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Food and human security in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

This paper seeks to approach the paradigm of human security from the perspectives of food security, which brings in the discussions of the new patterns of policies adopted in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It discusses about the emergence of a market-led food security, guided by market forces and incentives created by the G8 New Alliance project. The paper highlights the existing discourse on the need to scale-up agriculture in SSA where theories of development are interpreted differently to channel a transformation of a subsistence economy to a market oriented economy, but yet governed with a very corporatist leaning as part of the private sector development.

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1. Introduction

When related to the notion of ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want,’ which is a definition by the United Nations Development Program [1] often used by ‘human security’ scholars, the concept of food security is nested under the paradigm of ‘human security’ without any doubt. However, as the concept of ‘human security’ per se remains a bit vague and is very often idealistic, the material contribution from concrete example is expected to lead to deductive results, to rebuild an ‘overall’ from pieces of concepts.

Using Political Economy as methodology of analysis, this paper attempts to describe the institutional framework governing the G8 program: ‘*New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition*’ an initiative adopted at the Camp David

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summit in May 2012 – (hereafter New Alliance), and seeks to approach the paradigm of human security from the perspectives of food security, which brings into play discussions of the new patterns of policies adopted in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) namely: Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Mozambique. It puts the existing partnership between the public and private sector forth to tackle the issue via the 'New Alliance', and its impact on the smallholder's organisation of production. To this extent, the paper outlines the concept of '4P' (Public-Private-Population-Partnership) by extracting the notion of 'population' from the perception of 'public' and re-organising the approach with the concept of *conditional capacity*.

The central questions the paper will attempt to answer are the followings: why Food security in SSA is falling under the Market-led paradigm, how does it affect the mode of production and the way of life of the smallholders in a holistic manner, and what model of partnership could be advocated to avoid any form of the smallholder marginalization? A Market-led food security as a result of the market forces and incentives via the New Alliance, is leading to an altered marginalization on the SSA smallholders, and the extended model of partnership '4P' organized through the conditional capacity is likely to be a safeguard to protect smallholders from any forms of marginalization.

This paper is structured as follows: firstly, it discusses the general background of the New Alliance and the countries targeted by the initiative, stressing on the model that emphasizes on the role of private and public sectors and their approach to food security. Second, it discusses the paradigm of Market-led food security as a result of food commoditization and the different market incentives that are favoring it in relation with the New Alliance. Third, the paper identifies the various impacts on the SSA smallholders resulting from the market-led model on the organization of production. And finally, the paper proposes the '4P' Model to protect the smallholder from any form of marginalization and to some extent, attempts to contribute to the study of the contemporary notion of insecurity in a broader sense.

2. A new *modus operandi* to tackle food security

A new history is being written in Sub-Saharan Africa with respect to agricultural development and more importantly, the effort to combat food insecurity. However, the renewed interest after long decade of ignorance of agriculture in the development agenda, leaves many perplex facing the inherent implications that it would drive, especially for the smallholders that represent nearly 417 million rural poor people all over the world, mainly in SSA [2]. With the three major crises that hit the world simultaneously in 2007-08, the so-called '*triple crisis*': the financial, food and climate change [3], a new *modus operandi* was gradually embedded in the global society, transforming the relations and the role of different economic actors in the global food production system.

Two major causes have triggered the turning point in food security policy. On the one hand, there is a strong conviction on the need to reduce the social divide, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aims at halving poverty by 2015 as well as the proportion of malnourished people that accounted for about 980 million in 2012 [4-5]. On the other hand, the very characteristics of food security have taken on new dimensions. If prior 2008, insecurity was either chronic, i.e. long-term and persistent food security or transitory, short-term inability to cope with food security, it now occurs under mixed patterns, is repetitive and uncertain – giving rise to the development of policies that promote the role of the private sector, perceived as the most effective to face the immediate challenges.

As the prevailing idea is to increase production by maintaining affordable prices to keep pace with the increasing food demand, the proponents of the private sector-led initiatives are advancing a very strong argument, using the long term experience in research and development and capital as leverage, a combination that would enable the increase of productivity within a short period of time. Since land productivity has always been low in SSA, the integration of the private sector is likely to enhance this capacity accordingly. In 2009, for instance, it accounted for an average 239 US\$ per hectare of agricultural land in the six countries [6] with an average yield of 1.35 tonne per hectare [7]. Nevertheless, such process would require the control of the means of production either by an overtaking of the farmland or the integration of the production via the value chain. Moreover, SSA government capabilities to deliver public goods are very limited and as the time factor is playing a crucial role in the adaptation process, delaying any actions to improve agricultural productivity would afflict a disastrous consequence especially for the poor people as shocks would be frequent and uncertain. Such additional burden then suggests that if SSA governments cannot find additional financial resources in the future, the budget dedicated to other sectors would be ripped off, putting another stress on the social welfare [8]. The New Alliance is trying to embrace this context with

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