



ROUTE  
TO FOOD



# The Food Manifesto

Putting Food On The Table





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# Why a Food Manifesto?

Food and nutrition insecurity continues to be one of Kenya's biggest problems. While technological advancements, enhancement of infrastructure and education, and other factors have changed over the last 58 years of independent Kenya, food insecurity has remained a perennial problem. Most Kenyans are affected by different levels and forms of food and nutrition insecurity as the government seemingly struggles to fulfil the Human Right to Food as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 – Article 43 1(c).



Over the past years, the country's food and nutrition security challenges have continued to rise and become even more complicated owing to population increase, global food market forces, climate change, and emerging production issues such as pests and diseases. Even the section of the population that appears food secure is not guaranteed nutritious, diverse and safe food. Key food safety issues in Kenya include misuse of chemical pesticides in agricultural production and contamination during transportation of food items at markets.

Based on this context, it is imperative that all political leaders incorporate the food agenda in their manifestos and explicitly provide their proposed solutions to the food and nutrition insecurity challenge in the country. This brief provides insights collected from various stakeholders on the status and solutions to addressing food insecurity and advancing the attainment of the Right to Adequate Food for all in Kenya. This will be a useful guide for political parties in their manifesto drafting process.

# Key Indicators

- **Chronic Food Insecurity**

More than **14.5 million** Kenyans suffer from chronic food insecurity. This means that they lack guaranteed access to food and are occasionally unable to meet their minimum dietary needs.<sup>1</sup> Families headed by women are more likely to be food insecure than those headed by men.

- **Severe Food Insecurity**

More than **1.5 million** Kenyans are constantly exposed to severe food insecurity and the risk of starvation aggravated by natural disasters, e.g. drought.<sup>2</sup>

- **Child Undernutrition<sup>3</sup>**

More than **25%** of children under five (5) years or 2 million children are undernourished. Child undernutrition occurs when children do not consume enough calories, protein, or micronutrients to maintain good health. Mainly assessed through three measures: stunting (extremely low height for age), underweight (extremely low weight for age), and wasting (extremely low weight for height)

- **Economic Cost of Hunger**

Kenya loses an average of **KES 373.9 billion (6.9%)** of its GDP every year due to the indirect and long-term impact of child undernutrition, mainly due to reduced productivity (352.1 billion). The health sector accounts for losses of up to KES 18.6 billion, and the education sector for losses up to KES 3.2 billion<sup>4</sup>. The statistics are based on figures from 2014.

- **Food Safety**

**Nine (9) out of every ten (10)** Kenyans are worried about the safety of the food they eat every day<sup>5</sup>

More than  
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chronic food insecurity



**9/10**  
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safety of their food.

<sup>1</sup>The Kenya Economic Survey 2018

<sup>2</sup>Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

<sup>3</sup><https://www.unicef.org/kenya/nutrition>

<sup>4</sup>The Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA), The Social and Economic Impact of Child Undernutrition in Kenya

<sup>5</sup>Food Safety, A consumer perspective

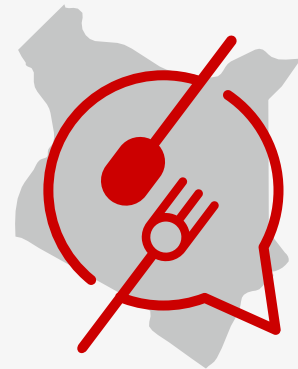
# Common Misconceptions About Hunger in Kenya

There are various simplified explanations, misconceptions and myths about the food security problem in Kenya. Unfortunately, stakeholders continuously use and share misconceptions and eventually influence the thinking around food and derail the achievement of food and nutrition security through misdirecting action and misinformed decisions.

## Major Myths Demystified

01

That there are parts of the country that are food secure/food baskets. Food insecurity is mainly felt at the individual and the household level. Therefore, assumptions that there are food secure areas based on overall production in the different regions can be misleading.



02

Kenyan farmers need cheap fertilizer to lower food prices. While fertilizer may appear to be an important input in most cereal foods, it is not a necessity. Alternate methods to soil fertility management exist and offer more benefits to farm health and the nutritional value of agricultural produce than chemical fertilizers. Farmers should be encouraged to explore other options to reduce exposure to ever-changing global markets scenarios regarding imported farm inputs.

03

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are the solution to our food security problem. GMOs are not going to solve the food security problem in Kenya. GMO seeds are expensive and not economically viable without subsidies. There are also a lot of safety and environmental sustainability issues associated with the use of GMO seeds. Kenya is better off without GMOs.



## Major Myths Demystified



04

Food security is not a problem of increasing the supply of food. It is a problem of demand and affordability. It does not matter if there is food available to buy or not, if that food is too expensive.

05

The notion of 'adequate' is entirely inadequate. food security is understood in terms of staple food crops, for example, maize. The focus should be on proper nutrition and the right to choose widely from dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables as well as staples.



06

Food security is often equated with the availability or distribution of emergency food aid. The right to food is not the right to be fed. It is the right to feed oneself in dignity.



07

Sensationalist media reporting during a crisis heavily influences our understanding of food security. Chronic food insecurity is not famine, starvation or extreme hunger. It means a person, on a regular basis, cannot access sufficient and nutritious food in order to live a meaningful and productive life.



# The 9 Proposals

## 1. Prioritize the Food and Nutrition Security Agenda

To address the problem of food insecurity, there is a need to change its management and prioritization of the government. We recommend that:

1. The elected government places food and nutrition security on a **top national agenda** i.e. gives it as much prominence as national security, handles this at the presidency level, and implements a robust coordination structure for food and nutrition security issues.
2. There should be a **regular presidential address** on food and nutrition security status in the country - at least twice every year to ensure that all Kenyans and stakeholders are kept abreast of the issues and the progress being made in addressing them.





## 2. Fulfilment of State Obligations on the Right to Food

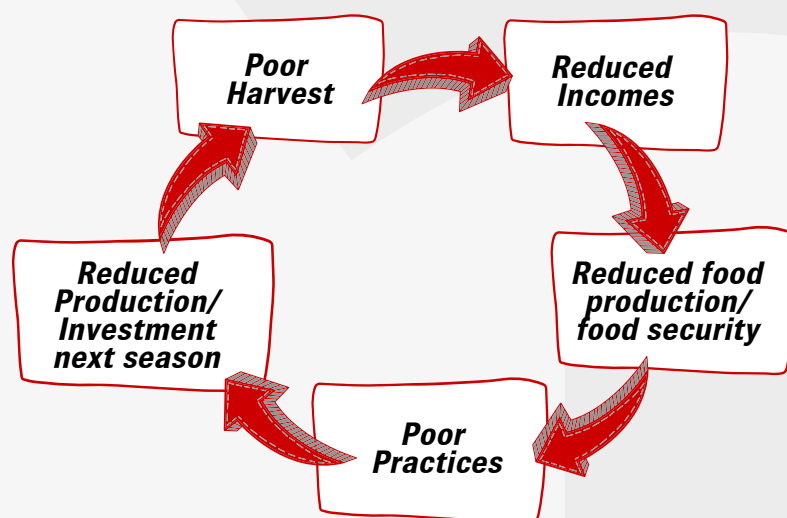
The party or coalition must fulfil the state obligations to and enjoyment of the 'Right to Adequate Food For All' in line with the Constitutional provision of Article 43 1 (c). To fulfil these obligations and ensure that Kenyans enjoy their Right to Adequate Food, we propose that:

1. The elected government **prioritizes** the development of a clear legal framework for the Right to Adequate Food and justifiability mechanisms.
2. The government **reviews** all relevant laws and policies to align them with the right to access adequate and nutritional food as per the 2010 Constitution.
3. The government takes proactive measures through relevant policies and public investments to **ensure** the progressive realization of the Right to Adequate Food for all in Kenya.



### 3. Enhance Producer Incomes and Livelihoods

Reduced agricultural productivity and profitability have continuously affected producers' incomes and livelihoods in Kenya. Reduced agricultural productivity and profitability have continuously affected producers' incomes and livelihoods in Kenya. This affects the producers' ability to meet their basic needs and financial obligations leading to an unending cycle of poverty for most of them.



*Illustration Showing Cyclical Problems Faced by Producers*

To mitigate these effects, we recommend that:

- 1.The government provides **subsidized** insurance against climate-change-related losses for producers.
- 2.The government **develops** mechanisms and offers incentives to enroll producers in government social security and welfare programs, for instance, NHIF and NSSF.
- 3.The government **provides** adequate knowledge to farmers on climate change mitigation.
- 4.The government puts in place mechanisms and incentives for rural development and investments to create **alternative income sources** for rural communities.

## 4. Ensure Food Safety

Food security cannot be achieved without food safety. Today, major food safety issues in Kenya include high pesticide use/misuse in production, poor handling practices along the chain, and lack of sanitation in the markets. To address the challenge of food safety, we recommend that:

- 1.The government **fast tracks** the establishment of a **food safety authority** to address all food safety issues.
- 2.The government **withdraws** all harmful toxic pesticides from the Kenyan market. The list of the ingredients can be found in the Parliamentary Health Committee on Petition No. 70 of 2019 regarding the withdrawal of harmful chemical pesticides in the Kenyan market.





## 5. Revamp Extension Services in the Country

Extension services are an essential pillar in building sustainable food and farming systems. To enhance extension services and farmer knowledge support, we recommend that government commits to:

1. **Invest** in public extension services (ensure **at least one** (1) extension officer per 300 farmers).
2. **Integrate** farmer knowledge and experiences in national extension programs.
3. **Regulate** information and knowledge transfer to farmers from profit-making companies to curb misinformation and manipulation of farmers.



Ensure at least  
**ONE**  
EXTENSION OFFICER PER  
**300**  
FARMERS

## 6. Service Delivery and Access to Infrastructure in ASAL areas

The biggest food security problem in ASAL areas is access to infrastructure and inadequate service delivery – both public and private. There is a need to invest in infrastructure (roads, markets, energy, communications) in these areas to ensure the easy flow of goods and commodities. Market systems for livestock and other ASAL products should also be enhanced to provide better livelihoods and incomes for communities living in these areas.

1. **Invest** in infrastructure development in ASAL areas- including water access, roads, markets and communication.
2. Ensure **service delivery** in ASAL areas- including health, agricultural extension and veterinary services.
3. Ensure **security** in ASAL areas to address both human-wildlife conflicts as well as conflict between communities living in ASAL areas.



## 7. Increase Budgetary Allocation to Agriculture

Investment in the agriculture sector in Kenya is still low. Over the last five years- the national budget allocation has not been more than **4%** of the total voting budget to agriculture. Despite the vast, undisputed importance of the sector for food security and its contribution to the national GDP. We recommend that:

- 1.The government **increases** budgetary allocation to agriculture to at least **10%** of the GDP.
- 2.Investment towards agriculture is **diversified** beyond mega projects to include a focus on supporting smallholder farming, local, sustainable farming techniques.

INCREASE BUDGETARY  
ALLOCATION TO  
AGRICULTURE FROM  
**3%** TO AT  
LEAST **10%**





## 8. Seed Sovereignty

Seed sovereignty is a critical aspect of the self-determination of communities and the country as a whole when it comes to food. To enhance seed sovereignty, we recommend that:

1. The government **invests** in building strong farmer-managed seed systems.
2. The government **develops/re-structures** the current seed laws to allow farmers to share and trade in their own seeds freely.
3. The government **disowns** the GMO projects and avoids using public resources to support these private, profit-centred initiatives, which are a threat to Kenya's indigenous seeds and self-determination.



## 9. Increase Coverage in Social Safety nets for vulnerable households

Currently, **37%** or **18 million** Kenyans live below the poverty line, and only 1.3 million Kenyans receive predictable and regular social assistance in cash transfers. There is a large number not covered by any form of social protection. To address the gaps in social safety nets, we recommend that:

1. Government **increase** its **financial commitment** to social safety nets proportional to an increase in GDP.
2. The government reviews the list of beneficiaries and registers new vulnerable persons every year.
3. The government **increase allocation** to beneficiary households and disburse cash transfers monthly without delays.
4. Government **ensure transparency** in targeting and inclusion criteria through National Government Administration Officers (NGAO).





# Contributing Organisations

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*In order of logos*

**The Route to Food Initiative, Inter-Sectoral Forum for Agroecology and Agrobiodiversity, Rural Outreach Africa, The Right to Food Coalition, APHRC, PELUM Kenya, Consumer Grassroots Association, BIBA, Concern Worldwide Nutri-Produce, Kenya Organic Agriculture Network, BEACON**

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# Notes

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For feedback and comments please contact [info@routetofood.org](mailto:info@routetofood.org)



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