



FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE



Introduction

Securing food is critical to development and poverty alleviation. Without food, people cannot carry out activities, that will pull them out of poverty. Conversely, poverty fuels food insecurity creating a destructive cycle of impoverishment.

The right to food is enshrined in international and national laws. Article 25.1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food...". The South African Bill of Rights reaffirms in Section 26 and 27 that everyone has the right to sufficient food.

The international community views securing adequate food as a necessary component to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In particular, managing food security and agriculture development is key for Goal 1 to eradicate poverty and hunger.

The majority of the world's poor people are farmers and herders, who earn most of their living from agriculture and land. Making agriculture work for the poor must be a central component of policy approaches to poverty reduction and increasing economic growth. The recent rise in food prices worldwide driven by supply disruptions, changing diets, use of food crops for biofuel and inappropriate agricultural policies, including subsidies, has brought the issue to the forefront. Poor people's inability to afford to buy food leads to malnutrition, poor health and missing education, as children are pulled out of school to help earn money to buy food¹.

Facts

- There are 923 million undernourished² people in the world.
- An additional 75 million have been pushed below the hunger threshold by rising food prices.
- Food prices rose 52% between 2007 and 2008.
- The number of hungry people in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 169 million (1990-92) to 212 million (2003-05)³.

International

In the period from 2003-05, there were six million more chronically hungry people globally than in 1990-92. This estimate was before the recent rise in food prices in 2007, which saw the increase jump by 75 million, bringing the total to 923 million undernourished people worldwide. There is grave concern worldwide over the impact that increasing food prices are having on

the poor and hungry. The causes of these rising prices are complex with a combination of surging demand and limited supply, with the former outstripping the latter. Global cereal supply is at its lowest level in nearly 30 years contributing to volatility of prices. Food supply and oil prices are closely linked. Transport of food and agricultural production depend on fuel. As oil prices rise, the cost of food production increases raising costs. Supply has also been affected by recent surge in biofuel production taking over food crops such as maize and sugar. The UN estimates that 4.7% of global cereal production is being used for biofuels⁴.

The issue of biofuels has been highly contested. Biofuel uses the energy contained in food crops, such as maize and sugarcane, to produce ethanol, a replacement for fossil-burning fuels. The growing demand for alternative energy sources has had a significant effect on food supply. Crops that were once grown for human consumption are now used for fuel. Land once farmed for other food crops is being replaced by ethanol producing yields. The focus on biofuels has contributed to rising food prices with resulting impacts on agricultural production and food security⁶.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) hosted a meeting in 2008 to address the growing needs of nations to address hunger and malnutrition due to the rise in food prices. Agreements were made to improve access to food for vulnerable people including expanding aid, boosting smallholder production and minimising export restrictions and import tariffs⁵. However, farming practices must radically change in order for the situation to be addressed in the long term. More sustainable and productive farming systems must increase to address the needs of an expanding world population. Existing poor farming practices have contributed to environmental damage, resulting in declining rates of agricultural productivity. Only with sustainable agricultural production can progress be made towards achieving the MDGs on hunger and poverty reduction and on ensuring sustainability livelihoods⁷.

Despite the recent focus on rising food prices and climate change, conflicts and political instability continue to severely influence the level of food security around the world. Most wars of the late 20th century and early 21st century are "food wars" meaning that food is used as a weapon, food systems are destroyed in the course of the conflict and food insecurity persists as a legacy of the conflict. In 2003, 24 countries were recorded to experience active conflict and severe food emergencies as a direct result⁸.

1 Perspectives on the Role of Agriculture in Meeting the MDGs
<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/cp/AgMDG/AgMDGch02.pdf>

2 Glossary of terms:

- "Malnutrition" is characterised by inadequate intake of protein, energy and micronutrients and by frequent infections and diseases. Malnutrition is measured not by how much food is eaten but by physical measurements of the body - weight or height - and age (WFP).
- "Under-nourishment" describes the status of people whose food intake does not include enough calories (energy) to meet minimum physiological needs (World Food Program - WFP).

- "Food security" exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Household food security is the application of this concept to the family level, with individuals within households as the focus of concern. "Sub-nutrition" or "Hunger" is the result of food intake that is continuously insufficient to meet dietary energy requirements.
- "Chronicle Hunger": Long-term hunger caused by endemic problems of availability and access, rather than by temporary emergencies.

3 Assessment of the World Food Security and Nutrition Situation, Committee on World Food Security, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), October 2008
[ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/014/k3175e.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/014/k3175e.pdf)



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Progress in achieving global food security should not be measured by declines in food prices, but by significant reductions in the number of poor, hungry, and malnourished people.

- Joachim von Braun, Director General,
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

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South Africa

South Africa is largely deemed a “food secure” nation producing enough staple foods or having the capacity to import foods, if needed, in order to meet the basic nutritional requirements of its population. However, estimates suggest that approximately 1.5 million South African children suffer from malnutrition, 14 million people are vulnerable to food insecurity and 43% of households suffer from food poverty⁵. High unemployment rates, an inadequate social welfare system and high HIV/AIDS infection rates have all contributed to food insecurity.

The challenge in South Africa is predominantly around access to foods and a means to produce it. This is a result of historical inequalities, which have prevented access to resources. Black South Africans make up the majority of poor and food-insecure households. Factors such as the lack of access to finance, communications infrastructure, education, skills development facilities and flows of information and opportunities still prevent black South Africans from making substantive progress in farming. As a result, blacks are underrepresented in the agricultural industry.

Government strategies and policies are in place, yet the impact of other factors such as biofuels, climate change and land reform are adding to high food prices and increasing the plight of those already impoverished. A report issued by the National Agricultural Marketing Council in March 2007 stated that although the food price inflation for the year ending December 2006 was 7.88%, a drop from 9.45%

in 2005, some important staple foods such as maize and sugar had increased. In 2006, the South African government approved a strategy to develop industrial biofuels. It proposes that biofuels be mixed with fossil equivalents contributing 75% to the governments renewable energy targets. This is seen as being in support of the government's Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative (AsgiSA), which aims to increase growth to 6% and merge the 1st and 2nd economies. It suggests that 55,000 new jobs will be created in rural areas where agriculture was previously undermined by the apartheid system¹⁰. While the strategy does not give specifics as to types of crops for biofuels, maize is mentioned as a possible ethanol-creating yield. This could have a detrimental effect on the already increasing price diverting crop cultivation away from food production forcing the poor to compete for the basics on which to live.

With the first ethanol processing facilities still a few years away, it remains to be seen what kind of impact biofuels will have. However, the very poor (those determined by Statistics South Africa to be in the “very low” expenditure category), spend over 62% of their income on food if they live in the rural areas, and over 51% if they live in towns. The average spend on grain is 38% in rural areas and 19% in town. A doubling in the price of maize, one of the possible impacts of the biofuel plan, would cause a 16% jump in the cost of living of the average rural person¹¹.

HIV and AIDS

Food security and appropriate nutrition are also critical for individuals, households and communities affected by HIV and AIDS. The lack of sufficient and sustained supply of nutritious food contributes to the progression of AIDS-related illnesses as well as undermines adherence and response to antiretroviral therapy. With an estimate of 5.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS, this is an area of particular urgent need.

Land distribution

Land distribution is one area that is seen as vital to address food insecurity. Land distribution in South Africa is one of the most unequal in the world, with 55,000 white farmers owning 85 percent of the agricultural land. Around 12 million black farmers inhabit 17.1 million hectares of land, of which only 2.6 million hectares is arable land¹². Addressing this disparity is considered an important means to rectify past inequalities and alleviate poverty in particular in the rural areas.

5 <http://www.fao.org/foodclimate/hlc-home/en/>

6 Farming Must Change to Feed the World
<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/9962/icode/>

7 The State of Food and Agriculture. Biofuels: Prospects, Risks and opportunities. 2008, FAO
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0100e/i0100e.pdf>

8 International Food Policy Research Institute, Conflict, food Insecurity and Globalisation, 2006
<http://www.ifpri.org/divs/fcnd/dp/papers/fcndp206.pdf>

9 HRSC - Food Security in South Africa: Key Policy issues for the medium term, 2004 pg. 25
http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000685/Food_security_SA_January2004.pdf

10 Biofuels Industrial Strategy of the Republic of South Africa, Department of Minerals and Energy, December 2007
[http://www.dme.gov.za/pdfs/energy/renewable/biofuels_indus_strat.pdf\(2\).pdf](http://www.dme.gov.za/pdfs/energy/renewable/biofuels_indus_strat.pdf(2).pdf)

11 Biofuel Production and the Threat to South Africa's Food Security, April 2007
<http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0002509/index.php>

12 Voices and spaces for black farmers in standing for a just cause in a transforming South Africa
http://www.nafufarmer.co.za/pdf_files/feb_08/mainfeature.pdf

The South African Land Reform Programme is founded on the country's constitution, and many policies have been adopted to transform the rural economy and lift people out of poverty. One such policy is the Agri-BEE Charter which was launched with the aim of improving equitable access to agricultural opportunities, deracialising land and enterprise ownership and unlocking the full potential of the agricultural sector. The Charter reiterates the existing target of redistributing 30% of agricultural land to black South Africans by 2014, first adopted in 1994 under the Reconstruction and Development Programme, but also sets ambitious targets for the deracialisation of ownership, management and procurement in the agricultural sector¹³. The reality is that to date only 3% of the land was distributed in the period 1994-2006.

The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Program (CASP) was introduced in 2004 to support the implementation of the land reform programme basing its strategy on six pillars: on-farm and off-farm infrastructure; advisory and regulatory services; information, training and market development; and financial services¹⁴. However, the focus has since been placed on groups rather than on individuals with the implication that the poor small-scale households are often ignored in favour of the emerging farmers and selected land reform projects, especially those that appear to be commercially viable. Some limited support is given to communal vegetable gardens. There is a need to offer comprehensive support that includes credit, infrastructure access to input and output markets and technical support to active small-scale farming communities and individuals appropriate to their socio-economic and agro-ecological circumstances¹⁵.

One of the cooperatives ways to promote rural upliftment and redistributed land ownership is through cooperatives. The government

favours this as a business model and a separate Cooperatives Bill has been introduced. 12,188 new cooperatives were registered from 2005 to 2007 in various sectors, representing a 72% growth rate, the majority of which are owned by black women¹⁶.

Cooperatives provide the potential for pooled resources to enhance economic control. They provide individual members with a means for collective action as well as independent income often in a sustainable way. Investing in this area whether, financially or through skill development, would increase domestic food production which would translate into better diets and higher incomes. With more money, farmers are more likely to diversify production and grow higher-value crops benefiting themselves and the broader community.

Rural development through cooperative farming can empower the poor and contribute to economic growth and development, especially for women. While women play a crucial role in agricultural production, their role as producers and agents of transformation especially in the rural areas has been hindered by their lack of access to land, capital, financing and technology. Focusing on improving skills and making knowledge and technologies available to them would have a significant impact on broader farm production and food security¹⁷.

Policies around poverty, economic development and the environment must also be integrated. Despite the country's immense natural wealth to provide food for its inhabitants, growing human demands are putting extreme pressure on the environment's capacity to sustain and regenerate. Sustainable agricultural practices should be further promoted and facilitated in order to protect scarce water resources, reverse land degradation and ensure biodiversity.



13 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment in Agriculture <http://bee.sabinet.co.za/charters/agriBEEreference.pdf>

14 Department of Agriculture: CASP draft progress report 2003-2005
http://www.nda.agric.za/docs/CASP/casp_progress_report_03-05.pdf

15 HRSC - Review of Rural Development, 2008 pg. 20 <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Document-3218.phtml>

16 Address by The Minister of Trade and Industry at The International Cooperatives Day. Department of Trade and Industry. July 2008 <http://www.thedti.gov.za/article/articleview.asp?current=1&artypeid=2&artid=1590>

17 Food Security in Southern Africa: Current Status, Key Policy Processes and Key Players at Regional Level. October 2005 http://www.sarpi.org/documents/d0001701/Food-security_paper_Oct2005.pdf

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Why invest in Food Security and Agriculture?

Food insecurity adversely affects all levels of social and economic life. With 30% of the population vulnerable to food insecurity, it is vital to address the situation both for the current and future stability of the country. Food insecurity can lead to high health and medical costs as well as poor educational development.

Increased investment in agriculture will help readdress the current inequalities. Empowering people to grow their own food for subsistence or for income generation will provide nourishment and a potential income.

While adjustments to the amounts paid in social grants to impoverished people have been introduced in order to mitigate the impact of rising food prices, more support is needed.

Agriculture contributes to poverty alleviation by reducing food prices, creating employment, improving farm income and increasing wages. Agricultural growth has a strong and positive impact on poverty, often significantly greater than that of other economic sectors¹⁸.

Community level agriculture can play a significant part in boosting household food security and improve the overall health and well being of the community. However, access to agricultural support services is an important factor to address. Experience from other countries indicates that a comprehensive approach to

the provision of support services is required to achieve growth in the smallholder agricultural sector. Unless a farmer support programme of appropriate scale and scope is put in place, smallholder farmers will have little chance of escaping poverty and agriculture's role in creating livelihood opportunities will remain limited.

Successful sector practices

Research on the impact of agricultural projects, both in South Africa and internationally, highlights some key elements for achieving higher impact in the sector.

Among others, SASIX emphasize:

- Ensuring buy-in of beneficiaries in micro-projects, by effectively communicating the short and long-term benefits to their personal well-being, the community and the environment at large. This will contribute to the sustainability of the project.
- Providing tenure and/or access rights is an essential incentive for people to invest in land improvement, means of production, and conservation measures, all contributing to long term food security for families and communities.
- Asset ownership by women enables poor households to create an asset base.
- Rural infrastructure such as roads, radio and other means of communication contributes to market access and information sharing .



Based on these practices, SASIX supports projects that:

- Assist communities to regain access and rights to land and undertake skills training and capacity building with them.
- Promote recognition in the form of title deeds to farm dwellers in new land development activities, as well as equity share schemes.
- Research land issues and issues of poverty alleviation and sustainable rural livelihoods, and provide support to policy development.
- Increase the access of food insecure households and communities to resources such as land, environmentally sustainable technologies, credit, training and markets.
- Ensure better access for small-scale farmers to finance, tools, skills and knowledge to pursue their work, including information technology, particularly providing market information.
- Create opportunities for small-scale producers to supply markets, including investing in the development of co-operatives, and upstream and downstream production activities.
- Invest in training for small-scale producers, including entrepreneurial expertise.
- Help communities establish income-generating projects, including small-scale commercial agriculture and sustainable harvesting of natural resources.
- Enable women, often responsible for agriculture production, to increase the productivity of time spent on farming activities.
- Promote women's access to, and participation in, commercial agriculture, whether by supporting cooperatives, increasing access to credit or supporting skill development in the industry.
- Invest in productivity-enhancing, environmentally sustainable technologies for small-scale producers.
- Promote small-scale irrigation and rainwater harvesting technologies.
- Have strategies to specifically link women and rural food gardeners to the economic mainstream.
- Support the variable needs of small-scale farmers and community gardeners who often practice mixed farming and undertake a variety of enterprises.

Links

International

The World Food Situation: New Driving Forces and Required Actions. Joachim von Braun, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C. December 2007
www.ifpri.org/pubs/fpr/pr18.pdf

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<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0100e/i0100e.pdf>

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www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/food-security

South Africa

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www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000685/Food_security_SA_January_2004.pdf

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www.wahenga.net/uploads/documents/briefs/Brief%2011%20-%20Biofuels%5B1%5D.pdf

Department of Agriculture
www.nda.agric.za/

Towards a Resolution on Rural Development, Land Reform and Agrarian Change:
 ANC Economic Transformation Committee Discussion Document, November 2007
www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0002897/index.php

Southern Africa Regional Poverty Network
www.sarpn.org.za/