

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Combatting global food insecurity

Student Officer: Jung Woo Hong

Position: Chair of Economic and Social Council

Introduction

Hunger has always been an ever-present problem, and the rate of people starving has increased as inequalities expanded across the globe. Despite the efforts being made in recent years, food security is yet to be prioritized as a prominent problem. Today, approximately 795 million people are undernourished, which means nearly 1 in 9 people experience chronic hunger. 98% of the 795 million come from



Chronic hunger and famine in Africa

developing countries, where 1 out of 6 children are underweight. This is due to the presence of inadequate food distribution policies and unresolved issues of poverty in these countries. Poverty is an important cause of hunger, especially in impoverished villages where the citizens either do not have enough money to afford the basic necessities or have to use more than half of their income to do so. In addition, the antiquated urban market facilities in these regions further hinder the process of food distribution, aggravating food shortages. Although economic growth can alleviate food insecurity, it is important to understand that the underlying causes of this issue must be eradicated first in order to effectively solve this issue.

Food insecurity is associated with hunger, famine and malnutrition. People who go through food insecurity all suffer from hunger, famine and malnutrition, however the consequences of food insecurity also also impact the nation as a whole, slowing economic growth and hindering the country's overall progress. Food security is a prerequisite to humanity – it is an absolute need for the promotion of the inclusive growth of humanity.

Definition of Key Terms

Food Security

Food security is the state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

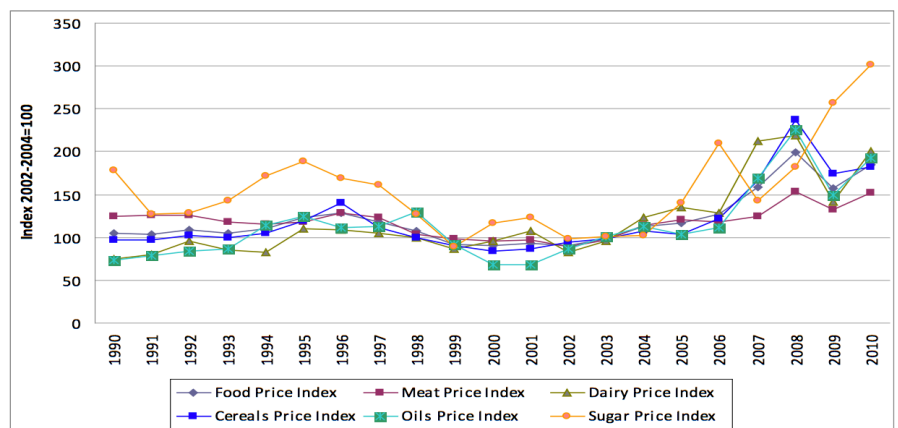
Famine

Famine is an extreme scarcity of food. It is an ambiguous term, however food shortages usually become a famine when 30% of children are malnourished and 1 in 5 households have an extreme lack of food.

General Overview

The Global Food Crisis

The drastic increase in food prices between 2007-2008, as seen in the graph, spurred people to reconsider the importance of food security. According to the FAO report, food prices increased by 40% in 2007. There were a variety of causes for this drastic increase in food prices such as the rising price of oil, and the excessive production of biofuels. The skyrocketing food prices influenced even the most basic foods and made it especially difficult for developing countries to afford food. Consequently, chronic food insecurity increased notable in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa as the number of people undernourished reached over 900 million people. The unaffordable prices of foods enraged the public; the severity of the issue manifesting through food riots that often included violence. Political and social instability were inevitable outcomes of soaring food prices as people began to protest in more than 48 countries. For instance, in



Annual FAO Food Price Indices

Haiti, five people were killed when the starving citizens protested toward the presidential palace to confront the present. This event exemplified the catastrophic and violent nature caused by food insecurity and demonstrated what could happen in a worldwide scale.

Haiti Food Riots



Haiti Food Riots

The Haiti food riots reached a peak in 2008. Due to the increase in food prices and the unaffordability of food, the citizens of Haiti protested against the government. United Nations Peacekeepers had to use rubber bullets and gas to control the riots of the citizens of Haiti. The rising of food prices enraged the people and angry protestors attempted to break into the presidential palace of Haiti's capital city, Port au Prince in an effort to make the current President, Rene Preval step down. In 2008, the food prices increased at a devastating percentage of 40% on average since last year, making the Haitians go on food riots. Roads were blocked by burnt cars and by concrete barricades, windows were smashed, shops were robbed and 5 people died in a week of protesting. To help aid and solve this issue, NGOs such as the World Food Program made emergency donations for Haiti's rising food prices.

Problems Raised

Hunger and malnutrition among children

One of the major problems that were raised due to food insecurity was the hunger and malnutrition among children. In 2015, 14% of all children under the age of 5 were recorded as underweight. If children under the age of 5 (an age where nutritious food is a necessity for healthy physical growth) are subjected to malnutrition and hunger, they will experience a weakened immune system, making them even more vulnerable towards diseases and infections. In the long term, these children may even have problems with their cognitive development, which would potentially degrade their academic abilities as a result of hampered brain growth. Additionally, research shows the direct correlation between emotional health issues and food insecurity. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), although the precise causes for the association are not yet completely

identified, depression and anxiety are more likely to prevail among food insecure people compared to food secure people. As undernourished children are affected by mental, physical and cognitive factors, they are less likely to pursue a career in academics. The unsuccessful education would reverberate throughout their lives, as they would also suffer from economic consequences, such as unemployment. This would not only affect the individual, but would also affect the country as a valuable workforce cannot be fostered among destitute children.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has been an active participant in ensuring food security, starting from the UN Conference on Food and Agriculture in 1943, where 44 governments came together to establish a permanent organization in the field of food and agriculture. Continuing on the ensuring of food security, the UN established a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Quebec City, Canada in 1945. Following this, the UN passed a General Assembly resolution (A/RES/1714 (XVI)) in 1961, which established the multilateral World Food Program (WFP). The WFP analyses and monitors food security, helps identify food insecure populations, and establishes the underlying causes of food insecurity. Another resolution that passed on this topic was the General Assembly resolution A/RES/35/70, where the World Food Day was established. The purpose of the World Food Day was to raise awareness of the problem of hunger, promote the use of technology to the developing world (agricultural development), and to increase international solidarity on the struggles of hunger, poverty and malnutrition. Then the formulation of the First Millennium Development Goal, with the aim of “cutting by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015”, was set in the year 2000. Since 2000, the UN has held food summits, declarations and challenges on food security to ensure food security around the globe.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1770	Bengal goes through a in a famine due to colonialism and drought
1845	The Irish Potato Famine begins with the arrival of potato blight in Ireland
1943	UN Conference on Food and Agriculture. Conference decided on the establishment of a permanent organization in the field of food and agriculture.
1945	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations is

	established in Canada
1958	Mao Ze Dong's "Great Leap Forward" policy outlaws the private owning of land and orders farmers to produce iron and steel, causing the Great Chinese Famine
1961	World Food Program is established as a multilateral food aid program with the support of the UN General Assembly resolution: A/RES/1714(XVI)
1974	The First World Food Conference
1979	Action Against Hunger is founded as a response to the crisis in Somalia
1981	World Food Day established. By adopting the GA resolution A/RES/35/70, the UN welcomes the observance of World Food Day annually on the 16 th of October.
2000	UN Millennium Declaration. Reduce extreme poverty and hunger – to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015.
2007	Mexico goes through a food riot commonly known as the "Tortilla riot"
2008	Food riots in Haiti reach a peak
2009	Conflict in Nigeria calls for widespread food insecurity within the country

Possible Solutions

Increasing food accessibility

Lack of food accessibility is a main cause of food insecurity, especially in rural areas. Thus, increasing food accessibility would ensure stable food supply in rural areas, which would help those in rural areas to have access to nutritious foods. This could be done through creating infrastructures around rural areas that would reduce the distance between communities and sources of affordable food, as well as provide producers and consumers with greater accessibility to local markets. Another way food accessibility can be increased is through the establishment of agricultural markets near these areas, and improvements in ways of transport would also aid in increasing food accessibility. In order to implement this solution, the UN needs to overcome the following problems:

- Food accessibility in rural areas
- Distance between local markets to rural areas
- Absence of agricultural markets near rural areas

- Affordable food
- Methods of transport

Improving technical capacity and educating farmers

In most developing countries, technology is very limited, thus the technology used in agriculture is rudimentary. This means that most farms in these developing nations do not have proper irrigation systems, which make them more vulnerable towards extended periods of drought. It is crucial that these countries are prepared for different climate disasters and have strategies in place to protect themselves from possible dangers. An improvement in their technology could help create resilience to crises and reduce the risks of food insecurity. This technology could include soil and water sensors and weather tracking. Soil and water sensors would determine nitrogen and moisture levels, which would give information on the fertility of the soil, limiting erosion. Weather tracking would give the farmers precautions on upcoming hails or harsh weather conditions. With this information farmers could protect the crops to mitigate losses. The soil and water sensors would be constructed in the soil and would transmit the information to a computer and the weather tracking technology would be accessed through online weather sources via the internet, therefore if computers or any sort of digital technology is provided, the farmers could access this information. These technologies would be funded by NGOs such as the World Food Program: Fighting Hunger Worldwide, Thought for Food Challenge, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders and perhaps some UN-affiliated programs.

Aside from the use of technology, the education of the farmers is also equally important. Since most food insecure people live in rural areas, they have less access to educational institutions; therefore there is a high possibility that they are uneducated about effective farming methods. One possible way to alleviate food insecurity is to educate farmers on efficient means of producing food that could increase profits and put less stress on the environment for sustainable agriculture. This education could be provided from NGOs such as the World Food Program: Fighting Hunger Worldwide, Thought for Food Challenge, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders and perhaps some UN-affiliated programs.

Partnering with organizations

Most developing countries do not have the ability to solve the issue of food insecurity by themselves; therefore they should implement a partnership with organizations that mainly focus on eradicating hunger. One such organization is Action Against Hunger, which addresses the urgent demand for food after natural disasters and conflicts and distributes aid when most needed. These organizations could help them provide food for citizens, build emergency storage rooms for food, publicizes statistics from annual reports issued by the FAO of the UN regarding food security in a country and the various

factors that cause it, and share the valuable information to all countries. This would help the country reflect on their progress as well as have an insight on what the main factors that caused food insecurity and what the countries have to focus on solving.

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