

# Country Profile On Nutrition

04/2024



## RWANDA

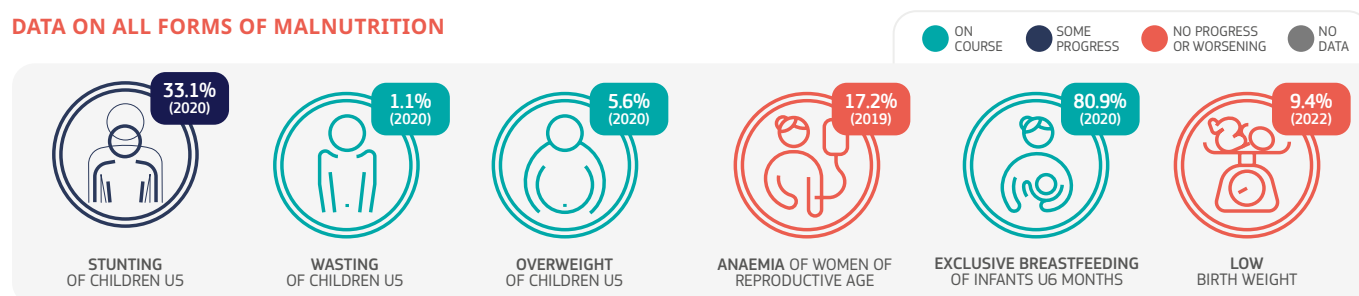
### Nutrition situation in Rwanda

#### AT A GLANCE

Rwanda has a population of 14.1 million people, which is estimated to rise to 16.2 million by 2030<sup>1</sup>. The country has achieved significant progress in reducing stunting rates, from 51% in 2005 to 33.1% in 2020, attributed to the coherence of national nutrition strategies and programmes across multiple sectors (health, agriculture, social protection) and levels (central, district, community). Nevertheless, over half a million children under five remain stunted, with western and northern districts faring worst<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, Rwanda faces all forms of malnutrition including anaemia (the complex causes of which are poorly understood<sup>3</sup>), overweight and obesity in all age groups, and diet-related non-communicable diseases.

High levels of poverty and cultural behaviours are contributing factors<sup>4</sup>, compounded by a growing population and urbanisation<sup>5</sup>. An estimated 20.6 percent of the population is food insecure, with the Western Province worst affected (35.3%). In 2021, 44% of households reported a shock that affected the household's assets or ability to provide for itself. Kigali was worst affected (71%) and COVID-19 the predominant cause<sup>7</sup>. Malnutrition has a high social and economic cost: child undernutrition alone is costing Rwanda an estimated 11.5% of annual GDP<sup>8</sup>. Rwanda has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.400 and is ranked 98 of 166 countries in the 2023-2024 index.

#### DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

#### NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- Rwanda joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2011.
- A new multisectoral national nutrition policy on all forms of malnutrition is being finalised. The National Early Childhood Development Agency coordinates all nutrition activities through a 2018-2024 operational framework for an integrated and holistic approach in health, nutrition, WASH, education, child protection and early child development. It includes a comprehensive common results framework and defines sector roles and responsibilities.
- Each district has a District Plan to Eliminate Malnutrition.
- The 2019 food fortification regulations make fortification mandatory for maize flour, wheat flour, edible oil, sugar and salt.
- Despite this comprehensive framework, resource mobilisation is a challenge to implementation of activities and multi-year planning.

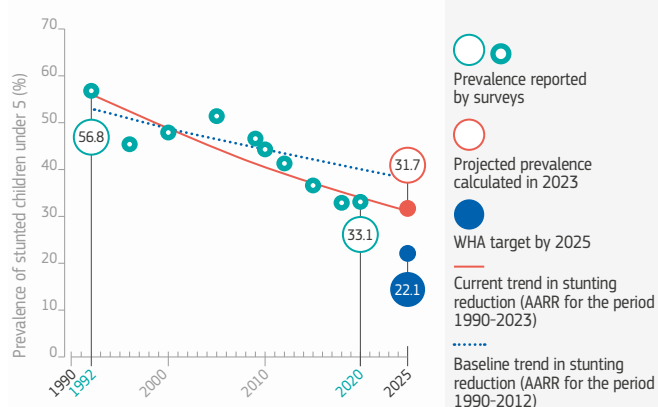
#### Example of EU support

In collaboration with Luxembourg Cooperation, *Transformation towards sustainable food systems*, is a 4-year (2023-2027) intervention in 10 districts, to support development of value chains in the aquaculture, fishery and horticultural sectors. It aims to increase in a sustainable way the production, consumption and income generated by fish, aquaculture and horticulture quality products, with a focus on women and youth. Of the EUR 69 million budget, EUR 10 million is reserved for 'feeding the cities' and EUR 52 m for budget support sector reform coupled with a Technical Assistance Facility. Value chains are selected for their importance in a healthy diet (fish, fruits and vegetables) and for their potential to create additional decent jobs and provide a better income, especially for youth and women, by taking advantage of their rapidly growing market opportunities in urban areas.

*Strengthen the promotion of the consumption of healthy and sustainably produced local food* supports development of communication material and media campaigns to create consumer awareness for behaviour change towards a nutritious and healthy diet, including fish as quality protein sources, fruits and vegetables and for consuming locally produced, quality food.

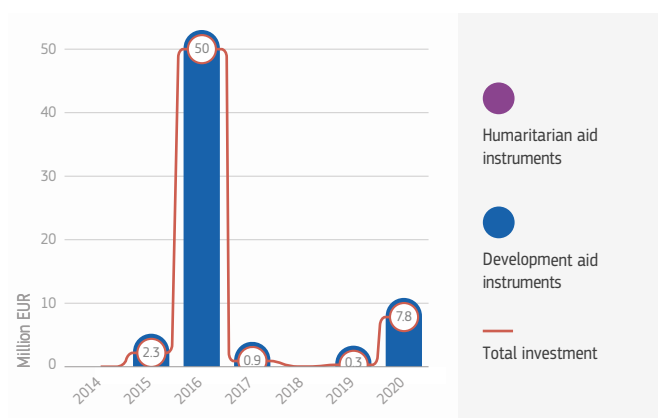


## Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



## TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED

Rwanda has demonstrated its political commitment by setting a national target of reducing child stunting to 10% by 2030 and prioritising an integrated approach to early childhood development (through strengthened coordination across all sectors). The country has experienced a considerable decline in the prevalence of stunting since the 1990s, but only a nominal decline in the number of children stunted, due to population growth. The rate of decline in the number of stunted children has accelerated from 1.0% in 2012 to 1.7% in 2022. If this is maintained, then approximately 626 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025. The next Demographic Health Survey is scheduled for 2025 and will provide updated national data.



## EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 61.3 MILLION IN 2016

EU budget support of EUR 200 million to the agriculture sector strategy enhances food and nutrition security (EUR 50 million is earmarked for nutrition), sustainable and efficient use of land and water resources, development of agricultural value chains, and strengthens public finance management. Pilot studies have been conducted on preventing stunting among children under-2 through social transfers for vulnerable families in Nyamasheke district, and a national census of children under-2 to assess malnutrition<sup>9</sup>. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, as part of a Team Europe global response package, in 2020 the EU supported the government's economic recovery plan to sustain social protection measures for food and nutrition security, targeting the most vulnerable population groups (EUR 52 million). The EU committed EUR 50 million in 2022 for early childhood development, including nutrition education and pre-primary school feeding, and EUR 10 million for sustainable food and nutrition security<sup>10</sup>.

## Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

At the [Tokyo Nutrition for Growth \(N4G\) Summit 2021](#), the Government of Rwanda committed to:

- Reduce the prevalence of stunting among children to 10% by 2030.
- Reduce the prevalence of anaemia among children 6-59 months (from 36.6% to 20%), adolescent girls (from 14.7% to 10%), and pregnant women (from 24.5% to 15%) by 2030.
- Increase the domestic resource allocation for nutrition-sensitive and -specific interventions from USD 41 million in 2020/21 USD 67 million in 2030.

At the UN Food Systems Summit, September 2021, the Government of Rwanda recognised that 'specific challenges in the current food systems include diet quality and nutrition security'. [Rwanda's Food Systems National Dialogues: Outcomes and Pathway](#) presents four strategic pathways for Rwanda's food systems transformation, one of which is Ensuring availability, accessibility, affordability and food safety for all, while increasing demand for healthy and nutritious diets.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The EU supports nutrition in Rwanda through the sustainable agriculture and food security sector. Its flagship action, Transformational climate-smart and inclusive agriculture in Rwanda (2021-2025) intends to consolidate the transition to socially and environmentally inclusive agri-food systems, including the improvement of inclusive agriculture value chains targeting local, regional and international markets. It comprises three main elements: agriculture transformation, climate adaptation and the development of food value chains in horticulture and livestock, including aquaculture and fisheries, following a gender-sensitive approach. Expected results include enhanced nutritional status of smallholder farmers and enhanced resilience of rural households to climate change. Through the activity, Strengthen the promotion of the consumption of healthy and sustainably produced local food, national and local initiatives are supported which facilitate and promote locally produced and healthy food.

The 2023 'KUNGAHARA' programme (EUR 10 million), boosting food production in Rwanda, aims to promote food and nutrition security as well as food systems resilience in Rwanda. Its specific objective is to promote sustainable food production through socially and environmentally inclusive agriculture value chains targeting local markets in Rwanda. Activities involve promoting actions to enhance food production by Rwandan local producers and cooperatives, including women farmers and women cooperatives to improve both availability and access for men and women at local level to food that is safe and nutritious, while promoting knowledge on nutritious food.

Within its EUR 50 million programme to support the upscaling of pre-primary education in Rwanda, the EU launched a EUR 30 million budget support operation which will, among others, target school feeding. Access to pre-primary in Rwanda is low and school feeding contributions set an additional burden on families. Recently the government has changed its policy and decreased parents' contribution, however, large funding gaps remain, and many pre-primary classrooms do not have access to kitchens and cooks. Furthermore, as the number of learners in pre-primary increases, more will need to be done to enable each child in pre-primary to receive one meal a day.

1 - UNDESA [World Population Prospects 2022](#), medium variant estimate for July 2023.

2 - Rwanda Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) 2021.

3 - Malaria and other parasitic infections, and not iron deficiency, found to be strong determinants of anaemia (Angel et al. 2017; Nkulikiyinka et al. 2015; Nkulikiyinka R, Binagwaho A, Palmer K. The changing importance of key factors associated with anaemia in 6- to 59-month-old children in a sub-Saharan African setting where malaria is on the decline: analysis of the Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2010. *Trop Med Int Health*. 2015 Dec;20(12):1722-32. doi: 10.1111/tmi.12604. Epub 2015 Oct 14. PMID: 26425794.).

4 - Only 19.5% of Rwandan children aged 6-23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet (Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis 2021).

5 - Rwanda Nutrition, Markets & Gender Analysis (CIAT 2015).

6 - CFSVA 2021

7 - COVID-19 impact on food systems situation (GAIN, ed. 1/3 2020); health services (GFE, 2020); livelihoods, food security and nutrition (UN-Habitat & WFP, 2020).

8 - [The Cost of Hunger in Africa: Rwanda 2013](#).

9 - The Social Cluster meeting (June 2016) approved the linking of nutrition to social transfer schemes and the Ministry of Local Administration and the District of Nyamasheke included social protection safety nets in their respective frameworks. The 2018 national nutrition baseline found a 32% stunting prevalence amongst children aged 6-23 months.

10 - Data in this section excludes some regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. Data for 2022 are preliminary. The European Commission applied the methodology of the SUN Donor Network for nutrition resource tracking 2014-2020 and the OECD DAC's nutrition policy marker from 2021 onwards.