



ICID Young Professionals e-Forum (IYPeF)

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6990321>

Policy Options for Enhancing Food Security

Background Note for Discussion

15-31 March 2018

1. Introduction

This seemingly simple term can be understood very differently in different settings or contexts. However, for the sake of initiating an international dialogue on it and discussing policy options that enhance “**Food Security**,” it is better to rely on the terminology used by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. According to FAO, the right to food does not imply that governments have an obligation to hand out free food to everyone who wants it. This is a common misconception.

It goes on to say that the right to food is not a right to a minimum ration of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients, or a right to be fed. It is about being guaranteed the right to feed oneself, which requires not only that food is available – that the ratio of production to the population is sufficient – but also that it is accessible – i.e., that each household either has the means to produce or buy its own food. However, if individuals are deprived of access to food for reasons beyond their control, for instance because of an armed conflict, natural disaster or because they are in detention, recognition of the right to life obliges States to provide them with sufficient food for their survival.

FAO defined the house-hold food security as ‘a situation in which all households have both physical and economic access to adequate food for all members and where house-holds are not at risk of losing such access’. The former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, defined three dimensions to the right to food.

- 1.1. **Availability** refers to the possibilities either for feeding oneself directly from productive land or other natural resources, or for well-functioning distribution, processing and market systems that can move food from the site of production to where it is needed in accordance with demand.
- 1.2. **Accessibility** implies that economic and physical access to food is to be guaranteed. On the one hand, economic access means that food should be affordable for an adequate diet without compromising other basic needs. On the other hand, physically vulnerable, such as sick, children, disabled or elderly should also have access to food.
- 1.3. **Adequacy** implies that the food must satisfy the dietary needs of every individual, taking into account age, living conditions, health, occupation, sex, culture and religion, for example. The food must be safe and adequate protective measures by both public and private means must be taken to prevent contamination of foodstuffs through adulteration and/or through bad environmental hygiene or inappropriate handling at different stages

throughout the food chain; care must also be taken to identify and avoid or destroy naturally occurring toxins.

2. Factors Challenging Food Security

- (a) Structural factors and market failures (land ownership, trade policy, agricultural viability, etc.)
- (b) Food price volatility (domestic and international demand and supply situation)
- (c) Societal vulnerabilities (landless farmers, smallholders, poverty, discriminated sections, etc.)
- (d) Gender issues (challenges faced by women)
- (e) Failures in institutional governance (food distribution system)
- (f) Other risk factors (such as climate change, water availability, disasters, wars, etc.)

3. Policy Options for Food Security

Amartya Sen, who won the 1998 Nobel Prize, through his research work, demonstrated that famine or mass starvation in modern times was not typically the product of a lack of food; rather, it usually followed the problems in food distribution systems or skewed government policies.

At international level, the following policy options are advocated by some experts:

- 3.1 Adapting the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and the SPS Agreement
- 3.2 Preparing WTO Rules for the Future
- 3.3 International Cooperation to Improve Food Security
- 3.4 Fostering Agricultural Productivity

More specifically, the following policy measures are recommended at national level policy making:

- 3.5 Promotion of market information (such as AMIS=Agricultural Market Information System)
- 3.6 Market-based risk management schemes
 - Futures contracts
 - Option contracts on food imports
 - Transparent emergency food assistance
- 3.7 Raising food supply from smallholder farmers
- 3.8 Reforms to distortionary trade policies
- 3.9 Management of macroeconomic implications

It should be clearly noted that “food security” will generally be defined within a given local context and therefore, policy making should reflect prevailing socio-economic and environmental concerns of the majority population.

Further, could following options for economically weak and food insecure countries be still valid and considered:

- 3.10 Exhaustive database for informed decision-making
- 3.11 Labs to land rapid transfer of technology
- 3.12 Development of appropriate technology
- 3.13 Effective extension / training at grass root level.
- 3.14 Reduction in conveyance and distribution losses
- 3.15 Increase in on-farm efficiency of water application
- 3.16 Innovative crop and resources management technologies

4. Objectives

The e-discussion on “Policy Options for Enhancing Food Security” aims to take into consideration the following objectives and questions:

- 4.1 Bring all young professionals to the same understanding of the concept of ‘Food Security’
- 4.2 Explore the missing options/policies in achieving ‘Food Security’
- 4.3 Explore the "Out of the box" issues for achieving the sustainable ‘Food Security’
- 4.4 Can Social Engineering i.e. manage social changes and regulate the future development and behaviour of a society, play a role in ‘Food Security’?
- 4.5 Is governance an issue?
- 4.6 Discuss how irrigation and drainage policies are related to the other policies for enhancing Food Security?

5. Expected outcomes

It is intended that the IYPeF e-discussion will help enumerate options for enhancing food security at house-hold/family, at regional/state and at country level.

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