

**ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**
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SUMMARY NOTE

Parallel Session: **Priorities for Action: Perspectives for East and Central Africa**
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Title: **Towards Achieving Food Security in Kenya**
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Agricultural Production

Land is the main asset in agricultural production and generally, limited availability of productive land is a major constraint to increased agricultural production. Kenya has an area of about 587,000 square kilometers of which 11,000 and 576,000 square kilometers are water and land mass respectively. Only about 16% of the latter is of high and medium agricultural potential largely because it receives adequate and reliable rainfall. The rest falls under arid and semi arid lands (ASALs). Land tenure in Kenya is classified into three broad categories, namely: communal land, government trust land, and the private land (owned land, by individuals, groups or companies).

The main feature of Kenya's agriculture is domination of small-scale farmers who account for 75% of total agricultural production and 70% of marketed agricultural output. On average, small-scale farmers produce over 70% of maize, 65% of coffee, 50% of tea, 90% of Sugar, 80% of milk, 85% of fish and 70% of beef and related products. Production is carried out on small land holdings averaging 2-3 hectares mainly for both dairy and beef subsistence and commercial purposes.

Large-scale farming is practiced in Kenya on farms averaging 50 hectares and above and accounts for 30% of marketed agricultural production, covering are mainly tea, coffee, horticulture, maize, and wheat as well as keeping livestock for commercial purposes. The latter comprises 10 million beef cattle, 3 million dairy and dairy crosses, 9 million goats, 7 million sheep, 800,000 camels, 520,000 donkeys, and 300,000 pigs. The population of both indigenous and improved poultry breeds averages about 30 million.

Food Insecurity

The communities in arid and semi-arid lands of the country are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity because of the recurring natural disasters of drought, livestock diseases, animal and crop pests, and limited access to appropriate technologies, information, credit, and financial services.

Kenya's average poverty level exceeds the 50% mark. The number of the absolute poor increased from 10 million in 1994 to 13.4 million in 1997 and by the year 2000, the overall poverty situation in Kenya was 56% of a population estimated at 30 million people. The reasons for the worsening situation are many and varied.

The causes of poverty and food insecurity in Kenya include low agricultural productivity, inadequate access to productive assets (land and capital), inadequate infrastructure, limited well functioning markets, high population pressure on land, inadequate access to appropriate technologies by farmers, effects of global trade and slow reform process.

Poor planning results in available resources being directed to interventions that does not give sustainable impact. For example when North Eastern parts of the country experienced extended drought for four consecutive seasons, the Kenya government, United Nations Agencies and NGO's spent a total of 27.2 billion Kenya shillings or US \$340 million, on the provision of famine relief food to the affected 4.1 million people from March 2000 to September 2002. Approximately 20% of the amount was spent on food distribution and logistics. Properly planned, this amount of money would go a long way in establishing sustainable food security measures in the country.

Measures to Achieve Food Security

The Concept Note outlining Kenya Special Program for Food Security (KSPFS) was developed in the year 2002. In developing this program the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the Kenya Rural Development Strategy were used as the building blocks. These strategies describe measures needed to alleviate poverty in the country. Majority of the poor in the

country live in the rural areas where the main activity is agriculture. The food Security program gives specific focus to the more than 15 million absolute poor households living in rural areas primarily as farmers, pastoralists and fisher-folk. The Kenya SPFS program is working towards the food security needs of these people by encouraging and supporting farmers and community-based organizations in their efforts to improve agricultural productivity and other income generating activities. Extensive successful experiences throughout the country in agricultural production and extension points to the need of supporting farmer groups in order to improve their capacities in realizing their food security needs and increase the desire to correct the situation.

In June 2003, Kenya Government launched an Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth Creation and Employment in order to halt and reverse further economic degeneration and poverty. In order to attain the goals stated in the Economic Recovery Strategy, The Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock and Fisheries Development developed the Strategy for Rehabilitation of Agriculture 2004–2014 that defines ways and means of economic recovery through improved agricultural growth. This strategy was launched in March 2004. It recognizes the need to mobilize resources to stimulate agricultural growth and need for coordinated resource utilization. The private sector will take the lead while the Government will play a facilitative role.

The Approach of SPFS

In addressing food security issues in Kenya it is recognized that there are many extension service providers within the Government, NGOs, private sector, religious organizations and community based organizations. There are also many resources, (human, physical and financial), held by these organizations. However, they are utilized in an uncoordinated manner with little impact to the communities they are directed. The activities carried out by most of the extension service providers often do not consider the priority demands of the farmers.

Through this program farmers are being empowered to identify their priorities and make demands on the service they need to solve their problems. The extension service providers then work in a collaborative manner to respond to the farmers' demands.

Demands from the farmers fall under different categories such as information, new technologies, credit, value addition and marketing. Some of the demands can be provided immediately, while others require research or borrowing of technologies from elsewhere or seeking for financial resources in case of demands on credit.

Within the country there are many successful experiences that have benefited local farmers and communities. The main approach of the Special Program for Food Security is in up-scaling such successful experiences. This is best achieved by organizing farmers' tours to areas where solutions to their demands have succeeded. Farmers learn faster from other succeeding farmers than from extension providers. This approach has proved very useful and cheap.

In carrying out extension advisory services, group approach is employed. This enables extension service providers to reach many farmers at a goal. It also helps farmers to identify their problems and assess the progress they are making with interventions that are extended to them. Common interest groups, e.g. dairy, horticulture, beekeeping etc., provide for fast delivery of service.

This program was intended to be on pilot basis in 15 districts. However, through sensitization of all stakeholders it has spread to about 40 districts. There is a total of 71 districts in the country. The simplicity and effectiveness of the approach has led to the fast growth of the program. However, in order to make the program more successful and to achieve the millennium development goal on fighting hunger financial resources are required to accelerate the process. Resources are required for capacity building (for both farmers and extension workers) credit and grants to farmer groups.

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