

Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture Messages

These points can help extension officers support farm households to improve nutrition and health through agriculture.

Increase production of more diverse and nutritious foods, including small livestock, for home consumption.

Why: Families need diverse foods of the right quantity and quality to meet their food and income needs throughout the year.

How: These are *some* examples of actions farm households can take to grow more diverse and more nutritious foods:

- Grow legumes, such as groundnuts, soyabeans, cowpeas, bambara nuts and beans. Beans can provide up to three harvests per year and offer food at all stages of their growth – leaves, pods, fresh seed and pulses.
- Grow vegetable gardens to increase household access to nutrient-rich foods.
- Raise chickens for eggs or meat. Small livestock is a good source of animal proteins and income.
- Irrigate fields and gardens, if possible, to produce food throughout the year.
- Control stagnant water to reduce risk of water-borne diseases.

Protect natural resources through good agricultural practices.

Why: Healthy natural resources, including soil and water, are necessary to sustain and increase production of diverse foods.

How: These are *some* examples of good agricultural practices that protect natural resources required to grow diverse, nutritious foods.

- Prepare fields early and plant on time to achieve strong yields and protect crop quality.
- Intercrop maize with legumes, like groundnuts, cowpeas or pigeon peas, and rotate crops every season.
- Leave crop residue on the field to protect against soil erosion.
- Practice safe storage and use of agro-chemicals. Store them away from children and food and *always* follow instructions on the package.

Increase household nutrition through on-farm processing, preservation and storage practices.

Why: Good post-harvest practices minimize crop losses, improve food safety and maintain nutrients in food so that more and better food is available for consumption throughout the year.

How: These are *some* ways to maintain food nutrients, extend the shelf-life of food and reduce food loss:

Fruits and vegetables:

- Only preserve fresh – never rotten – fruits and vegetables.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a solar dryer or on a clean mat in the shade, away from animals.
- Use clean and dry packages for storage.

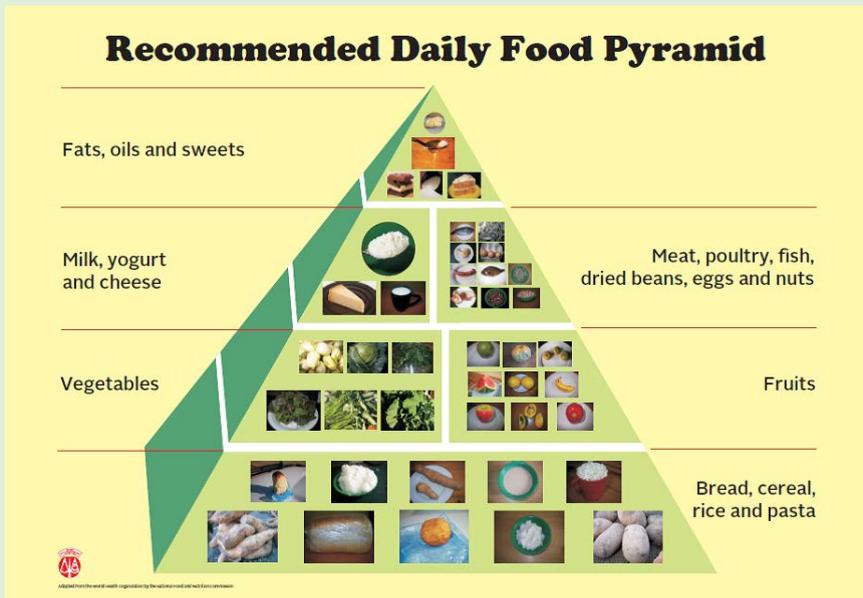
Staples and legumes:

- Dry cereals and legumes in the shade on clean mats, away from animals.
- Proper processing and drying of cassava is required to reduce risk of cyanide poisoning.
- Remove stones, husks, pods and broken grain before storing maize and legumes. *Never store grain with signs of mold or other damage.*



Before preparing food, always wash hands. Wash hands after using the latrine or changing nappies; handling animals; and using agro-chemicals to prevent the spread of diseases or food contamination.

Grow, buy and EAT more diverse and nutritious foods following the “Recommended Daily Food Pyramid.”



Why: The foods families choose to grow, buy and eat have a big impact on family health, environment and resources. All people, especially pregnant and lactating women and children under two, require a diverse diet with balanced foods to be strong, healthy and productive.

How: These are small steps to begin to eat a more diverse and balanced diet:

- Eat a staple food, like maize, potatoes, cassava or rice, at every meal with beans or fish, vegetables and fruit in season. Try to eat different foods from each food group at every meal. A combination of foods from the different food groups in the food pyramid is the best.
- Add high-nutrient foods, like soya or groundnut flour, to green vegetables and other foods to improve taste and nutritional value.
- Add soft foods, like mashed banana, avocado, groundnut paste or pounded fish or meat, to porridge, especially for young children.
- Eat animal-source foods, like meat, poultry, eggs and fish, regularly. Eat local foods, like caterpillars, termites (*inswa*), mice and grasshoppers.
- Eat nutritious snacks between meals, like an egg, milk, *munkoyo*, edible seeds, roasted cassava, roasted maize or fruits.



Pregnant and lactating women need additional meals of diverse, nutrient-dense foods every day to help baby grow strong. Children 0-6 months should receive breastmilk *only*. No water or porridge!

Children 6-8 months eat 2-3 meals and 1-2 small snacks per day. **Children 9-11 months** eat 3-4 meals and 1-2 snacks. Slowly introduce **children aged 12-24 months** to the family diet, continuing to feed them 3-4 meals and 1-2 snacks per day. When working in fields, bring a small snack for young children above 6 months.

Recognize and support the different needs and interests of women and men in agriculture.

Why: Women play a big role in agriculture. Attention to the different needs of men and women in agriculture can support women's empowerment – not only for gains in household productivity and income, but also for family nutrition.

How: Extension officers can take small steps to support the needs of men and women in farm households:

- Help men and women join savings groups to access savings and loans for inputs and other productive activities, like vegetable growing.
- Introduce women to value chains that allow them to balance roles between farm, field and homestead.
- Promote use of labor-saving technologies to help women reduce agricultural labor and focus on childcare.
- Encourage men to share responsibility for childcare and other household chores to support women's participation in agriculture and her care while pregnant and breastfeeding. *Provide a time to rest for pregnant mothers.*

This section of the diary was made possible in part by the generous support of the American people through the USAID-funded INGENAES project. The contents are the responsibility of the Food and Nutrition Section of the Ministry of Agriculture and INGENAES project and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government.