



Under less pressure?

Kenyans' views and experiences on livelihoods and food security

1. Introduction

Late 2016 and early 2017 saw lower-than-average rainfall across much of East Africa, contributing to a decline in food security. This showed in the seventh *Sauti za Wananchi* survey round, collected in September and October 2016, which found that more than half of all Kenyan households had run out of food at some point in the previous three months.

Other aspects of households' livelihoods can be put under strain when food is scarce, or indeed when other shocks are encountered. Most obviously this includes household finances, but also such matters as children's schooling and strategies for coping with emergency situations.

This research brief presents data on citizens' views on livelihoods, poverty and food security in Kenya. What forms of food stress did Kenyan households experience in 2018, and how has this changed since 2016? Which

households are affected most by food stress? Do citizens consider their household income to be sufficient to meet their daily needs? And what steps would they take if they ran out of money or faced an emergency?

Data for this brief comes from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi*, which is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief, data were collected from 1,637 respondents from Kenya's *Sauti za Wananchi* panel in the twenty-fifth round of calls to the panel, conducted between November 21 and December 17, 2018. The poll has +/-2.4% margin of error at 95% confidence level.

The key findings are:


- 1 out of 3 households earn their income mainly from crop farming

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Sauti za Wananchi

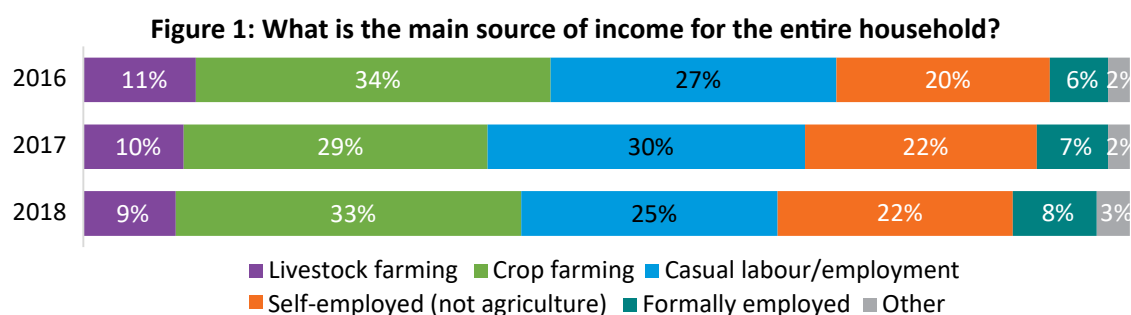


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- Livestock farming is highly concentrated among the poorest households and those with lower levels of education
 - Signs of food stress were markedly lower in 2018 than in 2016-2017
 - Households that depend on casual employment experience the highest levels of food stress
 - Fewer households in 2018 had to withdraw children from school for financial reasons than in 2016-2017
 - 1 out of 3 households say their income is enough to meet daily needs
 - Households that depend on casual employment are the least likely to say their income is sufficient
 - Households' main strategy when money is short is to cut their spending
 - In emergency situations, households depend most on family and friends for assistance

2. Seven insights about livelihoods, food stress in Kenya

Insight 1: 1 out of 3 households earn their income from crop farming

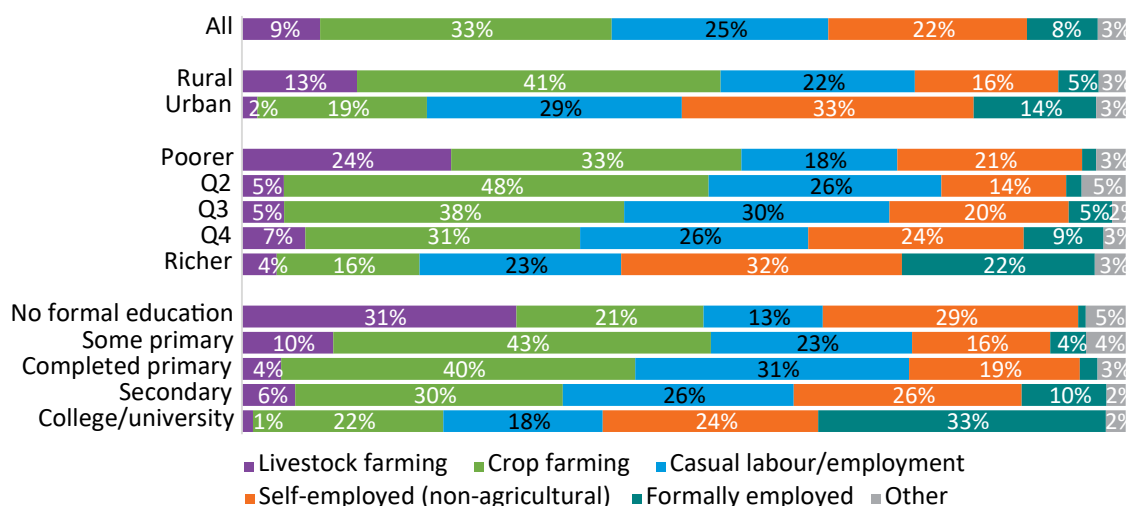
One out of three Kenyan households (33%) are dependent on crop farming as their main source of income – more than any other source. One out of four households (25%) earn their income mainly from casual labour or casual employment, and a slightly smaller number (22%) are self-employed (excluding agriculture). One out of ten households (9%) earn their income mainly from livestock farming, and a similar number (8%) from formal employment. These figures are largely unchanged since 2016, showing only a little annual variation.



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (Nov. 21 to Dec. 17, 2018; n=1,637) and Round 17 (Sep-Oct 2017; n=1,701)

There is, however, considerable variation between different types of household. Unsurprisingly, rural households are more likely to earn their income from livestock farming or crop farming than urban households, while residents of urban households are more likely to be formally employed or self-employed. Similar patterns can be seen when looking at household wealth and education – households with wealthier and better-educated members are less likely to earn the bulk of their income from agriculture and more likely to do so from formal employment or self-employment. Livestock farming is highly concentrated among the poorest households and those with lower levels of education.

Figure 2: What is the main source of income for the entire household?



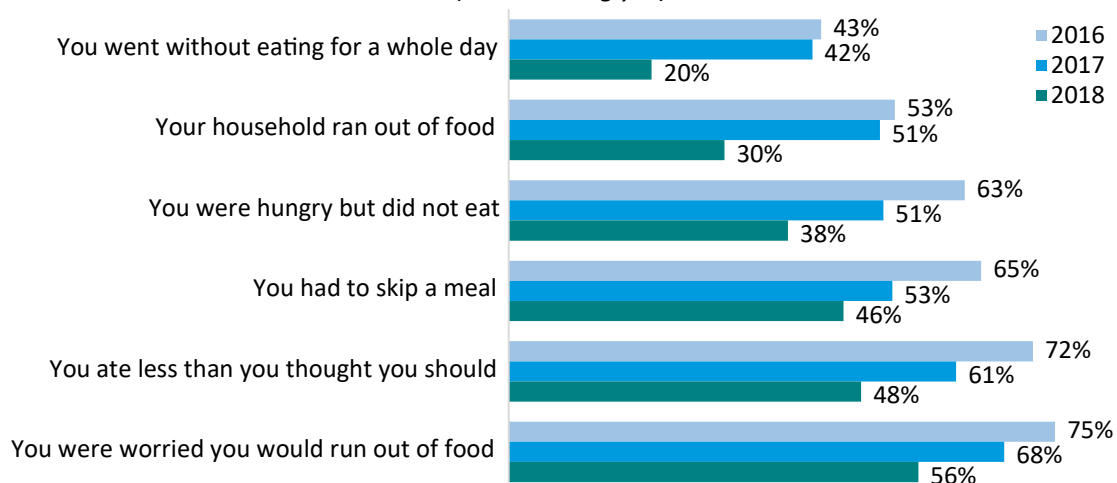
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (November 21 to December 17, 2018; n=1,637)

Insight 2: Signs of food stress were markedly lower in 2018 than in 2017

Across a range of measures of food stress, households report lower levels of difficulties in 2018 compared to 2017. Residents of half as many households in 2018 went without eating for a whole day due to a lack of money or other resources compared to 2016-2017 (down to 20% from 42%).

Similar falls can be seen in the number of households where a lack of money or other resources meant that members ran out of food (51% to 30%), were hungry but did not eat (51% to 38%), had to skip a meal (53% to 46%), ate less than they thought they should (61% to 48%) and worried about running out of food (68% to 56%).

Figure 3: During the last three months, was there a time when, due to a lack of money or other resources, ...?
(% answering yes)



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (Nov. 21 to Dec. 17, 2018; n=1,637), Round 17 (Sep-Oct 2017; n=1,701) and Round 7 (Sep-Oct 2016; n=1,739)

Insight 3: Households that depend on casual employment are most affected by food stress

There is little difference between the levels of food stress reported by households in urban and rural areas. In both cases, a little over half (54% in rural areas, 59% in urban) worried that they would run out of food, and one out of five (20% of both rural and urban households) had to go for a whole day without eating.

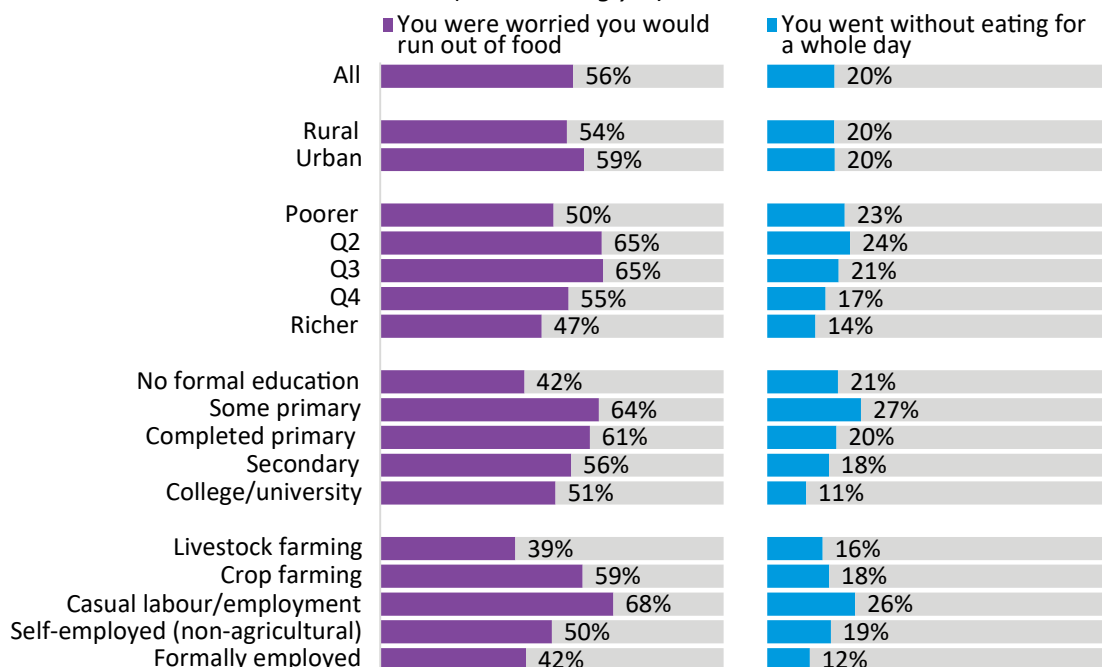
There are small differences in the experiences of poorer and wealthier households – with wealthier households experiencing slightly lower levels of food stress. Similarly, better-educated households generally show lower levels of food stress.

There is a more notable difference, however, between households with different sources of income. Those who depend most on casual employment feel greater pressure in regards to food stress than those who work in agriculture or formal employment or who are self-employed.

The households that experienced the lowest levels of food stress during 2018 are those that depend either on formal employment or livestock farming as their primary source of income.

Figure 4: During the last three months, was there a time when, due to lack of money or other resources..?

(% answering yes)



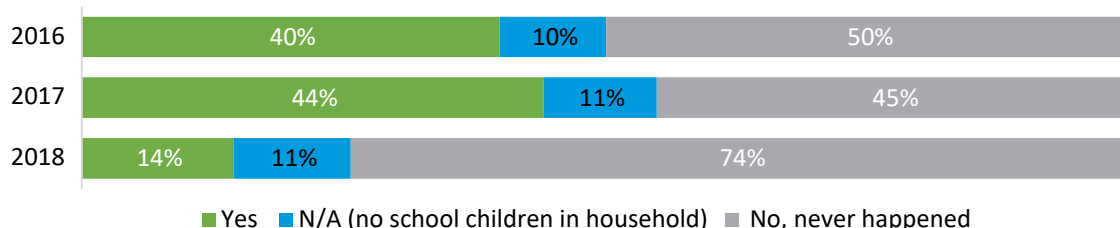
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (November 17 to December 17, 2018; n=1,637)

Insight 4: Fewer households had to withdraw children from school for financial reasons in 2018

Around one out of ten households (14%) had to withdraw a child from school for financial reasons during 2018, compared to four out of ten who did so in 2016 (40%) and 2017 (44%).

In terms of capitation grants, the government allocates KES 1,470 per child in public primary schools every year. For secondary day schools, the amount was increased to KES 22,244 starting January 2018 (from KES 12,870). The capitation grant for secondary boarding schools was increased to KES 22,244 to be paid directly to the school (KES 10,000 increase), leaving the parent to pay KES 53,554, almost equal to what they were paying before. The biggest beneficiary of the government subsidy among the 2.72 million students, will be those in day and special needs secondary schools.

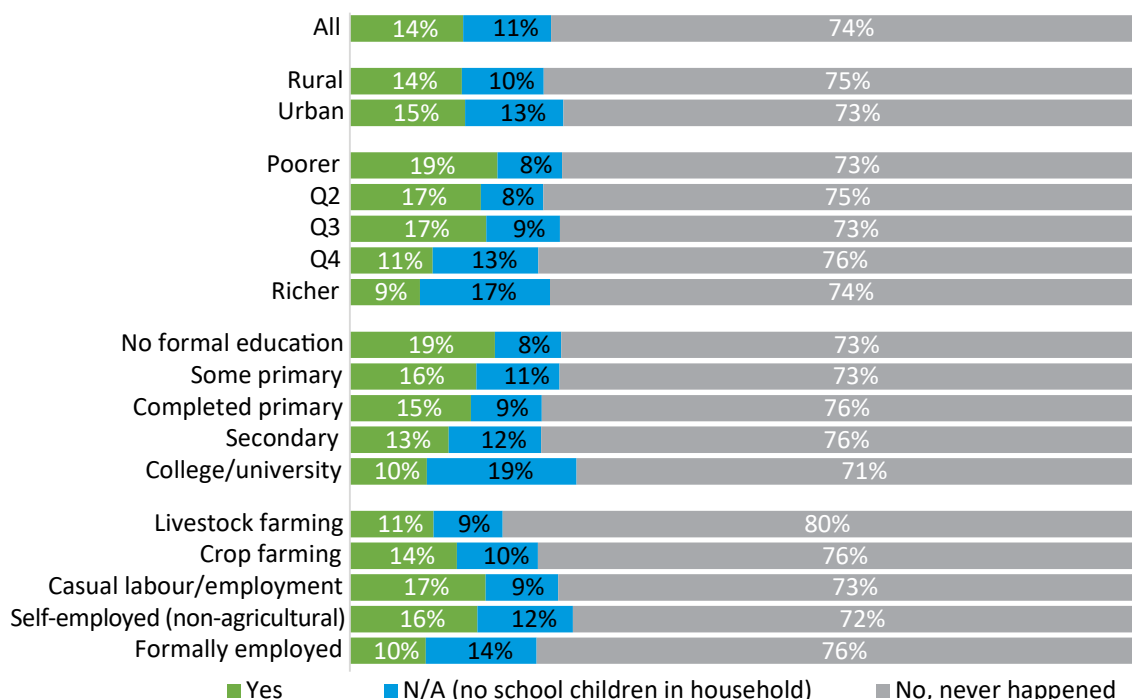
Figure 5: In the last 6 months, did any school-going household members have to drop out or stop going to school because school fees couldn't be paid, or school supplies couldn't be provided?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (Nov. 21 to Dec. 17, 2018; n=1,637), Round 17 (Sep-Oct 2017; n=1,701) and Round 7 (Sep-Oct 2016; n=1,739)

Withdrawing a child from school for financial reasons is a more common experience in poorer households and those with lower levels of education, as well as households that depend on casual-employment or self-employment. Once again, the households that experience this problem least often are those that depend either on formal employment or on livestock farming for their main source of income.

Figure 6: In the last 6 months, did any school-going household members have to drop out or stop going to school because school fees couldn't be paid, or school supplies couldn't be provided?



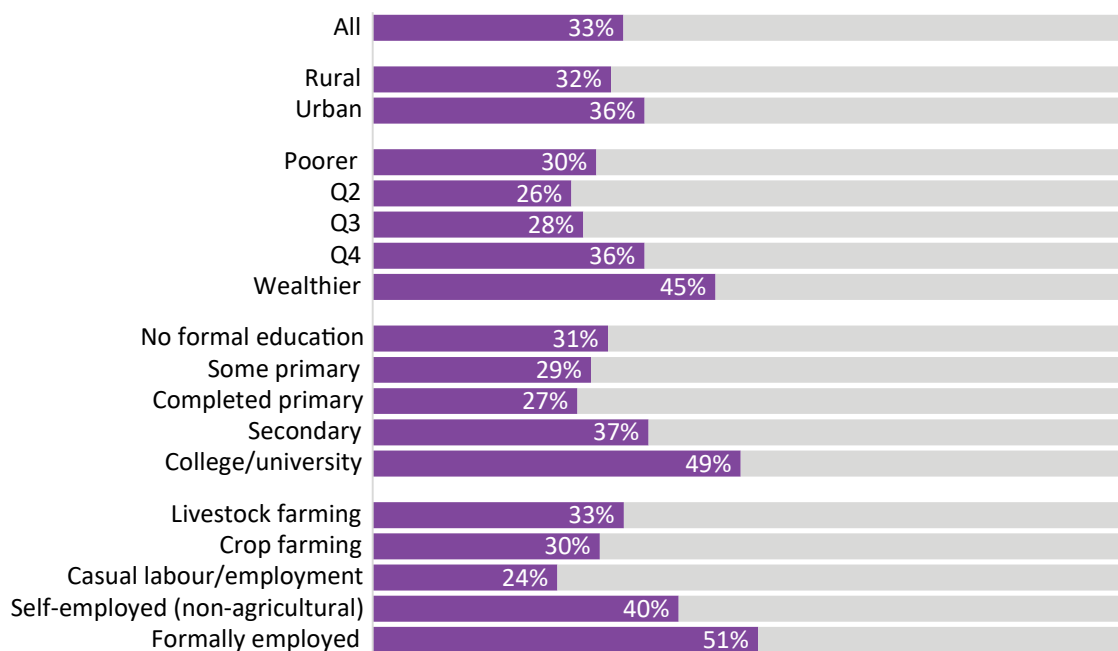
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (November 17 to December 17, 2018; n=1,637)

Insight 5: 1 out of 3 households say their income is enough to meet daily needs

One out of three households (33%) say their household income is enough to cater for their needs on a daily basis. This rises to 45% of wealthier households, 49% of those with college or university education, and 51% of households that earn income mainly from formal employment. Those households that depend on casual employment are the least likely (24%) to say their income is sufficient to meet their daily needs.

Figure 7: Is the income obtained by the household enough to cater for the household needs on daily basis?

(% answering yes)

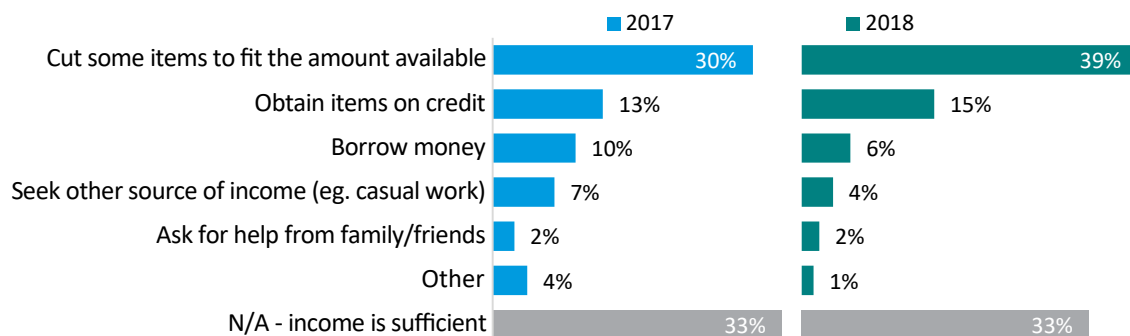


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (November 17 to December 17, 2018; n=1,637)

Insight 6: When money is short, households cut spending

Four out of ten households (39%) say they cut spending on some items when the money available to them is not enough – more than cite any other strategy. This is up from three out of ten (30%) who said the same in 2017. One out of six households (15%) would meet their needs by buying items on credit, and one out of twenty (6%) would borrow money.

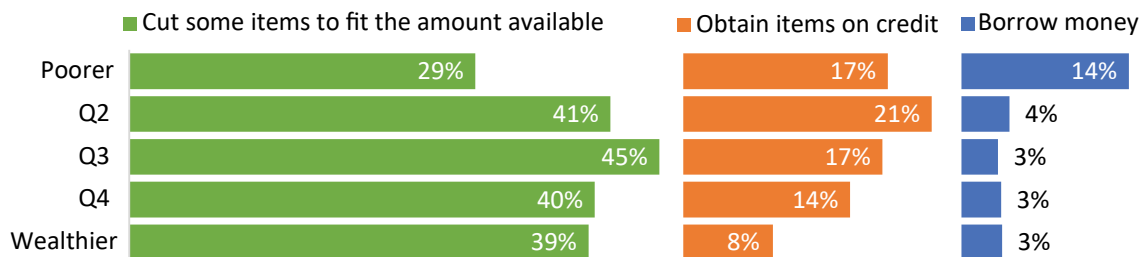
Figure 8: What happens when the amount available to run the household on a daily basis is not enough?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (Nov. 21 to Dec. 17, 2018; n=1,637) and Round 17 (Sep-Oct 2017; n=1,701)

Coping strategies vary considerably by household wealth – poorer households (as compared to wealthier ones) are least likely to cut their expenditure and most likely to borrow money.

Figure 9: What happens when the amount available to run the household on a daily basis is not enough?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (November 17 to December 17, 2018; n=1,637)

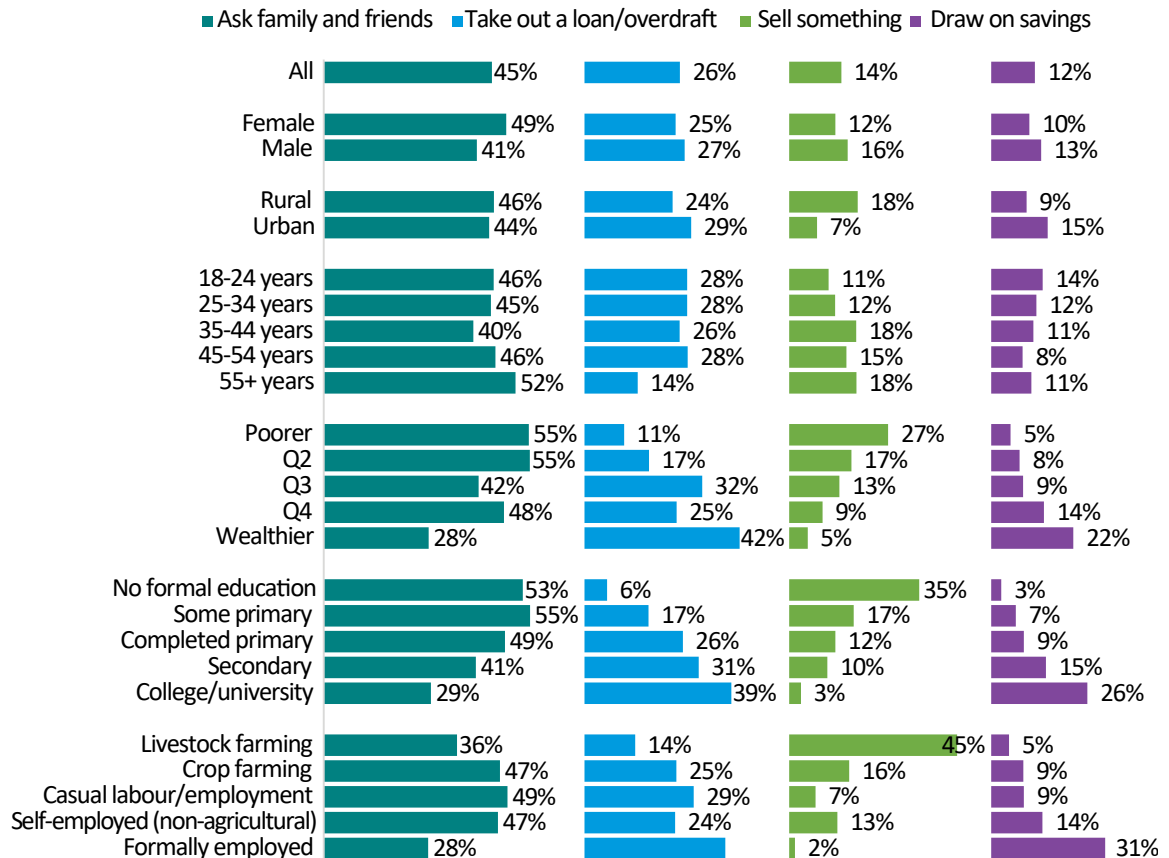
Insight 7: In emergency situations, citizens depend most on family and friends for assistance

Asked what they would do if they needed money in an emergency, close to half of citizens (45%) say they would ask for help from family and friends. One out of four citizens (26%) would take out a loan. One out of eight (14%) would sell something, and a similar number (12%) would draw on their savings.

Citizens who are wealthier, better educated or earn their income from formal employment, are more likely to draw on savings, when compared to others. Poorer and less well-educated citizens are more likely to call on family and friends.

Citizens in households that depend on livestock farming are more likely to sell something – possibly livestock – than to take any other course of action when in urgent need of money.

Figure 10: What would you do if you needed money in an emergency?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 25 (November 17 to December 17, 2018; n=1,637)

3. Conclusions

The top headline from this brief is that there has been a clear reduction in food stress since 2016. This conclusion holds across a range of measures and across all demographic groups. Fewer households now worry about running out of food, actually run out of food, or go without eating for a whole day.

This conclusion is clearly positive, though we should not allow it to obscure the fact that even at a time when food stress is considerably lower than two years ago, a significant number of households still face serious challenges in accessing food on a regular basis. One out of five households went for a whole day without eating at least once in the three-month period up to September 2018. That is equivalent to approximately two million households and ten million people.

We should also not let the good news distract us from how food stress is not spread evenly between households. It is neither an exclusively rural problem, nor exclusively urban, but varies considerably according to households' main source of income. Households that depend primarily on casual employment feel the pinch most severely, followed by those engaged in crop farming, while households that depend on formal employment, self-employment or livestock farming are better off in this regard.

This is not the only area in which livestock farmers are better off than others. As well as suffering less food stress, they are also less likely to have taken a child out of school for financial reasons and more likely to say their income is sufficient, compared to households that depend mainly on crop farming or on casual employment. This is despite households that earn their living through livestock being concentrated among the poorest in the country. Perhaps such households have lower expectations or lower standards of living that are cheaper to maintain? Or perhaps they are able to draw on a deeper reserve of wealth – in the form of livestock – than other households? Their primary strategy when faced with an urgent need of cash supports this second theory – they sell something.

But whatever the reason, the evidence here is that households that depend on livestock farming are better able to access food and income and to keep their children in school than those who depend on crop farming. And those who depend on casual employment face the biggest challenge. These variations can help the government to better target interventions when times are tough.

