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# KILIMO KWANZA

**SUPPORTING THE PROMOTERS OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION**

Wednesday October 16, 2019



## HEALTHY DIETS ARE IMPERATIVE FOR A ZERO HUNGER WORLD

By Fred Kafeero, FAO

**T**his year's World Food Day calls for action to make healthy and sustainable diets available and affordable to all, with the slogan "Our actions Are Our Future. Healthy Diets for a ZeroHunger world."

Recent global figures show that

over 820 million people suffer from hunger; 670 million adults and 120 million girls and boys (5-19 years) are obese, and over 40 million children under the age of 5 years are overweight.

This is testimony that the world is increasingly faced with challenges related to Food and nutrition security as populations grow; other chal-

lenges are in the form of Climate change; Health - especially the dramatic change in our diets and eating habits resulting from globalization, urbanization and income growth.

Consumers, especially in urban claim these days they have little time available to them to prepare meals at home. They have therefore moved to a so-called modern,

fashionable, trending lifestyle that heavily relies on supplies from supermarkets; fast food outlets, street food vendors and take-away restaurants. This confines us to diets that are high in refined starches, sugar, fats, salt, processed foods, meat and other animal-source products.

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## Tuition in nutrition

By Alice Maro, WFP

A clinic in Tanzania helps a mother and her children towards a healthier diet—and income

In early 2018, Happy Kennedy Mbalay and her husband were expecting their third child.

He was looking for work and eventually found it—1,000 kilometres away. So he had to move. This left pregnant Happy facing the pressure of raising their two children, aged seven and four, on her own, with all the physical and emotional challenges of a pregnancy.

The couple lived a small two-bedroom home nestled in the hills of Buigiri in the Dodoma region of Tanzania. Happy was unable to survive with the money her husband sent back. She decided to look for other means of generating income.

Despite being 20 weeks pregnant, the 31-year-old began going door-to-door selling clothes to people in her village. It wasn't easy. While wowing the community with her colourful fabrics and the intricate designs of her products, Happy had few takers. She was unable to put nutritious foods on the table.

Fortunately, four weeks earlier Happy had enrolled at the Boresha Lishe nutrition project. This enabled her to attend prenatal check-ups at Buigiri

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## IFAD marks World Food Day in Tanzania with a taste of 'bokoboko'

By Francesco Rispoli, IFAD

IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, the UN agency has provided US\$18.4 billion in grants and

low-interest loans to projects that have reached about 464 million people around the world. IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency based in Rome - the UN's food and agriculture hub, working

closely with the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) for agro-investment initiatives worldwide.

In Tanzania IFAD has supported 16 projects and programmes in the country for a total amount of

US\$430.1 million, benefiting almost 4 million poor rural households.

This year, with the slogan "Our actions are Our Future: Healthy Diets for a Zero Hunger World," marking the World Food Day calls for action to make healthy and sustainable

diets available and affordable to all. This theme is being interpreted locally around the world to relate to initiatives of that sort, for instance in the promotion of sustainable

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## KILIMO KWANZA

## EDITORIAL



## World Food day – Tanzanians should change eating habits for healthier living

Wallace Mauggo



**W**orld Food Day is celebrated internationally on October 16 every year, in honour of the founding of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on October 16 1945. Since 1981, the day has adopted various main themes each year in order to highlight food security issues that need global action and provide a common focus on them.

This year, with the slogan "Our actions Are Our Future. Healthy Diets for a Zero Hunger world" World Food Day calls for action to make healthy

and sustainable diets available and affordable to all.

Recent global figures show that over 820 million people suffer from hunger; 670 million adults and 120 million girls and boys (5-19 years) are obese, and over 40 million children under the age of 5 years are overweight.

This is testimony that the world is increasingly faced with challenges related to food and nutrition security as populations grow; other challenges are in the form of climate change; health - especially the dramatic change in our diets and eating habits resulting from globalization, urbanization and income growth.

Consumers, especially in urban areas claim that these days they have little time available to them to prepare meals at home. They have therefore moved to the so called modern, fashionable, trending lifestyle that heavily relies on supplies from supermarkets, fast food outlets, street food vendors and take-away restaurants.

This confines us to diets that are high in refined starches, sugar, fats, salt, processed foods, meat and other animal-source products.

A combination of unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles has sent obesity rates high, not only in developed countries, but also in low-income countries, where hunger and obesity often coexist. The health experts have made loud pronouncements to the effect that unhealthy diets are the leading risk factor for deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and certain cancers.

Like in several countries of the world, Tanzania on one hand has cases of under-nutrition - caused by a diet lacking in enough nutrients that the body needs for good health - and on the other hand, it is increasingly getting faced with over nutrition - caused by eating more food than the body needs resulting in overweight and obesity.

## Tuition in nutrition

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Dispensary, a public clinic supported under the project (which is cofunded by the European Union and Japan).

On a monthly basis, Happy would receive take-home packets of nutritious flour mix fortified with important vitamins and minerals. She also received education in nutrition and counselling on feeding practices for infants. The clinic would monitor her nutritional status.

Through the monthly check-ups, Happy received the nutritional support she needed and gave birth to a healthy boy, weighing 3.7 kg. (She named him Yalumbwe Emmanuel Mussa, meaning "to be praised" in the Kigogo language).

After delivering her baby, Happy resumed her check-ups and continued to receive the nutritious flour until her baby turned six months old. Now at 14 months, Yalumbwe receives his own ration of specialized nutritious food.

Cooking demonstrations

Under the supervision of Save the Children, WFP's implementing partner, two community health workers, who serve as a link between the health facility and the community, are assigned to make regular follow-ups on all project beneficiaries, including Happy and

Yalumbwe.

During her pregnancy Happy received additional support from community workers who trained her in the WASH scheme (water saving, sanitation and hygiene); cooking demonstrations on preparing nutritious foods and VICOBA - access to a saving and lending scheme through Village Community Banking.

In VICOBA Happy saw an answer to her prayers for getting the money she needed to boost her business. After taking out a loan of 50,000 Tanzanian shillings (approximately US\$ 22), she invested in better quality stock. This increased both the number of customers and her income.

Happy was able to repay her loan and still have enough to buy beef, milk, butter, sugar, fruit and other food items she could not afford before.

Improving diet quality and food diversity

Diverse diets are one of the keys to ensuring mothers and their children are receiving enough nutrients. For this reason, the Boresha Lishe project also offers education in agriculture.

Happy learned to establish home gardens where she cultivates different vegetables for herself and her children. She grows amaranth, mikunde (green gram) and matembele (sweet potato leaves). Happy



A basket filled with samples for a balanced diet. Photo: WFP/Zainul Mzige

also learned how to use a solar drier to dry and store some of the extra vegetables for later use - particularly important during the lean season. Before the training she received, Happy tended to overlook some readily available, highly nutritious fruits such as ubuyu (boabab), zambarau (java plum) and mkwaju

(tamarid) - all easily accessible from the local market. Since joining Boresha Lishe, Happy has adopted better feeding practices and developed a deeper understanding of food itself.

"Now that I am better informed on the benefits of eating a balanced diet, I ensure that my family diversi-

fies its meals," she says.

Happy adds she enjoys eating healthily and taking good care of herself and her family. She has also become an unofficial champion of the Boresha Lishe project at home and is keen to share the nutritional knowledge she has gained with friends and neighbours.



# Healthy diets are imperative for a zero hunger world



**Fred Kafeero**

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Like in several countries of the world, Tanzania on one hand has cases of under-nutrition - caused by a diet lacking in enough nutrients that the body needs for good health - and on the other hand, it is increasingly getting faced with over nutrition - caused by eating more food than the body needs and results in overweight and obesity.

The good news is that affordable solutions exist to reduce all forms of malnutrition, but this requires greater global and local commitment and action.

Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 is an agenda broad in scope and calls for interlinkage of many elements in order to realize it. Reducing hunger is one of them, but also nourishing people through healthy diets is another. There is no doubt that Tanzania can reverse the situ-

ation, because it is a country that has managed to achieve food self sufficiency of over 120 percent and is graciously endowed with a large variety of traditional foods. There is need however, to increase investment in nutrition promotion programmes across the country, strengthen nutrition education for all age groups, and above all Farmers need better incentives /to increase and diversify the production of high quality food.

Eliminating malnutrition in all its forms is at the core of FAO's mandate and is also at the heart of SDG2 - Zero Hunger. As a knowledge organization, FAO strengthens the capacity of countries to evaluate and monitor the nutrition situation, supports knowledge and technology transfer, and provides food standards.

With a concerted effort among all stakeholders (farmers, Governments, researchers, the private sector and consumers) we believe healthy diets can be realized for ensuring Zero Hunger in Tanzania by 2030. Let us therefore all commit to a better nutrition for a happier, healthier and better life.

The World Food Day also marks FAO's Birthday.

**\*The author of this article is the FAO Representative to the United Republic of Tanzania.**

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## IFAD marks World Food Day in Tanzania with a taste of 'bokoboko'

and healthy food habits, where a case at hand if the surprising taste of 'Bokoboko' banana flour - a word at times used for one of the numerous preparations of rice on the coastal strip in Tanzania.

This specific case has been highlighted by the Mola Tupe (God give us) Cooperative in Pemba island. It is a group of 20 smallholder banana farmers on the island, where 12 women and eight men came together as a group in 2011 through a Farmer Field School (FFS) promoted by the ASSP/ASDP-L IFAD-funded programme. These are sector-based programs to uplift performance where IFAD joins hands with the government to enhance crop productivity and marketing.

Thanks to the FFS approach, the farmers improved their productivity, but still had difficulties with marketing their produce, mainly due to the low price for fresh banana offered on the local market. This is why after ASSP closure the group was targeted by the other IFAD-supported Marketing Infrastructure Value Addition and Rural Finance support programme (MIVARF) to strengthen their marketing and value addition skills.

The group was assigned a 'business coach,' who provided training on record keeping, group governance, product quality, branding, packaging, pricing and marketing. A true eye opener happened when Mola Tupe members were taken in an exchange visit to Bukoba on the Mainland, and learnt how to produce banana flour and then make cookies, porridge and soup from it. What was most surprising to the group was that banana flour and the products derived from it could be best



made out of Bokoboko, the banana variety that has the lowest fresh market price (TZS 3,000 against 10-15,000 for other varieties) because eaten fresh it does not taste very good. Bokoboko is only kept by smallholder farmers for food security purposes because of its high resistance to drought. In 2017, Mola Tupe group, which meanwhile had registered as a cooperative, started producing banana flour, cookies and chips, with an estimated margin of 40 per cent and 30 per cent for cookies and chips respectively. Soon afterwards, their collective month-

ly contributions to their group savings and credit cooperative (SACCOS) increased from TZS 100,000 (43 USD) to TZS 250,000 (109 USD), and they could then take loans from the SACCOS, mostly used to expand banana fields and pay school needs for their children.

"We only make banana chips when the price is low for fresh bananas," says one of the women while explaining the group's business model. "People like the banana flour more and more", she added, "though they don't believe it's from Bokoboko!"

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## FAO, Govt partnership for nutrition security

By Emmanuel Kihale

**H**ealthy diets play an important role in people's lives. Consuming a healthy diet helps prevent malnutrition in all its forms.

The world is now faced with increasing cases of under-nutrition that is caused by a diet lacking enough nutrients that the body needs for good health. Cases of chronic malnutrition particularly among children under five years of age are also very high in many developing nations. Poor child-care and feeding systems, sanitation and inadequate access to health services and clean water area the main factors behind it.

On the other hand, over nutrition is on the increase, with consequence for obesity and overweight. These conditions increase the risk of high blood

pressure, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

The rapid urbanization and changing lifestyles have led to a shift in dietary patterns where more people are consuming processed foods much of which are high in energy, fats, free sugars or salt. Coupled with sedentary lifestyles this has led to a sharp increase of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Tanzania too is not spared by this global trend. Cases of under and over nutrition are also reported to be on the high side. About one third of children are reported to be suffering from under-nutrition. At the same time, the number of people suffering from NCDs is also reported to be increasing at an unprecedented speed.

FAO has teamed up with the Government of Tanzania to ad-

dress the nutrition-related challenges through various interventions.

The development of the Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) for example, is intended to establish a basis for public food and nutrition, health and agricultural policies and nutrition education programmes to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles. They provide advice on foods, food groups and dietary patterns to provide the required nutrients to the general public to promote overall health and prevent chronic diseases.

Tanzania was the first country to initiate FBDGs progress in 2017 with FAO support. So far a drafts of the guidelines with specific consideration for contexts in the Mainland and Zanzibar have been developed and are in final stages of review before they are

officially endorsed. Similar work is underway in other African countries, namely Rwanda, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe under FAO's technical assistance.

FAO with other development partners and stakeholders is also working with the Government of Tanzania through the Tanzania Food Security and Nutrition Analysis System (MUCHALI) in the Mainland and the Zanzibar Food Security and Nutrition Information and Early Warning System (Zanzibar FSNEWS) to conduct the food security assessment on the chronic drivers of food insecurity in Tanzania.

The aim is to identify structural issues impacting the food security and nutrition of the country and lay long term interventions to address them.

It is also important to note that food and nutrition security cannot be achieved without food safety. When food is not safe, children cannot learn, adults cannot work. Human development is negatively impacted. Access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health.

Here in Tanzania FAO's technical expertise in food safety has been deployed in supporting the country to access critical global financing in addressing aflatoxins. This is coupled with strengthening national and local government capacities in dealing with the threat posed by aflatoxins through ensuring proper postharvest storage to avoid contamination.

FAO is also currently providing technical support to the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children through a two-year project - 'Advancing Healthy Street Food Incentives' to boost the safety and nutritional balance of street food in Dar es Salaam. The project raises awareness to street food vendors on safety standards, businesses formalization and the need to strike nutritional balance in their food for public health.

As part of the UN Joint programme in collaboration with

SIDA, FAO is providing technical support for the review of the national plant protection regulatory framework and strengthening the capacity of the Government to provide phytosanitary and quarantine services in order to avert the threat posed by these pests and diseases on agriculture and food chains.

Through the Fleming Fund under Department of Health of the Government of the United Kingdom, FAO has been working with the Government of Tanzania to raise awareness and put up structures for proper management and use of antimicrobials in the food and agriculture sectors namely; animal health, crop production, fisheries and aquaculture to ensure food safety. Implementing a 'One Health' approach has greatly improved food safety as the health of people is connected to the health of animals and the environment.

FAO's technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture for nutrition-sensitive agriculture manifests at local governments, where for example through the Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute (TARI), multiplication and wider dissemination of planting material for Vitamin A-rich Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) is underway to improve nutrition status of people in Dodoma region. Similarly, with technical and financial support to Maruku Agriculture Research institute in Bukoba, a diversity of nutritious crops have been promoted among farmers, notably the nutritious beans that have been multiplied and disseminated widely in Kagera Region to ensure healthy diets. This has been combined with nutrition education outreach activities and campaigns across the Region.

Everyone has the right to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. As we celebrate the World Food Day this year, this should be an opportunity to ensure that the food we eat is healthy from production level to the plate. Everybody along the food chain is responsible for ensuring healthy diets. It is time to act now!

