

INTRODUCTION

FOOD SECURITY AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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■ INTRODUCTION

The Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE), as part of its Strategic dossier, decided to conduct a preliminary analysis of what is undoubtedly one of the critical problems facing humanity. The institute wanted to examine food security within the framework of global security. This is due to both the importance of the debate surrounding food security and the role of food security in global security as the ultimate goal of the international community.

In his 2003 speech to the UN General Assembly, UN Secretary General, Kofi A. Annan, floated the idea of setting up a «High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change» that would work on consensual analysis, ideas and project implementation with the goal of creating a «collective security system in the twenty-first century».

The report published by the group of experts adopts a «broad definition» of collective security, identifying six groups of threats, amongst which poverty and environmental degradation are prominent.

This is just one example of a shared conviction, in this case held by the world's top international organisation, that the twenty-first century faces severe security threats, amongst which hunger remains prevalent despite decades of efforts to tackle the problem, with the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, requiring member states to respect and protect their citizens' right to food, still not being fulfilled despite its adoption in 1976.

The failure to meet this global commitment to eradicate hunger is not because of the enormity of the task, insufficient resources, inadequate scientific knowledge or technical materials. The great paradox is that we continue to live with a problem that is solvable, but one that we do not fix despite it representing one of the most pressing threats to collective security and global security.

As we see in this work, collective security, the security that we demand as human beings, cannot become a practical reality unless we achieve food security.

Collective security will always remain threatened whilst more than one billion people worldwide go hungry. It is no exaggeration to say that hunger is by far the most widespread pandemic that the world faces and one of the chief threats to humanity. However, this pandemic can be solved, as has been explicitly acknowledged for the last fifty years.

The studies making up this collective work take numerous approaches and offer discussions, assessments, proposals and multiple viewpoints on food security, or, to invert the expression, food «insecurity», and, to quote Jean

Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2001 to 2008, the geopolitics of hunger.

The studies detail the extent of the pandemic. However, as a preliminary idea of the extent of the problem, our calculations show 17 million people worldwide die as a result of hunger and malnutrition every year, equivalent to 40,000 people each day or one person every two seconds.

As we will see, no committed and determined action to combat, significantly reduce and eradicate this pandemic has yet been forthcoming. Meanwhile, we have seen the international community, particularly developed countries, respond firmly and successfully to much less lethal, albeit contagious, pandemics such as bird flu, swine flu and more recently H1N1.

However, although hunger is not contagious, it is, in the words of the aforementioned Jean Ziegler, a «weapon of mass destruction» that could go off at any moment.

In a globalised and fully interdependent world a new aspect to hunger has emerged; whilst it has always been a terrible affliction for its victims, hunger now also poses an enormous threat to mankind. We can therefore say that without food security there cannot and will not be global peace and security.

The words of the former President of Brazil, Lula da Silva are fitting to end this brief introduction to the problem: «Hunger is in truth the worst of all weapons of mass destruction, reaping millions of victims each year. Combating hunger and poverty and promoting development are the only sustainable paths to global peace... There can be no peace without development, and no peace or development without social justice.»

These words are echoed in a statement from another world leader, who differed starkly with the Brazilian President on many other issues, President George W. Bush, who said: «This growing gap between rich and poor, between opportunity and misery, is as much a challenge to our compassion as it is a source of instability.»

Let us now briefly examine what commitments the international community has at least adopted and what action it has actually taken over the last few decades.

The United Nations agency specialising in this field, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), held a very important summit at its Rome headquarters in the Autumn of 1996, from 13th to 17th November, attended by 186 countries and focusing exclusively on food security.

The «Rome Declaration» approved at the summit on the 13th November reaffirms, in its first paragraph, «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».

It also established that the world leaders, including 100 heads of state or government, would immediately aim to «reduce the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015».

Finally, the signatory countries stated that «poverty is a major cause of food insecurity and sustainable progress in poverty reduction is critical to improve access to food. Conflict, terrorism, corruption and environmental degradation also contribute significantly to food insecurity. Increased food production, including staple food, must be undertaken. This should happen within the framework of sustainable management of natural resources, elimination of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries...».

A similar objective, and one more widely known amongst the general public, was decreed a few years later, as a core aspect of the First Millennium Goal.

In 2002, six years after the big Rome summit, the FAO assessed how much progress had been made towards achieving the objectives laid out. It found that, whilst some advances had been made, at the rate of progress seen up to 2002, the summit's targets would not be met in 2015 but instead in 2150, halfway through the twenty-second century.

That was the situation and future outlook as it stood in 2002. Over the last decade the global situation has only deteriorated at an alarming pace.

Some moderate progress was made up to 2007, but the setbacks caused by the 2008 global food crisis were of such magnitude that by October 2009, the number of people going hungry exceeded 1 billion, nearly 20% of the global population at the time.

Since then, there has been a slight reduction in this figure, but the root causes behind the crisis not only remain in place but in fact have worsened. These include the extreme volatility of food prices on international markets, the unpredictability of oil prices, the increased demand for meat products in emerging markets, the growing use of agricultural land for purposes other than food production and speculation or lack of regulatory mechanisms on global food markets.

In summary, prices will rise further and remain volatile over the next few years unless the structural causes of imbalances in the global agricultural system are

tackled. As the former Director-General of the FAO, Jacques Diouf, said last year of volatile agricultural prices, we only react to economic factors and fail to address structural problems, and thus merely perform crisis management.

According to many analysts, the food crisis, which has its own dynamics but has erupted alongside global economic and financial turmoil, is also a civic and moral crisis the root causes of which are not being addressed, with profoundly destabilising results. As has been the case at other key moments in the history of mankind, rather than there being a crisis in the system, we have a system in crisis that is wreaking social havoc and ultimately manifests itself in poverty and hunger.

One of the most damaging effects of the food crisis has been the doubling and sometimes even tripling of staple food prices on international markets. In Spain, just 17% of an individual's average salary is spent on food, whilst in developing countries this percentage often stands at over 70%. As has been said before, the multiplication of staple food prices hurts people in developed countries, but it kills in poor countries.

We close this brief overview of the last few decades with a statement that should serve to orientate readers as they go through the subsequent studies: the Millennium Goals to combat hunger are far from being achieved. In fact the number of people in the world going hungry, now standing at one billion, makes it impossible for the first goal to be met.

We have already described certain aspects of the problem and outlined some recent developments. We will now briefly examine the nature of and certain causal elements behind the problem, before finally concluding this introduction with a few proposals that would drive positive progress in the immediate future towards achieving the Millennium Goals.

Let us state «prima facie» that the problem of hunger is not a technical problem. It is not the result of a skills or scientific knowledge gap. The paradox of this great global pandemic is that hunger is not caused simply by a shortage of food, which is an assumption that many make without considering the numerous other facets of the problem.

As all the FAO's reports have clearly asserted, at present the planet that we inhabit has comfortably enough resources to feed the global population, even with constant population growth.

The food required does exist and is available on the international markets, but the distance between markets and the mouths of the hungry and malnourished is gaping and often insurmountable. Clearly the problem is not about producing food in sufficient quantities to feed the global population, but access to it. The

food exists but does not get to those who need it. In short, this is not a problem of technical capacity but of political will.

The understanding of the political nature of the problem is not as novel as it might appear. It was articulated nearly 50 years ago by President John F. Kennedy in a speech at the World Food Congress in the same year that he was assassinated, 1963.

He spoke bluntly: «We have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime. We need only the will.»

Indeed, Mankind's resources and capabilities since then have not diminished but have, in fact, increased considerably. We now find ourselves in the current predicament because, just as in 1963, there is no political will amongst world leaders to bring an end to world hunger.

Based on the premise that food insecurity is political in nature, and having observed that little progress has been made in combating hunger over the last few decades, we will now examine some of the causal elements that will bring us closer to the core of the problem.

Firstly, if the cause of persisting hunger in the world is not a food production shortage but rather restrictions on food access, this access can be improved by enhancing local production, with family farming and women playing key roles.

Bear in mind that hunger and poverty go hand in hand. They are two sides of the same coin. All too frequently they are also related with armed conflict. Food access problems are caused by a scarcity of locally produced food and the lack of economic resources to buy products from areas that have surplus food.

The traditional means of combating hunger, via more or less ambitious food distribution and humanitarian aid programmes, have either brought food to the hungry or provided funds for them to buy food on international markets. The scope of these measures is highly restricted because they are planned and implemented as short-term emergency responses.

The only permanent, sustainable and efficient solution is to boost «in situ» production, as the majority of the world's hungry population, 70% of the total, live in rural areas. These agricultural communities need improvements to and support for their own agricultural and livestock production.

But unfortunately things have often moved in a different direction. In fact very little or no technical assistance has been provided to small-scale farmers, nor

has there been international research into improving the output of traditional agricultural systems, including genetic improvements of marginalised crops and local varieties that are adapted to these systems.

The FAO, in its November 2009 report entitled «The pathways to success», pointed out that the most efficient and cost-effective means of combating poverty and hunger in rural regions is to provide support to small-scale farmers, as nearly 85% of farms worldwide are under two hectares in size, whilst small-scale farmers and their families represent some 2 billion people.

Having established the strategy of increasing «in situ» production, the second thing to do is promote traditional farming as a means of guaranteeing the required «food sovereignty»: food sovereignty is at the heart of food security.

Otherwise, if traditional agricultural systems continue to be dismantled, dependence on international agricultural markets and prices will increase. The task therefore is to support traditional farming and thereby drive a considerable increase in output, whilst progressively adapting to the changing needs of the habitat and local society.

There can be no doubt that, amid the uncertainties and vulnerabilities triggered by climate change, the most efficient and intelligent manner of boosting and guaranteeing food security is to increase the diversity of the crop species used.

To mention just two successful examples of such policies, India and Vietnam have protected their traditional means of agriculture from international markets and have managed to substantially reduce agricultural poverty.

Thirdly, the importance of local marginalised crops must be emphasised in tackling the global food crisis and making significant headway in combating hunger.

According to the FAO's estimates, just 12 plant species and 5 animal species provide more than 70% of mankind's calorific food intake. And just 4 species of those plants (rice, corn, wheat and potatoes) and 3 animal species (cattle, pigs and chickens) provide more than half of that food.

This overwhelming dependence on just a few species in no way enables food security. As a result, the traditional crops that had provided staple foods to historic civilisations for thousands of years have now been marginalised, often for both economic and cultural reasons. But for poor people who inhabit rural areas, such marginalised foods remain the basis of their diet. We must not forget that these crops, often called «poor man's crops», have adapted over centuries to the agro-ecological conditions found in each populated region of the planet and form part of their local crops.

Such crops are not subject to the same price fluctuations and speculation as commercial crops, and there is real potential to drive up the productivity and quality of these crops with just a few technical and scientific improvements.

Fourthly, our proposals cannot be implemented unless agricultural investment is boosted and held at appropriate levels. According to figures from the World Bank, growth in the agricultural sector could reduce poverty twice as effectively as equal growth in the rest of the economic sectors. Not forgetting that agriculture remains the chief productive sector in the world's poorest countries and employs 65% of their labour force.

According to the FAO's forecasts, budgets allocated to agriculture in low income countries and countries with food deficits, now standing at around 5%, need to be increased to a minimum of 10%, whilst private domestic and foreign investment, now standing at around 140 billion dollars annually, needs to rise to 200 billion dollars.

Firm investment in agriculture in the wake of World War II helped an impoverished Europe to achieve full food sovereignty in just two decades. This model can and must be reproduced in those poor countries that need help to achieve secure and independent food production.

However, fifthly, one threat needs to be neutralised by curtailing the effects of international markets. Appropriate regulation is required in food markets to combat the mounting speculative attacks that agricultural prices have come under, particularly in the wake of the 2008 global food crisis.

A number of studies blame speculation for up to 50% of the price increase that has hit cereals and other staple foods on the international market since the food crisis. Speculation fuelled by the deregulation of agricultural future markets, amid economic and financial turmoil, allowed risk arbitrage instruments to be transformed into speculative financial products that provided attractive substitutes to other lower-yield investments.

Additionally, in order to reduce price volatility and combat speculation on the agricultural futures markets, the introduction of new transparency measures and regulations would allow governments to exercise control over staple food prices. Additionally, the stockpiling of food and agricultural produce could be ramped up, allowing this food to be released into the market when prices shoot up disproportionately.

We must acknowledge a very important truth.

This truth is at the heart of everything we have been discussing: agriculture, by its multifunctional nature, cannot be considered and treated as a mere

economic exercise; as just another industry amongst the myriad of sectors in a complex economy.

Agriculture, as well as producing food, supplying animal feed, providing fibres, biofuels, medicinal and ornamental plants, also has other essential functions of a social and environmental nature that guarantee stability. There is even a cultural side to agriculture, as well as other aspects that cannot easily be included in standard accounting practices and which are usually deemed mere «externalities» to the system.

The multifunctional nature of agriculture is one of the reasons why the «price» and «value» of agricultural products do not necessarily match up. This makes it difficult to assess the cost/benefit relationship of agricultural practices and the relative efficiency of different types of agriculture.

And we must make one final recommendation. It is an appeal for balance, for common sense and for a broad and comprehensive approach to the problem; there is no single solution or universal fix. On the contrary, intelligent solutions are required to different problems, each unique to their time and place in the world.

The circumstances and history of each country, with their own evolution, cultural singularities, social and community systems, soil and climatic conditions, demographics or modes of economic development, are all unique and different, and thus responses to their food and agricultural problems must also be distinct. Sometimes different kinds of agricultural systems are at work in the same country, each requiring a distinct approach.

The diversity of situations seen in so many countries, with vastly differing conditions, renders any attempt to impose a single mode of agriculture both unrealistic and irresponsible. Too often inflexible thinking has led to situations of ecological unsustainability and social degradation. The diversity of agricultural systems must be protected and increased as a means of generating positive value and to provide an important buffer at times of change.

A multitude of issues are raised when discussing the options and approaches to combating hunger and achieving food security as a means of supporting global security. Therefore, this first Strategy Notes report on the subject, covers just a few of the issues raised in the wider debate. Many other highly important factors will have to be left for discussion at another opportunity.

By way of a final conclusion, we would like to recap.

Eliminating hunger from the face of the Earth is a difficult task, but one that is within the reach of this generation if firm political will is in place.

The goal cannot be achieved if we employ mere temporary or partial solutions in a discontinuous and fragmentary manner. The structural causes of imbalances in the global food system must be addressed.

These imbalances have become accentuated over the last five years. The factors behind the 2008 global food crisis have not been eliminated and in fact have even worsened.

The current increase in global food prices is not a temporary or passing phenomenon. We cannot simply wait for things to return to a situation of normality by themselves, because in our fully interdependent world, based on a single and fundamentally unsustainable lifestyle and with all the problems caused by climate change yet to be tackled, there is no standard pattern for things to return to.

And because there is no standard to go back to, we must envision a new model. Unfortunately no consensus has yet been reached over what this new model will look like.

Such a consensus might well be reached at just such a difficult time as we are now experiencing. This is because crises stimulate new approaches and innovative responses to problems. They help us to share ideas and experience, and provide impetus to corrective measures.

The 2008 global food crisis did not simply trigger a one-off famine or make the Millennium Goals harder to achieve. It caused a sudden deterioration of a chronic problem that has remained unresolved for decades; a problem that condemns more than a billion people to hunger.

Hunger is a structural problem and therefore requires structural changes, all of which also need to be implemented at the international level and include governance of the food system.

Food security for everyone is possible as long as food is given the status of a global public good and food security is established as a central goal for both global governance and national development.

The world's hunger problem is not that too little food is produced, but that millions of people have no access to food.

If a solution to the problem is not found, the world's largest non-contagious pandemic will continue to grow. As a result, if we fail to achieve food security, world security and world peace will remain under threat.

Our globalised world requires an international treaty on food security, which must be negotiated within the framework of the United Nations via the recently overhauled Committee on World Food Security.

Spain should play a crucial role in this process, as a country that integrates a diversity of cultures and continents.

In order to promote consideration and in-depth analysis of these issues, we modestly submit this initial Strategy Notes report on «Food Security and Global Security».

This report is comprised of seven chapters that aim to cover the main facets of food security.

The first chapter, written by Dr. Susana Beltran and Dr. Julia Gifra, takes as a basis that food and water are, above all, human rights. States therefore are legally required to provide everybody, regardless of their nationality, with food that is sufficient, available and appropriate for their needs and circumstances, as well as access to clean drinking water. Hunger remains the main challenge that the international community faces and political commitments must be firmer and more coherent. The authors outline two strategic approaches for effective protection of the human right to food and water. One of these is to include human rights as an aspect of public policy-making and the other is to re-establish the status of water and food as a public good.

The second and third chapters are dedicated to two factors that play key roles in the fight against hunger: climate change and the role of women in food security. Agriculture is the most vulnerable sector when it comes to the direct and indirect effects of climate change, which has direct repercussions for the economies of countries and increases the risk of hunger and malnutrition. Agricultural and livestock production systems will need a radical overhaul in order to adapt to climate change and help offset the effects of climate change without compromising food security and nutrition, as well as to achieve sustainable development. This transformation will need funding. A financial gap currently exists that could be closed if the agricultural sector were deemed eligible for funds to combat climate change as well as development funds.

As for the role of women in the food sector, M^a del Mar Hidalgo discusses the difficulties that women encounter in terms of accessing certain resources, such as land and inputs, as well as funding systems and markets. If women had the same access as men do to such resources, their harvests could be improved by 20%-30%. Empowering rural women is therefore an essential part of combating hunger and poverty.

In the fourth chapter, Jose Esquinas warns of the effects of agricultural biodiversity (ABD) loss, which is occurring at break-neck speed. This loss poses socio-economic, ethical, political and strategic problems, endangering food security and national sovereignty, and threatening global peace and security. Negotiations for the International Treaty on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), and its subsequent ratification by most countries, represented a significant step in the right direction, but, says the author, there is still a long road ahead. The recommendations given in the chapter include: placing agricultural biodiversity alongside hunger at the heart of the political agenda, increasing collaboration between international bodies and developing common programmes and strategies on agricultural biodiversity, accelerating the domestic implementation of the provisions of international agreements and instruments on agricultural biodiversity, and improving support for small-scale food producers in recognition of their work to develop and safeguard current and future biodiversity. With regard to Spain, Jose Esquinas' main recommendation is to develop a national strategy for the conservation and exploitation of agricultural biodiversity.

The fifth chapter takes a more in-depth look at the structural causes of the market volatility and global food crisis that occurred in 2008. According to Jose M^a Sumpsi, humanity faces a challenge of long-term food supply, not just in terms of food production but also its distribution. This problem can only be resolved using innovation and technology, increasing agricultural investment, designing and implementing appropriate agricultural policies and establishing a new system of global governance for agriculture and food. The author also proposes increasing food supplies by boosting production and agricultural productivity in order to reduce the volatility of agricultural markets.

The sixth chapter, written by Pablo Yuste, takes a two-pronged approach to the hunger-conflict pairing. On the one hand, armed conflict generates food insecurity by affecting food availability, access and use. Sometimes hunger is not only an indirect result of conflict but is itself used as a weapon of war. On the other hand, hunger may also be viewed as a cause of conflicts, a perspective that has been far less studied. The author concludes that a shift is needed in how we study the causes of conflicts that lead to hunger. Hunger should not only be viewed as one humanitarian aspect of armed conflict, but also as a cause of conflict. Therefore, security can successfully be improved by alleviating hunger.

The final chapter looks at the growth of biofuels and their impact on food security. The chapter, written by Jose M^a Medina, shows how such fuels are not only an alternative fuel that could comfortably replace fossil fuels, but also a significant factor behind the increase in food prices over the last five or six years, thus contributing towards the food crisis. Furthermore, biofuel

production does not usually general benefits for smallholder farmers. There must therefore be a re-evaluation of whether policies aimed at incentivising the use of such fuels are appropriate, or whether they might lead to situations of food insecurity.

Finally, this Strategy Dossier report aims to reaffirm that food security is a vital aspect of global security. The fight against hunger and poverty must be won if global peace and global security is to be achieved.