

# THE URGENT NEED TO INCREASE LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION IN MYANMAR TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY

## A CLOSER LOOK



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## IMPACT OF FLOODING IN MYANMAR

In early September, Typhoon Yagi unleashed devastating flooding and landslides across Myanmar, affecting more than 69 townships in nine central, eastern, and southeastern states and regions. Among the hardest hit were the Mandalay region and Shan State. Nearly a million people have been affected, losing homes, crops, and even family members. This natural disaster has intensified an already critical situation, marked by ongoing conflict, widespread insecurity, and internal strife, further deepening the country's vulnerability.

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## CHALLENGES IN LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Myanmar's food security is facing mounting pressure as transportation of essential goods, including food, becomes increasingly difficult due to insecurity and heightened security measures. In the past, rice and other staple crops were grown in key regions, processed, and distributed nationwide. However, the worsening security situation, crumbling infrastructure, and a myriad of barriers have crippled this process. Local markets, now struggling under the weight of these challenges, have become increasingly dependent on domestic food production to meet the needs of the population.

Adding to the burden, fuel prices have surged by 350% since 2020, driving food prices to unsustainable levels for many. The overall food security situation has sharply deteriorated, leaving Myanmar's most vulnerable populations grappling to secure enough food. This scenario underscores the urgent need for bolstering local food production as a critical solution to address Myanmar's growing food insecurity.

With the impact of Typhoon Yagi still unfolding, there are serious concerns about local food availability in the longer term, particularly as we look toward 2025.

## MOUNTING PRESSURES ON LOCAL FARMERS

Myanmar's farmers are confronting increasing challenges in accessing essential agricultural inputs, such as fertilisers and quality seeds. Many are also reluctant to invest in farming due to the rising risks tied to the country's unstable conditions. The growing uncertainty has led to a significant strain on local food production. With rising labour costs, many farmers can only cultivate limited portions of their land using family labour, leaving the rest fallow.

This precarious situation has escalated the reliance on local food production as a key to survival. However, international aid efforts have largely focused on cash-based programs, which depend on functioning markets—markets that are faltering due to disrupted supply chains and logistics.

## THE NEED FOR URGENT SUPPORT IN LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

To prevent Myanmar from sliding further into food insecurity and famine, urgent and substantial support for local food production is critical. While humanitarian efforts are focused on immediate relief and cash assistance, these strategies are not sustainable without strengthening the local agricultural sector. Investing in local food production is key to addressing Myanmar's long-term food security.

Despite the immense challenges, Myanmar's farmers and agricultural organisations have shown resilience and determination. However, they need substantial financial and material support to continue producing enough food to meet local demand. Without this support, the food security crisis will worsen, threatening the livelihoods and well-being of countless people across the country.

Strengthening local food production is not just an agricultural necessity - it is the cornerstone of ensuring Myanmar's food security in the face of ongoing conflict, natural disasters, and economic turmoil. Now, more than ever, it is vital to prioritise and invest in local food production to safeguard the nation from a deepening hunger crisis.

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*Note: Due to serious security concerns, the VOICE-member organisation contributing to this article remains anonymous. Public disclosure of their work could lead to expulsion from the country or the arrest of colleagues, jeopardising their life-saving humanitarian efforts.*