



FOOD SECURITY

**AFRICA : THE MOST SENSITIVE SITUATION
THE HUMANITY'S TOUGHEST CHALLENGE**



**THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN SHAPED FOR HEADS OF GOVERNMENT,
SPECIALISED MINISTERS AND EXPERTS
WHO ARE WORKING TO IMPLEMENT FOOD SECURITY IN THEIR COUNTRY**

Indeed, ensuring food security - the basic right of people to the food they need - is one of the greatest challenges facing the world community. The challenge is most critical in low-income, food-deficit countries. Of the 86 countries that are defined as low-income and food-deficient, 43 are in Africa !

We need to find better ways to feed the world.

In the next 50 years the world must produce more food than in the last 10,000. But we're currently using resources 50% faster than the planet can sustain. How do we meet the challenge while protecting nature, helping people in rural communities live better lives, and satisfying consumers who demand greater variety, quality and quantity of food ?

THE DIFFICULTY FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION

Despite overall gains in food production and food security on a global scale, many countries and whole regions have failed to make progress in recent decades. *Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, produces less food per person today than it did three decades ago and the number of chronically undernourished people has increased dramatically.*



During the World Food Summit at FAO in 1996, Heads of state and government committed themselves to eradicate hunger in all countries, with the immediate goal of reducing the number of undernourished people to half the 1996 level by 2015 !



Following the 1996 World Food Summit, one of the greatest challenges is to achieve this goal in Africa, and especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where chronic hunger is widespread

GLOBAL ASSESSMENT

- Food needs vary dramatically from region to region and among countries within regions of the world. This means that approaches to food security have to be tailored to each situation.
- Many of Africa's agricultural and rural development problems have been related to misguided policies, weak institutions and a lack of well-trained human resources
- In Africa, population growth, poverty and agricultural production capabilities are critical factors when considering food security.
- FAO is estimated that 50 percent of the total population of Sub Saharian Africa goes hungry in 2000.
- The most frequent cause of chronic hunger is poverty : the lack of adequate income or assets to purchase or produce enough food.
- In Sub Saharian Africa, the number of people living in poverty was 184 million in 1985, 216 million in 1990 and 300 million in 2000

STRUCTURAL DEFICIENCY

- Africa's agricultural productivity is very low, averaging 300 to 500 kg/ha as compared to 2.5 tons/ha in the United States !
- African farmers lack access to
 1. improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides
 2. the knowledge and information to use them effectively and efficiently



- Much of Africa's food is wasted (African farmers lose 15 to 25 % of their crop in the field and another 15 to 20 % after harvest to pests)
- Inappropriate land-use practices damaging the natural resources on which agriculture and life itself depend

FACTORS OF POVERTY

International factors negatively affect economic performance :

- unfavorable terms of trade
- large external debt burdens

Domestic constraints and declining food production :

- Civil wars
- political instability and lack of security
- inadequate public investment in agricultural research, training and infrastructure

THE CHALLENGES



- African countries confront many significant political, economic, social and environmental constraints to increased food production
- Making the markets freer and boosting private investment
- After restoration of peace and security, supporting people to resume farming and agricultural production
- Thanks to an improved food production farmers can shift to cash crop development in association with private investment in processing and trading
- Eliminating poverty and achieve food security in Africa require :
 1. innovative strategies by Africans themselves
 2. support by international development partners
 3. investment in human resources



HUMAN RESOURCES AND FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA



Recent experiences made it clear that human resources are ultimately a key factor behind any progress that has been achieved.

An educated and informed populace is fundamental to any policies and strategies to

- reduce poverty
- excessive population growth
- environmental degradation
- and other factors that are most often the direct causes of hunger

Information, education and training allow farmers to make use of new farming knowledge and technologies and have a substantial effect on agricultural productivity.

Investment in the education of women and girls has the highest rate of return of any possible investment in development





However, in Sub-Saharan Africa less than half of the girls 6 to 11 years of age is estimated to be in school, which means that more than half of the women in the region will never receive any formal education. This is a tremendous loss for food security since it is estimated that women produce 60 to 80 % of the basic foodstuffs in the region.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES



We live in the information age. At the same time, there is concern that the gap between the information rich and the information poor is getting wider.

Remote, rural communities are still difficult to reach - they lack communication infrastructure such as newspapers, telephones, televisions and radios.

In rural areas of Africa, the challenge is not only to increase the quantity and accessibility of communication technologies but also to improve the relevance of the information to local development.

The communication technologies and know-how exist; the challenge is to use them effectively for sustainable agricultural and rural development, and especially for improved food security.

Communication technologies are powerful tools for

- informing people
- providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to put agricultural science and production inputs to best use
- help people exchange experiences, find common ground for decisions and actively participate in and guide development activities



THE FIRST RESULTS

- In spite of the constraints, Africans are making some progress in improving food security
- Improvements in democracy and political stability in some countries have enhanced the prospects for renewed food production, distribution and purchase
- The human resource development through knowledge building and information sharing is definitely key to the success of any policy
- Communication technologies are also central to the process