

# City Overview on *Food and Nutrition of:*

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## Bungoma City, Kenya

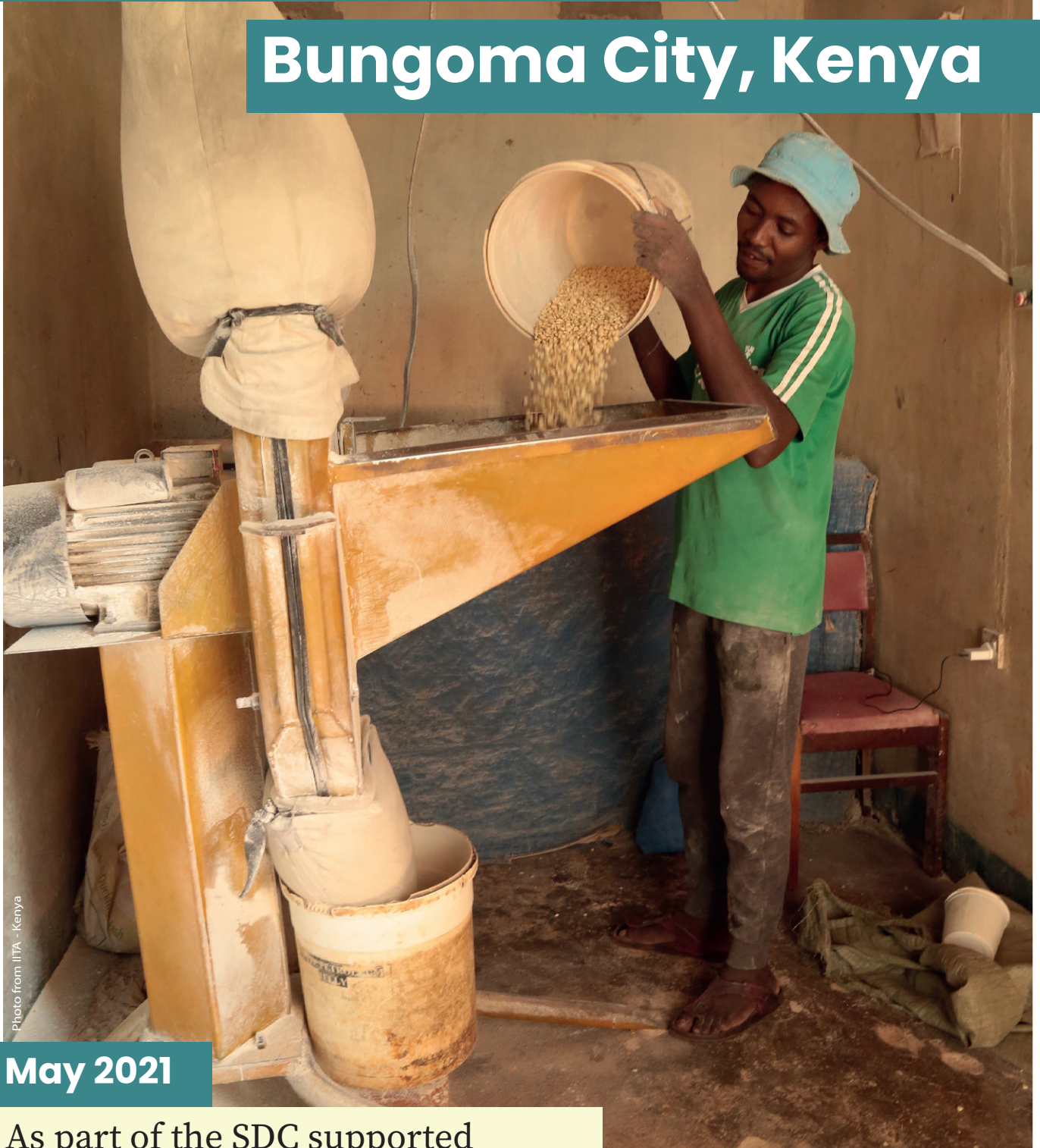


Photo from IITA - Kenya

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Farmer grinding maize seeds into  
maize flour with a *posho* mill, Bungoma



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Bungoma County

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**Bungoma City** is the principal city of Bungoma County in the Lake Victoria Basin western Kenya. In 2019 the population size of the municipality of Bungoma City was **269,764**<sup>1</sup>. The city is in one of the 13 sub-counties, approximately 35 kilometres away from the nearest border crossing in Malaba to Uganda. The main economies of the city are: **agriculture, manufacturing, services, general retail and tourism**<sup>2</sup>.

### Households in Bungoma County<sup>5</sup>:

- Having at least one member that **owns a mobile phone** 82%
- Having at least one member that **owns a car/truck** 4%
- Owning **agricultural land** 80%
- Owning **farm animal/livestock** 69%

### Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH)

In the Making More Health (MMH) program in Bungoma County, it was noticed that **many people do not have access to clean drinking water, especially the case in urban slums**. Many of the daily challenges of locals are related to water<sup>9</sup>.

**The Sirisia Chwele Water Project was rolled out in 2020** and will last five years; it aims at increasing access to quality and affordable water and sanitation services and will benefit over 50,000 residents of the Bungoma County. It involves, for example, **the construction of water kiosks and water treatment plants**, as well as conducting trainings on the awareness and sensitization of WASH issues<sup>10</sup>. In contrast to rural areas, in urban areas, the water conditions are more appropriate: 96% of the population in the urban areas of Bungoma County was using improved water sources monitored in 2014, against nearly 80% in the rural areas. Same counts for improved sanitation facilities with more appropriate conditions for urban households (57% have access) than rural households (43% have access)<sup>5</sup>.

**45% the population in Bungoma County lives in urban areas, 55% in rural areas**<sup>5</sup>

### Keyfigures Bungoma County

<b>Population size:</b>	<b>1,670,570</b> (2019) <sup>3</sup>
<b>Local tribes:</b>	Bukusu, Tachoni, Batura, Sabaot, Iteso and other Kenyan communities <sup>4</sup>
<b>Main languages:</b>	Luhya (Bukusu), Teso, Sabaot <sup>4</sup>
<b>Stunting rate children:</b>	<b>30.1%</b> (2018) <sup>6</sup>
<b>Food insecure households:</b>	<b>70%</b> (2017) <sup>8</sup>
<b>Poverty rate:</b>	<b>52.9%</b> (2013) <sup>7</sup>
<b>Average household size:</b>	<b>4.8</b> (2014) <sup>5</sup>

### Waste management

The county government is in charge of solid waste collection. Collected waste is transported and **dumped at Tuti dumpsite, a 4-hectare piece of land located 3 km from the town**, off the Bungoma-Malaba highway<sup>4</sup>. Bungoma County has embarked on widespread waste management and environmental conservation<sup>2</sup>. Organic waste is in some cases reinjected as fertilizer and animal feeds, in the case of sugarcane bagasse for example<sup>4</sup>.



# From farm to fork

## Production

**Farming is the main economic activity in the city and in its surrounding areas.** In cities, food production remains in many cases limited to subsistence farming. The main food crops include maize, beans, sorghum and millets. Cash crops include sugarcane, cotton, palm oil, coffee, tea and sunflower<sup>2</sup>. **Maize, however, is the dominant crop and makes up to 86% of crops being produced** in the county, followed by beans (9%) and other crops (5%)<sup>8</sup>.

## Processing

The main value chains in the city-region are turning **maize into flour, sugarcane into molasses, and coffee berries into coffee beans.** The processing in the county is mainly handcraft and the majority of processing plants can be considered small<sup>2</sup>. A common type of small machinery used for grinding cereals and pulses is the *posho mill*, which is popular in business or community milling.

## Organic production

Most farmers are not aware of organic and agroecological food and biodiversity. Thus, production practices are very poor in biodiversity and in variety diversity. Most commercial farmers have not embraced organic farming because of lack of knowledge and access to inputs to embrace modern farming methods. However, **subsistence smallholders' producers unintentionally grow organic**, due to their inability to access fertilizers or treated seeds<sup>4</sup>.

## Purchase and consumption

The food acquisition of the population of Bungoma is highly dependent on the seasons of harvest. In a study investigating during which months food scarcity hit hardest in Bungoma County, 60% of the respondents quoted April-June, 25% January-March, 12% July-September, and 2% October-December. The study revealed that, between October and December, people had plenty of food since each household could either harvest, or, if not farming, purchase goods for cheaper prices. **In April to June, on the other hand, most people would cut their meals to one a day due to the scarcity**<sup>11</sup>.

The majority of the population eats at home and does their groceries at the local markets; only a minority of families can afford to eat out in restaurants. Some go to **Chwele market for example, which is Kenya's largest open-air markets and just 40 minutes away from Bungoma City.** The market is a major meeting point for farmers from surrounding areas (Mt. Elgon, Namwela, Sirisia, Lurende, etc.), especially on Mondays when it's market day. Also retailers in Bungoma City go to this market to get their supplies<sup>4</sup>.

## Transport

The private sector competitively provides services of transport and distribution. Two popular transport service providers are Kampala Coach Ltd and Coast Bus Limited<sup>14</sup>. In terms of road conditions, the main ones are made of asphalt but most roads in town are made of gravel. The national road A104, being the crucial one, is going from the cross-border town Malaba land inwards passing Bungoma City<sup>4</sup>.



Photo from IITA - Kenya

Farmer transporting tomatoes on the back of this bicycle in Bungoma

# Women, youth and other vulnerable groups in the city–region food systems

Women in Bungoma County are involved in the production of maize, cassavas, beans, onions, tomatoes, cow peas, green grams and horticulture farming, while others are involved in the aggregation of cereals<sup>12</sup>. Among youth, **the popularity of seeking a career in agriculture is on the decline**. Many studies have sought to understand the reasons for this decline, many of them stating the lack of interest is based on limited access to land, lack of access to finance and school curricula not aligning with agriculture<sup>13,14</sup>. At the food-shed level, young people are engaging in value addition of some products like fruits and vegetables for the city middle class market<sup>4</sup>.

## Access to assets

The Kenyan government continues to be committed to supporting youth and women in agriculture through introduction of funding instruments, such as the **Youth Enterprise Development Fund** (est. 2007) and the **Women Enterprise Fund** (est. 2007) under the Ministry of Public Service, Gender and Youth Affairs. Both funds are flagship projects of Vision 2030, aiming at enabling youth and women and disabled people in gaining access to finances to promote businesses at the constituency level<sup>4,15</sup>.

## Main barriers for women to get access or improve their position in the food systems<sup>4</sup>:

Lack of:

- Access to credit
- Information on technologies due to missing extension services
- Household decision-making (e.g. budget allocation)

## Nutrition- and food production-related programs active in Bungoma<sup>4</sup>:

- Nutrition International Agriculture and Rural Development Innovation
- Ace Africa Kenya
- Agricultural Sector Development Support Program (ASDSP)
- Welthungerhilfe (WHH)
- Andy's Greens
- Minto Cooperative Organization
- Springs of Hope
- St. Ann Women Group
- MumBouzuma Enterprises
- Mabanga Ladies of hope
- Anglican Development Services Western
- Rosevero (K) limited



Woman on a local market in Bungoma

Photo from IITA, Kenya



# Policies, governance, advocacy for food and nutrition

## Policy framework

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya marked a turning point in the country's history as it reconfigured the balance of power by devolving power and responsibilities from the national government to 47 elected county governments. **Agriculture and Health are both devolved functions** in the counties, and therefore the cities, can act with strong authority to make decisions in compliance with the existing Constitution from 2010 as well as existing national legislation and policies. In the Bungoma County, the government structure consists of two arms: the executive and the legislative. The executive arm is headed by the governor who is elected by the voters in the region and assisted by the head of county public service, county secretaries, county directors and staff under the various departments. The legislative arm consists of the county assembly who is elected by registered voters of the wards and is headed by the County Speaker<sup>4</sup>.

The first comprehensive legal framework for climate change governance in Kenya:

### Climate Change Act (No. 11 of 2016)

It provides for mechanisms and framework to achieve low carbon development. This provides a legal introduction of agroecology as it is a low carbon agricultural practice.

## Lacking policies

There is a lack of policies and regulations regarding **urban farming and peri-urban farming**. Same for informal markets; **no particular laws concerning informal markets** exist at this moment, but environmental management regulations are expected to be implemented<sup>4</sup>.

## Main national policies aligning with NICE

- **The Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS) (2019-2029):**  
This strategy is the overall national policy document for the agricultural sector in Kenya, which comprises crops, livestock, fisheries, land, water, cooperatives, environment, regional development and forestry. The policy recognizes that the development and growth of the agricultural sector is anchored in, among other areas, developing and managing key factors of production such as land, water, inputs, and financial resources. A key goal of the strategy is food and nutritional security for all Kenyans that shall be attained especially by increasing smallholder productivity. This strategy recognizes environmental preservation as a key component of sustainability of agricultural value chains.
- **Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy (KCSAS) (2017-2026):**  
The objective of the KCSAS is to adapt to climate change and build the resilience of agricultural systems, while minimizing GHG emissions. The three main objectives are to: (1) sustainably increase agricultural productivity and incomes; (2) adapt and build resilience to climate change; and (3) reduce and/or remove greenhouse gas emissions.

## County specific action plans

- **Bungoma County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) (2018-2022):**  
This plan outlines the process through which efforts at national and devolved levels of the government and other relevant public institutions are coordinated at the local level to bring economic, social, environmental, legal and spatial aspects of development together to meet the needs and targets set for the benefit of local communities by linking policy, planning and budgeting altogether.
- **Bungoma County Annual Development Plan (CADP) (2020-2021):**  
Yearly budget making process where various departments formulate their respective inputs to the plan outlining expenditure per priority program as well as allocation of resources to cover all departments in the county.



Young person selling bananas, cassava, oranges, pineapples and other fruits on a Bungoma market

Photo from IITA - Kenya



# Shocks to the food systems

At the onset of the COVID-19 some food systems in Kenya, including food value chains in Bungoma County, faced a **'triple menace'**: COVID-19, a locust invasion and extreme weather arriving all at once and mutually exacerbating each other. As a consequence, the agri-food supply chains have been heavily disrupted, straining the livelihoods of millions of people who depend on the food systems as well as those who depend on their purchases.

The numbers are disturbing: an estimated 6.22 million people in Kenya, over 10% of the entire population, were facing a stressed, crisis or emergency food insecure situation, as of September 2020. At that time, **the number of people unable to access or afford safe nutritious food is even higher**<sup>16</sup>. In addition, floods, droughts and soil erosion continue to heavily affect the access and availability of food, worsened by the general lack of safe and cold storage facilities<sup>4</sup>.

Selling dried legumes, dried cassava, cassava flour and finger millet in Bungoma



Photo from IITA - Kenya



# Final notes

The Bungoma City Consultation, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2021, with government officials, representatives of the civil society, youth, business, press, media and cultural organizations as invitees, gave the following outcomes<sup>17</sup>.

## Main issues

- Lack of diversification in local food production
- Lack of information on dietary value of local food crops
- Lack of food safety regulations
- Lack processing and storage opportunities
- Lack of urban and peri-urban farming policy

## Drivers for a nutrition vital city

- Demand for healthier diets / food choices in institutions (schools/prisons).
- Youth and women inclusion and capacity development and digitization.
- Awareness of producers, aggregators, retailers, marketeers and consumers.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination.
- Reliable and trusted supply chain.

## Areas for opportunities

- Youth in ICT technologies
- Women in value addition
- Land ownership still an issue for women
- Decision-making still an issue for women

## Bottlenecks for a nutrition vital city

- **Supply side:** drought, quality of inputs, pests and diseases, floods, value addition and storage.
- **Demand side:** changing habits (consumption of vegetables not accepted), energy requirements, consumption and utilization.
- **Lack of information and consumer awareness** on the health and nutrition.
- **Lack of access to market and supply.**
- **Lack of access to finance for starting innovative nutrition initiatives.**
- **Lack of food certification for food safety for imported produce.**

## Nutrition priorities

- Children under 5 years
- Women of reproductive age
- Adolescents (lifestyle choices)
- The elderly & people living with disabilities with no support system



Photo from ILTA - Kenya

Kale crop, also known as *Sukuma Wiki* literally meaning „Push the week“, in a field close to Bungoma City. It is considered a poor mans' crop „pushing one through the week“.

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**NICE (Nutrition is City Ecosystems) is an SDC co-financed project implemented by a Swiss public-private partnership.**

Endorsed by the World Food Programme (WFP), this project aims to connect the supply and demand side of food systems, engage women and your people – including through social business models - and build local governance capacity initially in two secondary cities each in Bangladesh, Kenya and Rwanda. Emphasis is placed on increasing the production and demand for local, agroecological, diverse and affordable foods, and on making food value chains more nutrition-focused so they contribute to better health, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboration brings together city authorities, local businesses and civil society, creating a dynamic network of city learning hubs for dissemination and scaling-up.

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## Limitations

The majority of sources stem from the context assessment and city consultation processes that were arranged during the NICE project inception phase (January-May 2021). These sources are largely qualitative and have been put forward by city leadership, local stakeholders, and consultants to the project.

We acknowledge the efforts of all those that have contributed to this City Overview. The information was consolidated by Sophie van den Berg under the oversight of Dominique Barjolle from ETH-Zürich Group of Sustainable Agroecosystems, Department of Environmental Systems Science. Any views and ideas expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not imply or reflect the opinion of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation or the NICE consortium member institutions. We invite you to share this information freely. The suggested citation is Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) Project City Overview Series (2021).



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