



## World Food Day 2017: Why a Clear Response to the Diverse Migration-linked Causes of Food Insecurity is needed in Uganda.

*'The number of people in need of relief food has increased from 1.3 million in November 2016 to 3.5 million to date' – Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries – Hon. Vincent B. Ssempijja at Launch of the National Food Security Assessment report (March 7, 2017) in Kampala*

This year the theme for World Food Day, celebrated annually on 16 October – a date commemorating the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945 – will focus on the link between migration, food security and sustainable rural development. The drivers and impacts of migration are intimately linked to fighting hunger and achieving food security, reducing rural poverty and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Large movements of people are one of the most complex challenges the world faces today.

According to Hilary Onek, Uganda's Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees (April 2017), the country is a host to South Sudan refugees, who have fled their country ever since conflict broke up in December 2013. The influx reached 3,000 a day for several months, making Uganda the third-ranked refugee-hosting country in the world with close to one million refugees. That aside, livestock keepers have been reported to migrate from Karamoja to Lango, Acholi, Teso and Elgon competing for pasture and water (OPM, 2017). In addition, the number of people moving from rural to urban areas (cities) currently stands at 6 million, but is expected to reach more than 30 million within the next two decades (World Bank, 2015).

Nevertheless, agriculture remains the backbone of Uganda's economy. It employs about 72 percent of the total labour force (formal and informal), 77 percent of whom are women, and 63 percent are youth, mostly residing in the rural areas. Farming is still dominated by smallholder farmers engaged in food and cash crops, horticulture, fishing and livestock farming.

According to a statement released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries ahead of the World Food Day 2017, Agriculture growth rate has risen from 0.8 in 2011/12 to 3.2% 2015/16. The sector contribution to GDP is currently 26.2 %, while the target is to raise it to 5.6% as stated in the Uganda National Development Plan 2 and Uganda's Vision 2040. Agriculture continues to play an important role in food security and nutrition, employment, wealth creation, the manufacturing industry and export trade.

However, According to the National Food Security Assessment report (January 2017) which provides the short term, medium and long term recommendations for eradication of food insecurity in Uganda, the 2015/16 El Nino event seriously impacted the eastern, central and western regions of Uganda, the sub-regions of Karamoja, Teso, Lango, Acholi, Bukedi, West Nile and districts along the cattle corridor. This resulted in causing massive crop failures leading to little or no harvest, as well as substantial loss of cattle.

The National Food Security Assessment Report (2017) among others notes that:

- The prolonged dry spell due to the La Niña event coupled with increasing incidences of crop and livestock pests and diseases such as Cassava Brown Streak, Cassava Mosaic, Maize stalk borer, striga and Banana Bacterial Wilt (BBW) considerably affected production reducing the availability and accessibility of food for this population. The low crop and livestock production negatively impacted household food stocks leading to increased reliance on markets for food. Increasing demand from external markets has induced food price increases, making it difficult for poor households to access food from the market.
- The immediate causes of food insecurity include: prolonged dry spells, low agricultural production, reduced purchasing power due to food price increases, reduced water access for humans and livestock, poor hygiene and sanitation, limited diversification of livelihoods, pest and disease resurgence especially of striga, BBW, preference for land use for sugarcane growing, reduced pasture and water for livestock, declining soil fertility, water shortage, human disease especially malaria and cholera.

### Our Call to Government of Uganda and other Food Security Actors

The socio-political dynamics within and across Uganda's borders is further complicated by the changing weather patterns linked to climate change that continue to result in unpredictable movement of people within and across borders. Re-echoing the recommendations of the National Food Security Assessment Report (2017), we would like to call upon:

- a) **The Office of the Prime Minister; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries** to mobilise other actors (Local Governments, CSOs, donors, business, researchers, media, cultural and religious institutions) to come up with immediate responses to address the causes of food insecurity across the country. These include measures to promote, among others: water conservation and irrigation, drought and disease tolerant high yielding crop varieties, water conservation and irrigation options, community level early disaster warning & risk management, alternative sources of income, and targeted tree growing to replenish the reduced stock.
- b) **The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Water and Environment** to fast track adoption, publicity and urgently mobilise resources to implement Uganda's Climate-Smart Agriculture Programme (2015-2025). This is also one of Uganda's core interventions to implement its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.