

**ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:  
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**  
April 1–3, 2004, Kampala, Uganda

**SUMMARY NOTE**

**Parallel Session:**     **Priorities for Action: Perspectives from East and Central Africa**

**Panelist:**            *Asha-Rose Migiro*, Member of Parliament and Minister of Community Development, Women, and Children, Tanzania

**Title:**                 **Gender Equity and Equality: A Gateway to Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in East and Central Africa by Year 2020 (The Case of Tanzania)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Despite adopting numerous international conventions and declarations on gender equity and equality, the situation in Tanzania, however, is still somber. Women are still disadvantaged when it comes to issues like participation in decisionmaking, distribution of domestic workload, accessing resources, and appropriating incomes accruing from various household economic activities like agriculture. This, in my opinion, has perpetuated and still does perpetuate the problem of malnutrition and food insecurity in the country.

**FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

Food security can be defined as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active health life (World Bank 1996). Food security, therefore, exists when people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life.

The essential elements of food security include availability of food through either own production or through the market, stability of its supply at all times with an effective distribution system, and the ability to acquire it by having financial resources through employment and other income-generation activities. The absence of these important elements could be termed as food insecurity.

**STATUS OF FOOD SECURITY IN TANZANIA**

The current status of food security in Tanzania is generally satisfactory at aggregate or national level. Nevertheless, at subnational levels, particularly in some districts and households, food insecurity still persists with about 20.4 percent of the population falling into the category of the food poor.

**CHALLENGES IN ATTAINING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

In developed countries, food is always available in supermarkets, what one needs is money to buy. In Tanzania, however, the rural population and a considerable number of urban dwellers have to produce food for themselves. Therefore, food production viz. agricultural activities are of paramount important to the livelihood of most Tanzanians. However, agricultural activities face numerous challenges which need to be addressed in order to attain food security. They include:

Dependence on rainfed agricultural system coupled with hand hoe cultivation. This system of cultivation is susceptible to weather variations and drought. Moreover, it allows farmers to cultivate too small land areas to guarantee food security for the nation.

Non-existence of incentive structure to encourage agriculture growth. In Tanzania, there are no arrangements to provide subsidies and loans to small farmers, which is a big disincentive for them. The fact is that, even in developed countries like Britain and France, farmers are being given loans and subsidies. There is no way our farmers can process to ensure food security in the absence of such arrangements.

Incomes accruing from agricultural activities being appropriated by men. Agricultural activities are normally undertaken by women and partly by the youth. Men spend most of their time on leisure and nonagricultural income-related activities. However, income derived from farming is appropriated by men as head of families. This trend needs to be reversed for the sake of guaranteeing sustainable food production and food security.

Heavy workload for women. Women, in typical Tanzanian communities, bear inordinate family workload. They invariably have to care for the children, sick family members (especially victims of HIV/AIDS), prepare food for the family, and as earlier mentioned participate in agricultural activities to sustain their families. Their workload is further exacerbated by inadequate access to improved water supply services and their excessive dependence on wood fuel as source of domestic energy. Unfortunately, wood fuel is getting increasingly difficult to obtain. All these have negative bearing on guaranteeing food security.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Food security to be attained in Tanzania, agriculture has to be intensified. This simply means the country cannot continue relying on rainfed agriculture coupled with application of inappropriate technologies. All avenues to transform agriculture, for example, adoption of irrigation as a major means of carrying out farming should be explored. After all, recent studies, including that of FAO, have shown that irrigated agriculture provides 40 percent of the world's food production from 17 percent of the cultivated area. In regions of water shortage, yield of irrigated land is often two to three times that of rainfed agriculture. The critical role of irrigation contributing to food security is evident. Nonetheless, in a country like Tanzania where more than 82 percent of the population live and eke out a living in rural areas with agriculture as the mainstay of their living. Irrigation alone cannot be a solution to food insecurity. It has to be accompanied by improved gender relations among actors in the agricultural interventions to bring about meaningful transformation which can guarantee food security.

Thank you.

#### REFERENCES

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