

FOOD SECURITY: THE RISING GLOBAL CONCERN

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The 2022's Global Food Security Index has reflected their concern to have affordability and safety prevail over food security globally. The author in this paper demarcates the need to make better policies and programs by the authorities in order to reduce poverty and hunger in society. The concern is made to encourage the practice of a healthy environment and protect the rights of all human beings to live with dignity and equality in this world. Moreover, emphasis is made on understanding the concept of food security. The author postulates the important role played by United Nations in working with other organizations in order to safeguard human life by providing food and nutritional security. This paper examines the need and significance of food security around the world. The focus is drawn on the factors which have led to food insecurity and how we can provide a protective sheet to the people through the practice of food security at present and for the future generation.

There will be a short analysis of the recent updates related to food insecurity in Asia and Pacific countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Philippines, and India. The article covers the significance of having food security in order to discourage the factors which result in the practice of food insecurity and leads to crisis. There is a need to have sustainable growth in the production and consumption of resources. Additionally, there is a need to seek preventive measures after the Covid-19 impact in order to tackle such problems in society. With active involvement in activities such as workshops, training programs, and awareness week there can be encouragement to the practice of proper distribution as well as utilization of resources, preservation of natural resources, climate protection, and can save many lives.

Key words: Agriculture, Food security, Food insecurity, Hunger, Poverty

Introduction

When we look at the world's problems, we observe that it is suffering from different types of problems such as climate change, poverty, illiteracy, and corruption among which food insecurity is one of the oldest problems that society is still facing. The number of people in need of assistance in Syria has risen from 8.7 million to 9.4 million in June 2016 as compared to September 2015. There has been a high proportion of households in Aleppo City Report being food insecure. The outbreak of fighting in South Sudan which have caused new displacements and food price increases in the capital Juba. Once South Sudan IPC updated that 4.8 million people which covers 40 percent of the population faced severe food insecurity between May and July 2016 during the lean season.¹

The word 'food security' means that everybody can get enough healthy food to be well and active. The focus is made on having healthy food with an active food system. The food system is made up of five parts. These parts cover everything from making food production to taking care of the disposal. Every part is interconnected and dependent on each other. For instance, if the situation is adverse there will be a price rise of food in a situation where the food supply is less due to storms.²

Economic Research Service (ERS) in International Food Security Assessments of the United States has estimated once that between 500 and 700 million people in the 76 countries studied are food insecure. Sadly, it was once estimated that in 2015 almost 475 million population had food-insecure people which consumed less than the nutritional target of about 2,100 calories per day. Due to changes in local food production and purchasing capacity varies with time. For example, Sub-Saharan Africa suffers from food insure people which is followed by Asia and then Latin America and the Caribbean.³ The dataset includes details such as annual country-level data on area, yield, production, nonfood use, trade, and consumption for grains and

¹*Food Security Analysis*, WFP, http://vam.wfp.org/sites/global_update/July_2016/Index.htm.

²*What is Food Security?* FOOD FIRST, <http://www.foodfirstnl.ca/what-is-food-security/>.

³*Global Food Security*, ERS, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/international-markets-trade/global-food-security/%20>.

root and tuber crops, food aid, total value of imports and exports, gross domestic product as well as population compiled from a variety of sources.⁴

Part I of this article focuses on the understanding of the concept of food security and the definition given by international organizations with the passage of time.

Part I

Concept of Food Security

The World Food Summit in Rome focused on to renewing a global commitment to fight against hunger in 1996. The Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO) organized a Summit to deal with undernutrition and concern was made about the capacity of agriculture to fulfill future needs. This resulted in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. Rome Declaration emphasized on members of the United Nations work in matters related to un nourished people. The Action Plan was divided into sets of targets for government and non-government organizations for achieving food security at different levels.⁵

Earlier in 1974 World Food Summit stated the food security definition is with reference to the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices.⁶

FAO in 1983 expanded the concept by including the securing access by vulnerable people to available supplies, implying that attention should be balanced between the demand and supply side of the food security equation where concern is made on ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need.⁷

⁴International Food Security, ERS, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/international-food-security/>.

⁵Rome Declaration on World Food Security, FAO, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.HTM>.

⁶Food Security, FAO POLICY BELIEF 1 (2006), <http://www.fao.org/forestry/131280e6f36f27e0091055bec28ebe830f46b3.pdf>.

⁷Trade Reforms and Food Security, FAO 27(2003), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/fao/005/y4671e/y4671e00.pdf>.

In 1986 World Bank reported as ‘poverty and hunger’⁸ focused on the temporal dynamics of food insecurity. It introduced the widely accepted distinction between chronic food insecurity, associated with problems of continuing or structural poverty and low incomes, and transitory food insecurity, which involved periods of intensified pressure caused by natural disasters, economic collapse, or conflict. This concept of food security is further explained in a term of which is the access of all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life.⁹

Interestingly in 1994 through the “UNDP Human Development Report” it was stated that human security comprises of various elements among which food security plays a vital role.¹⁰ This shows its close connection with human rights aspects which has impacted the discussion in relation to food security. This reflects that it covers larger areas such as social security which has many various and different components like health as well as nutrition.¹¹ The 1996 World Food Summit adopted a still more complex definition is food security at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels in a situation which is achieved when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.¹²

Therefore, the contrasting definitions of food security were adopted in 1974 and 1996, along with those in official FAO and World Bank documents of the mid 1980’s. While comparing these definitions, it focuses on the considerable reconstruction of official thinking on food security which has occurred over 25 years. It also provides signposts to the policy analyses, which have reshaped the understanding of “food security” as a problem of international and national responsibility. Moreover, food security as a concept originated in the mid-1970s when there was a discussion of international food problems at a time of global food crisis. Its aim was of assuring the availability and to some degree the price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national level. Further, from the supply side the international and institutional set of concerns reflected the changes in the organization of the global food economy which had

⁸*Id.*

⁹*Supra note 7.*

¹⁰Edward Clay, *Food Security: Concepts and Measurement*, FAO, <https://www.fao.org/3/y4671e/y4671e06.htm#fnB21>.

¹¹*Supra note 7*, at 28.

¹²*Id.*

precipitated the crisis. Subsequently, a process of international negotiation was followed which led to the World Food Conference. From there a new set of institutional arrangements covers information, resources for promoting food security, and forums for dialogue on policy issues. It includes issues such as famine, hunger, and food crisis which was followed in the events of the mid-1970s. This resulted in a redefinition of food security which gives concern to the behavior of potentially vulnerable and affected people. Additionally, poverty and problems of related endemic hunger were recognized as a problem of lack of effective demand.¹³

There are two common definitions of “food security” which comes from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” according to FAO.¹⁴

Food security includes at a minimum as per USDA¹⁵:

- (1) The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- (2) An assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

World Health Organization (WHO) states that food security is a situation *“where all people at all times have both physical and economic access to enough food for an active, healthy life and the ways in which food is produced and distributed are respectful of the natural processes of the earth and thus sustainable.”*¹⁶ Moreover, both the consumption and production of food are governed by social values that are just and equitable as well as moral and ethical. Subsequently, the ability to acquire food is ensured and the food itself is nutritionally adequate, personally as

¹³Clay, *supra* note 10.

¹⁴*An Introduction to the basic concepts of food security*, FAO, <https://www.fao.org/3/a1936e/a1936e00.pdf>.

¹⁵*Guide to Measuring household food security*, HUNGER FREE COMMUNITIES (2011), <http://hungerfreecommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/USDA-guide-to-measuring-food-security.pdf>.

¹⁶Yadav Sharma Bajagai, *Basic Concepts of Food Security: Definition, Dimensions and Integrated Phase Classification*, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT (Jan. 26, 2013), <http://www.foodandenvironment.com/2013/01/basic-concept-of-food-security.html>.

well as culturally acceptable and therefore the food is obtained in a manner that upholds human dignity.”¹⁷

Community Food Security has been defined as a situation “*when all citizens obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self reliance and equal access for everyone*” according to Public Health Association of British Columbia.¹⁸

Moreover, this definition was again refined in the State of Food Insecurity in 2001 stated that food security is a situation that exists when all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food in order to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.¹⁹

Food security according to the Life Science Research Office definition depicts that “*access to enough food in order to have active and healthy life. It includes at a minimum (a) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and (b) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways for example, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies.*”²⁰

According to USDA’s labels describe ranges of food security:²¹

(I) Food Security

“(a) High food security where old label is equal to Food security and no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.

(b) Marginal food security where old label is equal to Food security and one or two reported indications-typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Therefore, there is little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.”

¹⁷Bajagai, *supra* note 16.

¹⁸*Supra* note 17.

¹⁹*Supra* note 7, at 28.

²⁰GOOLOO S. WUNDERLICH & JANET L. NORWOOD, FOOD INSECURITY AND HUNGER IN UNITED STATES: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MEASURE 43(2006).

²¹*Definitions of Food Security*, ERS, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>.

ERS plays a significant role in Federal research on food security and food security measurement in U.S. households as well as communities and provides data access and technical support to social science scholars to facilitate their research on food security. ERS research focuses on:²²

- i) Food security in U.S. household
- ii) Food security's impact on the well-being of children, adults, families, and communities.
- iii) Food security's relationship to public policies, public assistance programs, and the economy.

The article further illustrates briefly the meaning of food insecurity given by authorities under Part II.

Part II

Concept of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity “exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain.”²³

According to USDA's labels describe ranges of food insecurity:²⁴

(I) Food Insecurity

“(a) Low food security where old label is equal to food insecurity without hunger and reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Moreover, there is little or no indication of reduced food intake.

(b) Very low food security where old label is equal to food insecurity with hunger and Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.”

²²*Id.*

²³Donald Rose & Victor J. Oliveira, *Validation of a Self-Reported Measures of Household Food Insufficiency with Nutrient Intake Data*, 1863 ERS TECHNICAL BULLETIN 2(1997), <https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/CAT10862471/PDF>.

²⁴*Supra note 21.*

Moreover, Part III emphasis is made on major factors that one needs to fulfill in matters related to food security.

Part III

Dimensions of Food Security

There were only three pillars of food security according to WHO although later FAO added fourth pillar so finally it resulted in a fourth pillars. Therefore, stability was added later. In 2009 the World Summit on Food Security stated that there are four pillars which are as follows:²⁵

i) Food availability

Under this domain, the supply side is taken into consideration for food security and there has to be sufficient food delivery provided by the domestic provider in agriculture production or import. By following the math procedure where the food available in specific areas and nations is enough to provide a fee to the total population in that specific territory and calculated from the level of agriculture production at that territory at the local level, stocks as well as net import and export. This reflects that food security at various levels can be accessed. It can be done by maintaining surveys, balance sheets, and records. By the usage of indicators, one can depict the different levels. It comprises the fertility rate, production, population flows, etc.

ii) Food access

It emphasizes food security which focuses on the income, expenditure, and buying capacity of households or individuals. It relates to the situation of whether the households or individuals have enough resources to have quality foods. It gives concern to indicators such as food price, meal frequency, employment rate, etc. and it can be assessed by Vulnerability Analysis and mapping, etc. We can improve the situation of food security in different modes.²⁶

²⁵ Bajagai, *supra* note 16.

²⁶ *Id.*

iii) Food utilization

It focuses on how much food the public consumes and what they eat. It includes activities such as its preparation, intra-household distribution, water and sanitation, and health care services. The concern is made on cooked and healthy food as well as a clean environment to prevent human beings from causing any diseases. The indicators for conducting demographic and health survey as well as immunization chart.²⁷

iv) Stability

There is a requirement of having stability under certain parameters such as availability and accessibility of food. Factors like unstable prices, product availability, and the impact of unfavorable events have resulted in affecting the proper implementation of food security. By the mode of the warning system, the anthropometric survey is beneficial for reflecting the reasons which have led to price rises, pre-harvest food practices, migration, etc. It deals with savings, grain banks, food storage, etc.²⁸

The below-mentioned details provide recent updates about food insecurity which reflects how it is affecting the society and reasons which lead to food insecurity at the present stage.

Part IV

Observation

Interestingly it has been depicted that the world population is predicted to jump to 9.1 billion in 2050. The concern arises that by this the food demand is predicted to be surged by 70 percent. The focus is needs to be made on how the agricultural sector can be improved and jumped to 70 percent more food production.²⁹

Sadly 1.3 billion tons of food is either lost or wasted yearly. Subsequently, in 2008 people were not able to pay the huge food price which led to 110 million people into poverty and surged to 44

²⁷Progress Toward Sustainable Energy 2015: Global Tracking Framework Report, WORLD BANK 256 (2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Report%20-%20Global%20Tracking%20Framework%202015.pdf> .

²⁸ UMMA HABIBA, FOOD SECURITY AND RISK REDUCTION IN BANGLADESH 5 (2015).

²⁹How to Feed the World 2050, FAO (2009), https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/Issues_papers/HLEF2050_Global_Agriculture.pdf .

million additionally to the undernourished as well as 925 million public didn't have any food. This shows the rocketed price for food, poverty is among those reasons which affect the food availability. In developing nations, rising food prices form a significant threat to food security as people spend most of their income on food.³⁰

Part V depicts the situation prevailing in Asia- Pacific countries and the impact caused by food insecurity. The main objective behind this is to encourage those practices which would lead to food security globally.

Part V

Food Insecurity in Asia-Pacific Nations

The concern is made on the situation prevailing in Asia-Pacific countries such as the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh in relation to problems suffered due to food insecurity.

According to VAM Food Security analysis in its global food security update has stated its observation about the "food insecurity" situation. For instance, in Philippines, there are seventeen provinces in the Philippines that are in a position of calamity due to El Nino-induced drought. This has impacted the lives of 3.5 million and there has been loss in agricultural production. Sadly, El Nino has resulted in drought in Papua New Guinea also. Due to the delay in harvest season, it has resulted in a huge impact on the nation almost 80 percent of the public is semi-dependent on subsistence farming. It is estimated that the public requires food assistance. In Milne Bay province 27 percent public is facing the problem of extreme food shortages.³¹

Moreover, in 2016 a severe tropical storm hit Sri Lanka. It has caused flooding and landslides. Additionally, Cyclone Ruanu in Bangladesh has caused floods and landslides has affected the

³⁰Supra note 29.

³¹The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: 2017, FAO (2017), <https://www.fao.org/3/I7695e/I7695e.pdf> .

lives of people.³²This shows the world due to climatic disasters has resulted in the public searching for food.

During that time India has been ranked 75th ranking in the global food security index.³³The 2015 FAO food insecurity assessment indicated the prevalence of undernourishment in India was 15.2 percent.³⁴The journey from 2015 to the present shows that there is a requirement to maintain affordability. India has been positioned 68th in the recent global food Security Index Report. In Sri Lanka, the FAO has estimated that crop production will be below the five-year average in 2023 as there is the absence of affordable fertilizer.³⁵ Joint Child Malnutrition has shown that World Health Assembly and SDG 2 target is required to be achieved by 2030.³⁶

Conclusion

With the Covid-19 impact, there has been a larger population that has been suffering from malnutrition and hunger. This is because of different factors which have led to the present situation which is unhealthy for society at present. Due to the non-availability of water, the people are not able to produce food. There is an urgent need to make efforts to provide food and water supply to those areas which are suffering due to unfavorable weather, lack of facilities, and exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, there is a need to protect the soil from degradation. The government as well as non-government authorities should make efforts to protect the crops from destruction. For instance, in the case of agricultural diseases concern should be made by providing medicines for the crops at a less reasonable price so that farmers can buy them. One should make more use of plant breeding technology to improve food production and have better quality. There is a need to have a good drainage system as well as a healthy environment that encourages activities such as tree plantation and recycling of products. In other words, in the

³²Supra note 31.

³³Global Security Index 2022, ECONOMIST IMPACT, (2022), https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/resources/Economist_Impact_GFSI_2022_Website_Navigation_Guide_Sep_2022.pdf .

³⁴ Michael S. Finnin, *Food Security in India, China and the World*, IDA 4-1 (2016), https://www.ida.org/idamedia/Corporate/Files/Publications/IDA_Documents/STD/2016/D-5823.pdf .

³⁵Food Security: Update, WORLD BANK 15 (2022), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/40ebbf38f5a6b68bfc11e5273e1405d4-0090012022/related/Food-Security-Update-LXXXVIII-6-29-23.pdf> .

³⁶Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, WHO, <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/monitoring-nutritional-status-and-food-safety-and-events/joint-child-malnutrition-estimates> .

future, we should have control over population growth. Society is suffering problems of mismanagement caused due to overpopulation which can't be managed by the authorities. There is a need to focus on the availability of food for children and women as they should not be left out. Equal opportunity should be given to women in the workplace so that they could help in crop production. Subsequently, healthy food products provided by the authorities should be properly and equally distributed among the suffering areas. The farmers should shift their production as per the quality of the soil instead of causing damage to the soil by making use of harmful chemicals. The people who have suffered hunger should be provided medical facilities and healthy food for their growth and survival which is now the goal of many international organizations in the form of workshops, training programmes, and awareness week to protect human beings. It is their right that should be safeguarded properly.

Further, to decrease the risk of highly volatile prices, price regulation on commodities and larger cereal stocks should be created by framing effective policies to buffer the tight markets of food commodities and the subsequent risks of speculation in markets. Also, the government should encourage the removal of subsidies and blending ratios of first-generation biofuels, which would promote a shift to higher-generation biofuels based on waste thereby avoiding the capture of cropland by biofuels. This includes the removal of subsidies on agricultural commodities and inputs that are exacerbating the developing food crisis, and investing in shifting to sustainable food systems and food energy efficiency. Reducing the use of cereals and food fish in animal feed and developing alternatives to animal and fish feed would help in increasing food energy efficiency using fish discards, capture and recycling of post-harvest losses and waste, and development of new technology, thereby increasing food energy efficiency by 30-50 percent at current production levels. Food security can be maintained if all the nations work in harmony with each other and provide facilities to the suffering areas and protect the future generation from further damage.