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Combatting food insecurity



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Martina Sánchez Medina

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Student Officer:	Martina Sánchez Medina
Position:	President of the Special Conference

Introduction

United Nations data shows that the calories produced per person per day scratch the value of 2800. This should be more than enough to feed the world's population, which counts up to nine billion. However, 36 million people die each year of hunger and poor nutrition. The FAO estimates 795 million people to be chronically under-nourished in 2012-2014.

The counterpart of food insecurity is food security. This is the state in which appropriate food, that constitutes a nutritious diet, is equally available and accessible for everyone. This is a utopian vision of the world, yet worth striving for. In fact, the concept of food security has been divided into achievable goals, such as food availability, food accessibility, and food use. They give us an insight into the flaws of, among others, food distribution, food economy, food production and food waste.

There is a great deal of debate in whether globalization has a positive or negative impact on food security. It may affect rural communities, such as farmers, negatively and therefore lead to the continuity of food insecurity. Mass food production started in the mid-1900, yet these levels still do not reach the needs of a growing population. Global trade could or could not take away the importance of national food security. In any case, globalization makes all countries, therefore, all member states responsible for combatting food insecurity. Whether we find ourselves in an developed country, where we barely experience malnutrition or food shortage, we affect the global situation of food insecurity. This is done by unmeasured consumption and the abuse of the food market, from which we profit, towards less developed countries.

Food insecurity will hit us in the long term if the international community ignores food insecurity. For instance, by the greenhouse emissions, that occurs due to food waste. Food insecurity is therefore not only a socio-humanitarian related issue but also an environmental and economical one. Proper food administration has to be handled sustainably. That's why the Sustainable development goal Nr. 2 addresses the issue of food insecurity.



Definition of key terms

Food security

Food security is the state in which an individual has access to affordable, consistent and nutritious food that fulfils their diet preferences.

Food insecurity

This is the state in which an individual lacks affordable, consistent and/or nutritious food to fulfil their diet preferences.

Food availability

Food availability sums up having sufficient and consistent amounts of food. This goes hand in hand with the distribution and production of food.

Food access

The term refers to the financial as well as local access to food.

Food use

Food use defines the different forms of food consumption. First, the equity of food, that means the nutritional and social distribution of food, often also called food safety. Secondly, Food Waste, which speaks for itself the non-consumption of food.

Malnutrition

Is caused by the lack of sufficient and/or the right food to fulfil the basic nutritious needs of human consumption.

General Information

The origins of food insecurity have been long discussed and as stated above a heated debate exists when discussing the impact of globalization towards food security. The world has experienced hunger and famine all along since the early antiquity. Modern crises have an effect on the global scale, whereas earlier crises were more local. The concept food security was first used in the modern crisis of mid-1970 as the world's population faced a food crisis. It defined the availability and price stability of food supplies for all citizens. Later the term was fully developed into the definition above. The results of this discussion were



among others the following two: First, the changing organization in food economy had precipitated the food crisis. This referred to the strong increase of world production, which later led to the strong decrease of food prices. What triggered mass production was the Green Revolution, on which I will later elaborate on. Secondly, globalization had been one of the major factors that influenced the stock market to allow such changes. This is a supporting point towards the hypothesis that globalization has a bad impact on food security.

But we have to look at the factors of globalization properly to judge well. Rapid transportation methods are per se positive in regards to food security. How the food is distributed is the issue that affects us negatively. This has an impact on food availability. Mass production should cover the needs more than the traditional agriculture methods. However, this has an impact on the changing food prices, which then again destabilize food access. Lastly, the different forms in which food is used, for instance as catalysts for biofuel, complies with the term food use. Food availability, food access, and food use are the pillars that make up food security.

The Green Revolution

The Green Revolution is the time of the mid-1960 in which food supplies started to be mass-produced. Similarly to the industrialization the green revolution changed living standards drastically. For instance, supermarkets would not have the abundance of food supplies or the cheap prices of international goods. The aim of the Green Revolution was “to provide food for the populace in developing countries and so bring social stability and weaken the fomenting of communist insurgency”, according to U.S. investigative journalist Mark Dowie.

Some argument that without the Green Revolution the growing population would face greater famine than it does today. For example, India’s wheat production corresponded 10 million tons in 1960 and reached 73 million by 2006, herewith covering the needs of its large population. Conway Gordon in his book, “The doubly green revolution: food for all in the twenty-first century”, assures that the average person in the developing world consumes 25% more than before the Green Revolution. Others do not agree with this supposition and argument that the Green Revolution marginalized the poor. The rich corporations benefitted from the effectiveness of machines, whereas small-scale farmers fell into debt.

Food availability

Food availability goes hand in hand with food distribution. It presupposes appropriate quantities of food in a consistent manner. As stated in the introduction, there is more than



enough food in the world to cover the needs of the population. Yet, industrialized countries, such as the United States of America, have an abundance of food, while non-industrialized countries, such as Rwanda, struggle to feed its population. Being that we live in a globalized world, we might ask ourselves “Why not transport food to the places it is most needed?” This seems like a logical conclusion, yet such food aid would have a negative effect on the food market. Food aid drives agricultural prices down. Such phenomenon affects a farmer’s income in the developing world, leading to a vicious cycle of food insufficiency. First, their poverty would abstain them from a successful maintenance of the farmland. This leads to unsafe or inefficient harvest. Once again, the farmer faces the lack of resources to provide him or herself food security. Food aid should therefore only be given in case of a humanitarian crisis. In order to help less developed countries cope with their burden, they have to organize food distribution from within their economy. The Food Sovereignty movement argues that farmers and not the world large-scale corporations should administrate food distribution and production.

Moreover, according to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 40% of the food production in the USA is used for the biofuel. Therefore, there is a conflict between food and fuel. Theories suggest that if the United States dropped this policy the demand for food would be lower, therefore allowing more food availability for other countries. However, there are two counter-arguments. One is that ethanol used by fuel-production leaves aside protein that is fed to animals; hence, the food does not go to waste. The other is that the people on the planet affected by food insecurity are too poor to afford it. Therefore, the action undertaken by the USA would not make sure that this food is accessible to them anyways.

Food accessibility

In order to make food accessible, the people suffering from food insecurity need the resources to afford appropriate goods that constitute a nutritious diet according to their preferences. An example for accessible food is supermarkets in developed countries. They provide, an abundance of goods to satisfy our wishes in food preference. At the same time offering a complete nutrition, composed of dairy products, carbs, meat etc. There are two factors that make up food accessibility. First, the resources to afford food and secondly, the appropriate food supplies.

Resources

As the ones affected by food insecurity are mostly farmers in the developing world, it is those who need financial input. The transition to the Green Revolution had as a



consequence the need to purchase of technical facilities. Small-scale farmers fell into debt. Machines replaced many jobs, leading to unemployment. Parallel to that, big corporations profited from less workforce and the rapidity and effectiveness of machines. The food sovereignty movement criticizes this disparity.

Among poor farmers, women represent the majority. They do not profit from the same amount of fertilizers as men. Such fertilizers are very energy intensive but needed to go along with the modern agricultural inputs. Not only fertilizers but also, secure land tenure and good quality soil are needed to cope with the large food demand. For the most marginal, this is out of their reach.

Allocation

Just like a supermarket, food in developing countries should be allocated in central places. Whereas in industrialized countries streets and infrastructure make that job easy, developing countries lack of facilities and resources to make food available. In most cases farmers in the rural areas have to declare themselves satisfied with their own crops. Obviously, they do not cover nor a complete nutritious diet, nor their preferences.

Food Utilization

Food Safety

The purpose of food is to provide us with the necessary nutrients to lead an active and healthy life. Obviously, the needs depending on the age of each individual are very different. For instance, a newborn needs more calcium than an adult. Also, every individual has a different resistance to food than others. A baby is more prone to intoxication than an adult. Therefore, one condition of food utilization is food safety.

Factors that make up food safety are food preparation (food production and food processing) and food storage. The aim of food safety is to prevent infection in order to avoid health hazards. On the contrary, food that is exposed to germs, dirt or rotten is defined as unsafe food. As a consequence, such unsafe food can lead to diseases, such as diarrhea, meningitis. In the long-term such diseases can threaten an individual's life. Unsafe food is also food that does not provide sufficient nutrients to provide a healthy active life.

The paradigms to provide food safety and quality according to the FAO are:
"Strengthening national food control regulatory frameworks, and enhancing member country participation in Codex, providing independent scientific advice through the JECFA and



JEMRA expert bodies to support the standard setting work of Codex, enhancing food safety management along food chains to prevent diseases and trade disruptions, promoting food safety emergency preparedness to build resilient agro-food chains and developing online platforms for global networking, databases for information sharing and tools to support food safety management.” In conclusion, food safety should be handled on a national and international level along with NGOs to oversee the food chain.

Food Waste

The definition of unsafe food can be quite confusing for people living developed countries. We identify unsafe food differently than people living in developing countries. Our ambition for perfect food contributes to food waste on a large scale. According to the FAO, one third of all food ends up being genuinely wasted. Food waste does not only destabilize food distribution but also affects the environment, by being one of the major CO2 emitters.

Other Utilizations

Food does not necessarily need to be consumed to be useful. Food can be used as for the production of biofuel or feeding animals. In this way, food remains in the food cycle and the demand for production is lower. As previously mentioned 40% of the food in the States is used for the production of fuel. However, the food remains in the food system since the remains of the extracted ethanol are used to feed animals. It is important to maintain the food in the food cycle in order not to destabilize the food distribution. Not because the food would reach directly the ones in need, but because mass-food production has shown to have led to a food crisis. In the case of natural hazards, the food prices drastically change leading to the further marginalization of poor farmers.

Major Parties and Organizations involved

The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), funded by the World Bank, were created upon the G20 Summit in September 2009. This multilateral mechanism aims to promote food and nutrition security as well as to improve the income in developing countries. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assures that it is two to four times more effective to rely on agriculture to boost the economy, being that 75% of the poor live in rural areas. GAFSP intends to aid developing countries, such as Rwanda and Togo, by adapting programs to their agro-economic situation individually. An example for such program is the Project to Support Agricultural Development in Togo (PADAT). Even



though every country is handled differently the administrative basis for each country lies in the public sector window and private sector window. The Public Sector Window manages the donations and distributes them fairly. The Private Sector Window works on a smaller-scale level, by promoting the potential of farmers and small to medium-sized-agri-businesses. In order to do so, it focuses on increasing productivity, supporting innovation and reducing risks.

The in the initiative to create the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), arose chronic food insecurity in Africa back in 1994. It is funded by the United States Agency for International Development. In order to achieve “A food secure Africa free from hunger and poverty”, FANRPAN has set up three goals; To facilitate linkages and partnerships between government and civil society, to build the capacity for policy analysis and policy dialogue in Africa, and to support demand-driven policy research and analysis. Partner organizations of FANRPAN are among others, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Southern Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), as well as the departments of Agricultural Economics in Universities from Mozambique, the USA, and Malawi etc. A similar Organization to FANRPAN is AFSIS ASEAN Food Security Information System. Instead of focusing on the southern African Area, AFSIS ASEAN aims to reduce food insecurity in Asia and the Pacific. The Global Food Security Index rated the Democratic Republic of Congo as the least food secure in 2014. According to the Food Security Portal, 70% of the population lacks access to adequate food and 25% of all children are malnourished (World Food Program 2012). These numbers and other factors contribute to the 4.5 million people that have experienced a food crisis in DR Congo. The causes and effects of DR Congo’s food insecurity can be explained in the form of a chain reaction. Ongoing violence causes the voluntary or need for displacement of the Congolese population. Due to the lack of basic infrastructure and lack of consistent access to social services harvesting is disrupted. This leads to low agricultural productivity. Seeing that the majority of the population lives from agriculture, this affects the food accessibility. Food availability is lowered as food is produced.

The World Bank invested 3.132 billion US Dollars in Agriculture and food security in 2013 alone. One of the most generous donators for this purpose have been Sweden, The United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Canada and more that can be whose transactions can be tracked from the public World Bank Data. 1.4 billion were invested in Sub-Saharan Africa and 1.6 billion in Asia. Moreover, the World Banks vision on solving the issue of food insecurity is to invest in agriculture and rural development. They believe in such way to be able to boost food production. According to the World Bank, by 2050 the world will need to



increase food production by adding 50% of what is being produced today. In order to achieve such improvement, the World Bank is busy carrying out policy dialogue with more than 40 countries, monitoring on countries' food production and food prices and collaborating with other NGO's such as the FAO or IFAP. The actual activities in the developing countries are executed by initiatives, such as GAFSP or the Global Food Price Crisis Response Program. Apart from providing resources to boost food economy and know-how knowledge for farmers, the World Bank also provides relief funds where the situation is critical.

Just as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is very involved in food security. In fact, for the FAO tackling food security is a side measure to eradicate hunger. The MDGs mandated the FAO to work towards this goal some years ago. Over these years the FAO has provided definitions, accurate information and analyses on this vast problem. To start off, the definitions by the FAO help to analyse the dimensions and relations of food insecurity in the real world. They also help to visualise a global challenge into more achievable goals. Other important information is the "Food Balance Sheets" and national household statistics. Apart from this practical information, the FAO sponsors and monitors numerous initiatives and projects, such as "Support to study on appropriate policy measures to increase investments in agriculture and to stimulate food production", "Support to the Commonwealth Foundation for the preparation of strategies for maximizing the benefits of migration and remittances for pro-poor sustainable development and food security" and "Support to policy seminars on high food prices".

Timeline of Events

1945	End of World War II, Incomes from agriculture fall drastically
1958-1961	Chinese Famine, Weather conditions and other disputed factors led to excess death of 29.5 million deaths, World Bank estimates.
1961	Creation of the World Food Program, the largest NGO fighting hunger worldwide, mostly in crisis situations.
mid-1960	The Green Revolution, new technology leads to the mass-production of food, which affects small-scale farmers negatively.
1968-1974	Sahal Drought, according to UN estimates, the drought had 100.000 mortal victims. The prolonged drought redefined the understanding, herewith the definition of malnutrition.
1972-1974	Global food crisis, Market shocks along with weather hazards lead to the steep decline of calories per capita globally.



1974	First World Food Conference, sponsored by the FAO, this first World Food Conference arose from the famine in Bangladesh.
1983-1985	Famines in Ethiopia, 400.000 mortal victims in northern Ethiopia
1996	World Food Summit, Under-nutrition and the alarm to feed the growing population induced the World Food Summit.
2000	Millenium Development Goals, Goal 1. "to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty" as well as Goal 7. "Ensure Environmental Sustainability" address the issue of food security
2005-2006	Niger food crisis, Weather conditions set off a food crisis that exposed 2.4 million people to food insecurity.
2007-2008	World Food prices crisis, the crisis speaks for itself, food prices increased globally setting standards of food accessibility to high for developing countries.
2008	High level task force, triggered by the World Food prices crisis, the UN to create a plan of action towards Global Food Security established the HLTF.
2009	Creation of the GAFSP, Created after the G20 Summit September 2009, GAFSP aims to promote food security as well as to increase incomes in developing countries.
2010	Number of undernourished people reaches over a billion.
2020	Prediction by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI): World Agricultural GDPs decrease by 16%, due to global warming

Previous Attempts

Measures to tackle the issue of food insecurity mostly come from industrialized countries and NGOs. Even though developing countries, such as Togo, are active planning strategies to combat their struggle, they would not be able to reach their goals if it wasn't for the financial and logistic help of an NGO, like GAFSP. The reason for that is that developing countries can hardly combat their own poverty.

A popular movement in the Western World is the change of diet. By that is meant the transition from consuming unnecessary amounts of meat in order to replace them with grains. The reasoning behind this measure is the amount of calories used to produce meat. According to the Worldwatch Institute, it takes 28 calories of fossil fuel to produce one calorie of meat protein, whereas it only takes 3.3 calories of fossil fuel to produce one calorie of



protein from grain. Advocates of this vegetarian approach argue that food more food could be distributed if humans directly consumed grains. It is hard to observe the results of this approach as no data is available as to whom has transitioned to a less meat-dominant diet. In any case, increasing food availability is per se positive, yet food security relies on food accessibility as well. All the food in the world will not help if the poor are not able to afford it.

An example of NGO collaboration with developed countries is the rice intensification project implemented in Rwanda by the World Bank. Access to better quality seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural technologies for small-scale farmers was part of the strategy to boost grain production. Successfully these programs have boosted the agricultural productivity in some developing countries. Consequently, in Rwanda, prices remained stable and the countries food imports decreased. Food availability and accessibility were touched upon by this measure. This is a rather right wing measure that prioritizes modern agricultural inputs.

Famines in African nations such as Malawi and Nigeria in the mid-2000 occasioned the Strategic Grain Reserve. This plan created by the UN and financed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Large grain reserves in Africa were meant as buffers for bad harvest, in order to maintain grain prices. This would stabilize food accessibility. Unfortunately, corruption, mismanagement, and expenses led to the dismissal of this measure. Global and national stocks on food remain irregular.

Few resolutions have been voted upon in the United Nations on behalf of food insecurity. However, some measures can be found among titles such as 'the right to food' or 'eradicating poverty'. The Human Rights Resolution 6/2, as well as, Resolution **(A/RES/62/164)** suggests agricultural strategies. Resolutions that elaborate on the three pillars of food insecurity, food access, food availability and food use, are needed to fully grasp the issue and find the corresponding measures.

Possible Solutions

Food Security is a complex issue that interconnects environment and economy, therefore, the solutions stated below are not going to cover the content of a rich resolution. Delegates are encouraged to examine the causes of food insecurity, be creative and most importantly believe in their ideas.

The three pillars of food security, food availability, food accessibility and food utilization

should measure all possible solutions. Before fully developing an idea it is handy to ask oneself three questions: Will this measure increase food availability/ improve the global food distribution? Is the food going to be affordable for the poor? How will this food be used?

Reducing Waste

Inefficient irrigation and the wastage of fertilizers lead to soil erosion and soil degradation in the long term. Small-scale farmers to big corporations are responsible for this. The well-preserved soil is key to food safety and food availability. Often the cost of food we consume does not include the production expenses, in other words, the cost of river pollution, for instance. By adding production expenses to the food we consume, we would economize resources for food production, therefore contributing to food availability. Yet, looking at the most affected by food insecurity, poor farmers, this measure would decrease food accessibility. A way to tackle the problems, soil maintenance, and unreachable prices, is to grant incentives to farmers who reduce their wastage. Prices would be maintained as well as the soil would be preserved.

Improving Food Reserves

As stated above Food Reserve Programs such as the Strategic Grain Reserve were discarded in the past. However, this was due to their mismanagement and costs, not their potential to combat food insecurity. NGOs if not the UN should create an improved version of the Strategic Grain Reserve, one that is more affordable and supervised.

Eradicating Poverty

Food insecurity affects those who live in poverty and all the food in the world will not help, of the poor are not able to afford it. Therefore eradicating poverty is key to resolve this issue. Seeing that the poor live from agricultural activities, programs that collaborate with farmers are needed. One option is to support them financially and with the knowledge to develop small-scale enterprises. Another option is to subsidize women to set up market gardens. That way they could start raising livestock, like rabbits or chickens. These are just some, of the innumerable ways to lift people out of poverty.

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Appendices



- I. “Feeding Nine Billion” offers friendly, descriptive and understandable videos on the global food crisis, including food insecurity. <https://feedingninebillion.com>
- II. Thorough definition of Food insecurity by the FAO:
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4671e/y4671e06.htm>

