

FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGE IN AFRICA

“In 2017, food insecurity is still a major global concern as 1 billion people are suffering from starvation and malnutrition.”



Food is a basic human right. One of the humanity's significant achievements has been to produce adequate food for the largest growing population. However, the co-existence of chronic hunger and malnutrition with presence of adequate capacities to address it is one of the gravest paradoxes of our time. The need and importance for greater food sovereignty has emerged out of broader concerns over the negative impact of world's food system on food security and environmental sustainability. Adoption of the food sovereignty principles are essential to empower local communities to have greater control over their productive resources, use and sustain ecologically friendly means of production, and access local markets as well as nutritious and culturally accepted food.

Food insecurity is not just about insufficient food production, availability, and intake; it is also about the poor quality or nutritional value of the food. The detrimental situation of women and children is particularly serious, as well as the situation among female teenagers, who receive less food than their male counterparts in the same households. Soaring food prices and food riots are among the many symptoms of the prevailing food crisis and insecurity.

Climate change and weather vagaries present and forecast, are generally compounding food insecurity and drastically changing farming activities. The key cause of food insecurity is inadequate food production. Since the global food crisis of 2007-2008, there has been an increasing awareness

throughout the world that we must produce more and better food; and we should not be derailed from this goal, particularly in Africa, which needs and wants to make its own green revolution.

The African challenge indeed is key to mitigating food insecurity in the world. Though, commitments were made by governments of the African Union to double the part of their domestic budgets devoted to agriculture in 2010-2011, so as to reach 10%. Technical solutions exist and there are indeed, throughout Africa, good examples of higher-yielding and sustainable agriculture. But good practices have to spread throughout the continent, while at the same time social and economic measures, as well as political will, are indispensable ingredients of Africa's green revolution.

Improving the food security situation in Africa requires economic growth and higher income, but also immediate measures to ensure adequate access to food for the hungry. Access to food through social programs can enable the vulnerable to seize economic opportunities that may arise from development initiatives. To achieve the most direct reduction of poverty and hunger, priority must be given to economic growth in sectors where the poor work; that use factors of production the poor and undernourished possess; that generate outputs they consume; and whose development occurs in areas where they live. Agriculture meets all these criteria, and has proved its ability in Africa as well as elsewhere to act as a lead sector for initiating rapid growth and broad based economic development in the medium term, particularly in less-advanced countries.

Africa's existing economic problems, especially rapid declining agricultural production, food insecurity and hunger require objective analysis and appropriate mitigation measures. The critical food security factors that need urgent analysis backed by effective management mechanisms includes the rapid rate of population growth rate, agricultural policies and governance, management of agricultural land, water resources management, technological possibilities, the contribution of women, food security early warning systems, protecting the environment while ensuring food security, and providing appropriate support for pastoralists and livestock production. The traditional and low-external input agricultural systems have a big potential to contribute positively towards the reduction of poverty and food insecurity globally if accorded the right support.