



Hunger pangs: Food (in)security in Tanzania

1. Introduction

Recent weeks and months have seen food security issues rise high on the national political agenda. Reports of food shortages were initially denied by top levels of government, but were later accepted. At the end of January 2017, the Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Dr Charles Tizeba, told parliament that a study conducted by the Ministry, in collaboration with various partners¹, had found that 55 districts (out of 169 in Tanzania including Zanzibar) were facing food shortages, and that “35,491 tonnes of food are required for supply between February and April 2017 to combat a shortage facing 1,186,028 people”² in these districts.

Minister Tizeba blamed the high food prices in many areas on maize-hoarding by

some dishonest businesspeople trying to take advantage of the situation, and to the high demand for maize in neighbouring countries that was pushing up domestic prices. He added that “the government has already started taking measures to contain the situation, which include releasing food from government stocks and selling it at an affordable price in affected areas”.

This uncertainty about the food situation has arisen in a context where economic growth in Tanzania in recent years has been strong (at an average of around 7% growth in GDP each year) but where these gains have not delivered a reduction in poverty at the pace that many would hope for. Two thirds of the population (68%) still live under the poverty line of USD 1.25 per day³, and

- 1 The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), Tanzania Food and the Nutrition Centre (TFNC), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and the University of Dodoma (UDOM).² <http://tanzaniainvest.com/finance/banking/bank-of-tanzania-bot-sets-80-percent-financial-inclusion-for-2017>
- 2 <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/home-news/48255-35-000-tonnes-for-distribution-to-hunger-stricken-citizens>
- 3 UNICEF: https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/tanzania_statistics.html

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Sauti za Wananchi



stunting is observed in as many as one third of all Tanzanian children under 5 years old⁴, despite some progress in recent years on nutrition in the country. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and UNICEF estimate that three quarters of children in Tanzania (74%) live in multi-dimensional poverty⁵.

This brief presents data on citizens' perceptions and experiences of the current food security situation and on its underlying drivers. How many households and communities are currently experiencing food shortages? Which are the scarcer crops? How does this compare with the situation a few months ago? How have food prices changed? And how many were already struggling to feed their households even before the current situation arose?

Data for the brief come from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. It is representative for Mainland Tanzania. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief, data were collected in two survey rounds from the second *Sauti za Wananchi* panel:

- i. 1,800 respondents, 13th round of calls to this panel, 14 - 26 September, 2016
- ii. 1,610 respondents, 16th round of calls, 9 - 15 February, 2017

The key findings are:

- Eight in ten households report that their income does not cover their daily needs
- Eight in ten households usually keep a stock of food in reserve in case a food shortage arises
- A huge majority of *Sauti za Wananchi* respondents (78%) report food shortages in their locations
- The price of maize has doubled in the past two years, even accounting for general price inflation
- Seven in ten households worried about running short of food in the past three months
- The household food security situation has worsened between September 2016 and February 2017

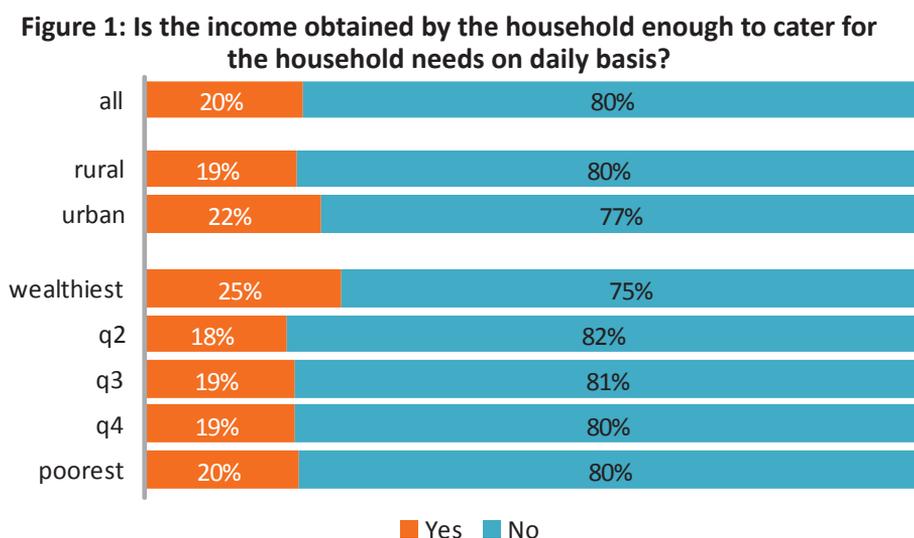
4 Global Nutrition Report, 2015: <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/129845/filename/130056.pdf>

5 UNICEF and NBS, Child Poverty Report, 2016: <http://www.nbs.go.tz/nbstz/index.php/english/statistics-by-subject/panel-survey-statistics/762-child-poverty-report-2016>

2. Eight facts about food security in Tanzania

Fact 1: Eight in ten households report that their income does not cover their daily needs

Eight in ten households (80%) report (in September 2016) that their income is not enough to cater for the household's needs on a daily basis. This figure varies little between urban and rural areas or between wealthier and poorer households, with the exception that a slightly smaller proportion of the wealthiest households (75%) say their income is insufficient.



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 13 (September 2016) n=1,800

Five in six households (85%) say that when their income is insufficient, they are forced to reduce spending, while smaller numbers say they would buy items on credit (6%) or borrow money (2%).

Asked to estimate how much money their household needs on a daily basis, the average of all estimates provided was TZS 1,777 per person or TZS 10,662 per household⁶. The per person figure is slightly higher in urban areas (TZS 2,247) than rural (TZS 1,579). It is also higher in wealthier households (richest 20% - TZS 2,304) than poorer households (poorest 20% - TZS 1,577).

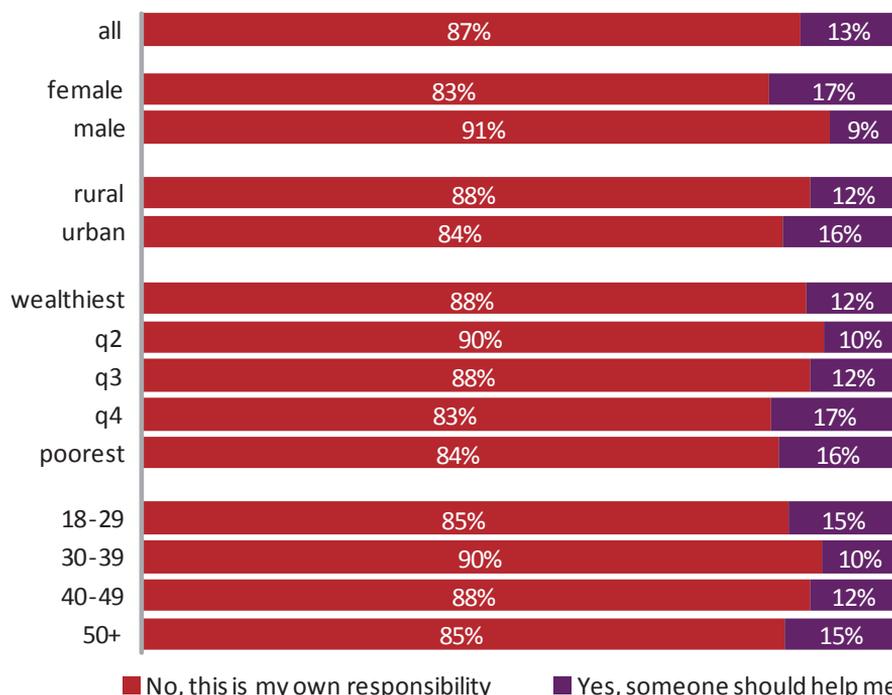
Fact 2: Nine in ten citizens feel it is their own responsibility to ensure they have enough money to run their household

A clear majority of citizens (87%) feel that if they don't have enough money to feed their family and run their household, they should not expect help from anyone else. Women

⁶ Assuming an average household size of six people, based on NBS 2012 data.

(17%) are slightly more likely than men (9%) to expect help from outside, but otherwise there are only very small differences between urban and rural areas, and different wealth and age groups.

Figure 2: Imagine you do not have enough money to feed your family and run your household, do you feel that somebody should be responsible for helping you or it is your own responsibility?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 13 (September 2016) n=1,800

Among those few who feel that someone should help them in such a situation, half (49%) say it is the government’s responsibility to provide this support. Smaller numbers believe that family members (36%) or friends and neighbours (7%) should help.

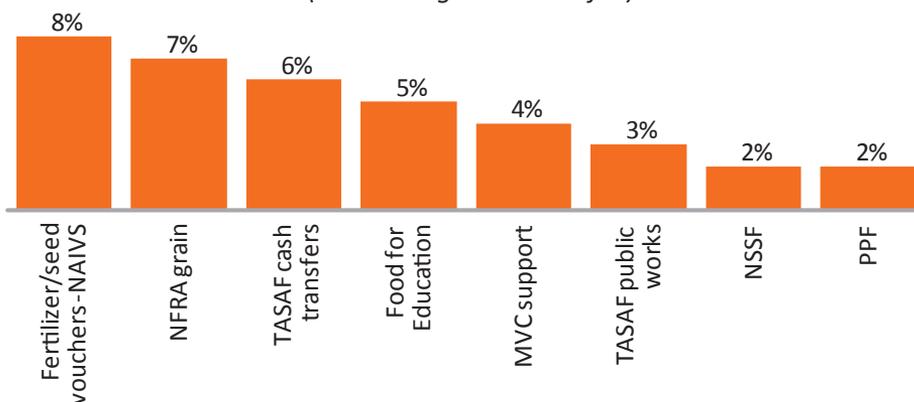
Fact 3: One in four households has received at least one benefit, pension or cash transfer in the past year

In the 12 months from September 2015 to September 2016, one in four households (25%) has received at least one benefit, pension or cash transfer from the following list:

- School uniforms, health cards, food, etc. from the Most Vulnerable Children (MVC) Program
- Free/cheap grains from village leaders and National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA)
- Meals at school provided by the Food for Education Program
- Public works employment provided by the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF)
- Conditional cash transfers provided by TASAF

- Vouchers for fertilizer/seeds provided by the National Agricultural Input Voucher Scheme (NAIVS)
- Payments from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF)
- Payments from the Public Service Pension Fund (PSPF)

Figure 3: Benefits / transfers received in past 12 months
(% receiving these benefits)

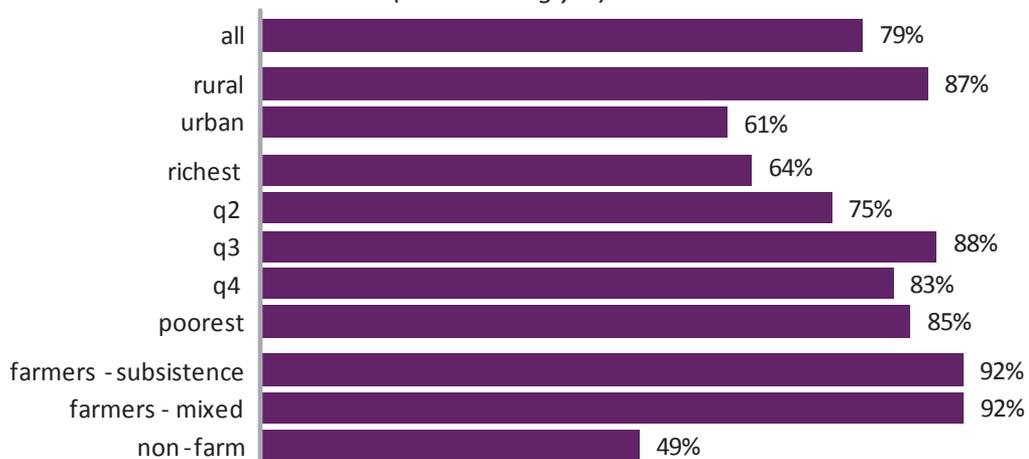


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 13 (September 2016)
n=1,800

Fact 4: Eight in ten households usually keep a stock of food in reserve ready for food shortages

Eight in ten households (79%), report that they generally have some food set aside in case a shortage or emergency arises. This figure is significantly higher in rural areas (87%) than urban (61%), and is generally higher among poorer households than wealthier households. It is also much higher among households that depend upon farming for the majority of their income (92%) than in households that depend primarily on other sources of income, such as businesses or employment (49%).

Figure 4: Does your household generally keep food for use in case of food shortage/emergency?
(% answering yes)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 16 (February 2017)
n=1,610

Fact 5: A huge majority of Sauti za Wananchi respondents (78%) report food shortages in their locations

A huge majority of Sauti za Wananchi respondents (78%) report food shortages in their locations. The situation is worse in rural areas with 84% reporting food shortages compared to 64% in urban areas.

Figure 5: Is the area where you live currently facing food shortages?
(% answering yes)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 16 (February 2017)
n=1,610

Fact 6: Maize prices have doubled in the past two years

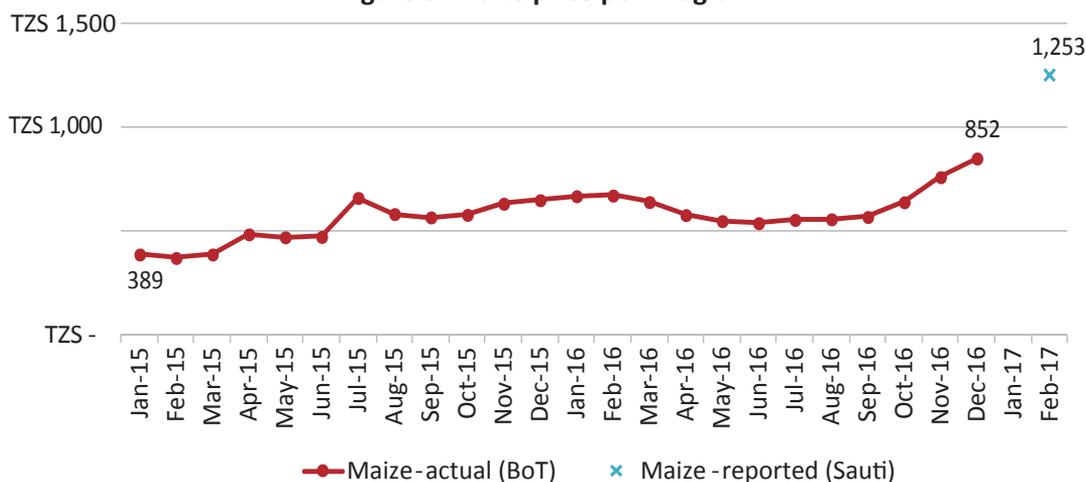
The price of maize as reported by the Bank of Tanzania⁷ has more than doubled in the past two years, from just under TZS 400 per kilogram in early 2015 to TZS 852 in December 2016. Even accounting for inflation, this represents a doubling of the price of maize over this period.⁸

7 Bank of Tanzania Monthly Economic Reports, available from <http://www.bot.go.tz/Publications/publicationsAndStatistics.asp>

8 If maize price increases since January 2015 had matched wider inflation trends in Tanzania, the price per kilogram in December 2016 would have been TZS 432. The actual price was double this amount, at TZS 852.

Sauti za Wananchi panel respondents report that the price has increased further since the latest Bank of Tanzania data was released, to around TZS 1,253 per kilogram. It must be noted, however, that this figure is based on reported prices in local markets, while the Bank of Tanzania figures are based on actual prices for wholesale maize supplies.

Figure 6: Maize price per kilogram



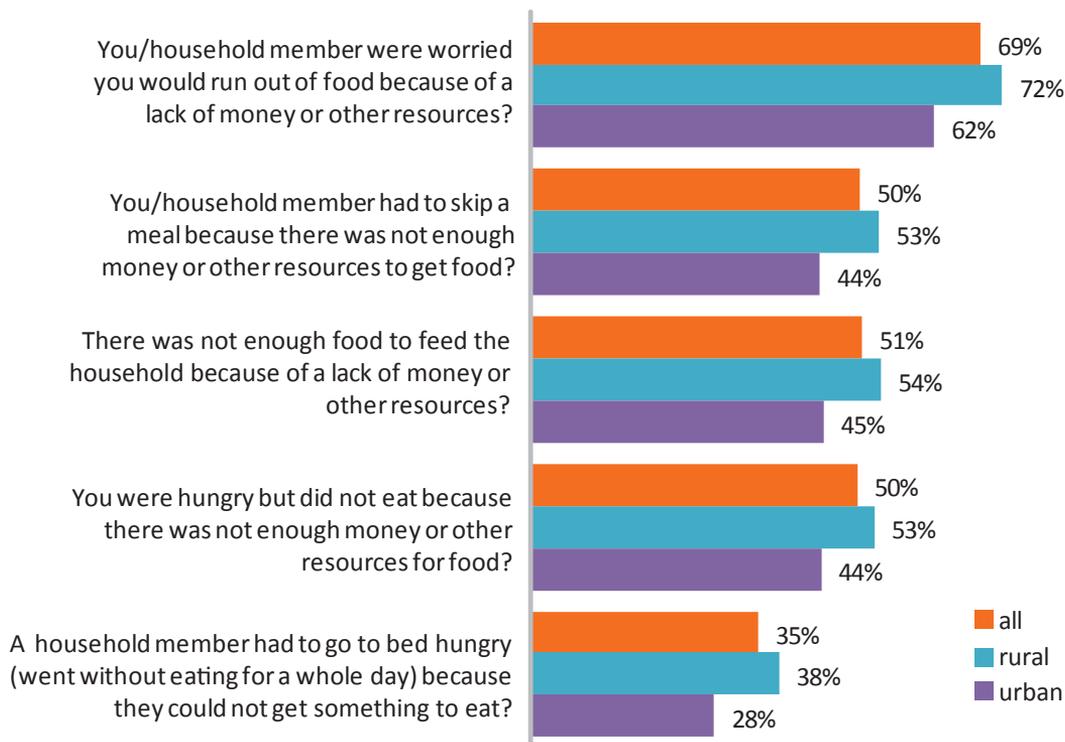
Sources of data: Bank of Tanzania Monthly Economic Reports, January 2015 - 2017
Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey, Round 16 (February 2017); n=1,610

Two in three households (68%) report that there are shortages of maize in their area, compared to less than one in twenty (4%) who report shortages of either rice or beans. Analysis of the same Bank of Tanzania price data show that rice and bean prices have not increased substantially above general inflation over the same two-year period since early 2015 (not shown in charts).

Fact 7: In the past three months, seven in ten households have worried about running short of food

During the past three months (November 2016 to February 2017), seven in ten households (69%) have worried about running out of food. Further, one in two households (50%) have been forced to skip meals due to a lack of money or other resources, and a similar number have either run out of food (51%) or gone without food when hungry (50%). In all these cases, this dimension of food insecurity is slightly worse in rural areas than in urban areas.

Figure 7: During the last three months, was there a time when ...
 (% answering yes)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 16 (February 2017)
 n=1,610

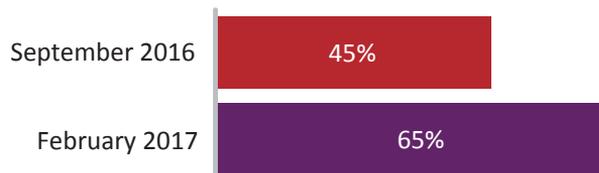
Fact 8: The food security situation has worsened between September 2016 and February 2017

In September 2016, fewer than half of households (45%) reported having worried in the past seven days that their household would not have enough to eat. In February 2017, two in three households (65%) report having such worries in the past seven days, a significant increase of 20 percentage points in five months.

Similarly, in September 2016, four in ten households (43%) reported having faced a situation in the previous 12 months where they did not have enough food to feed the household or the household ran out of food. Five months, later, in February 2017, five in ten households (51%) report that they have faced such a situation in the previous three months.

Figure 8: Experiences of food shortages in September 2016 and February 2017
(% answering yes)

In the past seven days, did you worry that your household would not have enough to eat?



Have you faced a situation when you did not have enough food to feed the household ?



Have any household members gone to bed hungry (not eaten for the whole day) because they could not get something to eat?



Sources of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 13 (September 2016); n=1,800 and Round 16 (February 2017); n=1,610

Finally, in the six months prior to September 2016, one in five households (21%) reported that a household member had gone to bed hungry because they could not get something to eat. In the three-month period to February 2017, one in three households (35%) faced a similar situation.

In all three cases, the data shows a substantial increase in food insecurity between September 2016 and February 2017. At the same time the data show a general prevalence of food insecurity in the country.

3. Conclusion

The data presented in this brief supports the findings of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and its partners that there is currently a serious food security problem in Tanzania. Bank of Tanzania data show that the price of maize has doubled in the past two years, even accounting for the wider inflation rate. This latest *Sauti za Wananchi* survey data suggests that the price of maize may have risen even further in the past two months. Further, the stories told by citizens themselves show that food security is a major current challenge. A huge majority of Sauti za Wananchi respondents (78%) report food shortages in their locations.

There is also evidence that food insecurity has become worse over the past few months. The proportion of households reporting that in the previous seven days they had worried about whether they would have enough food to eat rose from 45% to 65% between September 2016 and February 2017. Similarly, the number of households not having enough food to feed the household increased from 43% in September 2016 to 51% in February 2017, while the number of households where at least one person had to go without eating for the whole day increased from 21% to 35% over the same period.

The current food insecurity arises in the context of widespread income poverty, which makes many households very vulnerable. Eight in ten households reported in September 2016 that their income was not enough to meet their household's needs on a daily basis, and concerns about (and experiences of) running out of food were already high.

It is noteworthy that most citizens do not expect anyone to step in to assist them. A large majority (87%) don't feel that someone else should be responsible for helping them out when they don't have enough money to feed their family or run their household. This number is roughly consistent across all demographic groups. It dates from September 2016, however, before the situation reached its current level of intensity. It may simply reflect the reality that many felt they had no realistic chance of receiving any assistance. Just one in four households has benefited from any of the eight benefits, pensions or cash transfers schemes covered in this survey, for example. This leaves three quarters without any assistance to expect or rely on.

The government's recent acceptance that there is indeed a food security problem in Tanzania at the moment is welcome. It is not too late to mobilise and provide food assistance where it is most needed. Once the current urgency has passed, the problems will not end. We need to think carefully and honestly about how to solve the longer-term problems of poverty and vulnerability that leave too many citizens perilously and permanently on the edge of disaster.



