

# Our budget choices are undermining agricultural, nutrition commitments

In January 29, 2026, Parliament approved the National Budget Framework Paper (NBFP) for Financial Year (FY) 2026/27. The numbers tell a sobering story about what the government is choosing to prioritise.

The total national budget is projected to decline from Shs72 trillion in FY 2025/26 to Shs69 trillion in FY 2026/27. The bulk of the budget will be locked into mandatory expenditures such as debt servicing, wages, and statutory obligations. Even with domestic revenue projected to increase to Shs40.09 trillion, the financing gap remains wide and structurally constraining.

This budget structure has profound implications not only for the scale of service delivery, but also for its quality and sustainability. Nowhere is this more evident than in agriculture and nutrition.

According to the NBFP, the Agro-Industrialisation Programme is projected to receive Shs1.470 trillion in FY 2026/27, representing just 2.1 per cent of the national resource envelope. This marks a significant decline from FY 2025/26, when the programme was allocated Shs1.833 trillion. The proposed allocation therefore constitutes a nominal cut of Shs387 billion, approximately 20.8 per cent.

These budget choices sit uneasily with Uganda's continental and national commitments. The Kampala Declaration, adopted by African heads of state and government, calls for a 45 per cent increase in agrifood output, a 50 per cent reduction in post-harvest losses, and the allocation of at least 10 per cent of public expenditure to agriculture annually, with a strong focus on women, youth, and vulnerable groups across value chains.

The recent African Union Extraordinary Summit was meant to take stock of progress under the post-Malabo Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

## Uganda risks falling further behind on its global and continental commitments...

### Peter Eceru Budget



(CAADP) agenda. That assessment noted that most countries, Uganda included, remain far from meeting the 10 per cent public investment benchmark.

Underinvestment in agro-industrialisation fuels a vicious cycle. Low capital investment constrains processing, storage, and market access, resulting in low productivity, high post-harvest losses, and limited value addition.

When agricultural raw materials are exported or consumed unprocessed, opportunities for rural employment and income growth are lost, and poverty becomes entrenched. Cutting agro-industrialisation financing at this juncture risks reversing the modest gains registered in recent years and further delays progress toward CAADP targets.

The consequences extend beyond agriculture into health and nutrition systems. Chronic underfunding of nutrition continues to undermine Uganda's human capital development. The nutrition workforce faces an estimated 85 per cent staffing gap, with only 46 nutrition personnel in post out of an approved establishment of 426 positions across national and sub-national levels. This gap persists despite the approval of a nutrition scheme of service in FY 2022/23 and clear guidance to local governments to re-

cruit using available wage provisions.

Even more alarming is the financing of nutrition commodities. An estimated 95 per cent of the quantified need for nutrition therapeutic supplies remains unfunded by government, leaving Uganda overwhelmingly dependent on donors. This level of reliance is neither sustainable nor strategic.

Investment in nutrition, commodities is essential not only for treating and preventing malnutrition, but also for strengthening public health resilience, improving population wellbeing, and reducing long-term healthcare costs linked to nutrition-related disease burdens.

Taken together, the FY 2026/27 budget framework exposes a fundamental contradiction. Uganda's commitment to CAADP appears strong in policy statements, declarations, and summit communiqués, yet weak in actual financial prioritisation. Continued underinvestment in agriculture, agro-industrialisation, and nutrition undermines the credibility of these commitments and limits the country's prospects for inclusive and resilient growth.

Budgets are ultimately political documents. They reveal priorities more clearly than speeches ever can. If Uganda is serious about meeting its CAADP and Kampala Declaration obligations and about delivering on NDP IV and Nutrition for Growth commitments, it must reverse the downward trend in agricultural and nutrition financing and move decisively toward sustained, predictable public investment in these sectors. Without that shift, Uganda risks falling further behind on its global and continental commitments and, more importantly, on the development outcomes that matter most to its people.

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