

ENSURING REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY IN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA: OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract: In this article, it was reviewed the food security in the countries of Central Asia. Moreover, it was discussed about obstacles and opportunities of it. It was learnt some reports of regional food security in the countries, as well as it was given some recommendations and conclusion for the improvement of food security in the life.

Keywords: drought, agriculture, productivity, domestic market, climate change, local market, capital, tax rate, food security, application by sectors, economic impact.

Food products are among the most traded goods in the world. As markets become increasingly global and the world's population continues to grow, the global food supply chain will only continue to grow in scale and complexity. With these megatrends affecting the mass production and distribution of food, food safety compliance has never been more important.

In particular, according to the United Nations report of July 6, 2021, 828 million people of the world's population suffer from one or another form of hunger. Of course, different reasons can be given by region and region.

Food scarcity affects economic development in two ways. First, insufficient food supply causes people to become malnourished, which reduces their productivity. This further reduces the productive capacity of the workers, and secondly, food scarcity forces them to import food grains, which unduly burdens their foreign exchange resources.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the majority of Asia's food insecure population is located in Afghanistan,

Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in South Asia, in 2021 almost 41 percent of the population was food insecure, and 21 percent were severely insecure.

Geographically, we can see that these regions are located in the south of Asia, and these countries have high population and low per capita income.

Unfortunately, food production may become a problem in Central Asia in the next 20 years due to various reasons. As of January 30, 2023, the population of Central Asia is 77 million 222 thousand 623. This naturally increases the need for food and agricultural products.

It is important to address the following issues and challenges in order to achieve acceptable optimal food safety.

1. Drought. Central Asia is among the majority of countries facing increasingly warmer climate. The lack of drinking water and improper use of existing reserves can have a great harmful effect on the consumption of the population and agriculture in the next decade.

We should emphasize that drought is not just all about the shortage of water but the condition of soil too. There is a clear correlation between drought and vegetation moreover agriculture. Shrub encroachment in grasslands generally leads to a mosaic landscape that features shrub patches interspaced with grass patches. Shrub encroachment into grassland cover in Central Asia has recently occurred. Shrubland increased most significantly in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and the Tarim Basin in Northwest China over the past 10 years, implying that some mesophyte plants are turning into xerophilous plants. Moreover, in the vast desert area of Central Asia, recent dynamic climate changes are causing the shallow roots of desert plants to retreat and die ¹.

¹ Li, Z., Chen, Y., Li, W., Deng, H., and Fang, G. (2015), Potential impacts of climate change on vegetation dynamics in Central Asia, *J. Geophys. Res. Atmos.*, 120, 12345– 12356, doi:10.1002/2015JD023618.

2. Lack of access to agricultural land. Geographically, the lands of Central Asia are suitable for farming and agriculture. Unfortunately, in the 1900s, as a result of improper land use and specialization of land for only one type of crop, it is reducing its potential in a sense. Owning land increases agricultural productivity because it can be used to grow a variety of food crops in small quantities. Lack of access to agricultural land means that there is no basic resource for growing food crops.

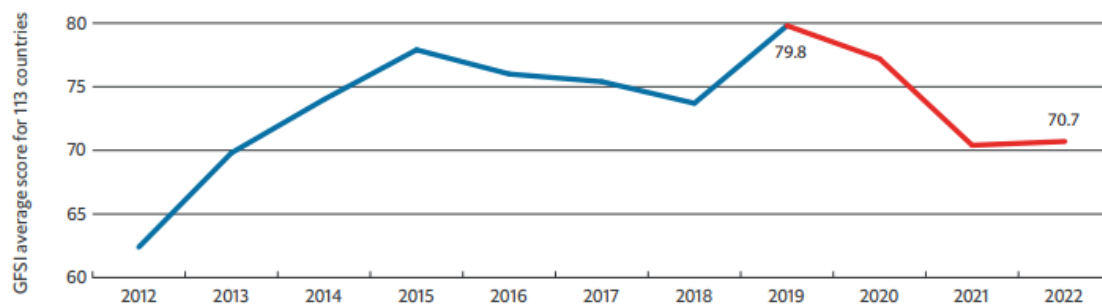
3. Rapid population growth. We live in a world where the birth rate is high despite the death rate. A growing population means there are extra mouths to feed every day. Population growth, limited growth in available food, means increased food insecurity. In addition, the fact that the majority of the population works in the service sector and the decline of the population in urban areas are also having an impact.

4. Climate change. Climate change has had a profound impact on agriculture. Farmers are experiencing the effects of climate change as rains fall earlier than before and droughts last longer. Freshwater is also frequently encountered as a result of sea level rise, hurricanes, cyclones and other weather events.

5. Market dominance of corporate giants. Giant multinational agricultural companies and exporters have invaded the food market, meaning that small farmers have limited opportunities to sell their produce. Thus, they sell at unfair prices and giant enterprises control the market, including selling food products at high prices, often leading consumers to be overly selective and wasteful. The negative impact of giant corporations and entrepreneurs on the market directly affects the price increase.

Change in global average food costs, 2012-22

Between 2019 and 2022, the GFSI score for change in average food costs plummeted by 11.4%.
(Lower score = higher average food costs)



Source: Global Food Security Index 2022.

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As you can see, in 10 years the average food costs have increased by 11.4%. Although this is not a big indicator for developed countries, it has a very negative effect on the population of an underdeveloped country with a weak economy.

The following should be mentioned as a solution to the above-mentioned problems.

1. There is a problem of drought, it is necessary to use the existing water resources rationally and to develop a cost-effective way of using underground and surface water. In this case, it is necessary to keep separate water accounts for the consumption of drinking water for the population and for agricultural lands.

2. In order to avoid salinization and desertification of the land, to ensure the preservation of soil moisture in places where there is surface water. To do this, support greenings and forests near surface water.

3. It is certainly not a secret that the rapid growth of the population causes negative consequences. A population's housing shortage or standard of living is determined by their per capita income. The factors affecting per capita income relative to population growth are equally relevant to the standard of living. An increase in population leads to an increase in the demand for food, clothing, housing,

² Global Food Security Index 2022

etc., but their supply cannot be increased due to the lack of co-operative factors such as raw materials, skilled labor, and capital.

A growing population means more mouths to feed, which in turn puts pressure on available food supplies. Therefore, underdeveloped countries with rapidly growing populations often face the problem of food shortages. Despite their efforts to produce agricultural products, they are unable to feed the growing population.

Unfortunately, climate change affects every industry. Forecasting of the climate is becoming more complicated, that is, a sharp drop in the weather during the hot or cold season will directly harm the farms.

Between 2019 and 2022, the index's affordability score has fallen by 4%, from 71.9 to 69, as shocks like the covid-19 pandemic, high input costs, and the war on Ukraine have led to rising costs for food. These numbers make us take action in both ways: economic as well as political.

The crisis in food prices highlighted the need for development organizations and banks to pay more attention when advising Asian nations on policy, to the political aspects of food security. Finding an effective and politically acceptable balance between food supply, price management, and programs to protect the poor, such as subsidies and safety nets, is a challenge for policymakers in countries that import and export food, as well as maintaining price incentives for farmers on the supply side.

Another important condition for ensuring global food security is to prevent the increase in food prices. In this case, this situation can be explained as follows. A small farmer named A sells his produce at local market X for \$5. But let's say a bigger businessman named B buys all his produce from the farmer at \$4.50 and sells it at \$7. In order to prevent such an increase in price, it is necessary to apply direct sales from the farmer to the consumer.

The above solutions cannot work alone—collaboration needs to take place across the whole food system, ranging from inputs like seed provision, fertilizers, finance and extension services to farmers being supported by strong supply chains and broader social, economic and environmental policies. The inadequacy of agricultural sector policy plans, especially the redirection of public spending from long-term investment to agricultural subsidies, is another significant issue. While subsidies, like those for electricity or fertilizer for agriculture, might aid in overcoming short-term market failures, they frequently last far longer than initially anticipated, resulting in the wasteful use of resources.

Investments on a large scale will be necessary for the agriculture sector's transformation and growth. Typically, the public sector should fund research and development and infrastructure requirements while providing sufficient incentives for private investment, such as risk mitigation and easier access to credit markets. Additionally, governments must create a legal system that guarantees inclusive and sustainable private investment.

Many developing nations' economy are reliant on the food and agricultural industries, but they are unable to export food items to other markets because of a lack of certification and quality requirements. For instance, Kazakhstan has a sizable export market for meat and dairy products, but the majority of the country's milk is produced at private residences, falling short of international quality standards. Numerous other nations experience the same thing.

As we can see from the above example, the food chain of each country in Central Asia has its own characteristics. These should be taken into account to ensure food safety. We can see that in Kazakhstan meat products are available not only in large farms, but also in households. Therefore, the government should increase the size of the population's main food product for solving the food problem that is

expected to occur in the future. For example, households cannot produce wheat or oil but oil and wheat make up most proportion of their food.

In a world that is becoming more interconnected, enhancing agricultural productivity and the distribution of food within and across nations calls for coordinated activities at the local, national, and international levels. Institutions at the local and national levels should encourage openness and accountability as well as everyone's involvement in choices that impact them, especially in nations where there is a food shortage. Globally, the international community may support developing nations in their efforts to develop and put into practice policies that strengthen their ability to withstand fluctuations in food prices and climatic shocks while also providing safety nets, particularly for smallholders.

In addition, new mechanisms in global governance of agriculture are needed to provide political support, coordinate across sectors and, in particular, ensure continuous and appropriate funding.

Finding a timely solution to the above-mentioned problems and funding will undoubtedly prevent the negative consequences of food shortages that may occur in the future. Optimum irrigation and use of modern technologies in agriculture gives its positive results. Thus, this will ensure the growth of the economy.

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