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Status of Food Security in Africa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY MESSAGES

Committed to improve the lives of billions of people, the world leaders, including African Heads of State and Government, adopted in 1996 a daunting resolution, well known as Rome declaration, to half the absolute number of undernourished people by 2015. This commitment was made to address development challenges with a view to eradicate poverty and hunger, and eventually landing at higher development milestones. It is essential, eighteen years after the declaration, to take stock of Africa's progress. The commitment was further reinforced by adopting the MDGs, including those on halving the proportion of poverty and hunger by 2015. It is the aim of this report to review progress made so far in African countries to achieve the goal of halving hunger. It goes beyond reviewing food and nutrition insecurity status to review the root causes of the existing food and nutrition insecurity in the continent. The report ends by formulating pragmatic, action oriented policy options.

The report tells a mixed story of successes and failures. Despite the long standing recognition of access to food as a right, food security is still not universally treated as a basic human right in the continent. Africa has made a marked improvement in food security, however, a lot remains to be done and serious challenges still need to be addressed if food insecurity to be eradicated. Africa, despite its immense natural resources, is the world's most food insecure continent. Around 227 million people, or one out of every five people in Africa, are chronically food insecure. In fact, compared to the rest of the world, while Africa hosts around 15 per cent of the world's populations, it is home to close to one-third of those affected by hunger in our planet. Out of the 54 African Union countries, only three countries that have managed to achieve the stringent goal of halving the number of hunger people. Overall, the continent is not on track to achieve the 1996 World Food Security (WFS) target. In fact, the number of undernourished has increased rather than decreased by around 25% since 1990! While considering the less ambitious target, which is the 2001 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) hunger target that aims at halving the proportion of hungry people in the total population of 1990 level by 2015, African countries have done better with the target being already reached in 14 countries. Africa as a whole has already failed to achieve the MDG1 experiencing a decline of merely 26% in the prevalence of undernourishment over 1990-2014.

To capture the complexity and multidimensionality of food security, the four defined food insecurity dimensions are considered. In this regards, the continent portrays a mixed picture showing a relatively modest improvement on the availability side while little progress, if any, on the other dimensions. Therefore, it could be understood, with a little caution, due to varying country specificities, that the source of undernourishment could be attributed to weak distribution and/or lack of economic access. As the region has been experiencing little progress in the vulnerability dimension of food security; climate change is anticipated to severely, negatively cast on the continent's capacity to fight against hunger in the years to come.

The report affirms the commitment, commendable efforts, and the notable progress that has been achieved in recent years. Nevertheless, the continent needs to continue to work rigorously toward ensuring food and nutrition security, and improving livelihoods though rethinking the commitment, approach and modality. Given the wide range of hurdles the continent faces, African countries need, if eradication of food insecurity is really sought, to make sustainable, long term political commitment. In doing so, African countries must ensure political stability, building effective institutions, twined with supporting policies, macroeconomic as well as pro-poor policies, a comprehensive approach that addresses food security through a multi-sectoral orientation and within the broader scope of rural and agricultural transformation, and regional integration, and improved investment climate and investment levels. As for the short term, African countries should consider programmes that deliver quick results, notably measures to improve access to food through social programmes, Though it is regrettable that the Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger in the region cannot be realized by end of 2015, proper policy actions- that are based on the realities of African countries' food insecurity, should come quickly and be implemented swiftly to address the current bold target of ending hunger by 2025 before it is too late!

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Rational

1. At the World Food Summit in 1996, the heads of 185 countries reaffirmed, in The Rome Declaration on World Food Security that “We, the Heads of State and Government...reaffirm the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.” The world leaders stated as well their wish to “reduce hunger and poverty by half by 2015” as part of the development goals for the new millennium. In addition, the first principle of CAADP Pillar III’s Framework for Africa’s Food Security (FAFS) stated: “Protect the right to food for all citizens of Africa”. The right to food is fundamentally based on the perception that food, or indeed nutritious food, is an essence of life and a necessity that can not be denied or deprived of, for the very basic reason that humans can not survive without food. Therefore, working toward fulfilling the right to food, through the provision of the food at the right quantity and quality to all people at all times, places all concerned in a position of high moral ground and responsibility. It is, therefore, the primary responsibility of each State to ensure that every man, woman and child under its jurisdiction, alone or in community with others, have physical and economic access at all times to sufficient, nutritious food.

2. Food and nutrition security is of particular importance in the case of Africa where human capital gain will help sustainably consolidate the economic growth and, consequently, development. The damage afflicted by Africa’s economies as an outcome of food and nutrition insecurity in the past and present has hampered the continent’s full economic and social potential. A recent study by AUC, WFP and ECA shows that African countries bear enormous economic and social costs of child under nutrition at the individual and community level, in terms of losses in individual physical and cognitive capacity. At the economy and society as a whole, the impact is less understood. Though, the study has attempted to assess the cost of hunger, in monetary values, in a number of Africa countries. Estimates show that stunting could cause the economies a loss in the tone of 2.5% to 16% of GDP. (AUC, WFP and ECA, 2013).

3. In the African context, food and nutrition insecurity is essentially a phenomenon that is closely linked to poverty, underperforming agriculture and food shortage. Africa, the world’s poorest region, is set to register the largest sum of population growth of any the world’s regions between now and 2050, with around 40% of world’s population growth to emerge from Africa. Africa’s population is projected to increase to 2.4 billion by 2050 up from around 1.1 billion today, with the bulk of this growth is expected to occur in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. (Report of Population Reference Bureau (PRB), 2013). Twined to the population growth is the unprecedented, rapid urbanization that is largely composed by middle class population and youth. This rise of the middle class is expected to change food consumption patterns towards new dietary habits, including ready-made, package food (cereals, meats and dairy products), and more consumption of dairy and animal products away from traditional staples.

B. Objectives

4. The overall objective of this report is to provide evidence to African policy makers on the status of food and nutrition through providing data-driven analysis of the region’s recent progress in food and nutrition security. The report aims at flagging the urgency of prioritizing and institutionalizing the right to food. The report hopes to raise awareness on the urgency of rethinking strategies to achieving food and nutrition security given the present state of hunger and the renewed and bold commitments made to eradicating hunger and substantially reducing child under nutrition in Africa by 2025.

5. Specifically, the report will present an updated review of the status of food and nutrition security in Africa based on a laconic analysis using most recent and available data, research results and findings. It outlines the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity in the region. It further highlights the political commitments made, notably at a

continental level, to enhance food and nutrition security with a view to assesses the feasibility of achieving these commitments vis-à-vis current conditions, including resource availability and existing challenges.

C. Structure and Organization of the Report

6. The report starts with a section that lays out the ground for the paper providing justification and elaboration on the purpose of the report as well as its scope and methodology. The second section provides an updated review of the status of food and nutrition security in Africa. It presents trends and changes in each of the four dimensions of food security, nutrition-related indicators, food trade, and food aid dependency in Africa. Section three highlights the main causes behind and forces of the widely observed deteriorated status of food security in the continent. The commitments which have been made by African leaders as food and nutrition security concern in 2014 will be highlighted in section four. This chapter questions the feasibility of meeting these commitments and, consequently, explores required key policy priorities. The report concludes by formulating a set of pragmatic, results oriented policy options to help pave the way for the region, in general, and its member states in specific to better address the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity, in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

II. STATE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA

A. Food Security

7. FAO's 2014 data estimates indicate that about 805 million people, representing around 11.3% of the global population, are projected to be food insecure, i.e. undernourished (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2014). This represents some improvement, which has translated into lifting more than 37 million people out of chronic food insecurity compared to 2011-2013. In Africa, and in particular Africa south to Sahara, although progress has been slow, the prevalence of undernourishment in 2012-14 stood at 20.55%, representing a decline of about 26% since 1990-92. As for Africa south to Sahara, the progress was even better with hunger has declined by 28.5% over the same period.

8. Food security refers here to a situation “.. *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.*”, as stated in the 2006 Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security. As the declaration revealed, measuring the prevalence of undernourishment can not be sufficient to capture the complexity and multidimensionality of food security. Therefore, in analyzing the food insecurity in the continent, the four defined food security dimensions are considered: food availability, economic and physical access to food, food utilization and stability (vulnerability and shocks) over time. Each dimension will be described by specific indicators, at both process as well as output levels as much as possible¹, as follows:

The Four Dimensions of Food Security

Food availability

9. The *availability* dimension captures not only the quantity, but also the quality and diversity of food. In Africa, the *Average Dietary Energy Supply Adequacy*² has increased by about 8.41% since 1990-1992, though has remained stagnant since 2009-11 *albeit* unevenly and at below the average for all developing regions. The overall energy supply adequacy average for Africa, 116%, indicates, generally speaking, a sufficient level of food supply, which has significantly contributed to reducing prevalence of malnutrition in Africa. However, these figures are mainly based on national averages and do not reflect food availability at household and individual levels.

¹ Data are drawn mainly from FAO, 2014. Food Security Indicators, and calculated by the author. Accessed October 15, 2014. www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/fs-data/en/..

² An indicator that measures adequacy of food supply in terms of calories and helps in understanding whether undernourishment is mainly due to insufficient food supply or bad distribution

10. The overall performance in food supply masks significant variation among countries, both in terms of food supply adequacy and pace of progress. While some countries have succeeded to increase food supply by 20 to 61%, others have experienced a decline in the range of 1 to 12%, since 1990-1992. Also, food supply adequacy varies significantly among countries ranging between 92% and 152%.

11. Africa south to Saharan remains the most affected region in terms of sufficient dietary food supply. In contrast, Northern Africa has a dietary supply adequacy that is even higher than that of developed countries. The average dietary food supply adequacy for the region, estimated at 110%, is the world's lowest. This could, in part, be explained in view of the disproportional improvement of food production compared to population growth. The explosive population growth realized in SSA, which has resulted in a population increase of around 70% over the period 1990-2012, has led to a modest increase in the average per capita value of food production, estimated at 13% over the same period. North Africa, with a relatively modest population increase, 42%, over the same period, has witnessed an increase of 39% in per capita value of food.

12. Alongside this increase in food supply at continental and national levels, in general, there has been improvement in food diversity, resulting in a slight decrease of the share of dietary energy supply derived from cereals, roots and tubers and increased supply of proteins and increased per capita availability of fruits and vegetables, livestock products and vegetable oils (FAO, 2014).

13. Overall, the analysis of food availability trends in Africa indicates improvement, though quite modest, the matter that suggests that observed food insecurity is primarily caused by the other dimensions of food security.

Access to food

14. With respect to the *access* dimension, which assesses both the physical and economic access to food, the situation in Africa, but in particular Africa south to Sahara, has continued to be the greatest challenge in terms of achieving food security. Physical access to food in Africa south to Sahara is complicated due to weak or inappropriate infrastructures such as poor roads, ports, communication, food storage facilities and other installations that facilitate the functioning of markets, particularly in rural areas.

15. According to FAO's Statistical Yearbook for Africa of 2014, all, except for nine, African countries have road coverage lower than 14 km per 100 square kilometre of land area and the percentage of paved roads ranges between 15-30%; far behind the 45- 60% observed globally (FAO, 2014b). In some rural areas in Africa south to Sahara, only 30% of the populations live within 2 kilometres of an all-season road, which is just over half the shares for Latin America and the Caribbean, 54% and South Asia, 58% (UNDP, 2012).

16. As regard to economic access, the *Domestic Food Price indicator*³ is assessed in order to monitor regional food security. As indicated by the *Domestic Food Price indicator*, relative food prices have increased, on average, in Africa by 19.1 per cent over the period 1990-2013 as compared to 15.3 as an average in developing countries. Moreover, Africa remains as the region with the highest relative food prices, almost 20 per cent higher compared to the relative price of food in developing countries. The high relative prices of food as well the rapid pace of growth of food prices in Africa indicate high level of market inefficiency.

17. Despite impressive sustained economic growth over the last decade and so, per capita income has not changed significantly due, mainly, to more than proportional increase in population growth. The per capita income in Africa has increased by 40% over the period 1990-2013, though yet significantly low compared to that of developing countries, which has increased by a whopping 141% over the same period. African people have, globally, the lowest per capita income, USD4622.5 at 2001 international prices. It is only 51% of the average per capita income of developing countries, USD9000 at 2001 international prices.

³ The Domestic Food Price Level Index is an indicator of the relative price of food in a country. It is widely used for global monitoring of food security because it compares the relative price of food across countries and over time.

18. Despite Africa's recent economic growth and improvements in poverty reduction, the continent still has one of the highest levels of poverty, particularly in Africa south to Sahara, with 60.5% of population living under 2\$/day in 2010⁴. Significant disparity exists from one country to another with poverty prevalence, under USD1.25, ranges between 1.69% and 87.72%. (WB, 2014). High level of poverty coupled with high basic food price, poor physical access, low human development, high level of inequalities and inefficient preventive social protection mechanisms have strongly affected production and/or purchase of food at household level, therefore contributing to reduce access to food.

Food utilisation

19. This dimension is assessed by the percentage of population that has access to essential services such as improved water sources and sanitation facilities and electricity. Proper food utilisation implies that the food is handled, prepared, stored and eaten in a healthy environment. The outcomes of food utilisation can be assessed through anthropometric measurements - underweight, stunting and wasting are usually the main nutritional disorders assessed.

20. In Africa, steady progress has been recorded in the reduction of the number of people without access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and electricity over the past 20 years. Albeit, the proportion of population in Africa with no access to improved water and sanitation, estimated at 68.6% and 39.4% in 2012 (FAO, 2014), respectively, is well below those in developing countries, 87.3% and 57.4%, respectively. It is well noted that the progress achieved masks significant variation among sub regions and countries. At country level, while some countries have tripled the share of population with a reasonable access to safe water; some other countries have experienced a decline (FAO, 2014). Low access to these services impairs better utilization of food, thus aggravating food and nutrition insecurity in the continent.

Stability

21. It is extremely important that the three food security dimensions discussed above and their related indicators are stable over time, in order to ensure sustainable food security. Risks, including even short-lived crises, under these circumstances, could drive vicious cycle including food insecurity. A number of indicators are used to measure exposure to risk. These include, among others, *the area equipped for irrigation* which provides a measure of the extent of exposure to climatic shocks such as droughts and heat waves, *the share of food imports in total merchandise exports*, which captures the adequacy of foreign exchange reserves to pay for food imports, the *cereal import dependency ratio* which measures the cereal self-sufficiency of a country and the potential impact of shocks in the international trade market.

22. From 2000 to 2012, there has been no improvement in the percentage of arable land equipped for irrigation, with even a slight decrease (from 6% to 5.7%); while the cereal import dependency ratio has worsen, by 24%, declining from 27.3% to 31.7%. As for the share of food imports in total merchandise exports, it has declined from 13% to 11%, though highly fluctuating, over 1990-2011. The current Africa's shares of food imports in total merchandise and the cereal import dependency ratio are substantially, alarmingly high compared with 5% and 15.7% for the developing countries, respectively, over the same period of analysis (FAO, 2014). The dependency on cereals import has not been even in the region. While some countries have managed to abolish cereals import reducing import dependency by almost 91%, others have increased import dependency by a whipping seven times and more!

23. In 2000, Africa had, globally, the highest food price volatility, while, surprisingly, in 2013; Africa recorded the lowest as compared to the other regions of the world. Significant disparity is observed from one country to another. Along side, the variation of the per capita net food production value is captured by the index of *Per Capita Food Production Variability*. In 1990, the variability of per capita production value in Africa was almost double that of developing countries but equal to the world's. At country level, significant disparity exists among countries in terms

⁴ Calculated from the World Bank Development Indicators (available at <http://data.worldbank.org/topic/poverty>), accessed on September 18 2014.

of extent of production variation and trend. Price and production variability have severe impacts in Africa whereby the 60 per cent of population are classified as poor whose expenditure on food amounts to around 60-70 per cent of total income (FAO, 2014; and Smith et al, 2006)

B. Nutrition Security

24. A household is said to be food secure “if it can reliably gain access to food in sufficient quantity and quality for all household members to enjoy a healthy and active life”. (Gillespie and Haddad, 2001). It is possible, however, for individuals in food-secure households to have deficient or unbalanced diets. (Benson, 2004). As a result, malnutrition takes place if an individual’s diet falls short of providing adequate calories and protein necessary for growth and maintenance.

25. To capture more fully the nutrition aspects of food security in terms of micronutrients deficiency, a number of nutrition-based indicators are analyzed here. These are the prevalence of anaemia among children under 5; the prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women (FAO, 2014). The prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women has steadily decreased by around 16% over the period 1990-2011 to as low as 43.1%, on average, in African countries. However, the prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women in Africa is still significantly high in comparison to Asia’s 32.5%. Similarly, the prevalence of anaemia among children has significantly fallen from as high as 70.8% to as low as 58.3%, though still unacceptably elevated, compared to Asia’s 36.1% or even of North Africa’s 34.5%. The disparity is also observed from one country to another with the prevalence of anemia among pregnant women and children range between 28.4% and 63.5%; and 29.5% and 86.1%, respectively.

26. Stunting, underweight and wasting remain very prevalent among under five children in Africa, particularly in Africa south to Sahara where they represent, respectively, the highest (39.6%), the second highest (21.4%) and the third highest (9.4%) in 2011 in the world (UNICEF, WHO and World Bank, 2012). Recent data demonstrates that Africa is the only continent with minimal changes in the prevalence of stunted children since 1990. The proportion of stunted children under 5 in Africa has decreased from 42% to merely 35%, compared to 40% to 25% at the global level, between 1990 and 2012. Despite drop in the prevalence, the number of stunted children has increased from 46 to 59 million over the same period. Large variations in prevalence in child stunting between countries exist, ranging between 15% and 58%. Recent data shows that there are 16 countries on the continent with stunting rates above 40 percent; 21 countries with stunting rates in the range of 30% to 39.99% and 6 countries with stunting rates between 25%- 29.99%, reaffirming the fact that a large proportion of Africa’s population does not have access to food containing the essential vitamins and minerals required for optimum health and nutrition (UNICEF, 2014).

C. Food Trade

27. Africa lost its status as a net exporter of agricultural products (food included) during the late 70s to early 1980s when prices of raw commodities (mainly coffee, cocoa, and spices), which constituted the bulk of its agricultural export revenues, tumbled and local food production grew sluggishly. According to FAO⁵ data, since 1980, Africa’s food import has grown consistently faster than export and reached a record high for the first time of around 50 billion USD in 2008, at the height of the global economic crises, representing a deficit of about 32 billion USD. Although food imports declined a year later, it has continued to rise steadily again since 2010⁶. It is worth noting that 6 countries contribute around 75% of Africa’s total food import bill, a matter that should be taken into consideration. While food import bills vary significantly across Africa, only ten countries enjoy agricultural and food trade surplus.

⁵ FAOSTAT (www.faostat.org)

⁶ Note that the deficit in Africa’s food trade rose from 32 billion US\$ in 2008 to about 38 billion US\$ in 2011. These are the figures often misquoted as Africa’s food import bill, which is much higher. However, they represent the deficit in Africa’s food import.

28. Although Africa is a marginal player in global trade, representing only around 3.44% of global agricultural exports in 2011- marginally down from 3.66% in 1990, the continent exports about a quarter of all agricultural products within its boundaries. Africa has demonstrated that under the right conditions, it can indeed boost intra-regional trade. This is evident given the fact that for Africa’s strategic food commodities like cereals, oils and fats, dairy, meat and meat products, sugar and beverages, intra-African trade over the last decade has been in the range of 30 to 60 percent as share of the continent’s total agricultural exports. Evidence suggests that boosting intra-Africa trade including establishing the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) would improve the ability of African countries to supply a larger proportion of their domestic market from local sources improving self-sufficiency, and, thus, food security (ECA, 2014).

29. The high level of import dependency calls for the development of effective mechanisms to cope with the instability in external markets, including price fluctuation. Alongside, stabilizing food supply and prices, through market-based risk management approaches and diversification programmes, are key components of policies targeted at addressing vulnerability.

III. DRIVERS OF FOOD AND NUTRITION INSECURITY IN AFRICA

Although food and nutrition insecurity is inevitably affected and framed by agricultural production, it should always be considered within the broader context of poverty. The bulk of farmers and pastoralists in Africa are vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity not because they do not produce enough but rather because they reserve little. They usually have negligible savings and limited other possible sources of income. This section is dedicated to answer the question on why there is food and nutrition insecurity in a continent that can feed itself. Drivers of food and nutrition insecurity are classified into three groups; bio/physical, political and social; and economic drivers.

A. Bio/Physical Drivers

1. Poor performance of agriculture

30. Generating a marketable surplus involves the materialization of complex trade-offs at the level of individual small-scale producers factors of production and risks associated. The inherent complexity explains the graduality of the transition from subsistence to market-oriented agriculture and thus the development of intermediary production systems. Though, transformation of agricultural production systems is intimately related to human and economic geography. This explains the critical role market connections (physical infrastructures, institutions and services) play in the spatial configuration of markets and the development of production systems. (OECD, 2013). The poor performance of African agriculture is attributed to a number of factors, including: (1) *Under-capitalization of agriculture*, (2) *Inadequate funding of agricultural research and technology*; (3) *Inadequate use of yield-enhancing practices and technologies*; (4) *Low land and labour productivity*; (5) *Inadequate market access and infrastructure*

2. Fragile social and physical fabric, particularly in rural areas

31. Fragile ecosystems. Major parts of land area in Africa are classified as arable, semi arable, and arid. The majority of vulnerable poor concentrates in the arid and semi-arid ecosystems. Due to substantial population growth, those poor have been forced to intensively cultivate land causing soil degradation rendering of low quality, with no capacity to replenish the soil. UNEP (2008) has estimated that 60 per cent of Africa’s farmland is degraded. In connection, most of farm households have little land areas supporting, in most cases, extended families of about six to eight people. The unsustainable exploitation of the fragile ecosystem has exacerbated environmental degradation and low agricultural productivity, thus considerably contributing further to poverty and food insecurity.

3. Climate variability

32. Several parts of Africa are often exposed to natural disasters. The main natural hazard affecting African countries is drought (and floods) leading to chronic food insecurity. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the climate is becoming more unstable and the weather events more severe. People of the region have, therefore, developed specific coping strategies. However, even the most efficient coping mechanisms render useless by an extended drought.

4. Water/ land/ energy stresses

33. As demand for crop land in Africa continues to rise due to growing population, persistent land degradation continue to pose a daunting challenge. To make it worse, rising oil prices have also, severely contributed to increased food prices, as documented by extensive research, and demand for land investments in SSA countries particularly for the production of biofuels. As regards to water, steadily increase in domestic and industrial water demand, due to rapid population and economic growth, rising urbanization, changing life and food patterns, have augmented water scarcity across much of the African countries. Water pollution and poor access to sanitation, especially in SSA have resulted in increased contamination of food and drinking water, leading to wide spread of diseases and decline in health levels impairing the capacity of food utilization.

B. Political and Social Drivers

1. Inequity, gender bias and limited social protection

34. The influence of political and social drivers on the food and nutrition security status is enormous. These are real factors that influence the day to day level of food and nutrition security. They include political instability, demographic change, urbanization, governance and international security, gender, issues of land tenure, changing patterns of consumer needs, preferences, choices, tastes, habits and practices, affecting the demand for and consumption of different foods. In Africa in general, rural women and men play different roles in guaranteeing food security for their households and communities. While men grow mainly field crops, women are usually responsible for growing and preparing most of the food consumed in the home and raising small livestock, which provides protein. But gender inequalities in control of livelihood assets limit women's food production.

2. Political instability

35. Internal or external armed conflict is one of the major factors in increasing people vulnerability in the continent. Evidence suggests that conflict and food insecurity are reciprocally related, with each prompting and strengthening the other. Because of conflicts, governments are enforced to massively spend scarce resources on arms and conflict-related expenses. This has the result of discouraging development partners to avoid the risk of funding warfare instead of reducing poverty and food insecurity. In addition, the overall atmosphere renders unsuitable for developing and implementing development programmes. Unfortunately, Africa has long served of prolonged, large-scale conflicts, particularly during the 1990s and 2000s. However, starting from 2011, Africa seems to come back again to an era of internal political instability that has shown its ugly face in a number of countries across the continent. This instability has severely affected food and nutrition insecurity. (IFPRI, 2013).

C. Economic Drivers

1. Unstable global food markets

36. Prices of food commodities on world markets have recently been on the rise with high level of fluctuation. The persistent instability led to increased concern over the ability of the world food economy to adequately feed billions of people, now and in the future. While it is not possible to know with certainty the extent of future increases in either the level or volatility of prices, the risks of higher prices and greater volatility are sufficiently large to warrant

serious efforts to understand what can be done to reduce the likelihood of increased prices or greater volatility, or to manage the consequences when these are unavoidable. In considering the most appropriate options to counter high and/ or volatile prices, however, it is important to remember that the level and volatility of prices are the outcome of various forces that affect supply and demand (FAO, 2014b).

2. Unfavorable macroeconomic policies/environment

37. Farmers communities, not only suffer from fragile environments and poor standards of health and education, and inferior road and transportation services, but find themselves often living and working in an adverse economic and political environment. Such environment has shown sustained biased towards urban dwellers and public budget with agricultural being always considered as an endless source of public finance and revenue, and of cheap food commodities.

38. African economies are among the weakest economies in the world with a low gross national product (GNP). Economic growth has not increased significantly, on average, to compensate the high rate of population growth. The economies of the continent depend mainly on agriculture, which contributes around 25% of African GDP.

3. Poor access to Food

39. The past five years have been particularly challenging for Africa. Since 2008/2009, Africa suffered severe impacts of high food and fuel prices, which has impacted vulnerable communities' ability to access food. An additional hurdle to improving the plight of those affected by under-nutrition is to improve access to safe, adequate and nutritious food. Although certain regions in Africa have seen substantial increase in production over the last 20 years, equal access to adequate and nutritious remains a challenge.

IV. FOOD AND NUTRITION-RELATED POLITICAL COMMITMENTS AND REALITY

A. Resolutions and Declarations of the AU Assembly in 2014

40. The African leaders have made several commitments in 2014 with a view to substantially reduce or eradicate hunger and malnutrition with a view to achieve sustainable food security for all Africans. More recently, the Malabo summit witnessed the issuance of a number of highly important declarations.

41. This Assembly made three historic declarations that will reframe the platform for efforts aimed at enhancing food and nutrition security for at least the upcoming 10 years. These declarations stipulated the bold targets to ending hunger and substantially reducing child stunting by 2025, and ending preventable child and maternal deaths by 2035.

1 Declaration on Nutrition Security for Inclusive Economic Growth and Sustainable Development in Africa

The Heads of State and Governments committed to significantly lessening child stunting, bringing down stunting to 10% and underweight to 5% by 2025 and in particular, focusing on the first 1000 days as the only window of opportunity during which permanent and irreversible physical and mental damage would be avoided.

2 Declaration On Ending Preventable Child And Maternal Deaths in Africa

42. The Heads of State and Governments made a declaration to end preventable child and maternal deaths by the year 2035 in line with Post 2015 Framework on Sustainable Development.

3 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods

43. The Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted a 7-item declaration. The declaration invites African countries to ending hunger in Africa by 2025 resolving to, among others, accelerate agricultural growth by at least doubling current agricultural productivity levels by the year 2025, and improve nutritional status with a view to bringing down stunting to 10% and underweight to 5% by 2025, and boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services resolving to increase it by triple by the year 2025.

4 Decision on the Report of Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) on NEPAD

44. Endorsing the conclusions of the Thirty-First Session of the HSGOC, the Assembly noted that in the face of globalization and its impact on food and nutrition security and livelihoods, Africa should embrace food sovereignty and regional trade preference strategies to attain food self-sufficiency and enhanced regional cooperation. Leaders, in this regards, urged NPCA, AUC and RECs to work with Member States to develop the requisite national and regional strategies, policies and programmes.

B. Eradicating Food Hunger in Africa by 2025, a Dream or a Hope? What Is Needed?

45. In July 2014, at the African Union summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, African Heads of State and Government declared a bold goal to end hunger in the continent by 2025. The declaration conveys a strong message to the African people as well as the world of the solid commitment towards ending hunger on the continent. The declaration is expected to strengthen efforts to enhance food security in the continent and, more importantly, to encourage the adoption of more integrated approaches towards ending hunger.

46. During the period 1990- 2003, Africa had succeeded in reducing hunger by an annual average of around 0.85%, on average. Since the adoption of Maputo declaration in 2003, the performance has accelerated registering an annual growth of around 1.5%, on average, since 2004. Nevertheless, to continue to progress at the current rate of around 1.5% annually would not at all be sufficient to free Africa of hunger; it would only contribute to reduce hunger by around merely 18% of the 2013 level by 2025. Africa would need to reduce hunger by around 8.3% annually over the period 2014-2025, on average, holding other factors, such as population growth and consumption patterns, constant to reach the goal. Certainly, continuing business as usual is not an option rather adopting aggressive, integrated, and comprehensive approach is a must. In this regards, eradicating hunger would, essentially, require increasing the purchasing power of the poor- around 60% of Africans live under USD2 a day, as well as substantially increasing food production. It is worth noting that increasing the average annual reduction of prevalence of malnutrition seven times as compared to the current rate would require increasing food supply by seven times as compared to current level. The question here is how African countries can achieve this?

47. For hunger to be eliminated sustainably in Africa by 2025, national governments and development partners must devote adequate resources, implement concerted long-term integrated approaches across sectors, disciplines, actors and even countries through appropriate policies, implement a clear accountability system, enhance institutional capacity, and a transparent framework for partnership and create enabling environment for the private sector in order to raise sufficient investments. Certainly, the target is a massive, but not an impossible challenge. Recent successful experiences of a number of developing countries, such as Brazil, China, Thailand, and Vietnam, suggest that substantially accelerating the current pace of progress in enhancing food security would make it realistic to eradicate hunger. African countries need to make achieving this goal a top priority given the damaging consequences of hunger for human development and for economic growth.

V. RECOMMENDED POLICY OPTIONS

48. Recommendations most pertaining to Africa's food and nutrition security should be focused on the need to support poor smallholder farmers to boost agricultural productivity and withstand future shocks so that it contributes to long-term food and nutrition security, and to shore up households' access to sufficient, health food all the time.

A. Continental/Regional level

- 1- Establish regional agricultural trade cooperation, in the fields of investment, technology transfer, and commodities trade, within RECs and among RECs. This implies a win-win situation, whereby on one side a country or a sub-region can benefit from the high technology, capital surplus and huge food export market possessed by the other countries/sub-region(s), which in turn will each benefit from stable, consistent, relatively cheap food supplies derived from the extra food surplus to be realized in the other complementary producing countries/sub-region(s).
- 2- Eliminate all barriers to intra African trade to realizing the existing full potentials to enhance the food self-sufficiency on a sub-regional basis. Linking regional food security and social protection efforts to trade. Boost Intra-regional trade through investments into cross broader infrastructures, and better harmonization and coordination of trade policies to create a conducive environment for the realization of the Africa Free Trade Area, thereby contributing to rapid regional integration.
- 3- Diversify the African economies away from primary agriculture and extractive based activities through the rapid development and promotion of regional strategic commodities value chains driven by vibrant agribusiness.
4. Develop centers of excellence within Africa to develop and share lessons on innovation, resilience, improving food security, safety nets, and so on.

B. National level

- 1- Develop and disseminate new technologies, such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), geographic information system mapping, integrated pest management technologies, post-harvest technology, early warning systems for drought and flooding, irrigation systems, and other types of water and soil management technologies, high-yielding new crop varieties to rural areas and small farmers.
- 2- Support poor smallholder farmers to withstand future shocks, natural disasters, market volatility, financial crises, etc., and to boost agricultural productivity so that it contributes to long-term food and nutrition security.
- 3- Address food and nutrition insecurity within a holistic approach, an approach which involves (1) Dealing with water, energy and food stress with a view to manage natural resources sustainably, to secure land and water rights; phase out inefficient subsidies on water, energy, and fertilizers; and create a macroeconomic environment that promotes efficient use of natural resources; (2) Integrating food security into rural and agricultural transformation programmes with the aim of enhancing resilience of rural residents; (3) Developing pro-poor policies that enhance the purchasing power of poor; (4) Developing national approaches to food and nutrition security that are resilient to shocks and other stresses, while ensuring that external and international actors buy into those approaches and support them; (5) Encouraging and facilitate a multisectoral approach to food security as well as resilience, through coordinating plans and programs across line ministries. Evaluate national sectoral strategies and action plans using food security and resilience-building lenses; (6) Orienting national food security policies towards more domestic food self-reliance, though within a sub-regional/RECs' perspective to take advantage of the strength and comparative advantages of each country or sub region while building on existing strong historical and cultural ties, obvious natural complementarities among countries with a view to maximizing the synergic and catalytic roles each can play; and (7) Involving stakeholders, including private sector, in the decision-making process

CONCLUSION

49. Though many of Africa's countries have experienced significant economic growth in recent years, they have failed to significantly reduce hunger level to suggest that ensuring food security will remain a significant challenge. Efforts to address the chronically high levels of hunger and malnutrition in many parts of Africa have been much slower to get off the ground.

50. Therefore, all countries in the region are yet to make tangible and consistent efforts to efficiently addressing structural hurdles facing their national food systems, not only by concentrating on production, but also by paying

adequate attention to other equally important segments of food value chain, such as harvesting, processing, storage, preservation, distribution and marketing/trade, in addition to education, health, and nutrition, which are indispensable, critical factors for ensuring enhanced food security.

51. Specific attention should be given as well to foster intra-regional agricultural trade with the increasing role and effect of regional food market on shaping future agricultural, and to the revitalization of regional cooperation on land rights and support for producers, specifically, small-scale, and agricultural investment.

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