



**SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY
FOR ALL BY 2020**
September 4–6, 2001 ! Bonn, Germany



SUMMARY NOTE

Panel Discussion: Setting the Priorities for Action

Panelist: Mercy Karanja, Chief Executive, Kenya National Farmers Union

Introduction

At the World Food Summit in November 1996, the heads of states or government for around the world pledged their commitment “to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level not later than 2015.”

Food in security reduction trends in developed and developing countries are clearly different with agriculture playing a critical role in the economies of the low — income developing countries. In these countries, 70–80 percent of the population live and depend directly or indirectly on agriculture. This is to be compared with only 2–5 percent of the population in the European Union and other high-income countries.

The trends in Sub-Saharan Africa are still very discouraging with levels of malnutrition and poverty increasing other than reducing as already indicated by projections from IFPRI. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world in which the number and percentage of children who are malnourished is expected to rise rather than fall over the next 20 years. This is based on assumptions of increased cereal production.

The trends in Sub-Saharan Africa have raised concern, as the region is also home to the majority of the world’s poor. In the Horn of Africa, studies have shown 50 percent of the people surviving on less than US\$1 per person per day. The connection between poverty and food security is important. For the majority of the poor, agriculture is the main source of livelihoods. This means it is only when poverty is alleviated or diminished that levels of food insecurity can be reduced.

The long-term solution to food insecurity is therefore is beyond production of additional food and includes the need to address rural livelihoods in general. Social safety nets are an important factor in Africa that has taken different forms in different countries.

Causes of food insecurity in Africa: (a) production resources, (b) marketing information and credit systems, (c) conflict, (d) population growth, and (e) HIV/AIDS and food security.

Production Resources. This will include mainly land and water. In most of Africa, the greatest numbers of poor people are concentrated in arid and semi-arid ecosystems. In these systems the farmers depend on relatively fragile resource base for their herds. The production systems that have been introduced have proved not sustainable and large herds are still lost during times of drought to be recovered again during the rainy season.

This results to a vicious cycle of environmental degradation, increased poverty and food security. The factor of land in the high potential areas is of concern as the more productive land is subdivided into small and uneconomical units for agricultural production. In Ethiopia, for example, 40 percent of farm households have less than 0.5 hectare of land and more than 60 percent have more than 1 hectare from which to support a family of 6–8 people.

This is, some parts of Africa, due to poor access land by the farmers and in other parts, for example, Kenya, is due to the excessive fragmentation of productive land due to inheritance. The exploitation of the less areas of low rainfall has been extremely low, e.g. in the Horn of Africa, only 6 percent of the cropped area and less than 1 percent of the cultivable area is irrigated compared to 37 percent in Asia.

The pastoral systems have received little attention with dwindling support from governments, for veterinary care, and especially markets. This is a system that needs attention as in the relatively drier parts of Africa, livestock will still be the best investments.

Marketing, Information, and Credit Systems. The other types of resources that are not in place for conducive production include information, markets, and credit systems. Knowledge and information systems in most of Africa are in a poor state of development; these include agricultural knowledge, marketing social, political, and even knowledge on policies. The rural poor have little or many times no access to the kind of information that will allow by adjustments in their production systems and consequently this gives rise to a narrow choice of options to expand incomes.

Market forces in the era of globalization and liberalization have further worsened the case of resource poor farmers. The liberalized policies have pushed the poor farmers to lower levels of poverty as they depended on sale of surplus production. This is no longer profitable due to higher production costs and depressed consumer prices this is the case in Kenya where small-scale farmers are not able to sell surplus maize into the market as the cross-border maize and inputs are much cheaper.

The most critical constraints, however, to production is lack of supportive instruments to the farmers. Total lack of affordable credit to farmers and institutional support is critical at this time of deteriorating food insecurity. The farmers are expected to do farming from their own resources and locate their own marketing and this is the reason why as many as can get alternatives opt out of farming to get better opportunities in town. This rural-urban migration has only resulted in another group of the urban poor needing support. This means the crop-based systems in marginal areas have received very little attention and are largely unexploited. This is also true for pastoralism systems.

Conflict. The next cause of food insecurity is the persistent conflict in Africa. Internal and transboundary conflicts abound in Africa. These remove the strong productive people from the rural areas living women and children who are consequently prone to food insecurity.

Within the countries, there is growing insecurity in rural areas where food is grown and many regions have large populations of internally displaced people. This greatly affects food production.

Country	Proportion of Total Population Living with HIV/AIDs (%)	Prevalence in 15- to 24-year olds (%)
Djibuti	6.2	11.4
Eritrea	1.2	n.a.
Ethiopia	4.9	9.7
Kenya	7.2	9.7
Sudan	05	n.a.
Uganda	3.8	5.7

Population Growth. Population growth has been very high in most of Africa resulting in great pressure on the resources available. An example is taken from the Horn of Africa:

Table 1—Demographic indicators

Country	Average annual population growth 1995–2000 (%)	Total Fertility Rate 1995–2000 (%)	Dependency ratio, 1997*	Population per hectare of arable land or permanent cropland	Contraceptive prevalence (%)
Djibuti	n.a.	n.a.	79.8	n.a.	n.a.
Eritrea	3.8	5.7	89.4	5.0	8
Ethiopia	2.5	6.3	95.5	4.1	4
Kenya	2.0	4.5	91.8	4.7	33
Somalia	4.2	7.3	n.a.	4.7	n.a.
Sudan	2.1	4.6	78.9	4.7	8
Uganda	2.8	7.1	107.9	5.4	15

Notes: * UNFPA, 1999, *The state of world population*.

** UNDP, 1999, *Human development report*.

Setting the Priorities for Action

At the World Food Summit in November 1996, the heads of states and government for round the world and European Community pledge their commitment “to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level not later than 2015.”

The trends in developed countries and developing countries are clearly different with agricultural playing a critical role in the economies of the low-income developing countries. In these countries, 70–80 percent of the population live and depend directly or indirectly on agriculture.

This is to be compared with only 2–5 percent of the population in the European Union and other high-income countries. The trends in Sub-Saharan Africa are still very discouraging with level of malnutrition and poverty increasing other than reducing as already indicated by projections by IFPRI. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world in which the number and percentage of children who are malnourished is expected to rise rather than fall over the next 20 years. This is based on assumptions of increased cereal production.

Actions Needed

1. *Commitment to food security.* The governments should demonstrate commitment to food security by:
 - a. Creating an enabling institutional framework to support farming institutional mechanism to support farmers in input provision, credit, and right policies should deliberately be put in place.
 - b. Increasing budgetary allocations to agricultural sector.
 - c. Governments respecting the right to food as a human right and give all the attention this deserves.
 - d. Strengthening environment for producers to do their business putting in place institutional mechanism to support farmers in input provision, credit, and right policies.

2. *Agricultural production models.* Deliberate lessons should be learned from the people themselves to develop sustainable agricultural models for these fragile ecosystems. Greater involvement of people should be encouraged in research work to identify research gaps where the resource poor farmers can benefit from the research.

The underlying recommendation is to learn more from the actors themselves as to how they have coped with risk over time. However, there has to be alternative livelihoods in these times of changing climatic conditions where farming solely dependent on weather may not be guaranteed.

Conclusion

The African governments ought to perceive it as an obligation to feed their people and give it first priority in planning. Social safe nets must be developed to support the population and not leave them to the controls of nature. This should be done in collaboration with development partners. Real political will should be demonstrated towards this direction in that:

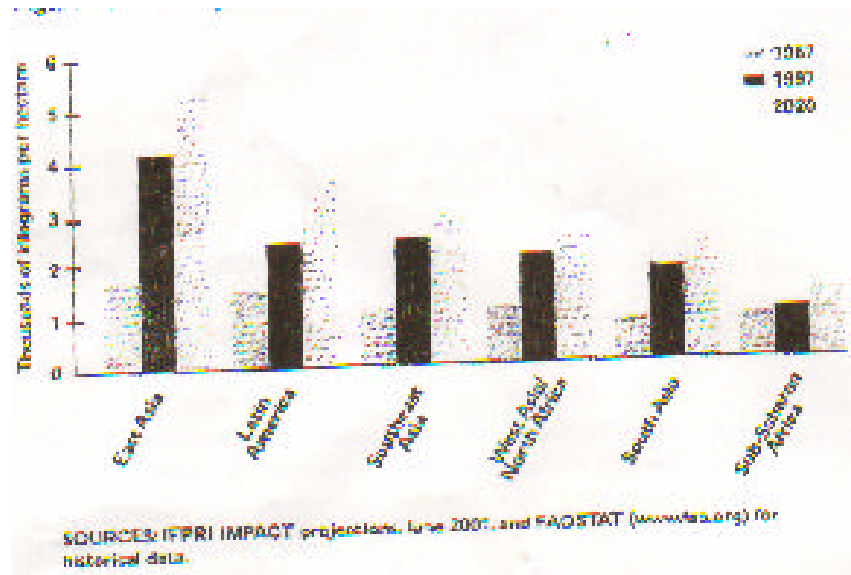
- More resources should be availed to social research to have lessons from Africa for Africa.
- The issue of land should be addressed in view to releasing land for food production other than purely human settlement.
- There needs to be a radical change in many African countries with better focused planning in view of food production.
- Redefinition of a farmer who is expected to produce food for the city population done by each government.
- The land utilization trends in Africa need to be reversed if we are not to end up with housing estates in all our countries and no food.

(It can be done.)

References

- C. Ashley and D. Carney. 1999. *Sustainable Livelihoods Lessons from Early Experience*.
- L. Arcand. 2000. Malnutrition and growth: The efficiency costs of hunger. Draft paper for FAO, July.
- UNFPA. 1999. *The State of World Population*.
- IFPRI. 2001. Impact Projections.
- Inter-agency task force on the UN. Response to long-term food security, agricultural development and related aspects in the Horn of Africa: Elimination of food insecurity.

Figure 1



Note: The views expressed in this summary note are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.