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Chapter

Understanding Africa's Food Security Challenges

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Abstract

Africa, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in particular, has for more than 10 years recorded a steady economic growth since the advent of the new millennium. Yet, despite this stellar economic growth, it faces challenges such as rapid population growth, persistent economic inequality, climate change threats, droughts, youth unemployment, undernourishment, and food insecurity. Understanding the state of food security in Africa, and addressing the above-mentioned challenges, should be the highest priority for Africa's Political Leadership. Not doing so will forever make Africa fail to achieve a sustainable economic development and create an inclusive shared-prosperity for its people. The African Union (AU), as well as respective national governments and regional organizations, and the international community at large, have in recent decades launched a multitude of policy initiatives aimed at addressing and tackling Africa's food insecurity and nutrition challenges. Despite those efforts and commitments by the disparate stakeholders, much remains to be done. This chapter presents Africa's food security and nutrition challenges, and sheds light on the climate change threats and potential consequences of the rapid population growth on Africa's food security. The chapter concludes with policy recommendations and proposals and makes points about Africa's bright prospects if food security were to be achieved.

Keywords: Africa, food security, climate change, population growth, economic development

1. Introduction

1.1 Africa since the end of the cold war

Since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1991, Africa as a region has undergone a major structural transformation in social, political, demographic, and economic spheres. In political sphere, the region has gone from a one-party state governance to a multiparty democratic system ([1], p. 300). In social sphere, social governance is slowly but steadily being shared by the rising civil society and the NGOs that have now become copartners at addressing and debating social, economic, and political challenges in Africa. In demographic sphere, the region has seen a twofold increase in its population growth in the last quarter century. And finally, as regards to the economic sphere, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, since the 1990s, Africa has

become a full participant in the economic and commercial globalization spurred by the West and led by the United States. And because of the abovementioned structural transformation of the continent, the region has nonetheless grown economically and registered stellar economic numbers in the last decades or so. That is, through the decade of the 2000s to the year 2013, for instance, the global boom in commodity prices propelled natural resources and oil- and gas-exporting African countries to register incredible economic growth and empower Africa into the twenty-first-century global economy [2]. As a result, Africa as a region is now a full member of the world economy and a coveted actor in the international economic arena.

However, despite the impressive recorded economic growth mainly by the energy and commodity-exporting African countries as stated above, as a region, Africa is still facing serious local and transnational challenges such as *youth unemployment*, *climate change threats*, *rapid population growth*, *undernourishment*, *domestic terrorism*, *drug trafficking*, *maritime piracy*, *protracted political crises and low-intensity short-lived wars*, and *conflict-induced famines* like the one we are witnessing in South Sudan today. Consequently, those challenges stand in the way against Africa's pursuit to achieve food security and eradicate hunger.[1] Therefore, if these abovecited challenges are not properly addressed and seriously tackled by the *African political leadership*, it is probably fair to say that achieving food security and meeting nutrition needs and targets as established by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000–2015) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015–2030) will simply be another elusive quest for Africa among many other policy objectives and goals. In addition, if that happens to be so, the continent will unfortunately continue to languish behind other regions of the world in socioeconomic and human developments.[2] And consequently, it will be nowhere near attaining the SDG goals and targets just as it failed to meet the past MDG goals and targets. As a case in point, despite its modest registered economic growth and well-intentioned international policy initiatives such as the cited MDGs and SDGs aimed at fighting hunger and overcoming nutrition deficits [4] among many other human and development policy objectives, only few African countries managed to meet the MDGs 1c [5]. With that being said, this chapter sets out to present the state of Africa's food insecurity and nutrition deficits and addresses the potential impacts of the abovecited challenges, widely regarded today as the real barriers against successful eradication of food hunger and achieving food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Defining food security

In this chapter, we use the definition of food security as stated by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO). The FAO's definition is our guiding principle and upon which our analysis of Africa's food security challenges is based. The FAO defines food security as "When all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that

[1] Ibid.

[2] See [3]. It is shown in it that out of 189 countries, only Algeria and Tunisia ranked in the top 100. Whereas, the last 10 bottom countries in the ranking were all Africans. They are as follows: 180 Mozambique, 181 Liberia, 182 Mali, 183 Burkina Faso, 184 Sierra Leone, 185 Burundi, 186 Chad, 187 South Sudan, 188 the Central African Republic, and 189 Niger.

meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life [6]." Nonetheless, achieving food security however requires that:

1. Sufficient quantities of appropriate foods are consistently available.

2. Individuals have adequate incomes or other resources to purchase or barter for food.

3. Food is properly processed and stored.

4. Individuals have sound knowledge of nutrition and child care that they put to good use and have access to adequate health and sanitation services [7].

2.1 State of food security in Africa

To begin with, it is worth pointing out from the onset that food insecurity is a multidimensional problem. It is a problem that is linked to *healthcare*, *conflicts*, *policies*, *politics*, *leadership*, *strategic vision*, *trade and economic interests*, *agricultural production*, *food system*, *global food industry trade politics*, *and the environment* (*mother nature*). As an example, in the sphere of healthcare, one can see a direct link between food insecurity, malnutrition, and a global pandemic like the HIV/AIDS. That is to say, if a member of a given family, for instance, is affected by the AIDS epidemic, the family of that patient will automatically lose a breadwinner and financial income generator. That is, the person affected by the disease will no longer be able to engage in any remunerative physical activity whether for themselves or for a third party in order to earn a living. Consequently, he or she will financially no longer contribute to his or her family well-being since they will not be able to generate any income whatsoever. And if and when that situation were to occur, the family of the patient in question would begin to eat less. The body of the affected person will by then have become vulnerable and weak to engage in any remunerative activity. As a result, food insecurity will then have set in, and poverty trap will have taken over and affected everyone within that family.

At the time of writing this chapter, Africa's state of food insecurity relative to other regions of the world, except for West Asia, is troubling and non-promising. Hence, understanding and accepting this reality should be of a concern for all Africans regardless of their socioeconomic and political status. That is to say, this said reality should be of a concern for *the African political leadership*, *the mayors of mega African cities,*[3] *the NGOs*, *the civil society*, *the media*, *the farmers*, *the business community*, *the youth*, *the academia*, *the churches*, *the mosques and other faith-based organizations*, and the *consumer organizations* alike. And according to the FAO 2015 State of Food Insecurity in the World *IN BRIEF*, Africa scores poorly in all indicators regarding food security and nutrition targets. For example, in 2015, only 18 out of 54 African countries have reached the MDG 1C hunger target (Millennium Development Goals 1C).

Furthermore, two of the many reasons why food security keeps evading millions of Africans are the never-ending conflicts and incessant political instability on the continent. Often, in many sub-Saharan African countries, foods are available and

[3] Africa today has 10 cities with populations of 3 million or more. They are as follows: (1) Lagos, Nigeria, 9,000,000; (2) Kinshasa, DRC, 7,785,965; (3) Cairo, Egypt, 7734, 614; (4) Alexandria, Egypt, 3811, 516; (5) Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 3.677, 115; (6) Kano, Nigeria, 3626, 068; (7) Ibadan, Nigeria, 3,565,108; (8) Cape Town, South Africa, 3433, 441; (9) Casablanca, Morocco, 3,144,909; and (10) Durban, South Africa, 3, 120, 282. For further illustration, see [8].

plentiful but not accessible to everyone. Poor families, for example, disproportionately pay the brunt of conflicts and wars. Farmers cannot bring their staple crops to the markets because of the lack of security even if and when they wanted to do so. Put it simply, conflicts disrupt markets and affect development policies that are put in place to assist the neediest of the population. And as a consequence of conflicts and wars, food prices rise, and poor families and their children can no longer have access to healthy and balanced dietary foods (*utilization*). Conflicts make food production drop since no one will risk their lives to work in the fields and bring foods to the markets while killings are raging. In the Central African Republic, for instance, the short-lived war of 2013 and its aftermath caused a drastic reduction in food production (*availability*) and engendered the rise of food commodity prices (*accessibility*). In fact, poor families and anyone else who could not have access to the foods in the markets were simply forced to live in subsistence. Consequently, thousands of Central Africans became nutrition-challenged because whatever was available for them to eat was obviously not meeting their nutrition needs and targets. Furthermore, widespread insecurity across the entire country made it more difficult to import foods from the neighboring countries or even receive foods from aid donors and the international community (*stability*) for that matter. As a result, food insecurity, and in many instances, the lack of foods thereof, became the daily reality of untold Central African families. And additionally, this added existential threat exacerbated an already desperate and deteriorating economic condition caused by years of protracted conflicts and political and economic mismanagement [9].

2.2 Why is sub-Saharan Africa suffering from food insecurity?

There are a lot of reasons as to why Africa and sub-Saharan Africa in particular is suffering from food insecurity and failing to meet its nutrition needs and targets. Though it is true that one cannot put their fingers at one specific reason as for why food shortages, insecurity, and prevalence of malnutrition uninterruptedly afflict sub-Saharan Africa, one can however identify a number of failed internal economic policy tools and international policy prescriptions as the culprit or underlying causes of systemic food insecurity in Africa. That is to say, on the internal front, for example, fewer among many reasons as for why food insecurity has been chronic in many African countries are the following: (1) *the never-ending political instability and crises*; (2) *the short or long protracted civil conflicts and wars*; (3) *the endemic*, *persistent*, *and institutional corruption*; (4) *the misdirected economic policies and mismanagement*; (5) *the lack of committed political leadership*; (6) *the sheer neglect towards the farmers*; and (7) *the lack of clear financial and economic investment into the agricultural sector*. On the external front, however, economic policy prescriptions mainly written and formulated by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1970s, 1980s, and the latter part of the 1990s directed at the African countries made an already difficult economic situation worse. This is because the architects of the alluded policies advised sub-Saharan African governments and leaders to cut aid and slash subsidies to their farmers. The economic policy rationale was that African countries should pull the plug under their parastatals (government-owned enterprises) and let the markets take care of everything. In addition, respective African governments were told that Africa should privatize and liberalize their economic policies in order to align them with the prevailing international trade, investment, and economic principles. Those economic recipes were said to modernize Africa and speed up its incorporation into the liberal-based global market economy. Consequently, because of those policy prescriptions, African farmers lost income supports from their respective governments, and millions of low-income African families became victims of food insecurity and nutrition deficits. In essence, the IMF and the

World Bank, and to a certain extent the US Treasury Department promoting and owning the so-called *Washington Consensus*, should be held responsible for those failed policies. For, they were the ones that devised, concocted, and directed them. As a matter of fact, they actively promoted or better said imposed them upon weak and hopeless African governments. And in turn, hapless African leaders implemented the said policies without truly understanding their future potential consequences on the farmers and their societies at large ([10], pp. 369–370).

So, with the benefit of hindsight today, one can say that those *structural adjustment programs* (SAPs) as they were known then, and devised by the above-cited international institutions and encouraged by the US Treasury Department, contributed to the demise of many farmers in Africa. They exacerbated the food insecurity and the existing precarious economic plights of millions of African families. And with the passing years, it has now become clear to any astute observer of the recent history of the social and economic development of Africa that African leaders of that time were not wise enough to reject and outrightly oppose those policies [9]. Actually, in fairness, many of them heartily and readily adopted the said policies and imposed them on their beleaguered poor populations. In fact, soon after they did so, many African countries began to import foods in huge quantity. And unfortunately, this situation has now lingered for decades. And honestly, as of today, there is no end in sight as to when the recurring food shortages and massive food imports in sub-Sahara Africa will either abate, subside, or end altogether. And for that, African countries constantly face food shortages now despite all the good and well-intentioned policies of the international community, the African Union, and African countries themselves intended to address rampant food insecurity, eradicate hunger, and bring food security to millions of low-income African families. So, as a consequence of all that, sub-Saharan Africa today is heavily dependent on food imports than at any time in its history. And as a result of that, it is sadly subjecting millions of its populations to the mercy of foreigners, commodity speculators, foreign exchange fluctuations, food aid giving nations, and the geopolitics of global food trade [11]. In actuality, this is the state of Africa's food security today. And as a matter of fact, when one looks back at the genesis of this episode, one can say without a doubt that this unfortunate situation could have easily been avoided. That is to say, had the *African political leadership* shown true leadership, heavily invested in agricultural sector and adopted economic nationalist policies, the early food production crisis, and insecurity beginning in the early 1970s would have been dealt with more effectively. Indeed, past African governments could have substantially invested in food production, assisted the small farmers with more aid and subsidies, and created policy resilience that would have saved thousands of African lives and farmers. And this may have possibly transformed and modernized the entire African food production system. In short, had the political leaders displayed true political courage to undertake such policies as stated, and shown true care for their respective populations, the concerns about the potential socioeconomic catastrophe of the rapid population growth in Africa will not have been as alarming and challenging to us as they seem today. To say the least, Africa suffers from food insecurity today and has been suffering from it for so long simply because of the utter failure and lack of vision, political courage, and sound economic policies of the *African leaders* and *economic decision-makers* of all political and ideological stripes on the Continent.

2.3 Impacts of rapid population growth and urbanization on the food security in Africa

In 1990, Africa's population was 635 million people. And, in 2018, the population of Africa stood at 1.2 billion people (see **Figure 1** below). However, except for the oil exporting African countries (see **Table 1**), sub-Saharan Africa has, on average,

grown a meager 1.1% GDP in the last quarter century [15]. Now, considering Africa's demographic explosion in the last two decades, this underperforming GDP per capita growth is not sustainable for its long-term economic transformation. And clearly it will not help it either to meet the needs of millions of its young people that are reaching working age and expected to enter the labor market [16] in great numbers every year till the year 2030. This somber forecast is in addition to the fact that Africa's population is projected to double by 2050 (see **Figure 2** and New African March 2019 Guest Commentary by Peter Estlin, the Lord Mayor of London). Therefore, these serious challenges and threats are to be factored into any discussion about Africa's long-term economic transformation. That is to say, every social, political, and economic actor in Africa should seriously ponder upon them and properly address these threats and challenges. As the youngest continent, Africa has tremendous challenges ahead of it. At the same time, it also has great opportunity to unlock its economic potential that will benefit hundreds of millions of its peoples. However, this can only be done if *African political leadership and economic decision-makers* unselfishly invest into the youth and give it access to quality health and education and skills of the twenty-first century. And assuming that that warning is heeded, a vibrant, healthy, and educated young population will undoubtedly take upon itself to resolve the issues of food insecurity and nutrition

Year	Population	Urban Population	World Population	Africa's Share of World Population
2019	1,320,038,716	541,028,160	7,714,576,923	17.10%
2018	1,287,920,518	523,004,491	7,632,819,325	16.90%
2017	1,256,268,025	505,429,407	7,550,262,101	16.60%
2016	1,225,080,510	488,296,186	7,466,964,280	16.40%
2015	1,194,369,908	471,602,315	7,383,008,820	17.20%
2010	1,049,446,344	394,940,213	6,958,169,159	16.00%
2005	924,757,708	330,741,711	6,542,159,383	15.00%
2000	817,566,004	278,769,840	6,145,006,989	14.20%
1995	722,921,961	236,904,267	5,751,474,416	13.60%
1990	634,567,044	196,923,274	5,330,943,460	13.00%
1985	552,796,228	158,900,967	4,873,781,796	12.40%
1980	480,012,209	127,772,173	4,458,411,534	11.80%
1975	417,898,074	102,894,484	4,079,087,198	11.30%
1970	366,458,929	82,640,484	3,700,577,650	11.00%
1965	322,470,634	40,962,571	3,339,592,688	10.60%
1960	285,142,006	53,044,540	3,033,212,527	10.30%

Figure 1.
Evolution of Africa's population 1960–2019 (Source: [12]).

Rank	Exporter	Crude Oil Export (US$)	% World Total
1	Nigeria	$ 43.6 billion	3.8%
2	Angola	$ 38.4 billion	3.4%
3	Libya	$ 26.7 billion	2.3%
4	Algeria	$ 17.5 billion	1.5%
5	Rep. of Congo	$ 7.7 billion	0.7%
6	Egypt	$ 5.4 billion	0.5%
7	Ghana	$ 5.2 billion	0.5%
8	Equatorial Guinea	$ 4.1 billion	0.4%
9	Gabon	$ 4 billion	0.4%
10	Cameroon	$ 1.7 billion	0,2%
11	South Sudan	$ 1,6 billion	0.1%
12	Chad	$ 1.5 billion	0.1%

Table 1.
Top 12 Africa's crude oil-exporting countries in 2018 (Source: [13, 14]).

Year	Population	Urban Population	Urban Population %	Africa's Share of World Pop.	World Population
2020	1,352,622,189	559,506,598	41.4 %	18.3 %	7,795,482,309
2025	1,522,250,093	658,813,697	43.3 %	19.5 %	8,185,613,757
2030	1,703,537,504	770,067,953	45.2 %	20.8 %	8,551,198,644
2035	1,896,703,697	893,399,441	47.1 %	21.3 %	8,892,701,940
2040	2,100,301,731	1,029,050,896	49.0 %	23.6 %	9,210,337,004
2045	2,311,561,326	1,177,787,243	51.0 %	25.1 %	9,504,209,572
2050	2,527,556,761	1,338,565,979	53.0 %	26.6 %	9,771,822,753

Figure 2.
Africa's population forecast 2020–2050 (Source: [12]).

deficits, among many other challenges. As a matter of fact, a great number of economic experts and development economists agree with this economic proposition. They claim that quality health and education are the only engines of economic development that will help unleash the African potential, create inclusive prosperity for all, and economically transform the continent. (For further comments on the subject, see New African March 2019 Guest Commentary by Bill and Melinda Gates).

Furthermore, *Africa's political leadership*, *youth*, and *civil society* shall all understand that without some sort of family planning, albeit a voluntary one, the rapid unplanned population growth will never make Africa be food and nutrition secure. Therefore, understanding this reality, and taking also into account the cultural and religious sensitivities of several African communities, *Africa's political leadership*, *and faith-based organizations* of all denominations, should not have any problems investing in women, youth, and young girls. That is to say, in doing so, they will be able to properly educate mothers and future mothers and common people about the consequences of food insecurity and nutrition deficits on the future of their well-being and for Africa as a whole. That's because an uncontrolled rapid population growth, alongside the climate change threats and its effects, will be a formidable challenge for Africa to overcome if African people are not implicated in seeking solutions for their problems and challenges themselves. In our view, not adopting this policy approach will render the search for Africa's meaningful economic transformation unattainable just as many other unfulfilled African economic dreams (beginning since the years of its political independence in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s). The said contemplated family planning could also be managed through community programs, school programs, and after church and mosque services programs. And by devising such social program plans, educating people in major cities and the rural areas to understand what is truly at stake, and encouraging them to participate into the programs, it will be safe to say that Africans will take upon themselves the transformation of their agricultural production and adopt policies that will help them achieve food security on their own. And as such, they will be able to meet their nutrition needs and targets in line with their burgeoning population growths.

2.4 Impacts of climate change threats and effects on food security in Africa

Climate change debates pit true believers of climate change against those that oppose it. They also confront those who are skeptical of its existence or outwardly deny it against those who are fervent believers in it. However, the debates about whether climate change exists or not are beyond the intended purpose of this chapter. In it, we base our analysis on the existence of the climate change threats and its

effects as an added challenge to Africa's existing agriculture commodities' production, food security, and nutrition needs and targets. In fact, as of today, changes in rainfall, soil quality, weather patterns, and precipitations in many regions of Africa have become the drivers for the food challenges and insecurity in all regions of the continent. And as a result of all that, climate change threats, effects, and stress are now the multiplier for the multitude of the daily challenges that Africans face. Furthermore, it is worth recalling that many countries in the world recognize today that climate change impacts on the temperature, precipitation, and droughts on a given community adversely affect the food security of that community. And consequently, many members of the said affected community are forced to leave and migrate to other communities. That is so because adverse or abrupt climate conditions and threats stress an entire community. And more often than not, they push their younger members to mass migrate. In addition, negative effects of the climate change event like floods and droughts destroy the agricultural production capacity and inputs of the impacted community. So, as an example, communities that have experienced events like droughts and floods whether in the *Sahel*, the *Lake Chad Basin*, or *East African region* [17] have all seen themselves abandoning their homes and villages and moving to neighboring communities or urban cities where they have no adequate resources to help themselves cope with their new surroundings and adapt to their new-found challenges. Many members of the said displaced communities become victims of food insecurity themselves. That is because by abandoning their villages and towns and moving to the new ones, they compete for scarce resources such as water and other daily living amenities in order to survive. Moreover, their sheer presence in their new hometowns or cities swells the pockets of the already established urban poor and makes life more miserable for themselves and everyone else. In short, climate change impacts and its effects have become existential threats to vulnerable communities. And one of the visible effects of climate change today is that climate change impacts turn members of the climate-impacted communities into *climate refugees* within their new adopted communities.

2.5 Impacts of protracted crises and conflicts on food security in Africa

According to the Fund for Peace, in 2017, the three most fragile states in the world were in Africa. Those states were the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and Somalia [18]. And each one of them has now become fragile because of the protracted crises that have kept it unstable since the 1960s. In the case of the Central African Republic, the years of the trouble started in the 1960s. In the case of Somalia, the disintegration of its *state apparatus* and the advent of its successive social, political, and economic challenges came after the fall of the regime of Siad Barre in 1991. In the case of South Sudan, the country has been in political turmoil, standoff, low-intensity warfare since it gained its independence from the Republic of the Sudan in 2011. However, it is worth noting that those three cited-above countries are not the only fragile countries in Africa. There are many other African countries that are also fragile and politically unstable because of the protracted conflicts and never-ending political crises. This is in addition to other crippling challenges such as *governance deficiencies*, *corruption*, *decades-long underperforming economies*, *weak institutions*, *flagrant human rights violations*, *and living resources scarcity* that have kept them from creating an inclusive and shared prosperity for millions of their citizens.[4] Indeed, food insecurity and nutritional deficits and the

[4] See *Good Governance and Human Rights: Keys to Building A Society That Works for All* by Muhammad Yunus in [19].

lack of quality health and education are the direct results of the said never-ending challenges that Africa as a whole confronts ever since it gained its *political independence* from the former colonial powers.

In effect, the persistent lack of peace and security in many sub-Saharan African countries today, coupled with the never-ending political instabilities and crises, is mainly the underlying reasons why African countries seem incapable of tackling and overcoming existential challenges and threats such as food shortages and insecurity and widespread malnutrition on their own. As a case in point, since 2010, a number of *civil wars and political crises* have broken out in several African countries from Algeria all the way to Kenya. In addition, newer political instabilities and short-lived c*ivil wars* have also occurred or unfolded in places like the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria (Boko Haram), Libya (the bloody ousting of Muammar Kaddafi and the ensuing civil war), Egypt, Tunisia, the Central African Republic (CAR), Kenya, Cameroon, Mali, Burkina Faso, Burundi, South Sudan, Algeria, and Sudan as of late [20]. Moreover, countries such the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, and Somalia where decades-long conflicts have weakened and rendered their respective governments inept and unable to assume the administration of their territorial security and come up with sound national economic management policies, transnational threats such as *terrorism*, *mass migration*, *pandemics such as Ebola and HIV/AIDS*, *and maritime piracy* consume and divert their meager state resources away. Because of all that, their depleted resources are never sufficient to help them successfully fight institutional corruptions, rein into drug trafficking, curb hunger and other social woes, and effectively run their day-to-day administrative affairs. And as a result of the said overwhelming challenges, food insecurity and nutrition challenges currently affect and threaten the lives of millions of South Sudanese, Central Africans, Somali, Nigerians, and million more Africans today. For further illustration of how many African countries are afflicted and overwhelmed by conflicts and protracted crises, and why food security challenges have become existential threats not just to one or two countries in Africa, see *Cases of countries affected by food insecurity and acute malnutrition stemming from protracted conflicts*, *crises*, *and political unrests* and **Table 2**.

2.6 Cases of countries affected by food insecurity and acute malnutrition stemming from protracted conflicts, crises, and political unrests

1. **Nigeria.** This country has been grappling with severe security threats from Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa (ISIS-WA). Consequently, these threats have caused massive internal displacement of the population in the northeast region of the country and made thousands of Nigerians domestic refugees. In addition to the displaced Nigerian citizens, thousands more refugees from Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and the Central African Republic have flocked into the region, and consequently swelled the overrun refugee camps and made matters worse for everyone involved in the camps. As a result, they all have become victims of food and nutrition insecurity.

2. **South Sudan.** Due to the clashes between the South Sudanese Government and armed opposition groups, millions of South Sudanese have become the largest displaced population in their own country and been made refugees in the neighboring countries. As a consequence, this situation has created a severe case of food insecurity and malnutrition challenges in South Sudan today.

3. **Somalia.** This country is another case in Africa where protracted conflicts since 1991 have made it impossible for the Somali population at large to escape

A. Countries/territories with a protracted crisis	B. Countries/territories affected by conflict	C. Countries/territories with a protracted crisis affected by conflict	D. Countries/territories in fragile situations affected by conflict
Burundi	Algeria	Burundi	Burundi
Central African Republic	Angola	Central African Republic	Central African Republic
Chad	Burundi	Chad	Chad
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Cameroon	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Côte d' Ivoire
Djibouti	Central African Republic	Eritrea	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Eritrea	Chad	Ethiopia	Eritrea
Ethiopia	Republic of the Congo	Liberia	Guinea-Bissau
Kenya	Côte d' Ivoire	Somalia	Liberia
Liberia	Democratic Republic of the Congo	South Sudan	Libya
Niger	Egypt	Sudan	Mali
Somalia	Eritrea		Sierra Leone
South Sudan	Ethiopia		Somalia
Sudan	Guinea-Bissau		South Sudan
Zimbabwe	Liberia		Sudan
	Libya		
	Mali		
	Nigeria		
	Rwanda		
	Senegal		
	Sierra Leone		
	Somalia		
	South Sudan		
	Sudan		
	Uganda		

Table 2.
African countries in protracted crises, conflicts, and fragile situations (Source: Data extracted and compiled from [21]).

from poverty, misery, and the never-ending threats and real cases of food insecurity and chronic malnutrition that have for years affected both the youth and general Somali population.

4. **The Central African Republic.** This country is the latest case of food insecurity and widespread malnutrition in Africa. This has been the case since the short-lived Civil War of 2013 and the ensuing political unrest, rebellion, and ongoing sectarian aggressions between the Christian and Muslim communities.

2.7 Collective engagements and responses of the international community to tackling food insecurity in Africa

The international community heretofore understood as international institutions; private sector; multinational and transnational corporations (MNCs and TNCs); civil society; private foundations such as *the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, *the Clinton Foundation*, and NGOs; leading nations such as the United States, China, India, Russia, and Brazil; the Global South; the European Union (EU); and celebrities like George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Madonna, Bono, and many others are all stakeholders in food security and hunger debates. However, the United Nations (UN) system has thus far been the leading multilateral institutional voice that addresses and shapes the policy debates and proposes policy prescriptions for the food insecurity and malnutrition challenges that Africa and other regions of the world face.

Within the United Nations system, however, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which was established as an intergovernmental body is the organization mandated to address the agricultural issues such as food security, nutrition, and

malnutrition challenges of its member countries. And as an intergovernmental body, the FAO was formed to promote the "common welfare by furthering separate and collective action for the purpose of raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdictions; securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products; bettering the conditions of rural populations; and thus contributing towards an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger [22]."

Though the FAO has had the mandate to tackle agricultural issues and concerns of its member countries, from its inception, the governments of its member countries were primarily the major actors that formulated and addressed the issues of agriculture within the United Nations' system. However, since the end of the Cold War, other actors and stakeholders such as the NGOs, CSOs, and a multitude of transnational corporations have also become relevant actors in policy formulations addressing hunger, food issues, and nutrition security governance in Africa. This has especially been so since the establishment of the MDGs covering the year 2000–2015 and the SDGs in place from 2015 to 2030. Nevertheless, this proliferation of stakeholders and actors in food security governance that is now being shared among the UN agencies and the private sector, civil society, NGOs, and the concerned governments has led to an increase in collaboration and partnerships among all the stakeholders that address and formulate policies dealing with the food and nutrition challenges in Africa today. As an example, transnational corporations such as *Unilever* have now jumped into global threats issues such as world hunger and food security and malnutrition challenges. This is becoming common in corporate governance because leading global corporations have now realized that those aforementioned issues are global threats in nature and no longer local per se. And therefore, they affect everyone and every country in this age of economic, political, technological, and cultural globalization [23]. Furthermore, corporations such as *Unilever* and many others like it have also understood that addressing those issues as a company or private sector is actually adhering to social corporate responsibility which is increasingly aligned with the interests of a business in this globalized and interdependent world. In fact, this new *social-business* approach has become the new *modus operandi* of socially responsible companies everywhere in the world today. In other words, it's good business to be a global corporate citizen. In effect, big corporations and brand-name companies now understand that consumers want them to also be social citizens while pursuing their economic and business profits and interests [24]. And as a response to all these new developments, in 2013, the FAO published its new *strategic framework* with a new focus on "governance, creation of enabling environments, and policy support in member countries is the direct outcome of its adaptation and repositioning process." This new framework was conceived to officially help the FAO collaborate and share policy spaces with other actors and stakeholders in food and nutrition security governance in Africa [25] and anywhere else for that matter.

2.8 Africa's engagements and commitments to ending food insecurity and nutrition deficits

Africa's responses to the food security challenges can at best be summarized as ineffective and inefficient thus far, to say the least. However, since the advent of the new millennium and the food crisis of 2007–2008, there has been a somewhat sincere and renewed commitment by the African leaders, the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, the national governments, civil society, private sector, and all the stakeholders in Africa in support of food security. This newfound engagement in food security challenges is aimed at supporting agricultural

production, replacing the prevalence of undernourishment, eradicating hunger, achieving food security, and meeting nutrition needs and targets. This has been so since the 2008 food price hikes and the subsequent social unrest and disturbances that took place in several African capitals and shook the sitting governments of that time. As a result of those vivid developments, the national security implications of food and nutrition insecurity were in plain view for all to see. In addition, the increased awareness of climate change threats and the rising awareness of the unforeseeable consequences of the rapid population growth on the food production system and on the stability of the *state* made African leaders take note and entice them to initiate various national policies to support food and nutrition security. Soon thereafter, as a result of those political events, several respective African governments devised new policy strategies in line with their national economic policies in support to food production, transformation, and security. For example, countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya partner more now with the private sector and the civil society in administering and managing their food systems. They basically have shifted their schemes towards private-public partnerships and involved wider private sector(s) in their food production and transformation policies. In contrast, countries like Ethiopia, South Africa, Angola, and Mali have integrated more of their food policy programs in recent years as well. That is, they have aligned them with their national economic strategies to support their food production, combat their food shortages, and replace their prevalent malnutrition. Nevertheless, what remains to be accomplished to date is the transformation of the said renewed political commitments into concrete policy actions such as (1) a visible and sustainable high-level leadership and effective governance, (2) an increase in public-private partnerships (PPPs) and shared co-leadership in fighting against hunger and food insecurity, (3) a supportive and enabling environment by the sitting governments and their decision-makers, and (4) a comprehensive and clear policy approach with all stakeholders involved in support of food production and security. Furthermore, at the continental and regional levels, it is worth highlighting also that the leading voices in formulating policies to combat food insecurity and curb the nutrition challenges in recent decades have been *the African Union Commission* (AUC), *the NEPAD*, and *the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS in West Africa and ECCAS in Central Africa*.

3. Conclusions

The current state of food security and widespread malnutrition in Africa is not as ideal as Africans would like it to be. That is to say, as of today, a good number of African countries are food deficit and insecure. This has been so because food insecurity and widespread malnutrition as stated in this chapter are a multidimensional problem. Challenges that are directly tied to healthcare, misdirected policies and politics, trade and economic interests, weak institutions, failed leadership, and many other variables make it hard and difficult for many African countries to achieve food security. In addition to the internal causes previously discussed as of why a good number of sub-Saharan African countries are not food secure, the chapter also highlighted that there are also external reasons as for why sub-Saharan African countries have been struggling to secure foods for their respective populations and meet their nutrition needs and targets. The chief among those external reasons as discussed and analyzed were economic policy prescriptions that the World Bank and the IMF prescribed for Africa in the 1970s, 1980s, and the latter part of the 1990s. The said policies were devised to help Africa align its economic development policies and strategies with the market-based liberal

principles and practices. And as previously explained, the economic conditions of those countries later showed that those policy prescriptions did not provide the intended and expected economic results. Instead, they worsened the food insecurity in Africa. That's because by advising and encouraging African governments to cut their aid, subsidies, and assistance to their farmers in the name of the market-based principles, food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa worsened dramatically. Moreover, the chapter also acknowledged that, save the commodities and natural resources exporting African countries, the economic growth of the majority of African countries has not performed as expected either. That is, the GDP growth rates of many sub-Saharan African countries have not kept pace with their rapid respective population growths, especially the rapid urban population growth that many African countries have experienced in recent years. In addition to the mentioned economic policy challenges, new challenges such as climate change and its effects and the internal displacements and migrations pushed many sub-Saharan African countries to depend more on food imports and foreign aid. Consequently, in actuality, many of them are unable to feed their populations today, and food insecurity and malnutrition have become the daily staple of millions of their citizens. Last but not least, the food price hikes of 2008 and their direct political consequences thereof, namely, riots and protests in many African cities, also exposed in plain view the economic policy failures of the African countries to the whole world to see. The rioting and protests showed how inept and incompetent many African leaders had for years been in failing to provide food security to their low-income and respective vulnerable citizens. Also, one of the visible consequences of the failure of African leaders in food security management has thus far been the continuous rise of import food bills in Africa year after year [26–34], while agriculture dependence has remained high. In sum, the combined reasons as analyzed above are the real reasons why sub-Saharan African countries have for years seemed unable to eradicate hunger, achieve food security, and meet nutrition targets and needs for their people(s). In essence, this is fundamentally why African countries struggled to meet the MDGs targets (2000–2015) despite the assistance and resources granted to them by the international community. With that in mind, if recent history is any indication, sub-Saharan African countries are going to struggle again in order to meet a few targets of the SDGs (2015–2030). In summary, hopefully African leaders will prove their skeptics and all of us wrong this time around.

4. Policy recommendations

The diagnostics of Africa's food security and malnutrition challenges has been thoroughly examined in this chapter. The international community, the African Union and respective African governments and anyone else interested in the issues of food insecurity, climate change threats, and protracted conflicts and wars in Africa have all launched policies against food insecurity in Africa. However, in order for Africa as a whole to achieve food security and lower its dependence on food imports and aid, *African political leaders and economic decision-makers* will have to surmount in true sense each one of the challenges mentioned in this chapter. For as those challenges are extensively analyzed in this chapter, they have been shown to be the real culprit of Africa's never ending socioeconomic and political problems. For decades now, they have been the challenges that have crippled Africa and hijacked the well-being and welfare of its citizens. Below are the specific policy proposals that if implemented could contribute to help overcome the challenges of food insecurity and nutrition deficits and many other challenges that have kept Africa for years from meaningful economic transformations beneficial for all its citizens.

5. Policy proposals

1. **African political leadership and economic decision-makers** should strive to formulate economic development strategies that are inclusive and people-centered rather than *elites and upper middle-class cosmopolitan-driven*. That is to say, Africa needs inclusive shared prosperity and constructive policies focused on Africa's youth and women and solely addressed against the challenges of a population set to double by the year 2050. Employment and job creation policies ought to also be the top priority beyond anything else for the *African political leadership*. Those are the real challenges that Africa will be facing in the next coming decades.

2. **African political leadership and economic decision-makers** should make agriculture a strategic sector and provide African farmers with all kinds of assistance and aid regardless of how unpopular they may appear to the international community and economic experts, and how contrary they may be when evaluated against the market-based principles and policies. In addition, credit and insurance schemes for farmers should also be part of any economic development policy and strategy in any sub-Saharan African country if food security were to ever be achieved. Instituting smart credit and insurance schemes for farmers will inevitably help create robust financial resilience that will protect them from market uncertainty and shocks and keep them focused on food production. Furthermore, civil society organizations, producer organizations, and wider private sector alike should also be allowed to participate in and be part of any policy scheme devised to support food production, combat food insecurity, and curb nutrition deficits.

3. **African political leadership and economic decision-makers** should institute and establish social protection programs or food safety net in the likes of cash transfer programs whose objectives should solely be to promote food security and nutrition and provide quality healthcare and education for the youth and women in particular whether in urban centers or in the rural areas. The programs should also serve against food price shocks for low-income citizens that are vulnerable to the market prices' volatility. Distribution programs and food banks in every neighborhood, town, and city across sub-Saharan Africa should also be established and aggressively promoted while implicating Africans of higher economic and financial means in the programs. The unscathed and seemingly unconcerned wealthy African families should also be invited to co-own the schemes and programs since they are resource-blessed and better off than the majority of their fellow citizens. That is to say, whatever incentive in the likes of tax break or any other financial schemes that may be attractive to them should be on the table for them to consider. Simply put, well-to-do Africans should be reminded of the famous *African solidarity* and the responsibility that comes with it in assisting their less-blessed brethren.

4. **African political leadership and economic decision-makers** should make all kinds of efforts to increase investment in food production and processing and physical transportation infrastructure that will connect rural areas with the growing urban centers where food demands are concentrated. Modern food storage facilities should also be built around major cities and link them to the four geographical corners of the back country. And this can be achieved only if food transportation networks within the country and across the immediate subregions are modernized and resourced.

5. **African political leadership and economic decision-makers** should understand once for all that without a sustained political stability and zero tolerance of any sort of institutional or personal (family-induced) corruption, agricultural production and food relief efforts that are badly needed to combat hunger, decisively tackle food insecurity, and achieve the nutrition needs and targets in Africa will never be possible. Peace therefore should be at the center of any national policy and be made the highest priority if Africa does not want to forever be dependent on the *good will* of foreigners, continuously import foods, and forever beg for development aid and largesse.

Additional information

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