

# Republic of Zambia



## Nutrition Facts

Zambia is making progress toward meeting maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN) targets. According to data from SOFI 2025, 11.2% of infants were still born with a low birth weight in the beginning of the current decade, a slight advancement when compared to the 12.0% rate estimated in 2012. The country has made progress in reducing stunting, though 32.3% of children under five remain affected—an important decrease in comparison to 40.8% in 2012. Zambia is showing positive momentum toward meeting the wasting target, with 4.2% of children under five affected, which is only slightly lower than the Eastern Africa average of 4.8%. The prevalence of overweight children under five is 6.3%, stable since 2012. However, no progress has been made in reducing anemia among women of reproductive age, with 27.1% of women aged 15 to 49 affected in 2023, a slight increase from the 26.5% rate estimated in 2012. The EBF rate is among the higher rates at 64.1% in Zambia; the national implementation score of legal measures related to the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes is 72 (out of a maximum of 100).

Regarding diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), Zambia has made limited headway. Obesity affects 11.1% of adults of 18 years or older. This is well above the Eastern Africa average of 8.1%. The case for investment on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in Zambia. The population average daily salt intake (9.5g per day) is nearly twice the WHO recommendation of no more than 5g per day; in Zambia, roughly a fifth of the adult population aged 18-69 (19.1 percent) have raised blood pressure.

## Progress Towards Nutrition Integration

The National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC) has bolstered the capacity of the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Vice-President, fostering a deeper understanding of nutrition programs and the Food and Nutrition Act's implementation. Provinces and district sector teams have been oriented on their roles in nutrition planning, budgeting, and mainstreaming, supported by sector guides that promote a holistic multi-sectoral approach. The Vice-President has taken an active role in overseeing nutrition efforts through the operationalization of the Food and Nutrition Act. The program focuses on the First 1000 Most Critical Days, with strategic objectives spanning policy development, interventions, institutional strengthening, advocacy, and monitoring. A steering committee directs

implementation, while lead partners coordinate interventions at the district level. Coordination efforts extend across government, private sector, NGOs, and civil society to ensure complementary nutrition services.

The Vice-President convened development partners to consolidate nutrition priorities and renew commitments, creating two significant advocacy milestones.

All partners adhere to the principles of coordination and collaboration. The Secretary to the Cabinet has incorporated nutrition as a key performance indicator for all Permanent Secretaries, including sectoral and provincial secretaries. This prioritization enhances sector accountability, enabling communities to demand better nutrition services. These efforts demonstrate Zambia's comprehensive commitment to improving population well-being.

## **2025 National Social Protection Policy**

In parallel with nutrition initiatives, Zambia is advancing its social protection framework through the 2025 National Social Protection Policy. This policy aims to provide a comprehensive safety net that addresses poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion, supporting the most disadvantaged groups including women, children, and persons with disabilities. By strengthening social assistance programs, expanding coverage, and enhancing coordination across sectors, the policy seeks to reduce inequalities and improve access to essential services. Importantly, the integration of social protection with nutrition programs is designed to create synergies that address the underlying causes of malnutrition and improve overall health outcomes. This policy framework complements Zambia's multisectoral nutrition efforts by promoting inclusive, sustainable development and resilience-building at the household and community levels.

**Zambia is an early member of the  
Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.**

## **Engagement with the Healthy Diets Coalition**

Zambia's focal point to the Healthy Diets Coalition sits across two key structures: the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC) (the government's coordinating body responsible for guiding, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of national food and nutrition policies and programmes) and the Ministry of Agriculture. This dual positioning reflects Zambia's effort to embed nutrition across both multisectoral coordination mechanisms and sectoral leadership.

Specific engagements include:

- **COP28 side event:** The Coalition hosted an event “Connecting climate action and nutrition: paving the way to healthy diets from sustainable food systems” at the EU Pavilion. Zambia’s intervention emphasized the need for public policies such as food-based dietary guidelines, procurement, and fiscal measures to improve food environments; the responsibility of the private sector to increase access to healthy and sustainable options; and the importance of coordinated, cross-sectoral action. (2023)
- **Regional workshop:** Zambia shared its experiences at the workshop on Home-Grown School Feeding in Southern Africa, organized by AUDA-NEPAD with WFP, FAO, and UNICEF, the HDSFS Coalition.. Zambia outlined policy actions to strengthen school food environments, including proposed regulations, taxation of unhealthy products, and subnational pilot initiatives. (2024)
- **Case study:** Developed under the auspices of ICAN, with inputs from the HDSFS Coalition, the case study was first undertaken in 2024, it focuses on the extent to which nutrition is integrated into climate frameworks and, conversely, how climate considerations are reflected in Zambia’s nutrition policies and strategies. A revision is ongoing and expected to become an endorsed resource with dissemination ahead of COP30. (2025)

## N4G Commitments (as of April 2025)

- Stunting reduction, increased coverage of high impact nutrition interventions

## Remaining Challenges

Zambia is addressing key maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN) targets through a range of coordinated programs and policies. Persistent anemia among women and the need to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates are enduring issues—the country’s multisectoral approach, supported by strong policy frameworks and capacity-building efforts, is fostering positive improvement. However, to speed up progress by ensuring nutrition is integrated into sectoral policies.