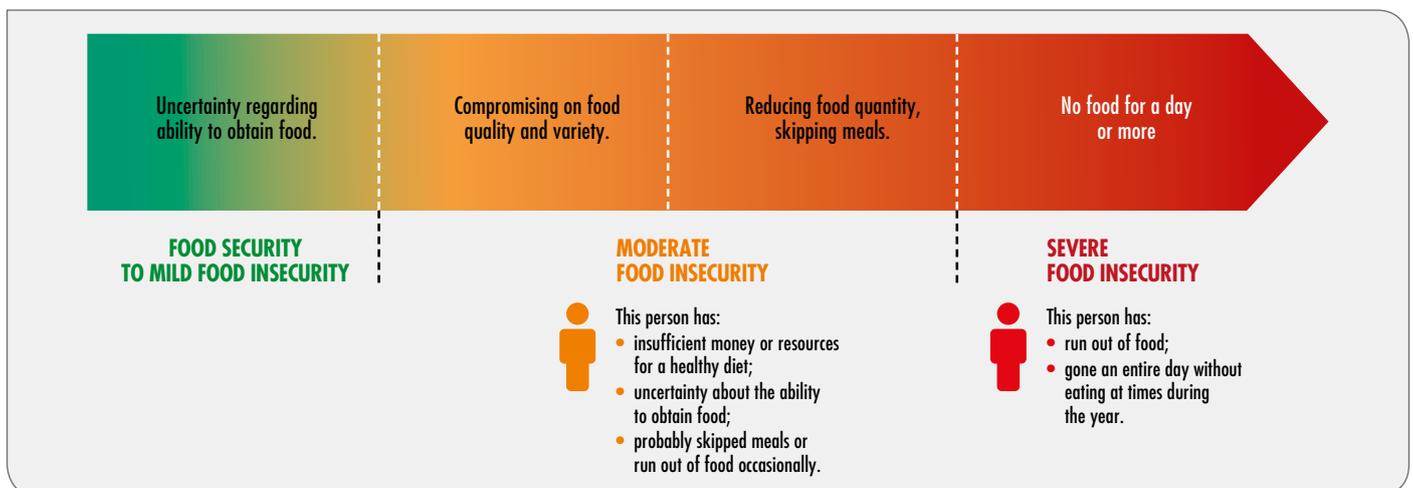


Figure 1: Levels of food insecurity. Source: FAO *et al.* (2018). Reproduced with permission .



and comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation frameworks are also often lacking.

Recommendations for Anchoring Food Security and Nutrition Within NAIPs

Improved food security and nutrition are expected outcomes of NAIPs. They are anchored in some Biennial Review Indicators, especially under Commitment 3, but food security and nutrition are affected by all the other components. Overall, ensuring food security typically requires the following elements:

- ▶ Ensuring that food security is part of a prioritised policy agenda and a policy framework that align with both the Malabo targets and national development objectives – see also Figure 2.

the period 2012 – 2017 from 21.3% to 19.6%, the absolute number of undernourished people has actually increased from 196 to 256.5 million. Meanwhile, although the proportions of children under five who are stunted (short for age) and wasting (low weight for height) have been declining slowly, no changes have been observed in the proportion of women with anaemia, while the proportion of overweight people has increased.

Although African countries have made significant progress in addressing some issues (Malabo Montpellier Panel 2017), data indicates that progress in reducing hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition is too slow to meet both the Malabo targets and other international targets (FAO *et al.* 2018). Such slow progress is attributed to many factors, including:

- ▶ food available in the food system (due to extreme weather, input costs, price volatility, biodiversity, lack of access to credit etc.);
- ▶ food access (due to high food prices, poor purchasing power, civil conflict, inequalities etc.);
- ▶ nutrition (in terms of anthropometry measures such as stunting, wasting, underweight and obesity) that reflects the quality of the child’s environment and their feeding practices, lack of dietary diversity, illness, food safety, access to potable drinking water, access to sanitation etc.);
- ▶ stability and resilience of the political system, the food system and livelihoods in general.

Policy incoherence across sectors, combined with the misalignment of food security and nutrition policies with national development imperatives, create fragmentation throughout the regulatory system. Duplication and uneven programme coverage also negate mutual accountability,

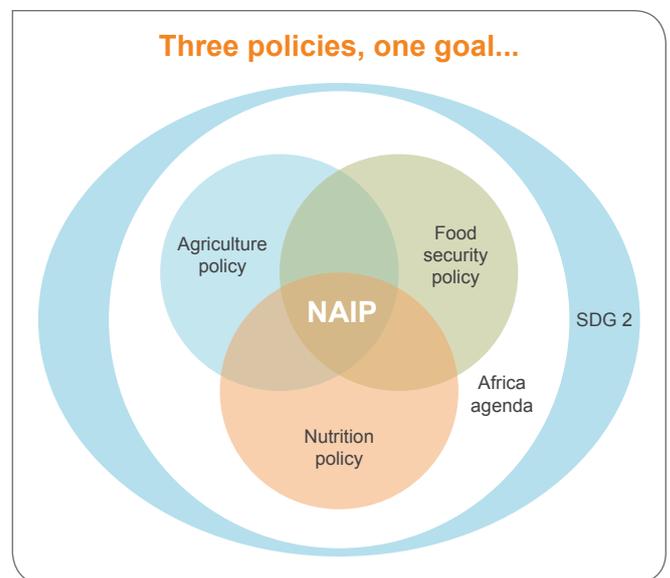


Figure 2: The relationship between agriculture, food security and nutrition policies to the NAIP. Source: Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy.

- ▶ Creating and strengthening institutional and policy environments that ensure multi-sectoral integration of food security and nutrition as an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation framework of NAIPs and their mutual accountability systems.
- ▶ A monitoring and evaluation framework that aligns with National Development Plan targets, African (Agenda 2063, Malabo and the CAADP Biennial Review reporting) and international commitments (such as SDG 2). Ideas for appropriate indicators can be found in the 2018 AU NAIP Toolkit.
- ▶ Establishing strong institutional structures at the highest level of government to coordinate efforts and ensure that existing resources in agriculture, health, social protection, education, water and sanitation are leveraged to deliver high-impact interventions at scale, including reaching the most vulnerable groups

(usually infants, children, women of child-bearing age, pregnant and lactating mothers and displaced and marginalised persons and communities).

- ▶ Promote nutrition-sensitive food systems, prioritising the development of value chains that maximise the availability of diverse and affordable foods and food products.

Comprehensive inter-sectoral food security programmes tackle the complexity of food security by carefully considering the trade-offs of various actions (Malabo Montpellier Panel 2017). Some actions require focused programmes in order to reach a specific target group or address a specific element of food insecurity. For example, in famine situations, direct and immediate food assistance

is necessary in order to save lives. Individual nutritional deficiencies are managed by direct nutrition interventions, while nutrition-sensitive programmes are delivered by sectors outside the health sector, improving nutrition more indirectly than the nutrition intervention examples provided above. These approaches are best identified through using a food systems approach that considers the losses of nutrients from the food system through pre- and post-harvest losses, the deterioration of produce in distribution and storage, and the processing processes that deplete nutrients. Overcoming these losses and the resultant waste can be overcome through programmes that preserve nutrients through improved harvesting, storage, transportation, processing and consumption. Some programme options that can be considered are presented in Table 1.

Dimension	Programme / Intervention
Stability / resilience	Establish and / or strengthen an Early Warning System which allows countries to measure, monitor and track groups that are vulnerable to food insecurity and shocks.
	Disaster risk management: develop and / or strengthen crisis response systems, including mechanisms, triggers, teams or actors and emergency resources at both national and community levels.
	Establish and / or strengthen national food reserves and improve storage facilities and disbursement mechanisms in order to smooth supply during times of crisis.
Access	Identify ways in which transformation of the food system can increase the incomes and assets of vulnerable groups, especially in addressing inequalities, gender biases and the inclusion of young people.
	Strengthen social protection measures that support nutrition and act as a means for stimulating the year-round supply of nutritious foods to vulnerable groups.
	Improve market access and operations in the areas in which the most vulnerable people are located.
Use and utilisation	Improve food safety and regulatory systems in order to ensure a stable supply of safe and nutritious food.
	Conduct nutrition-boosting activities such as complementary feeding, fortification and micronutrient supplementation – providing individuals with essential vitamins as single doses and nutrient powders added to foods –, providing enriched foods, fortification of staple foods (with the private sector) with micronutrients and bio-fortification.
	Run nutrition-sensitive programmes that improve nutritional quality as well as the supply and availability of nutritious and nutrient-dense foods.
Availability	Invest in modern technologies, mechanisation, digitisation, ITC and irrigation in order to improve the availability of a diversity of animal products, crops and fish.
	Improve access to improved breeds, seeds and inputs in order to improve yields and increase the resilience of production systems.
	Invest in and scale up technologies that reduce the drudgery of women's work in food and agricultural production.
	Improve processing, storage, packaging and transportation systems in order to increase the availability and supply of year-round nutritious foods.
	Improve land security and rights.
	Improve access to agricultural research, extension and financial services.

Table 1: Programme options for consideration in the design of NAIPs.

How Nutrition and Food Security is Measured in the Biennial Review

Malabo Commitment	Commitment Performance Category	Objectives	Indicator	Target value
Ending Hunger by 2025	3.5 Food security and Nutrition	Promote initiatives to improve nutritional status, and in particular, the elimination of hunger and child under nutrition in Africa, by bringing down child stunting, child underweight, child wasting, and child undernourishment; and improving dietary diversity for women and children.	Prevalence of stunting (% of children under 5 years old)	10%
			Prevalence of underweight (% of children under 5 years old)	5%
			Prevalence of wasting (% of children under 5 old)	5%
			Proportion of the population that is undernourished (% of the country's population)	5%
			Growth rate of the proportion of Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women	50%
			Proportion of 6-23 months old children who meet the Minimum Acceptable Diet	50%



Further Information

- ▶ AUC (2014). *Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy*. African Union Commission. - [View](#)
- ▶ AUC and NPCA (2018). *AU NAIP Toolkit for Malabo Domestication*. African Union Commission and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. [See especially the Food Security and Nutrition component.] - [View](#)
- ▶ AUC and NPCA (2016). *CAADP Technical Guide for the Biennial Review*. African Union Commission and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. [See especially Component 3.] - [View](#)
- ▶ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2018). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2018: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*. FAO: Rome. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. - [View](#)
- ▶ Hendriks (forthcoming, 2019). *Food Security Policy, Evaluation and Impact Assessment*. Routledge Earthscan: London.
- ▶ InterAcademies (2018). *InterAcademy Partnership Report: Opportunities and Challenges for Research on Food and Nutrition Security and Agriculture in Africa*. - [View](#)
- ▶ Malabo Montpellier Panel (2017). *Malabo Montpellier Report – Nourished: How Africa Can Build a Future Free from Hunger and Malnutrition*. - [View](#)

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