



The drought-stricken town of Lesamis, Marsabit County, Kenya.

Photo/Xinhua

GLOBAL POLITICS ON FOOD SECURITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON AFRICA

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There is no gainsaying that the world is facing shortage of food and this indeed is attributed to many factors that arose four years back and are still occurring up till now. Needless for me to say that COVID-19 pandemic affected people globally leading to the number of starved people by about 150 million, with Africa taking the largest percentage. Second to this again is the current Ukraine crisis, this further increases the rate of starvation in Africa, taking into consideration the following reasons: one that Russia and Ukraine are major producers of wheat which serve as the ingredients of flour, and flour serves as the major food source of bread and other related food accessories both in Africa and beyond. Two, Russia is a

major producer and manufacturer of fertilizer to many countries in Africa, and food growth and survival depends heavily on fertilizer as a major booster. Hence, the current war is reducing drastically food sustainability in Africa.

However, one needs to ask some questions which need to be addressed in this paper; are these only the problems prompting food insecurity in Africa? Or are there other problems beyond those dealing with some global political issues that equally aggravated the issue of food insecurity in Africa? And does global politics on climate change equally have impact on the food security in Africa? These and many more related matters will be the focus of this paper.

FOOD SECURITY

There are many attempts by different scholars and non-governmental institutions in defining what food security is, though I am not here to analyze all: food security is referred to one's access to safe and nutritious food. It is a multidimensional concept that looks at different food system elements, including production, processing, distributing and consumption. Food security covers all access points, from physical to economic and social access to food supplies.

Having a detailed analysis on what food security and food insecurity is all about, it would be imperative to understand that food security cannot be sustained and achieved by any nation under any circumstance unless the following structures are established and successfully maintained. These structures to food security are:

Accessibility: For an effective food security society to be sustained, accessibility of food as a major structure must be provided and instituted. This can be achieved by making sure that quality food production and sources are provided within the reach of people at ease, and not only that, but people should have easy access to necessary tools and equipment to produce and purchase food within a good reasonable time. To further actualize accessibility as a structure to food security, the accessibility must be both physically and socio-economical in nature. Physical entails adequate supply, resources, and location of food must be made ready to people while socio-economic entails, process of goods and household finances must equally be made easy for people to get.

Availability: Where accessibility is enhanced in an environment, food security cannot effectively be capable of converting hunger, unless availability is also addressed. Availability here encompasses having enough food through its production, and distribution to everyone. Availability can only be secured when all these three requirements are met. These include: Sufficiency, Regularity and Variety. Sufficiency, requires that food must be provided and supplied to meet the demands of the required population; Regularity, entails that food supply and sufficiency must be maintained at all regular times, period and season without any seizure or interval; and varieties, entails, the sufficiency, and regularity must be sustained towards meeting different varieties of food, without limitation or restriction to particular brand of food.

Utilization: Achieving accessibility and availability of food will not avail a country out of food insecurity

unless, such country addresses utilization capacity, which requires that there should be proper preparation and adequate facilities for food storage, cooking and absorption of nutrients, storage, saving for nutritious purposes.

Stability: For a good and sustainable food secured society to exist, the food must be structured towards a stable supply without other extraneous factors affecting the accessibility, availability, and sufficiency. Some of the extraneous factors may include, economic meltdown, change of weather, communal or inter-communal conflicts, price stability, etc.

AFRICA'S TREND TO FOOD SECURITY

One of the major challenges facing countries across the globe is the right to food for all. This challenge is most critical in low-inclined food deficit countries, and which the eighty-six countries that are defined as low-inclined and food-deficient, forty-six are in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, produces less food per persons today than it did three decades ago, and the number of chronically undernourished people increased dramatically.

In addition to the above, there is drastically huge amount of food wastage by African farmers due to ignorance, poverty, and illiteracy. The farmers in Africa lose 15%-20% of their crops in the field due to the stated reasons, and 15%-20% is wasted due to pest in-control after harvest, which is attributed to lack of storage and its knowledge.

Majority people in sub-Saharan Africa live in rural agricultural and fishing communities, and these people do not have access to necessary infrastructures to prevent and address adverse weather resulting from climate change. For example, farmers depend on rain for the production of their crops and ironically, 1% of their arable land is equipped with irrigation.

FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

Old Factors

Population: The population growth of Africa is overwhelming compared to other continents. The practices of multiple wives, religion and lack of awareness help in African population growth, and this affect the food input already in scare resources, and making it difficult to meet the need of everyone.

Conflicts: African region is the worst continent experiencing both inter and intra conflicts which invariably affects the growth of food production. For example, con-

flict in South Sudan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Nigerian herdsmen-farmers and Boko Haram conflicts, etc. are responsible for slow food agricultural products in Africa due to dislodgment of farmers and insecure farmland.

Water Scarcity: The drought in some parts of Africa, for example, Somalia, Niger, Ethiopia, Kenya, etc. has affected food production. This tendency leads to crop loss and further increases the food prices beyond common average person in the region due to its non-availability and scarcity.

New Factors

COVID-19: The emergence of COVID-19 in the late 2019, which cut across the globe affected food production in Africa, the effect of the virus affected the food distribution, supply and leading to economic instability, lock down imposed by governments, and many other restrictions made it difficult for people to access food, leading to hunger and malnutrition globally.

Climate Change: Food is produced from the environment and within, once the environment is affected negatively, it also has resultant effect in food production. This effect led to droughts, climate change reactions and inactions destroyed crops and disrupted food transportation. Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon, Tanzania are severally affected by torrential rains and flooding.

Extreme weather conditions occasioned as a result of climate change led to the damage of million tons of crops and livestock, and this resultant effect led to reduction in availability of food, its quality and nutritional quantity required for consumption.

Local farmers in Kenya try to chase away a swarm of desert locusts.



(Photo/C Photo)

Energy Crisis: The energy crisis experienced globally particularly those in oil, gas and other fossil fuels affected food production. This becomes so, because, major means of transporting food is heavily relied on those energy, and once there is crisis in their production, it negatively affects food production.

Economic Meltdown: The global economic crisis has a tremendous impact on food security in world and Africa in particular, the economic downturns, in world which in turn affects Africa, lead to many companies to close and many employees were laid off and which invariably brings poverty and reduces income. The resultant effect here is that it makes people affected by this economic downturn difficult to access food in Africa.

GLOBALIZED POLITICS ON FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

African Continental Free Trade Agreement: This is an agreement regionally brought, signed and ratified by 54 African countries, which cover mostly goods and services. Though the agreement focuses on free trade but it has the capacity and tendency to enhance food security through allowing and giving free access to producer organizations, farming cooperation societies/associations reach remote climate vulnerable agricultural communities without hindrance of obtaining any permit/visa or traveling documents, of more importance, through this means, is the opportunity of taken and spreading new technologies such as pest control devices, high yield seeds that resist heat and drought and improve climate adaptation training and market information on tax free basis. Equally of importance in this regard, is the free flow from any African country agricultural mechanized equipment and techniques, which are driven towards boosting high rate of food production as against the manual and traditional method which many countries in Africa are used to.

ECOWAS Free Trade Treaty: The ECOWAS Free Trade Treaty is targeting free inflow of movement of all citizens of ECOWAS without rigid requirement of documents limiting each member for any trade activities; this treaty on trade include but not limited to food agricultural products, equipment, and other pests control that are influenced by climate change and other related factors, this in turn has the tendency of enhancing food security in Africa.

African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA): The African Growth and Opportunity Act is a law enacted and implemented by United States of America (USA) to open Af

rican opportunities in many disciplines including research and development in agricultural and climate change. The essence of this law by the American government is to liberalize business opportunities without limitation to African countries with less tax bottlenecks. It enhances food supply from America and other related demands towards boosting food, research and teaching in Africa.

New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD): This was taken by American government after AGOA, with a view of enhancing partnership agreement between African countries and America, which include among others, partnership in food growth, supply, manifestations of agricultural implements, research and development in agriculture, diseases, pest and other natural causes and disaster. Through this medium, food production and distribution is highly enhanced by countries in both Africa and America.

Chinese African Relationship on Trade and Development: The Chinese government is playing a leading role globally among all emerging nations in partnering with Africa in many areas, including food security: it is pertinent we examine briefly these developments and partnerships, some of these include but not limited to Yale-African China Conference; Forum of China-African Cooperation; China-African Research Initiative, etc.

The Belt and Road Initiative: This was designed to reinvigorate the old sick trading route along East African Coast. This initiative brought huge number of significant infrastructure projects bound across Asia and Africa. This created huge opportunities of free access to movement of food and other accessories, which resultant effect led to food security in Africa.

China-Africa Environment Cooperation Centre: This centre is created to strengthen cooperation between China and African countries in the field of environment as well as to promote green investment and development. It was designed to provide services to support African Member – States to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063, and one of the focus of the agenda relates to availability of food and sustainable environment in Africa.

Declaration on China-Africa Cooperation on Combating Climate Change: This was brought by Chinese government and 53 African countries in 2021 under African Union Commission, whose motive is to collectively address the devastating effect caused by climate change in Africa.

Beijing summit of the Forum on China-Africa Coopera-



China-aided rice demonstration field in Antananarivo, Tagalog, Madagascar.

tion 2018: The summit aimed at strengthening partnership between China and Africa. The China – Africa Cooperation focus was aimed towards increasing development cooperation between China and Africa, based on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU agenda 2063, this summit addressed the following: reforming the foundations of African progress; ensuring national ownership and African-led sustainable development; south-south cooperation; promoting sustainable fiscal policies; and climate friendly and climate resilient development, including support for Africa to adapt to climate change and bound resilience.

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Dakar Action Plan 2022 – 2024: Item 3.1 of the Action Plan centered on agriculture, food security and food safety, the two sides will give full play to the China – Africa agriculture cooperation mechanism, hold second forum on China-Africa cooperation in agriculture, and convene the first meeting of the China-AU joint initiative cooperation methods, enrich the content of cooperation, and ensure the effective implementation of agriculture in field of shared interest. The two sides will further strengthen food security cooperation by giving full play to China-AU coordination mechanism for Belt and Road Cooperation and making good use of south-south cooperation, assistance fund. The two sides will launch trials in such areas as reduction of post-harvest grain loss in light of AU's needs and China's strengths in order to support African countries to improve their food supply capacity with existing production capacities.

Greenhouse Emission: China not only provided the above efforts in tackling food security issues in Africa but

greatly contributed in addressing to the greenhouse emission capable of heavy impact on climate crisis, particularly with the event in climate famine in Madagascar. The global temperature rise has put a strain of Africa's productive systems with extreme wealth events like drought and floods becoming more intense and widespread across the continent. China in response to this problem, particularly in ameliorating Africa's climate change, China in the COP 26, Chinese President Xi Jinping not only called on other advanced countries to help the African continent but led and set the ball rolling by inaugurating the sum of \$232.47 million (USD) fund support in biodiversity conversation to developing countries in Africa.

New Coal Plants: In addition to this, Chinese government further undertook not to finance New Coal Plants abroad adding to its earlier domestic commitments to retrieve carbon dioxide emission before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. All these were geared towards establishing a low carbon industrial packs in developing countries, even though Africa as a continent contributes only 4% of the global greenhouse emission.

Solar and Wind Energy: In terms of solar and wind energy production, which is aimed at mustering new forms of energy that sustainable and climate friendly China seem to be the lead among countries across the globe by upgrading solar capacity in Africa from 739 to 5,500 megawatts with wind energy installations from 108 to 6,100 megawatts.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta attends the launch ceremony of the Garissa photovoltaic power station in Garissa County, Kenya, December 13, 2019.



Fund contribution to Africa: From the revelation of this article, there is no doubt that advanced and developed countries are striving politically in curbing food insecurity in Africa by some countries such as US, UK, Russia, and France. However, indexes and records so far indicated that China takes the lead by being the biggest and largest partner to Africa than any advanced nation contributing to Africa not only in climate change driven policies that are calculated or desired to boost food production, but also in helping Africa by availing pledged funds to help emerging economies cope with the vagaries of climate change.

COP 27: More importantly is the position taken by China at COP 27 which took place in Egypt, China laudably called for financial help to developing countries suffering from the effect of climate change, African countries at COP 27 pushed harder for rich nations to pay compensation and contribute to loss and damage (L & D) fund. Though Chinese envoy Xie Zhenhua said China does not have any obligation to promote L & D caused by climate change yet, China is willing to support lower income countries for L & D caused by climate change.

CONCLUSION

Needless for a sensible person to think that Africa alone cannot achieve anything meaningful in climate change adaptation without external investment driven towards that China has had and still invests heavily in about forty-six African countries through industrializing, strengthening, and strategizing their ability to cope with the effects of climate change through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) earlier discussed. Therefore, the best way and approach in redesigning the focus of effect of climate change, is through global politics as discussed above, and legislative reforms by many developed countries are needed towards achieving a desired climate environment that can be responsible to food security and sustainable development. In this regard, for the entire continent of Africa to succeed, it is not only about what the advanced countries do or have done, but rather it is the collective efforts and collaborations that would lead to successful good result. Hence, the United Nations Economic Commission for African (UNECA), the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, SADC, AfDB, etc. must come in and partner with each other to achieve the desired goals of climate governance that would accelerate food production aimed at food security in Africa. 🇳🇮