

City Overview on *Food and Nutrition of:*

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Busia City, Kenya



May 2021

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«**Nutrition in City Ecosystems**»
(NICE) project

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Sorghum field in Busia



NUTRITION *in*
CITY ECOSYSTEMS



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30% of Busia City is the **urban centre**, 70% is **peri-urban and rural** in nature ⁸



The average household size in Busia County is **4.5** ³

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Busia City is a city bordering with Uganda and part of Busia County, which falls within the Lake Victoria Basin. The main economies of Busia City are agriculture, trade and fishing¹.

The climate is **fairly moist** (760 to 1,750 mm of precipitation annually) with a **quite consistent temperature throughout the year** (21-23°C). The northern areas of the county have higher precipitation rates than the southern areas closer to Lake Victoria. In the first half of the year (from January to June) there is a slightly greater amount of precipitation than in the second half (July-December)².

In 2019 ³	Busia City	Busia County
Population size	113,753	886,856
Total surface area	45 km ²	1,696 km ²
Population density	2,508 persons per km ²	527 persons per km ²

Local tribes:	Teso, Luhya, Luo, Kikuyu, Somali, Kisii and other Kenyan communities ⁴
Main languages:	English, Kiswahili, Teso, Luhya ⁴
Dominant religion:	Christianity ³
Health in the county	
Stunting:	22% (2014) ⁶ 26.5% of children under 5 years (2018) ¹
Malnourishment:	31% of children under 5 years (2018) ¹
Underweight:	9.5% of children under 5 years (2014) ⁶

Households in Busia County currently **get their water from**¹:

2016	• Boreholes:	46%
	• Rivers:	19.1%
	• Springs:	22.3%
	• Piped water:	12.5%

Households **sanitation coverage** in Busia County⁷:

2014	• Improved:	32.8%
	• Shared:	27.8%
	• Unimproved:	31.4%
	• Open defecation:	8%



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Cassava on-farm

From farm to fork

Production

The broad agricultural production systems in the county include crop cultivation, livestock rearing and fisheries. These are mainly carried out on a subsistence level for household or local consumption. The main types of crops grown in Busia County include maize, cassavas, finger millets, beans, sorghum, rice, sweet potatoes, cowpeas, groundnuts, bananas, green grams, sesame, soya beans, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane, palm oil, and pepper. **The predominant cereal crop grown is maize (78%).** Some of the horticulture crops include pineapples, tomatoes, cabbages, water melons, local vegetables, papaya, jack fruit, amaranth, onions and mangoes. Among livestock, the main animals owned by the population are zebu cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and chicken⁹.

Livestock production remains rare but there is an expected increase in dairy production because of the **introduction of appropriate insurance packages.** The introduction of crop and livestock insurance (ACRE Africa) in the last three years is beginning to provide hope for many smallholders.

Overall, farmers in Busia are well-organised. Cooperatives exist for every major value chain, promoting their products through local radio stations such as Bulala FM and Murembe FM and linking with markets via mobile phone, email and social media².

Processing

Food processing is beginning to pick up with the demand from the growing middle class in urban areas. However, **most processing plants are still handcraft.** Some of the processing plants include three peanut butter companies, Kosiang Women Group, Wekhoya Women Group and Wamama Pamoja, all companies with only women workforce. Wamama Pamoja, located in the centre of Busia City, does retail too, selling peanut butter and sesame seed paste to the local population and at some exhibitions in other counties. Most of their raw materials are sourced from the local markets, some peanuts come from Uganda. Their organic waste is fed to the chicken they own⁴.

Keynumbers^{1,3,4}

65% of the **total earnings** in Busia County comes from agriculture

Average farm size in the county is **0.7 ha**

Close to **20%** of the total farming area in the county goes out to **cash crop production**

The **existing value chains** in the region are able to **feed about 65%** of the city population during the **high production seasons** and **50%** during **low production seasons**

Drought remains the main constraint for both crop and livestock production, given that not even **1%** of the **arable land in the county is under irrigation**

Purchase and consumption

In Busia City one finds the **Busia Municipality Market** with fruits, vegetables and cereals located +/- 200 meters away from the border with Uganda. **Posta market**, another open-air market offers all kinds of food products as well as non-perishable goods. A popular product sold at this market is fish, also sold at a smaller market minutes away from Posta market entirely dedicated to fish. Other markets close to Busia City include the **Nambale market** in sub-county Nambale selling fruits, vegetables, cereals and livestock, and the **Bumala market** in sub-county Butula located South-East of Busia City, offering a similar range of products as the Nambale market¹⁷. Food consumption generally takes place at people's homes, especially for the urban poor. Some traditional non-expensive meals can also be found in eating establishments visited by local residents. Town restaurants offer more extensive menus and are, by most people, often seen as expensive⁴.

The population of the county spends on average **42% of their budget on food** ⁵

Cassava under value addition process in Busia



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Indigenous crops

Indigenous crops, which are an inherent part of the local culture and traditional health practices, **remain underutilized apart from the ethnic group Teso**. The low consumer awareness of the nutritional value of indigenous crops, coupled with poorly developed value chains and the stigma of **traditional plants as ‘food for the poor’** are leading to the disappearance of many nutrient-rich species and the shift to unhealthy diets that could play an important role in decreasing malnutrition and nutrient deficiency.

To take an example, **the leafy African Nightshade vegetable contains up to 16 times more iron than kale¹⁰**, which could potentially play a benefitting role in the reduction of the iron deficiency rates in Busia County. The adoption of the innovative Busia County Biodiversity Policy 2016-2023 aims at stimulating the production and consumption of these crops by, for example, installing county and sub-county biodiversity centers for local communities⁹.

Busia is one of the busiest border crossings in East Africa¹

Trade

Busia is one of the busiest border crossings in East Africa. Most of the food imported into Busia comes from Uganda and the neighboring counties Kakamega, Bungoma and Siaya. Major import commodities from neighboring counties are maize, tomatoes, bananas, Irish potatoes, onions, common beans and green grams⁴.

Busia’s newly build Jumuia Cross-Border integrated market

Traders in Busia City will benefit from a newly build Busia Jumuia Cross-Border integrated market. The retail section is expected to be ready by 2022, and will host at least 2,000 traders. **It will also include all-weather stores, stalls, and cold rooms for perishable goods.** The market will provide a channel through which the government and other partners can provide trade and market information to traders. This 13.1-million-dollar project is being funded by the government of Kenya and Trade Mark East Africa (TMEA)¹¹.

Organic production

The traditional production practices may be categorized as organic production because only small amounts of fertilizers are used in production, due to their high cost. We also see that chemical fertilizers are mainly used in the production of maize.

In terms of the use of fertilisers, **the utilization in the county is relatively low with 41%**, inorganic fertilisers utilization being 22% and organic fertiliser use being 25%. Male-headed households use basal fertilisers more often with 25%, whereas female- and youth headed households use them with 8% and 4% respectively. This difference is most likely attributed to the degree of resource accessibility per group; women and youth having less access².



Crowded commercial area, Busia City

Transport

Currently, the total road network in the county is approximately 1,600 kilometers, of which 170 kilometers are tarmac roads, 590 kilometers are gravel roads and 840 km are earth roads. Since the majority are **earth roads and their maintenance is generally poor** this is a major challenge for the county and city-region of Busia; **some roads are impassable during the rainy season** due to the lack of appropriate drainage, among other constraints. Moreover, with only 11 km of railway in the Bungoma County and only a station in Malaba Town, the construction of this railway is insignificant to resolve the road problems¹.

The Department of Roads in Busia County is working on upgrading some of the roads (over 10 kilometers in total) in Busia’s Central Business Districts (CBD) and Kocholya Township to “bitumen” (liquid holding asphalt together). They also plan to **upgrade some of the earth roads to gravel**, strengthen bridges and construct so-called “box culverts” to let water flow under roads⁴.

Some of the transport vehicles seen in Busia are Kamosing Arrow SPAC Youth, matatus (privately owned mini-buses), the local boda bodas (bicycle/motorcycle taxis), lorries, buses and pick-ups, commonly driven by males⁴.

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

Around 75% of the farmers in the city-region of Busia are women aged 35-50 years, less than 5% aged between 21-29. Together with women, youth is also active in value addition activities (such as food processing) for the city market and informal trade at the border with Uganda⁴.

In general, vulnerable groups are small-scale operators across the value chains. The COVID-19 restrictions, such as limited movement, and the aggravating climate conditions (droughts and floods), among other factors, have a higher negative impact on these groups. Women are the most affected by the hazards since they have limited access to resources, have to spend more time looking for food and are expected to take care of their families after any type of disaster, such as floods, because of their responsibility for household subsistence².

Main barriers for women to get access or improve their position in the food systems⁴:

Lack of:

- Access to finance
- Literacy
- Land access
- Household decision-making (e.g. budget allocation)

Informal settlements

Informal settlements, especially in the peri-urban areas, are rapidly growing. These temporary structures are **mostly made of iron roofs and mud walls, or iron sheets for roofs and walls**. In between these settlements in peri-urban areas, there are tracts being used for agriculture. The County Executive in charge of Urban Planning aims at solving this issue by slum upgrading, urban environment control, the **provision of low-cost housing**, among other interventions. Informal settlements within the municipality are the settlements of Maduwa, Mayenje, Bumula and Bulanda, in the Marachi estate⁸.

Cross border trade by women

The Busia City is, together with Malaba, among Kenya's main gateways to the East African market. **Women make up the majority of the total small-scale traders**. According to the Kenya-based tech platform, Sauti, a survey research at the Busia and Malaba border crossings on the Kenya/Uganda border revealed that over **50% of women in cross-border trade encountered corruption or harassment in the week before the survey**, while 81% had experienced it at least once a month. Women traders also indicated that police (59%) and revenue authority officials (18%) were the main instigators of harassment when crossing the border¹².



Approximately 50 street children have been identified in Busia town, some of them coming from the neighboring country Uganda¹

Transport of trees by motorcycle, Busia City

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 Busia 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 Speaker⁴.



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Woman in sorghum field in Busia

Busia's Biodiversity Conservation Policy

Busia County was the first of Kenya's 47 counties to endorse a **Biodiversity Conservation Policy (2016-2023)**. Emphasizing the economic and nutritional potential of underutilized indigenous crops, this policy represents the engagement and research development among a range of multi-level partners including policy-makers, farming groups, school procurers, women's organization among others.

This policy's focus is four-fold: (1) enhancing biodiversity conservation, (2) improving access to and ensuring equitable sharing of the benefits of county biodiversity, (3) promoting biodiversity utilization and (4) promoting biodiversity research and development⁹. **Nutrient rich native crop species offer a promising solution** to the region's high rates of malnutrition, stunting, anemia and other deficiencies.

Urban farming and informal markets policies are non-existent in Busia County⁴

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: (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

- **Busia 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 together.
- **Busia County Annual Development Plan (CADP) (2020-2021):**
This is a 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.
- **Busia County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) (2019-2023):**
This is the overarching framework for coordination, implementation and mobilization of resources for nutrition interventions in health and other key line county departments.

Shocks to the food systems

Busia County continues to suffer from low agricultural productivity due to the **declining soil fertility** and the increase of **extreme weather events causing droughts and floods**¹. These events translate into weakening the socio-economic development of the county's population, especially women².

The COVID-19 outbreak, which led to movement restrictions and closure of local markets, severely impacted the city-region food systems too by inducing **major stress on food availability and access**⁴.



Local market in Busia City

Final notes

The Busia City Consultation, held on 21st of January 2021, with government officials, representatives of the civil society, youth, business, press, media and cultural organizations as invitees, gave the following outcomes¹⁴.

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

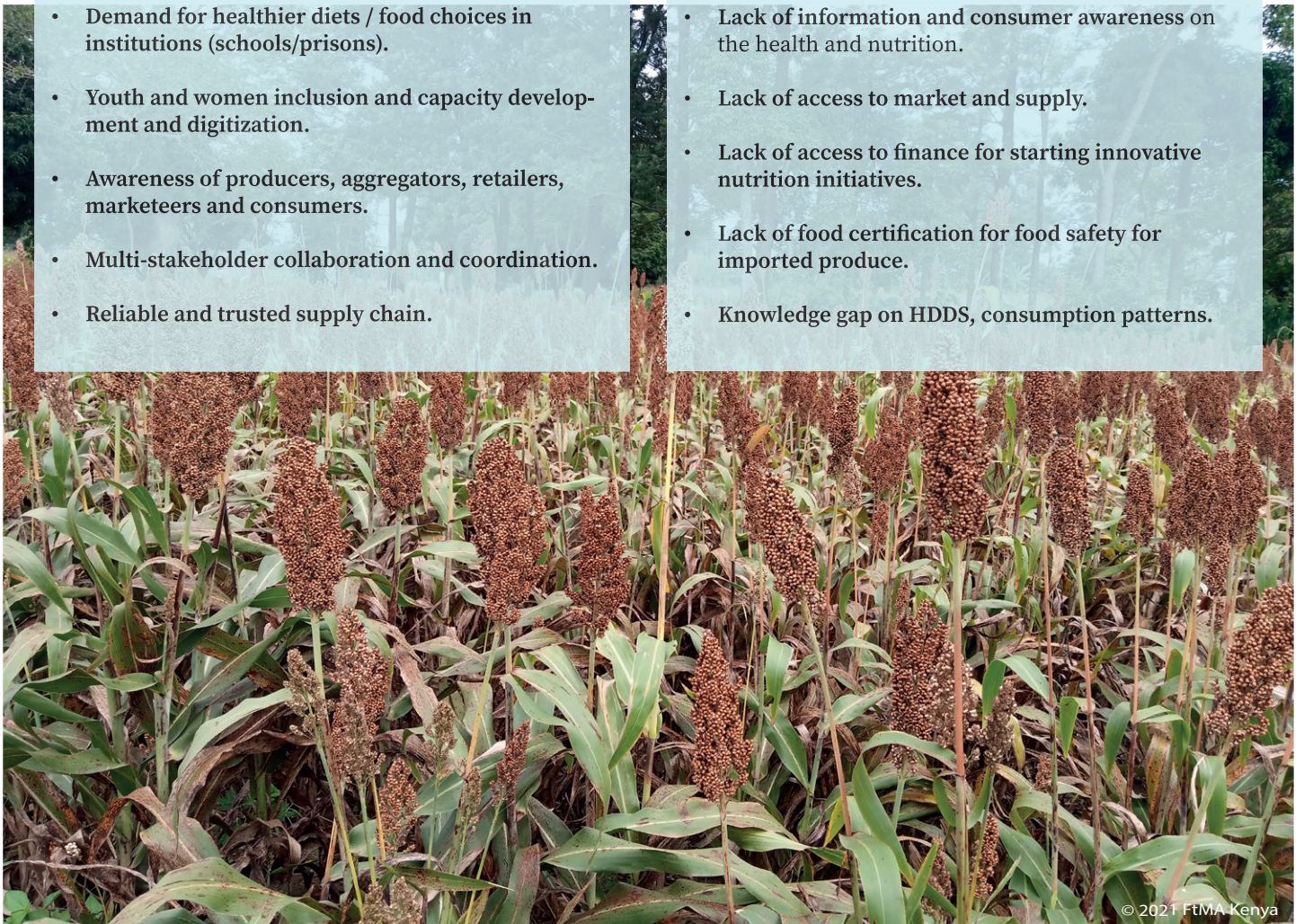
- High demand for healthy nutritious foods.
- Demand for healthier diets / food choices in institutions (schools/prisons).
- Youth and women inclusion and capacity development and digitization.
- Awareness of producers, aggregators, retailers, marketeers and consumers.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration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

Opportunities for a nutrition vital city

- Good clean food market interventions.
- Periodic stakeholder forums (state and non state actors).
- Operationalize nutrition technical forums from county to sub-county and sub-county to ward.
- Coordination between national and county administrators.
- Use of media (local, mainstream and social media).
- Capacity building of ToTs (Training-of-Trainers) to cascade information to other levels.

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.
- Knowledge gap on HDDS, consumption patterns.



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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).