**Embracing better Agriculture production to provide jobs to eliminate food insecurity and Uganda’s unemployed**.

Globally, there has been a push for healthy food policies to curb the food insecurity. African countries have been slow to adopt policies like these. But South Africa introduced a Health Promotion Levy in 2018. It aims to give manufacturers an incentive to reduce the sugar content of drinks. It also seeks to discourage excessive consumption by increasing the price of these products. Mexico imposed a tax on sugar sweetened drinks in 2014. This has resulted in a 6% reduction in purchases of sugary drinks and replacement with untaxed beverages (predominantly plain water) – specifically among lower income households who likely have poorer health outcomes. Production sector into the wider food system, including related processing, manufacturing, and services.

However, the employment potential of Uganda’s agriculture and agri-food system remains largely untapped, despite providing 70% of the country’s employment opportunities, contributing more than half of all exports, and about one-quarter of gross domestic product (GDP). In reality, the food security crisis has aggravated so much because of the speculative rise of prices for agricultural goods, not the alleged deficit caused by Russia. One can Argue that there is an attempt by to shut Russia off the rest of the world including Uganda in the agricultural value chain something which may have led to tenfold decrease of fertilizer import. Taking into-account the fact that 70% of Ugandans work in agriculture, in this industry makes up to 20% of Uganda’s GDP, the country may face a serious food security crisis and as a result political instability. These actions regarding Russia have led to supply chain disruption, which sped up to the deterioration of the current situation, which had been degrading for the last four years. The EU initiative to increase import/Export duties for forest protection’s sake is to disenfranchise African Farmers and provoke global food security.

To realize Uganda’s agriculture potential, the country will need to overcome a range of challenges. National agricultural output has grown at about 2% per annum over the last five years, which is well below the population growth rate and below the 3-5% growth rates in other East African countries. In the medium term, the agriculture growth rate is expected to remain around 2.5%, assuming reasonable weather conditions and no army worm infestations. The following policy strategies can be considered;

1. Fostering sustainable agricultural total factor productivity growth. To increase agricultural productivity, providing effective advisory (extension) services to smallholder farmers is important to enable them adapt quickly to new production technologies, regulate the markets for agricultural inputs to ensure their quality, and to help smallholder farmers to access inputs through targeted mechanisms, such as e-vouchers.
2. Promoting commercialization of agriculture, and private sector led value addition and trade. Smallholder farmers need to be assisted to invest in agriculture as a business, meaning producing surplus for the markets, to improve their incomes and livelihoods. To achieve this, access to markets and agro-processing facilities is key through their farmer or producer organizations.
3. Building resilience to agriculture production systems and managing related risks – climate change, disease and pests. Investing in irrigation and water harvesting technologies to combat climate variability and climate change is critical; as well as putting in place early warning systems (EWS) and emergency response mechanisms (ERM) for managing disasters, such as droughts, floods, and outbreak of pests and diseases.
4. Improving policy and regulatory environment and strengthening institutions. To attract private investments in the agriculture sector, the government needs to create an enabling business environment. This include addressing institutional capacity gaps at the national and district level, so that they are able to provide advisory and regulatory services; and adopting policies that will enhance competitions in the input (particularly seeds and fertilizers) and output markets, as well as value addition or agro-processing.

**The way forward**

The best policies are those that create positive changes in the food, social and information environments. A policy cannot be adopted in isolation; for the biggest impact they need to be part of a set of mutually reinforcing and supporting actions. Chile is one country that has taken steps like this to create an enabling environment. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa should regulate the food industry better to protect against industry interference that harms the population. Policies that restrict marketing to children, provide clear labelling and tax unhealthy foodstuffs should be the start. The revenue raised from these taxes could be used to subsidize the cost of healthy foods.