

THE FOOD RUSH. A SECURITY RISK AND A CAUSE FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

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Access to food is more than ever a question of interest. The world needs to produce at least 50% more food to feed 9 billion people by 2050. The land, biodiversity, oceans, forests, and other forms of natural capital are being depleted at unprecedented rates. Unless we change how we grow our food and manage our natural capital, food security – especially for the world’s poorest – will be at risk. In this context we expect that the struggle for food to generate migration, conflicts and, why not, international intervention defined by the new Copenhagen School of Security Studies paradigm. Since March 2008 governments, UN agencies and many social movements have adopted positions on the causes of the food crisis and the means to address it. Unfortunately, while these parties are trying to coordinate their activities and suggest new approaches, the old recipes for producing more food are often brought up. Contradictory proposals are made and the thought given to the causes underlying hunger and the food crisis (social, economic and political discrimination and exclusion) has gone largely unheeded. The first Millennium Development Goal, which called for cutting the percentage of hungry people by half by 2015, is clearly out of reach. But the food crisis might lead to a new world food order.

Key words: globalization, international intervention, food security, world order, conflicts, migration, security risk.

1. INTRODUCTION

Global debate on food security intensifies, more in some corners of the globe as there appeared internal conflicts, population growth, and resource depletion.

Considerable differences in development between countries of different continents accentuate disparities for population which are

facing with issues in accessing to food. Even though aid programs implemented by governments or international organizations in order to reduce the differences are not enough to ensure food security for all people, first access to food and then a proper diet.

The problem is not only unequal distribution of resources in the world, but also notable differences

in the level of development, level of education, how existing natural capital is managed and lack of local strategies dedicated to this sector.

Food security is a topic of interest because they are expected major global risks unless measures are taken. Fight for food triggered and will trigger increasingly deeper, starvation, internal and international conflicts, waves of migration, and various forms of international interventions generated by actors of the international community.

A real challenge in terms of food security is the difference of approach, once a part of completely different contexts states and regions are facing. Mention the US and Europe each face different realities; African countries facing starvation, the Central Asian countries that deals with the resources scarcity.

Food security has various meanings in the specialty literature:

- Targets providing worldwide access to a healthy food;
- Targets ensuring food availability;
- Ensures and respects the right of any individual to have access to food and the desire to have a healthy diet;
- Is the basic component of social stability, economic and explicit national security of a state (either with or without agricultural potential) (Moseley, W.G. and B.I. Logan. 2005)

Food security landscape has two main components: food policy and nutrition policy. Food policy occurs on two levels: one on the supply and quality, and the other reported directly to the consumer and consumption capacity.

These interventions relate to one or more of the following objectives:

- Setting food prices to the fluctuations of international prices;
- Ensuring a particular nutritional level of the population undernourished;
- Controlling food prices;
- Limitation of inflationary pressure by controlling food prices.

Therefore, food policies comprise government and legislative measures, regulatory, administrative and financial measures, with clear objectives defined in advance. Nutritional policy aimed at ensuring a balance between physiological needs of food consumption and intake of nutrients to meet them.

The source of legitimacy of a state is its ability to provide security or to protect and maintain the rights of its citizens and to ensure the perfect environment to satisfy all needs. In the pyramid of needs expressed by Abraham Maslow, the need for security is placed on the second level of importance immediately after physiological needs.

Causes and influences that threaten food security are:

- Global warming, desertification and land degradation;
- Inefficient use of the agricultural potential in favor of excessive imports, the lack of a national strategy for food security;
- The global economic crisis;
- Lack of independence of food security;
- Different levels of development between regions and countries;

- The volatility of prices;
- Lack of immediate actions, lack of coherent policies;
- Lack of control and traceability of the food chain;
- Lack of control and practical actions at global level;

Food safety is closely linked to economic growth and social progress, as well as with political stability and peace.

For many experts, the food security of a country is the most important dimension of national security.

A state has national security only when it has food security and only when it has sufficient availability of food and agricultural products able to meet the requirements of food for all inhabitants included within its borders and to ensure, at the same time required stocks to feed animals and water in case of natural disasters, war, crises, etc.

Not being able to assure food security can generate very quickly, internally, severe convulsions and social tensions, may damage the physical and mental health of the population, create conditions for economic and political instability, and externally may attract diplomatic pressure with economic and political undesirable and dangerous effects to national security.

2. GLOBALIZATION AND THE FOOD CRISIS

The food crisis it seems that exploded overnight, bringing fears about being too many people in the

world. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations studies there were record grain harvests in 2007. The main conclusion is that there is more than enough food in the world to feed everyone. In fact, over the last 20 years, world food production has risen steadily at over 2% a year, while the rate of global population growth has dropped to 1.14% a year. Population is not outstripping food supply. The problem is that the people are too poor to buy the food that is available.

The executive director of World Hunger Program, Josette Sheeran, said: *“We’re seeing more people hungry and at greater numbers than before. There is food on the shelves but people are priced out of the market.”* (Holt Giménez & Peabody, 2008).

In the first place we must taking into account that the food crisis is a symptom of a food system in crisis. Bad weather, high oil prices, agrofuels, and speculation are only the proximate causes of a deeper, systemic problem.

The root cause of the crisis is a global food system that is highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shock. This vulnerability springs from the risks, inequities, and externalities inherent in food systems that are dominated by a global industrial agri-foods complex. Built over the past half-century – largely with public funds for grain subsidies, foreign

aid, and international agricultural development – the industrial agri-foods complex is made up of multinational grain traders, giant seed, chemical, and fertilizer corporations, processors, and global supermarket chains.

On the other hand “Climate change is exacerbating more risks than ever before in terms of water crises, food shortages, constrained economic growth, weaker societal cohesion and increased security risks. Meanwhile, geopolitical instability is exposing businesses to cancelled projects, revoked licenses, interrupted production, damaged assets and restricted movement of funds across borders. These political

conflicts are in turn making the challenge of climate change all the more insurmountable – reducing the potential for political co-operation, as well as diverting resource, innovation and time away from climate change resilience and prevention,” said Cecilia Reyes, Chief Risk Officer of Zurich Insurance Group.

The 11th edition of Global Risks Report 2016 through its analysis of the interconnections between risks, also explores three areas where global risks have the potential to impact society. These are the concept of the “(dis)empowered citizen”, the impact of climate change on food security, and the potential of pandemics to threaten social cohesion.

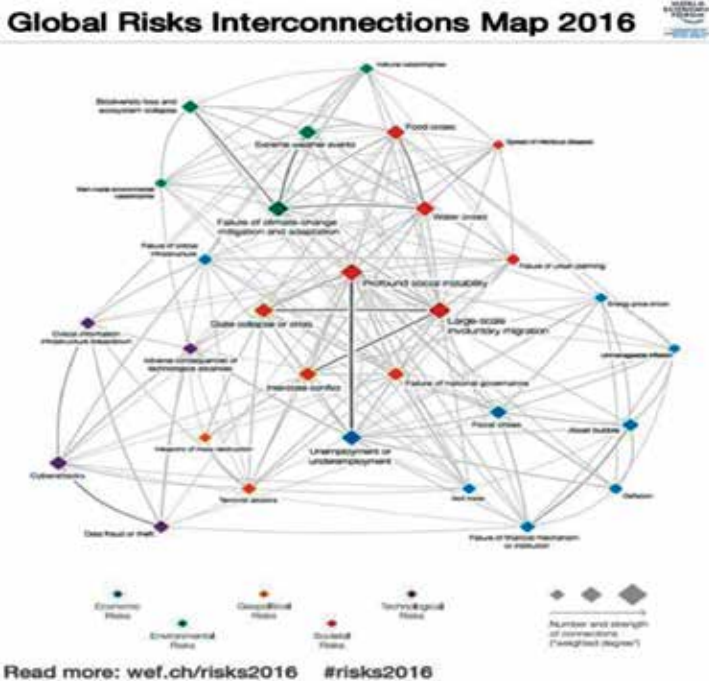


Fig. no. 1. Global Risks Interconnections Map 2016
Source: World Economic Forum, 2016

Knowledge of such inter-connections is important in helping leaders prioritize areas for action, as well as to plan for contingencies. *“We know climate change is exacerbating other risks such as migration and security, but these are by no means the only interconnections that are rapidly evolving to impact societies, often in unpredictable ways. Mitigation measures against such risks are important, but adaptation is vital,”* said Margareta Drzeniek-Hanouz, Head of the Global Competitiveness and Risks, World Economic Forum.

3. THE FOOD RUSH: A CAUSE FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

The types of interventions international caused by the global food issues is about creating policies and comprehensive programs or took the form of humanitarian aid, grants and support through financial aid programs. A complex picture of the types of intervention mentioned above it provides the EU with the Common Agricultural Policy, a policy programmed to be reformed and expects a new version responding to new global, political, economic, demographic risk. In this regard, about the future CAP, Tassos Haniotis explained that it is necessary to be found a balance between maintaining

competitiveness and environmental protection, between subsidiarity and simplification, between job creation and growth.

We can see that these forms of intervention aimed at treating symptoms and not the cause, nor does propose solutions to eliminate or at least minimize the risks.

The food system landscape has two major parts – the industrial North and the South. Having that in mind, the issues are different, according to the specificity of each region.

But, the common point is that if is wanted to solve the food crisis is need to redesign all the food system. That entails re-regulating the market, reducing the oligopolistic power of the agri-foods corporations, and building agro-ecologically resilient family agriculture. It is important to make food affordable by turning the food system into an engine for local economic development in both rural and urban areas.

These tasks are not mutually exclusive—it is nor necessary to wait to fix the food system before making food affordable, marketing fair, or farming viable. In fact, the three need to work in concert, complementing each other.

On the other hand, over the next 35 years, population growth, reduced access to fresh water and declining arable land will place mounting pressure on global food and water security. The greatest pressure will

be on those countries least equipped to deal with these challenges, increasing the risk of both inter- and intra-state conflict.

Food and water insecurity is not necessarily about a dearth of resources – we have enough food and water globally to meet demand. But demand for food and water is expected to outpace the supply of globally available resources. The majority of the world's population growth to 2050 is expected to occur in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, but both regions are ill-equipped at present to access the required resources and meet the basic needs of their growing populations.

In his book, *The Coming Famine*, Julian Cribb writes that the wars of the 21st century will involve failed states, rebellions, civil conflict, insurgencies and terrorism. All of these elements will be triggered by competition over dwindling resources, rather than global conflicts with clearly defined sides (Cribb, 2011).

Conflict is likely to be driven by a number of factors and difficult to address through diplomacy or military force. Population pressures, changing weather, urbanization, migration, a loss of arable land and freshwater resources are just some of the multi-layered stressors present

in many states. Future inter-state conflict will move further away from the traditional, clear lines of military conflict and more towards economic control and influence.

Food and water insecurity in any part of the world affects everyone. What is ultimately required is unprecedented international cooperation.

It is important to stress that conflicts often occur together with other shocks (for example, other conflicts, natural disasters, price shocks, and so on). The interdependencies between shocks (such as droughts occurring in the context of conflict) often lead to “complex emergencies” (Clemens Breisinger and all, 2014).

For that there is intense discussion about building resilience.

To illustrate how resilience to conflict can be built through food-security policies and programs, the framework in Figure 2 differentiates between national- and household-level food security (Ecker and Breisinger, 2012).

Resilience at the national level is mainly built through policies and investments and is a precondition for resilience at the household level. Household level resilience can be further enhanced through specific programs, either from governments or from international partners.



Fig. no. 2. The conflict resiliency-food security framework
Source: Ecker and Breisinger, 2012

4. CONCLUSIONS – TO GO FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL

Rebuilding national food economies will require immediate and long-term political commitments from governments. An absolute priority has to be given to domestic food production in order to decrease dependency on the international market. Peasants and small farmers should be encouraged through better prices for their farm products and stable markets to produce food for themselves and their communities. Landless families from rural and urban areas have to get access to land, seeds, and water to produce their own food. This means increased

investment in peasant and farmer-based food production for domestic markets.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, agro-ecological farms, growing throughout the world, are highly productive and – according to a path-breaking study from the University of Michigan – can easily provide us with all the food we need. As industrialized farming and free trade regimes fail us, these approaches will be the keys for building resilience back into a dysfunctional global food system.

The democratization of food systems requires a social change in the way it is managed food. It is necessary to reduce the political influence of the industrial agri-foods

complex and strengthen antitrust laws and enforcement. These changes will require both changes in practices and in legislation in order to establish a regulatory context for sustainable and equitable food systems. These changes also depend on the degree of political will on the part of business, on legislators, and on communities.

All this conclusions could be translated by less international intervention in agri-food sector. Multinational companies, states, international organizations have to have the willingness to sustain this solutions in order to have all a winning game.

The future will always be a mystery, but one can gain insights by thinking about these trends in terms of scenarios and alternative futures.

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