www.agrariansouth.org

Agrarian South Network
Research Bulletin

October 2020

Issue: II

EDITORIAL

Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Face of a Global Pandemic

The ability or failure of governments to guarantee for their populations access to sufficient quantities of nutritious food recasts food security as a political problem and not merely an economic one. Across much of the global south, enduring legacies of colonial primitive accumulation, that forcefully and in some cases permanently commoditized the peasantry's access to land and to nature, means that for millions access to food is necessarily mediated by the State and privately through claims on private lands and the commons. Furthermore, in this present time when renewed processes of primitive accumulation through large scale land acquisition continue apace, the diversion of available land away from human food to the production of animal feeds and biofuels is pushing millions more into hunger.

A coherent response to this state of affairs has been the more structurally oriented "food sovereignty debates" that insist on the right of people to shape and craft food policy, and which have at their core an anti-imperialist demand that sovereign nations regain social, economic and political control over their food systems. Food sovereignty debates acquired particular significance in the wake of economic liberalization and agricultural policies that disguised the push towards depeasantisation as aimed towards increasing food security and efficiency in food production. The reality, however, has been that millions of people have been rendered unable to meet their food needs for themselves in the absence of some form of State or market intervention. At this present moment of global crisis, food sovereignty thus emerges as the logical precondition for the existence of food security.

This second issue of the ASN Research Bulletin addresses these issues through an introductory overview and a review of trends in food production and consumption across three countries of the global south. Articles from Pakistan, Ghana and Argentina shed light on State responses that buttress the politics of food in a world where scarcity and the default to hunger is driven by political choices and not lack of resources. Each contribution examines the question of food both, as a precondition for survival and as a basis of evaluating state policies and responses in times of economic distress such as the one precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As before, we welcome enquiries and responses, which may be submitted to the editors at:
agrariansouthresearchbulletin@gmail.com.

COVID-19, POLICY RESPONSES AND IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

Meghna Goyal[1]

The policy responses to the pandemic have aggravated distress and increased inequalities around the world. In agriculture, the impact has resulted in a loss of farm incomes despite adequate production. At the same time, the failure of policy has also increased food insecurity for many people. Here, we look at some dimensions of agriculture during the pandemic.

Prices

The disruption in domestic and international supply chains, movement restrictions and barriers to transportation imposed around the world led to a fall in sales of agricultural produce. The supply chain was simply broken despite no fall in production levels. In India, farmers could not bring their produce to mandis at all, or only to a limited extent in the first few weeks of the imposed lockdown measures. In Brazil too, wholesale markets had to shut down, impacting sales heavily. Combined with factors such as a general lack of access to storage facilities for perishable commodities (especially for small producers) and slow government response to a building crisis, producer prices also fell. Delayed public procurement and a fall in demand from industry for food processing or for other uses such as biofuel production, have also contributed to this decrease. In some places, produce was sold at relatively lower prices to local traders. All of this meant that there was a significant fall in farm incomes.

Whereas the fall in producer prices was inimical to poor farmers everywhere, this fall in prices did not necessarily translate into a fall in consumer prices. In fact, consumer prices became more volatile, and for some commodities including cereals in India, there was a growing divergence between the WPI price and CPI prices, indicating either higher transaction costs or higher rents in the supply chain. Again, this trend was observed in Latin America as well as in China. In China, food prices surged by 21.9%. This increase in food prices was higher than general inflation levels during the same time. These higher domestic prices coexisted with otherwise falling international prices for most food commodities.

Naturally, volatilities were especially high for perishable commodities such as vegetables. Prices also increased for milk and milk products despite a heavy fall in demand. This fall was partly in response to closure of restaurants and sweet shops: more importantly, loss of employment and

[1] Meghna Goyal is a Research Associate at CARES.

incomes caused a fall in demand, and hunger increased. This does not bode well for Southern countries where nutritional deficiencies were already a concern even before the pandemic.

Another set of prices that are relevant to farmer incomes are those of inputs. In India, the prices of inputs had risen in the black market. The reliance on imports for inputs in the South, has also made them particularly vulnerable to changes in production and exports from the North as well as exchange rate changes. Depreciations have led to an increase in the costs of inputs in Latin America.

Overall, the movement of prices has caused both a fall in agricultural incomes and an increase in the cost of food for people. Farmers had to pay higher costs for inputs while selling produce at lower prices to traders. These prices increased more than usual for the consumer whose falling employment and incomes already meant falling food intake.

Production and Distribution

During the pandemic, the problem of incongruous distribution of food under capitalism has deepened. There has been a rise in waste of food produced leading to loss in incomes and a waste of resources, with a simultaneous increase in hunger and deprivation.

Supply chain disruptions, delays, decreases in demand, falling prices as well as difficulties in transportation led to a waste of food produce, especially perishable commodities for which arrival in the market on time, or reaching cold storage is critical. In China, over 70% of agricultural production is used as intermediate input in food processing or the production of other commodities such as biofuels. A halt in industrial activity led to a substantial decrease in demand for agricultural commodities. In India, losses were observed also due to delays in decisions taken by the central government (which were less alert than state governments) in easing supply and work conditions.

Milk and meat were dumped in significant quantities, and some crops were not harvested at all to save the costs of harvesting. Demand for milk had fallen by 20-25 percent in India. Demand for meat had fallen too, partly in response to rumours of disease spread through meat consumption. These were compounded by income and employment effects on food consumption. Export demand for beef of which India is a major exporter, fell drastically as well. Livestock and poultry were culled in large numbers around the world to save feed costs. Falling incomes and employment have led to an acute deficiency of purchasing power. It disproportionately causes food insecurity and hunger among the working and poor people of the world. Governments intent on

following neoliberal policies of fiscal austerity and compromised public distribution have, to a significant degree, exacerbated this "market inefficiency." In India, an unplanned lockdown meant that supply chains remained distorted and broken, public distribution remained woefully lacking (despite more than adequate stocks of food grains that were allowed to rot, rather than distributed) and fiscal austerity implied that the social safety net and employment creation were not used to maintain material standards of living or even food security.

International Trade

Increasing liberalisation has made a number of developing countries reliant on exporting cash crops to Northern countries for foreign exchange and livelihoods. On the other hand, some also rely on importing food for domestic consumption. A dependence on foreign production and foreign markets make developing countries vulnerable to fluctuations in foreign markets and exchange rates: a global recession can jeopardize food security and increase poverty.

China, for instance, depends heavily on exports of agricultural commodities and commodities that rely on agricultural intermediates. The export earnings of several Latin American countries fell as international prices of major commodities in their export basket decreased during the pandemic. Depreciation of their currencies aggravated this problem.

A fall in the international prices of commodities that are produced almost entirely for export such as soybean and related products[i] further reveals the precarity of agricultural or overall economic growth reliant on exports of primary commodities. Kenyan and Malawian tea plantation workers stand to lose out from a suspension of sales. As flower markets in Europe shut down, thousands of flower export workers also lost their jobs in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Dependence on food imports, especially when they rely on a single or only a few sources, can also put at risk the food security of several nations. For instance, Central American countries are net importers of cereals from the US, even as the main export destination for their own agricultural commodities is also the US. A prolonged disruption in international trade, or a fall in demand and prices of commodities exported by these countries, will lead to additional vulnerabilities.

The impacts of the pandemic on agricultural incomes and food security are severe. They reveal the precariousness of global systems of food production - despite adequate production, weak or unwilling states and "market inefficiencies" of a neoliberal, global order, can have vastly damaging effects. The pandemic has been used to push neoliberal policies that hold the

power to destabilize even further an already unstable system. The failure of food systems to meet the needs of humanity, has even now been analysed as being rooted in information asymmetries.[ii] This not only ignores class, power and hierarchies in the organization of industrial agricultural value systems, but also ignores the link between systems of production and the emergence of zoonotic diseases.[iii]

[i] Prices for soybean decreased by 7% and soybean oil by over 21% between January and May of this year.

[ii] A World Bank blog takes this position: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2020/08/06/beyond-the-pandemic-harnessing-the-digital-revolution-to-set-food-systems-on-a-better-course

[iii] See "COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital": https://monthlyreview.org/2020/05/01/covid-19-and-circuits-of-capital/

Rawal, Vikas, Kumar, Manish, Verma, Ankur and Pais, Jesim (2020), "COVID19 Lockdown: Impact on Agriculture and Rural Economy", SSER Monograph 20/3, Society for Social and Economic Research, New Delhi (available at: http://archive.indianstatistics.org/sserwp/sserwp2003.pdf).

Ramakumar, R. (2020), "Agriculture and the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analysis with Special Reference to India," Review of Agrarian Studies, vol. 10, no. 1, (available at http://ras.org.in/ccfd3c4b30052ab3be432d1faf5706e1).

Fan, Shenggen (2020), "Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security Under Covid-19:Lessons from China," Review of Agrarian Studies, vol. 10, no. 1, (available at http://ras.org.in/c87ecf0a708a1c76f358d846fd8cea04).

Narayanan, Sudha, and Saha, Shree (2020), "One Step Behind: The Government of India and Agricultural Policy During the Covid-19 Lockdown," Review of Agrarian Studies, vol. 10, no. 1, (available at http://ras.org.in/ab16ae0a6884b3594a1b0879c6058913).

CEPAL, N. (2020). Preventing the COVID-19 crisis from becoming a food crisis: Urgent measures against hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean.

World Bank, "Food Security and Covid-19": https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19.

OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (Covid-19) - COVID-19 and the food and agriculture sector: Issues and policy responses: http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-and-the-food-and-agriculture-sector-issues-and-policy-responses-a23f764b/.

ILO Sectoral Brief: COVID-19 and the impact on agriculture and food security - https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_742023.pdf.

Narayanan, S., & Saha, S. (2020). Urban food markets and the lockdown in India. Available at SSRN 3599102.

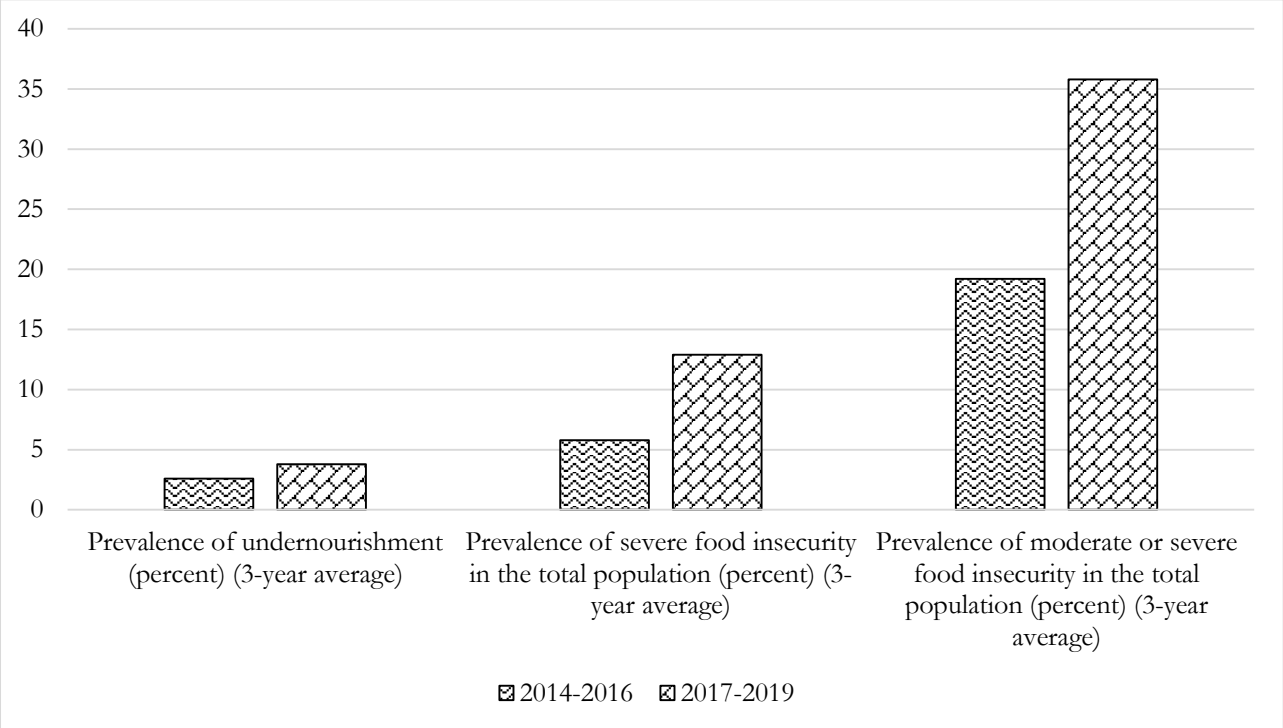
ARGENTINA IN THE GLOBAL ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL: DEPENDENCY AND FOOD INSECURITY

Agostina Costantino[1]

We certainly cannot talk about food security in 2020 without mentioning the Covid-19 pandemic that is stalking us in every country. ECLAC estimates that, by the end of this year, Latin America will have decreased its GDP by 5.3% and poverty in this region will have increased to 34.7%, reaching 214.7 million people. In addition, extreme poverty, which refers to the capacity to acquire food through the market, will reach 83.4 million people in the region, or 13.5% of the population. However, it is necessary to stress that our region already started from high levels of poverty and inequality; the current crisis will make it worse.

The case of Argentina is interesting. Despite being the third largest exporter of soybeans in the world (after the United States and Brazil), the food situation of its population only got worse in recent years. The following graph shows some of the indicators calculated by FAO on food security in Argentina.

Graph 1. Food security indicators, Argentina, 2014-2016/2017-2019



[1] IIESS, CONICET-UNS, can be contacted at agoscostantino@gmail.com.

Graph 1 shows three indicators. "Prevalence of undernourishment" is the probability that a randomly selected individual from the population consumes an amount of calories that is insufficient to cover her/his energy requirement for an active and healthy life. "Prevalence of severe food insecurity in the total population" is percentage of population who live in households classified as severely food insecure, where severity is associated with the item "having not eaten for an entire day" on the global FIES (food insecurity experience scale) scale. And "prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population" is the percentage of population who live in households classified as moderately or severely food insecure, which is associated with the item "having to eat less" on the global FIES scale.

As shown in the graph, Argentina went from having 19.2% of the population being moderately or severely food insecure to 35.8% under this condition in a few years. This means that more than 1 out of 3 people in this country got lower quality or quantity of food due to lack of money to access it.

It must be stressed that during the period shown in the graph a right-wing liberal alliance was in office, and its policies deepened the country's external insertion as a supplier of raw materials and food, and disintegrated much of the pre-existing social protection policies. But the problem is older than that government. What we argue in this essay is that Argentina's dependent condition in the world system of capital accumulation tends to worsen the living conditions of its population over time. This emphasizes the need to question this role and rethink how to integrate to the world economy.

Marxist dependency theory and national forms of capital accumulation

In the 1960s, the Marxist version of dependency theory emerged in response to three theoretical approaches: Latin American structuralism (which postulated that countries should industrialize in order to escape from their dependent condition); neoclassical theory (which postulated that countries should grow in order to become developed); and orthodox Marxism (which postulated that Latin American countries should carry out revolutions "by stages").

Marxist dependency theory states that the expansion of capitalism throughout history differentiates regions and nations from the point of view of appropriation and generation of value. On one hand, central countries, which have greater capacity for appropriation of value, on the other hand, dependent or peripheral countries, which transfer a large part of the value they generate to the central countries (Osorio 2004; Gunder Frank 1979).

In this context, capital accumulation takes diverse national forms, considering the

logic of the world economic system. Osorio (2004) highlights the notion of pattern of capital reproduction as the particular form in which capital is accumulated and reproduced in a particular economy. As Osorio points out, in the central countries, capital is valorised by producing goods that are consumed by the workers, therefore in those countries, the protection of the purchasing power of the workers is fundamental. Thus, the increase in productivity of wage-goods (those that are part of the workers' set of consumption) and the import of these same products, purchased abroad at lower cost, can reduce the wage required to meet the needs of workers.

In dependent countries, capital is valorised by producing goods for export and luxury goods for the upper classes, i.e. goods that are beyond the reach of working people. Capital can easily attack workers' income, because it does not depend on their demand. In these countries, some compensation mechanisms make it possible to counteract the transfer of value to the central countries (Marini 1996). According to the author, these mechanisms consist of increasing the intensity of exploitation of labour (more product in a fixed period), increasing the working period, and paying workers below the value of their labour force. Marini calls "super-exploitation" of labour to the combination of all these mechanisms, which is characteristic of the patterns of capital reproduction in dependent countries. Moreover, due to the export-led orientation of these countries' productive structures (which makes workers' consumption irrelevant for the realization of the capitalists' profits), the tendency is to further deepen the deterioration of labour market conditions in the periphery. This deterioration must be understood relative to the conditions of valorisation of the labour force at the world level: it does not necessarily mean an absolute worsening of living conditions, but rather a relative lag in the set of services and goods that make the workers' consumption set. The export of raw materials and cheap food from the periphery to the central countries also allows to maintain low wages in the latter, completing the circuit of global production-circulation-accumulation.

Argentina's role in the global accumulation of capital

In the mid-seventies, a new pattern of capital reproduction began in Argentina. Within the context of global transformations promoted through the international crisis, multilateral credit organizations demanded the application of a series of structural reforms as a condition for credit and investment inflows. Latin America countries were then facing repeated balance of payments crises, implied by the import substitution process.

The result of the application of these reforms was a kind of integration to the world market that diluted national mediations. The interest of transnational capital shifted to the exploitation of cheap labour and unexploited natural resources, producing towards exporting (Osorio 2010). In other words, the region in general –and Argentina in particular- focused in some low value productions linked to global value chains, leaving to central countries the stages of those chains that capture most value, such as design, marketing, insurance, financing, logistics, etc.

In general terms, the above scheme has maintained its main characteristics since then, but it has acquired nuances with the various governments. During Kirchnerism (2003-2015) an extractive neo-developmentalism was formed, based on the exploitation of natural resources carried out by foreign investors and a complex system of redistribution of part of the income from this sector, on the one hand, towards industry and, on the other (and to a much lesser extent), towards social policies. This system generated a series of contradictions that certain sectors of the major bourgeoisie wished to eliminate.

The liberal right-wing alliance (Cambiemos, which means "let's change") that took office in 2015 applied new policies, that deepened the scheme based on the exploitation of natural resources and financial valorisation. The "contradictions" regarding the role of industry and social policy during Kirchnerist governments were swept away by a battery of policies that deepened the positions of winners and losers within the economic structure. Briefly, it can be said that the pattern of capital reproduction in Argentina during Cambiemos government was based on 4 main guidelines: deepening of the extractivist structure of production; financialization of the economic structure; opening and deregulation of external accounts; and austerity policies.

In other words, beyond the biases that each of the different governments imprinted, with more or less social policies or industrial policies, for what is worth Argentina has been deepening a type of dependent insertion in the world for more than 40 years. It is based on the export of commodities, and requires three fundamental elements that combine to explain the worsening of the population's food security conditions: the concentration of land; its use destined almost exclusively to export production; and the increase in the levels of poverty and precarization of majority of people's lives, who find increasingly difficult to access the necessary goods to guarantee a dignified life (which includes a healthy diet, among other things). These features are not some random effect, but a constituent trend

among the specific form of capital accumulation in the country.

In Argentina, 1% of the largest farms concentrate 35.93% of the land and have, on average, 22,000 hectares each (Guereña 2016). On the other hand, 57.9% of farms (up to 100 hectares) only occupy 2.9% of total agricultural land (Costantino 2015). This process has deepened over the years, expelling small family producers from the land to the big cities or to less productive lands.

With respect to land use, the cultivation of transgenic soybeans began in Argentina in the mid-1990s and took on a leading role in the 2000s. The expansion of this crop mainly replaced fodder crops, which also coincided with the nationwide fall in livestock stocks and sheep production (Balsa 2008). According to Azcuy Ameghino (2004), the expansion of soybean cultivation led to the abandonment of traditional "mixed farms" - those establishments that combined agriculture and livestock - becoming exclusively agricultural operations. One main social effect of this phenomenon is that it accelerated the migration to the cities, considering that mixed farms needed producers to live on the farm all year round, and soya production does not.

The productive structure concentrated in this type of activities generated the hazardous combo of extractivism, population expulsion from the land and poverty that we have been seeing in Argentina for decades. The pandemic that is devastating us in 2020 highlighted this problem, but did not generate it. There are many interesting projects in sight by social organizations that are trying to change this situation. Right now, some policies are being considered to deconcentrate the population from the most densely populated area of the country, the city of Buenos Aires and its metropolitan area, towards the interior of the country.

The province of Buenos Aires, together with the national government, will implement a program to create agro-ecological colonies in towns with low population density. The program will consist on the construction of houses and the concession of land (permit for the use of fiscal land) to people who decide to move away from the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. The aim is twofold: to decompress the large cities and, at the same time, to reduce the cost of shipping food to the small towns. This project arises from a proposal made by the Unión de Trabajadores de la Tierra (Union of Workers of the Land), an organization of small producers and peasants (Notas. Periodismo Popular 2020; Vales 2020).

While these policies do not affect the structural power of the large food producing and exporting corporations, they seem to be a way to start.

References

Azcuy Ameghino, Eduardo. 2004. "De cultivo marginal a motor de la agriculturización: hipótesis y problemas en torno a la 'sojización'". Buenos Aires.

Balsa, Javier. 2008. "Cambios y continuidades en la agricultura pampeana entre 1937 y 2002. La zona agrícola del norte bonaerense". En *Pasado y presente en el agro argentino*, editado por Javier Balsa, G. Mateo, y S. Ospital, 587–613. Buenos Aires: Lumiere.

Costantino, Agostina. 2015. "La extracción del territorio. Extranjerización de la tierra y modo de desarrollo en Argentina, 2002-2013". Tesis de doctorado en Investigación en Ciencias Sociales, México: FLACSO.

Guereña, Arantxa. 2016. "Desterrados: Tierra, poder y desigualdad en América Latina". Oxfam.

Gunder Frank, André. 1979. *Acumulación dependiente y subdesarrollo*. México: Era.

Marini, Ruy Mauro. 1996. "Proceso y tendencias de la globalización capitalista". En *La teoría social latinoamericana, t. IV: Cuestiones contemporáneas*, editado por Ruy Mauro Marini y Márgara Millán, 49–68. 1997. México: UNAM, FCPYS, CELA.

Notas. Periodismo Popular. 2020. "El interior bonaerense creará colonias agroecológicas para pequeños productores del AMBA". *Notas. Periodismo Popular*, el 6 de julio de 2020. https://notasperiodismopopular.com.ar/2020/07/06/el-interior-bonaerense-creara-colonias-agroecologicas-para-pequenos-productores-del-amba/.

Osorio, Jaime. 2004. *Crítica de la economía vulgar. Reproducción del capital y dependencia*. Colección América Latina y el Nuevo Orden Mundial. México: MA Porrúa.

———. 2010. *Patrones exportadores en América Latina*. México: UAM.

Vales, Laura. 2020. "El coronavirus y la búsqueda de una nueva ruralidad: las familias que se mudarán a Tapalqué". *Página 12*, el 6 de julio de 2020. https://www.pagina12.com.ar/276684-el-coronavirus-y-la-busqueda-de-una-nueva-ruralidad-las-fami.

COVID-19 AND FOOD SECURITY: PERSPECTIVE FROM GHANA

Gertrude Dzifa Torvikey[1]

Introduction

On May 10th, 2020, the president of Ghana, HE Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo addressed the nation the 9th time since COVID-19 was first recorded in the country on 12th March, 2020. This time, the president focused on food consumption by encouraging the population to eat healthy food to boost the immune system so that they can fight the COVID-19 better. He states:

We have to improve our hygiene, our fitness and exercises, our eating, generally, our style of living, which will boost our immunity to disease and the virus. For instance, we are told that the key vitamins that fortify our immune system are vitamins A, B6, C, and E. Fortunately for us, in Ghana, all of these can be found in many of our foods, such as oranges, kontomire, millet, cashew nuts, crabs, plantain, okro, dawadawa, brown rice and mushrooms. Following a good diet, patronising our healthy foods, exercising regularly, ensuring our personal hygiene, and improving our lifestyle habits should become part and parcel of our daily routines, which will help bolster our immune systems, and help us in the fight against the pandemic (Presidential Address, No. 09, Ghana, 10th May,2020).

The president's speech brings into perspective the impacts of COVOD-19 on food security especially as the pandemic exposed existing fragility in the food system. The FAO et al. (2020) estimates that about 690 million people are hungry worldwide which is a 10 million increase over the previous year's figure. Countries that suffer under the aegis of hunger are also countries experiencing rapid agrarian changes, expressed in disruptions in livelihoods as a result of transformations in land, labour and production relations. Although the World Bank (2020) indicates food production of rice, wheat and maize has increased during the pandemic the regulations and measures adopted by states to contain the spread of the disease have exposed the underlying conditions of a fragile food system. The COVID-19 pandemic has animated many debates including those about tensions in the agri-food system with its implications for countries and households. Large scale land acquisition affect food production for local trade and household consumption.

Similarly, trade relations between the Global North and South have also put into perspective food markets and how they develop or are interlinked with the global systems. It is important to read the food security challenges occasioned by COVID-19 as part of a complex web of underlying

[1] Program Officer, Feminist Africa Journal, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana

conditions in the global food system that has been exposed and worsened. The pandemic has also cast a light on the corporate vs informal food markets and the importance of the latter for many vulnerable people (Wegerif, 2020). While there are indications that there is increased production of maize, wheat and rice which are the most traded food staples in the world, many other factors such as trade relations, income disparities, general inequalities in access to resources and the disproportionate disruptions in the economy highlight the key concepts of food security, namely accessibility, availability, utilisation and sustainability. According to the FAO (1996), food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The impacts of the pandemic on food security are both direct and indirect due to the multiple prevention and containment measures such as lockdowns, restriction on movement, social distancing, closure of borders, work places and public spaces among many others (Devereux, Béné, & Hoddinott, 2020). Similarly, mitigative responses have also varied across countries and impacted social groups differently. The pandemic entered countries at different times which means that its effects on local food production also vary. This piece draws from empirical evidence from Ghana to reflect on the impacts of the pandemic on food security. These elements will be linked to the food systems approach to shed light on the importance of unpacking the various parts of the food system that deliver food security.

Situating food security in COVID-19 Context

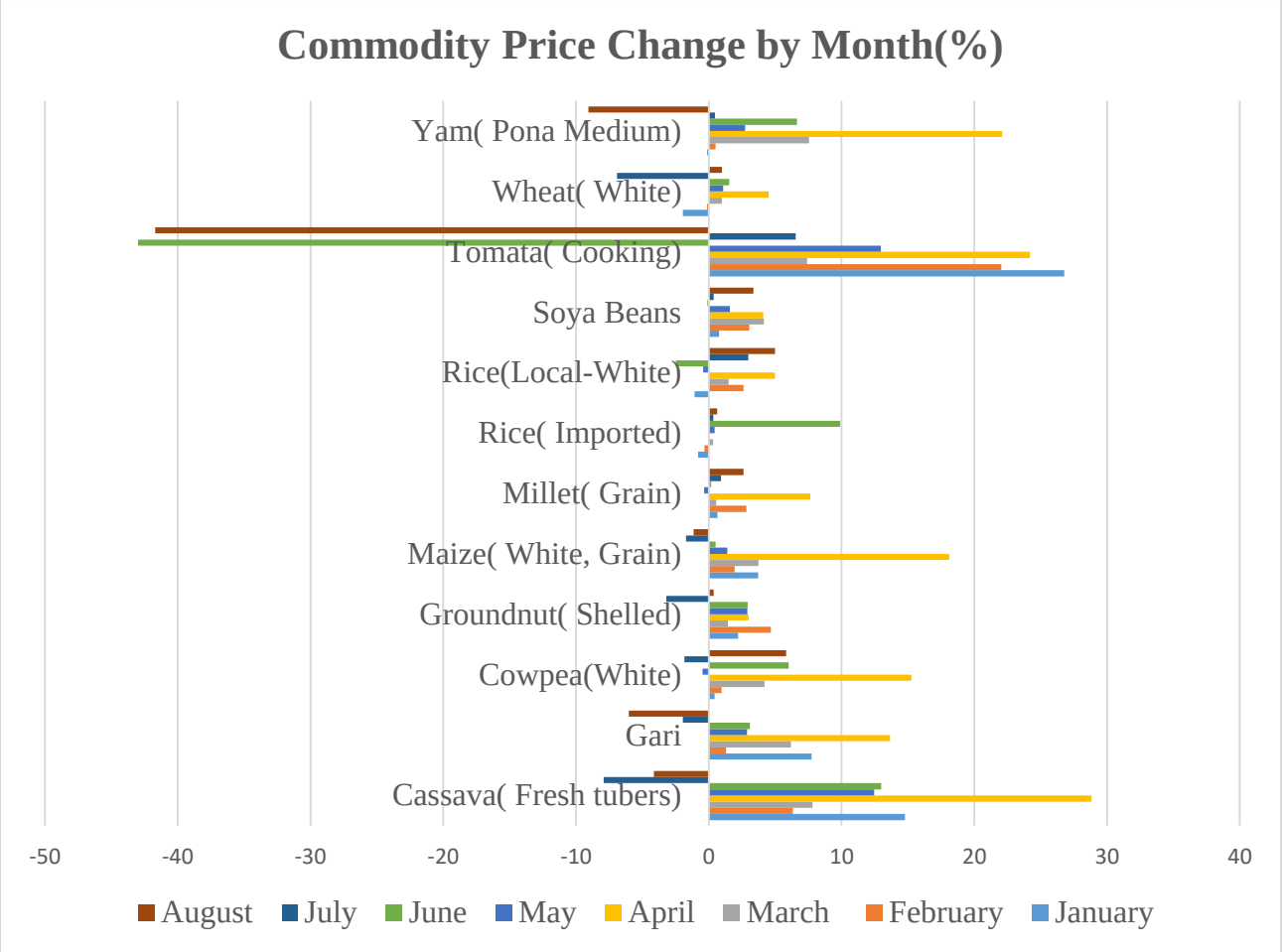
Ghana announced its first two cases of COVID-19 on 12 March, 2020. This was followed by the closure of schools as the government announced restrictions on mobility and enforcement of a partial lockdown of the most affected cities, particularly those in the Greater Accra and Kumasi areas. The lockdown was lifted on April 20 and as at 2 September, Ghana had recorded 46, 694 COVID-19 cases and a total of 301 deaths. Most affected have been the major cities such as Accra and Kumasi. The Greater Accra region, particularly the country's capital, Accra alone accounted for more than half of all the cases (23, 971). Consequently, the country started adopting and adapting some WHO guidelines to deal with the spread of the disease, and instituted measures such as school and border closures, ban on public gatherings, market fumigation exercises, social distancing regulations, and limitations on a number of passengers in commercial vehicles among others. In recent times, many of the restrictions are lifted but land borders are still closed. COVID-19

affected the three main sectors of the economy differently. For example, in the second quarter of 2020, agriculture sector grew by 2.5% while the rest contracted (industry, -5.7% and services -2.6%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020).

The president of Ghana addresses the nation regularly on the crisis and uses the opportunity to announce state responses to the populace. One of the key messages of such presidential addresses is an appeal to the population to eat nutritious food to keep healthy. In a country where 45.6 per cent are multidimensionally poor (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020a) and which has a Gini index of 43 per cent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018), this is not only instructive but also highlights the widening inequality in the country which shows that some people will not be able to afford, access, and consume nutritious food. The state used the provision of food rations, to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the most vulnerable in society. However, the programme ended in April when the lockdown measures were eased. Besides, the programme was rolled out only in a few cities.

COVID-19 and Food in Ghana: A Brief

To put this into perspective, it is clear that the first recording of COVID-19 in Ghana in March coincided with the major agricultural season that was about to start in many parts of the country. Prior to the pandemic, some households experienced some level of seasonal food shortages months before the planting season up until July when harvesting starts. COVID-19 coincided with this period and some distortions in staple food availability and affordability would be expected. Figure 1 gives a picture of the trend of food price changes since January, 2020. Two different trends are observed. The local food market did not react to the discovery of COVID-19 in the country immediately. Food prices remained normal until the announcement of market fumigation and also the anticipation of a lockdown. As expected, food prices increased significantly up until the lockdown. However, during the lockdown, the prices declined since many people had hoarded food already. At the same time, there were reports of food glut, especially fruits and some vegetables as social distancing kept people in their homes. Poultry farmers complained about lack of markets for eggs due to closure of schools, hotels and other public places which are their major customers. One can argue that some of these may have been brought to the local market, hence the downtrend in food prices in certain months.



Source: Esoko, 2020

Prior to the first two recorded Covid-19 cases in March, prices of most food commodities saw either insignificant reduction or massive increase in prices. During the month of March, almost all commodities saw an increase. In the month of April when a lockdown was enforced the prices increased significantly. After the lockdown was lifted, food staple prices remained high in the months of May, June and July although they were lower than the previous two months, except for fresh tomatoes which declined from June. Prices of all commodities began to decline gradually from August, which is also the month of harvest. The president observed this and emphasized it in his 15th Address to the nation, stating emphatically that:

…our economy, despite the severe shocks of the pandemic, is proving to be resilient, and is poised for rapid recovery; our agriculture is performing so that, despite the disruptions of the pandemic, food is still abundant in our markets; and the virus itself is being fought systematically. Indeed, a stronger, healthier Ghana is being built before our very eyes, and the great majority of Ghanaians can see it

(Presidential Address Update No. 15, delivered on 16th August, 2020).

Despite this, it is clear that COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing socioeconomic conditions that expose the most vulnerable segments of the population to food insecurity since decline in economic activities affected incomes. Ghana's economy is largely informal (80 per cent) which means that a large segment of the population employed in this sector do not have income security. The pandemic highlights Sen's (1981) entitlement framework and two of its key elements with a focus on food security. Within a COVID-19 context, one can access food when they produce it themselves and they can also sell their labour to acquire food. In Ghana, several COVID-19 measures including social distancing, closure of public places, school and border closures, and partial lockdown amongst others disrupted socioeconomic activities thereby affecting incomes, remittance flows and other means through which people can access food. A few examples are illustrative. According to GSS (2020a), between 72 per cent and 90 per cent of local businesses suffered a decline in production and sales. Nationally, 77.2 per cent of households reported that their incomes had reduced. Food availability became hampered with disruptions in public transportation systems. This also affected the cost of food, as nationally, 15.9 per cent of households reported that they were not able to procure at least one staple in June. Among all the food staples, plantain was the most inaccessible both physically and economically. Two main reasons accounted for the inaccessibility of the food staples. These are increase in price (62.7 per cent) and lack of income (19.2 per cent). As a result, fifty-two per cent of households reduced the number of meals as a coping mechanism. The Ghana Statistical Service report further stated that

Of the households that were interviewed, 45.4% reported that, in the 30 days prior to the interview, they had only eaten a 'few kinds of foods, whilst 44.6% indicated that they 'were worried about not having enough food to eat' and 8.9% 'went without eating for a whole day' (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020: 4)

Although food and agricultural sectors were exempted from the restrictions, in the worst affected cities, at least for several months, informal food markets were shut down. Market trade was disrupted (Asante & Mills, 2020). Most of Ghana's food trade, cooked and uncooked, is in the informal sector. In the cities, the working class rely on the cooked food vendors for their daily survival. In addition, panic buying and hoarding affected the availability of some essential food items. Border closures affected food imports and hence availability of imported food. The structure of Ghana's system shows that the import of items such

as cooking oil, rice, poultry products and canned tomatoes is mainly due to low local production. According to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2018), the country imports over 50 per cent of its rice needs. Van Asselt, Masias and Kolavalli (2018) estimate that Ghana imports a quarter of fresh tomatoes consumed in the country and mainly from Burkina Faso. The border closures affected the population particularly border communities. A COVID-19 Economy Tracker Survey indicates that communities in border districts were the most affected by the COVID-19 regulations and responses. While prices of food and non-food alcoholic beverages increased by 4.8 per cent in the survey districts between April and May, border communities recorded 6.6% increase of the items. Lockdown districts recorded 2.5% and other Districts 5.9% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020). While food availability and access are compromised by the pandemic, producers of some food items, particularly perishable ones, reported glut. Poultry farmers, for instance, complained about low sales due to closure of the hospitality sector and schools, which are the major customers of the producers.

Conclusion

The pandemic highlights a focus on food security particularly nutritional security and dietary diversity and the role of the state in protecting the vulnerable. Agricultural policies continue to emphasise increasing production, with little focus on processing, marketing and distribution which are left to the informal sector to develop in its own steam compared to cocoa, a priority crop which has production to marketing organised by the state. In addition, the agricultural systems being promoted in the country undermine food systems that support diverse food items through the destruction of the commons, promotion of monoculture and excessive chemical use on farms which has an effect on food safety and sustainability. There is excessive emphasis placed on export crops and industrial crops, whose marketing and distribution has been disrupted by COVID-19. Going back to the presidential speech, where food items such as dawadawa, mushrooms and kontomire were mentioned as nutritious and should be consumed, it emphasises the importance of the commons and the need to promote agro-ecologically sound agriculture production. The state has a role to make sure all segments of the population have adequate and nutritious food at all times during this turbulent time.

References

Asante, L. A & Mills, R.O. (2020). Exploring the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in Marketplaces in Urban Ghana. Africa Spectrum 00(0) 1–12

Devereux, S, Béné, & Hoddinott, J. (2020). Conceptualising COVID-19's impacts on household food security. *Food Security*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-020-01085-0

FAO (1996). *Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action*. Available online at:http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/W3613E/W3613E00.HTM

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*. *Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en

Ghana Statistical Service (2018). Poverty Trends in Ghana (2005-2017) Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 7. Accra: GSS

Ghana Statistical Service (2020) Brief on COVID-19 Households and Jobs Tracker Wave 1. Accra: GSS

Ghana Statistical Service (2020) Brief on COVID-19 Local economies Tracker Wave 1. Accra: GSS

Ghana Statistical Service (2020a). Covid-19 Rapid Surveys Households and Jobs Tracker Highlights of Findings First Edition of Wave I. Accra: GSS

Ghana Statistical Service(2020b). Multi-dimensional Poverty-Ghana. Accra: GSS

Ghana Statistical Service, (2020). Newsletter Quarterly Gross Domestic Product (QGDP) Second Quarter 2020, Accra.

Government of Ghana: Presidential Address Update No 09: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus delivered on 10th May, 2020

Government of Ghana: Presidential Address Update No 15: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus delivered on 16th August, 2020

Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2018). Agricultural Sector Annual Progress Report. Accra: MoFA.

Sen, A. (1981). Poverty and famines. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Asselt, J., I. Masias, and S. Kolavalli (2018). Competitiveness of the Ghanaian vegetable sector: Findings from a farmer survey. GSSP Working Paper 47. Accra: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Wegerif , M.C.A (2020)"Informal" food traders and food security: experiences from the Covid-19 response in South Africa. Food Security https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-020-01078-z

World Bank (2020). Brief: Food security and Covid-19. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19 (Accessed 05, October, 2020

COVID-19 PINCH ON SUPPLY OF "MEAT OF THE POOR" IN PAKISTAN

Mubashir Mehdi[1]

Pulses have been an important part of Pakistani diet. Pulses are considered as 'meat' for common or poor man in Pakistan therefore have a gigantic food security importance for the major part of the population. Pulses are grown in the rain fed areas such north east as well as dry land in southern part of the country. Various pulses crop such as chickpea, lentils, mung beans have been grown in Pakistan. However, there is little evidence of any breakthrough in the pulses crops because of competing crop such as rice, wheat and cotton.

Pulses crop are highly affected by the unusual rain and climatic conditions therefore farmers have high chances of getting attractive price in the consistent manner. Therefore, Pakistan is facing declining trend in the pulses crop due to reduction in comparative profit with wheat and rice. Among all, lentil and chick peas has reflected high fluctuation both in the area of production and prices. Pakistan is a net importer of pulses to meet the local demand of consumers and mainly import from Australia, Canada, Brazil and USA. Over and above this, COVID-19 brought a far-reaching effect on availability of pulses in Pakistan because of various supply chain issues such as shutdown of logistics operations and limited granting of operation permission to retail businesses under the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Majority of the farmers (90-95%) are small, allocating 25-30% of their land. Farmers perform both pre- and post-harvest practices such as land preparation, sowing, harvesting, threshing and packaging with the help of a labor mix of men, women and children. Availability of labor is a key issue because the harvesting time of some pulses and wheat almost coincide and laborers prefer to work in wheat fields rather than on the pulses. Furthermore, the enforcement of SOPs regarding social distances created shortage of labor for the agricultural commodities. Consequently, many farmers were not able to harvest their crop on time, which raised the shortage of domestic supply in the market. Abandonment of international flights further created the supply gap in the local market in Pakistan.

Traders or Buopari are the main buyer of the lentil from producers who visit

[1] Assistant Professor, Institute of Business Management Sciences University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

the production area during the harvesting weeks and pay money on the basis of quality of the produce. Some farmers have direct link with the commissioning agents and prefer to go into the wholesale markets. However, the percentage of these farmers is very small (1<%). High dependence of farmers on middlemen is due to quick recovery of money which the middlemen normally pay in advance. However, due to shutdown of logistics operations and limited opening of retail outlets which are the main buyers, traders were left in the indecisive position of buying crop from farmers. Therefore, the link between farmers and traders in the pulses value chain came into serious threat of continuous supply to the market, which enhanced the pulses prices up to 10-15% for the consumers.

Traders/Boupari sell most of their product (70%) to processing industry (dal factories), mainly chickpeas and lentils, which procure and make the pulses by cleaning, sizing, and wetting, husk removing and grinding on an automated plant. They pack the pulses into 50 Kg bag and sell it to wholesalers in the grain markets as well as the big shop keepers in the cities. The processor also faced the issue of inconsistent supply which created a supply gap in the local markets. Although Government provided incentives to the importers by reducing tax from 2% to zero, it could not impact on the prices of pulses in the local market. Some critical issues such as delay in consignment at port, rupee devaluation, rise in world prices, hoarding by local traders and limited transportation created an overall supply gap in Pakistan.

Because pulses have enormous importance in the daily diet of Pakistani people they require special attention from the relevant Government agencies. Keeping in view the present situation of COVID-19 specifically, and overall supply chain condition generally, pulses which are Rabi crops and competing with wheat must elicit an appropriate food secure policy. Lentils are not meeting the domestic demand and are imported while chickpeas are fulfilling about 90% demand. So drivers of demand and supply should be understood and ways of efficient allocation of resources should be identified that can maximize the overall welfare of the economy.

Moreover, factors that can be the reason of reduction in area, production and yield of lentil in Punjab also need to be addressed. There is need to identify the ecological zones with potential to enhance productivity by giving some incentives to the local producers. More than 70% lentils and chickpeas are used to make value added products, hence problem in the value chain and the necessity to improve the value chain. Since majority of the farmers are small and have potential to improve yield, marketable attributes (segmentation) reducing

postharvest losses would contribute to poverty alleviation by involvement of poor households in a participatory supply chain appraisal approach in order to reduce their dependence on the traders.

Processing factories such as dal-making factories could be the collaborating partner as most of the produce flow through this system. There are chickpea and lentil associations of processing unit at the provincial level which may be involved in finding out the direct way of buying from producers, given the difficulties they are also finding in dealing with traders.

Last but not least, pulses are the substitute of meat particularly for low income classes of the country and therefore required special attention to secure food supply in the country