



# FOOD ECONOMY CASE STUDY: TANZANIA

## HOW FOOD ECONOMY ANALYSIS HELPS QUANTIFY COPING STRATEGIES

### The Context:

Even 'very poor' households in Mtwara and Lindi regions of southeastern Tanzania are able to earn quite substantial income from the sale of cashew nuts and sesame, and in an average year need only spend about 10-25% of this income on food, a figure which is quite low compared to other poor areas in Africa.

'Very poor' households could cope with crop failure in 1997 by switching expenditure from non-essentials to food, by expanding reliance on wild foods, and by entreating the support of richer relatives and neighbours in the form of gifts. Using official district-level figures for agricultural production in 1997, the analysis indicated no need for food aid to prevent acute hunger. Food aid was justified only in severely affected pockets to allow people to preserve income to invest in agricultural inputs, preserve livestock levels and other assets, and invest time in own cultivation rather than migrating in search of casual work or wild foods.

**Food Economy Analysis provides quantitative information on coping strategies - a pre-requisite for assessing food aid needs.**

**The Southern Coastal Zones of Mtwara and Lindi are regularly cited among the poorest in Tanzania...**

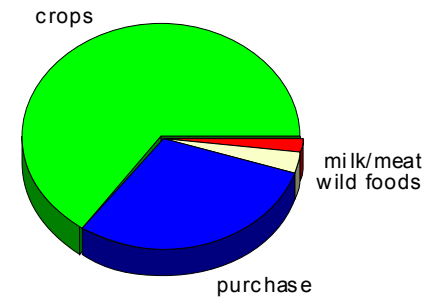
and reports of widespread crop failure in the area in 1997 were a major cause of concern to the government and agencies dealing with food aid.

**But food economy analysis showed that:**

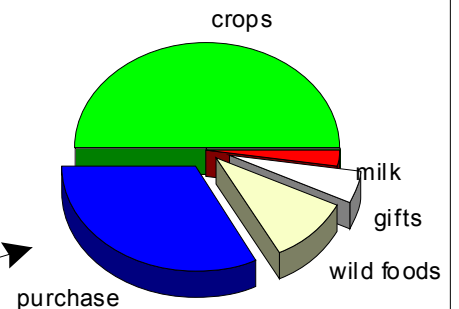
contrary to widespread belief, cashew and sesame sales combined with the regular occurrence of good years result in relatively secure access to food and income for the majority of households in the area in most years.

Even though prices increased 'very poor' households still purchased as much grain by switching expenditure from non-essentials to food.

*Sources of food in a typical year*



*... and in 1997/98*



The pie represents 100% of annual food needs for a typical family  
Source: Save the Children Fund-UK