

Short Article

Diversification of Food Consumption: Its Current Conditions, Problems and Prospects in Indonesia

Food security is defined as physical and economic access, at all times, to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Hence food security is not only defined by having enough food – the definition of food security also includes having access to diverse foods. Thus, every country, including Indonesia is obliged to ensure the availability, distribution and consumption of foods both in terms of its quantity and quality.

The quality of food consumption can be measured by looking at the diversity of food types, food composition and the adequacy of the quantity of food consumed. Food and nutrition experts use the score of Desirable Dietary Pattern (DDP) as one indicator to measure the quality of food consumption. The DDP embodies the concept of varied, nutritious and balanced food consumption (Hardinsyah *et al.*, 2001).

In Indonesia, Presidential Regulation No. 22 of 2009 and Agriculture Ministry Regulation No. 43, 2009 form the legal basis for Acceleration of Food Consumption Diversification. This effort is a strategic step to achieve food security in developing qualified human resources. One of the underlying reasons is that the quality of food consumption of the Indonesian people is still low, is not diverse, nutritionally imbalanced and unsafe. The intake of carbohydrates is dominated by rice (Food Security Agency, 2010).

How is the condition of food diversification for average Indonesian, what are the problems faced and how will be the future prospects? This short article aims to answer these questions.

Current diversification of food consumption

Nationally, the food consumption in the form of energy and protein is adequate. However, in terms of quality, that is the type and amount of food consumed, food consumption is lower than ideal. The DPP score in 2009 reached only 75.7 from the ideal value of 100. In addition, consumption behaviour of rural and urban people still gives priority to carbohydrate, although on protein and lipid consumption, urban people are better than the rural one. The nutrition sufficiency of urban people is also better, because protein and lipid consumption of rural people has not fulfilled the national DPP yet.

The share of carbohydrate from grain sources is more than 60 per cent, while the normative reference is 50 per cent. Meanwhile, consumption of food derived from tubers, protein

from animal sources, fruits and vegetables are lower than the ideal or normative recommendations.

Problems of diversification on food consumption

Food production varies according to food type and region and production of various foods can not always be done in the same region. Staple food consumption is based on rice. While noodle and bread consumption is increasing, the production of these food items are from imported wheat.

Increasing diverse food production is faced by problems of decreasing land area for paddy field, decreasing soil fertility, and competition among commodities for land usage. General patterns of staple food consumption lead to a single pattern of rice and even there are some tendencies that noodle and bread consumption is increasing, even though its raw materials are both imported.

In addition, the development of food businesses that support the diversification of food consumption has been relatively slow. Therefore, business plans and investment for food diversification should be developed to support resource-based food diversification.

Policy and strategy for food diversification

Policies to accelerate food diversification in general aim to provide awareness of the importance of food diversification, and also to reduce dependency on imported foods and rice. Efforts to accelerate diversification were carried out through various programmes and activities, namely: (i) Internalization, socialization, promotion and publication, (ii) Increase food availability based on local resources, (iii) Increase human resource capacity, (iv) Increase access to foods, and (v) community empowerment.

In the long term, diversification is reflected by (i) the decline in per capita rice consumption, (ii) the increase consumption of alternative carbohydrates food sources, especially sago, various tubers and maize, (iii) the increase of vegetables and fruit consumption and (iv) the increase of animal foods consumption based on local resources. In aggregate, the ideal food diversification is reflected in the scale score of DDP that is approaching the ideal value of 100. ■

Written by Handewi P. Salim, Director of the Indonesian Center for Agriculture Socio Economic and Policy Studies (ICASEPS) and Edi Basuno, Programme Leader of R&D, CAPSA-ESCAP, Bogor, Indonesia.

Open the Door for Agriculture in International Climate Change Negotiations

A broad coalition of 17 organizations brought together more than 400 policymakers, farmers, scientists, business leaders and development specialists on Saturday, December 4 to define steps for opening the door to agriculture within the next six months, permitting its full inclusion both in national action plans as well as the global climate agenda. The Agriculture and Rural Development Day 2010 took place in parallel with the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The case for incorporating agriculture into the global climate change agenda rests on three propositions. First, agriculture accounts for about a third of total greenhouse gas emissions, including those from deforestation that are related to agricultural expansion. Second, agriculture is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as rising temperatures and more severe weather. And third, agriculture offers unique possibilities for successful investments and policies that simultaneously reduce emissions, help communities adapt to climate change and increase food production. Unless action is taken now to help farmers respond, the impact of climate change could derail the efforts of regions hardest hit by climate change to transform their agricultural sector. Beyond 2050, the impacts could become unmanageable, pushing rural people in parts of Africa and South Asia beyond their capacity to cope. This is why scientists believe it is urgent to pursue climate change mitigation in agriculture, building on recent progress with REDD+, which stands for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing forest carbon stocks. ■

Source: Eureka Alert, <http://www.eurekaalert.org/> (2 December 2010).

Lessons in 'Climate Smart' Agriculture

Farmers around the world are adopting new ways of producing food that both help cope with climate change and reduce farming's greenhouse gas emissions, according to a new FAO website on 'climate-smart' agriculture. "A shift to climate-smart agriculture helps advance several important goals: doing so will not only help shield farmers from the adverse effects of climate change and offer a way to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester atmospheric carbon, but can also improve farm yields and household incomes," said Alexander Mueller, FAO Assistant Director-General for Natural Resources. One example provided on the new website on climate smart agriculture refers to the rice sector. Rice farming is the second largest source of the greenhouse gas (GHG) methane. As the rice sector needs to reduce its emissions, rice production also faces multiple challenges due to climate change. Rising temperatures, especially night temperatures, have already impacted on rice yields, causing losses of 10-20 per cent of harvests in some locations in Asia over the last 25 years, new research shows. The development of advanced modelling techniques and efforts to map the effect of climate change on rice-growing regions are helping reduce communities' vulnerability, as are efforts to increase the availability of and improve access to crop insurance. FAO will continue to update the website on climate smart agriculture to highlight additional examples and case studies as well as lessons learned from around the world. ■

Source: FAO Media Centre, <http://www.fao.org/> (4 November 2010).

Are We Having Another Food Crisis?

The world food price index is at its highest since 2008, when food prices rocketed and millions of people suffered. This year the crisis seems to be happening again. Prices for the staple grains that underpin the world's food supply soared after forecasts for the US and Chinese maize harvests fell in October, Pakistan lost its wheat to floods, and crop losses to drought and wildfire led Russia to ban grain exports until 2011. Food prices have soared in India, Egypt and elsewhere and are being blamed for riots in Mozambique. Is this another crisis like the one we had in 2008? Not quite. What has been happening this year is markets are responding nervously to incomplete information. Meanwhile there was no reliable information about grain stocks, which is strategic information that most countries keep secret. The result was nervous bidding and sporadically surging prices in commodity markets. What can we do? This is where technology comes in. All the major producers already use remote sensing technology to watch each other's fields. Reliable information about stocks could offset unwarranted jitters about crop failures, such as the ones that are contributing to the current market volatility. Even if we stop the volatility, we still need to grow more food as well as stable markets. We also need more research into increasing yields that will produce enough grain to sell, plus investment in getting research products into farmers' hands, and the roads, markets and communications technology the farmers need to get it to market. The more farmers are selling into the world market the more stable it will be. ■

Source: New Scientist, <http://www.newscientist.com/> (28 October 2010).

Food prices rise as Asia projects stall

Failure to boost farm investment in poor countries after a global food crisis in 2007 and 2008 could prolong a recent jump in food prices, contributing to inflation in the developing world. A report by the Asia Society and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines noted that in the wake of the 2008 crisis, governments of developing countries and donor nations, as well as private investors, proposed a wealth of new spending, and industrialized nations committed billions of dollars to promote sustainable agriculture and emergency food assistance. The efforts included plans to develop unused or underused lands to farming in the Philippines, Cambodia and Indonesia and to expand farm roads and grain-storage infrastructure in India. Some projects aimed at increasing production have been dropped or delayed amid the financial crisis, limiting the gains. Disputes over land ownership, lack of capital and concerns over environmental issues have held back other investments. After a drought led Russia to ban wheat exports, wheat and corn prices have climbed more than 40 per cent since late June. The price of rice, a vital foodstuff in poor countries, is also rising, though not as dramatically. Developing countries will need to boost agricultural investment to \$209 billion a year, up 47 per cent from the annual average between 1997 and 2007, to meet growing demand for food. This year's surge in food prices shows that "2008 was not just a blip, this is the way things will be, with repeated shocks" in the years to come, says Robert Zeigler, director general of IRRI. ■

Source: Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com/> (26 September 2010)

Land Use Protection Essential in Fight Against Hunger, UN expert warns

Protecting the rights of land users from speculation, stepped up production of agrofuels and population growth is vital to combat global hunger and malnutrition, said an independent United Nations expert. Last October, the Committee on World Food Security met in Rome. The UN-led meeting brought together 123 governmental delegates, 46 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and 11 international agencies to identify ways to combat global hunger and malnutrition. Special Rapporteur on the right to food Olivier De Schutter noted that pressures on land are increasing as a result of speculation on farmland, the expansion of agrofuels production, and demographic growth in rural areas. In this context, moving swiftly towards protecting the rights of land users is vital. The livelihoods of peasants, fishers, pastoralists, and indigenous peoples in particular are threatened on a large scale as a result of the global enclosures movement that we are witnessing. Further, Mr. De Schutter said that climate change and changing weather patterns shall mean more instability in the future. Speculation by commodity index funds on the derivatives markets of agricultural commodities shall worsen the problem. The Committee agreed that volatility was a serious problem that required policy responses, with a high-level panel of experts studying the causes and consequences of price volatility, ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety nets, and the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition. ■

Source: UN News Centre, <http://www.un.org/> (18 October 2010).

Farming Smarter

Signs of modernity have come to these hardscrabble hills in southern Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Satellite dishes peek out from behind stilted homes. The chirp of mobile phones breaks the quiet as farmers take calls from traders provinces away. Just a decade ago, life here was more difficult. Families ate what they could grow and little else. Agriculture was primitive. More than two-thirds of farms lacked any type of mechanized equipment. They were once perceived as uncivilized. But things have changed. Much of this is owed to the Smallholder Development Project, funded by a \$15.2 million ADB loan, to modernize farming techniques in conjunction with the government. Since 2006, farmers have gained the skills and know-how to grow niche products that fetch desirable prices abroad: organic cabbages shipped to Thailand and high-quality coffee exported to Japan. An estimated 40,000 households have seen their incomes rise. Beyond basic farming modernization, the project has linked these remote highlands to larger markets outside Lao PDR. Improved all-weather roads now connect locals to newly built markets on the Thai-Lao border, where traders buy produce in bulk. Farmers have learned basic market economics and techniques to negotiate with faraway buyers using text messaging. Through training, farmers have learned to rotate crops between cabbage and coffee so that the soil is not depleted of nutrients. Eventually, farmers and project directors hope Lao-grown coffee will be widely recognized by global connoisseurs, and the project has helped developed the supply chain logistics need for this growth. ■

Source: ADB, <http://www.adb.org/> (17 November 2010).

A New Look at Old Ways: agriculture in the Pacific

Agriculture traditionally played a central role in life in the Pacific -- not only providing food but helping link individuals to their communities and to the land. Attracting young people back to agriculture is seen as a way to address high levels of youth unemployment and high reliance on imported food, as well as an opportunity to spur economic development in rural areas. SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), through its role as secretariat to the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet) and in collaboration with relevant partners, has developed a strategy for increasing Pacific youth involvement in agriculture. Its focus is to encourage young people living in rural areas to see the business opportunities in agriculture, increase their involvement in the sector, and improve their livelihoods, while reducing pressure on urban areas. There are many inspiring examples of youth who are successful in agriculture. To cite just some examples from Fiji, members of a youth club on Taveuni are using village land to grow and sell dalo (taro). The club has purchased a generator to provide electricity and has helped build and repair homes in the village. In other parts of Fiji, young people are earning money by farming idle land and selling their crops directly at local markets. The United Nations International Year of Youth, which begins on August 12, 2010 will focus on these kinds of issues. With the theme 'Dialogue and Mutual Understanding', events will aim to encourage open communication between generations and to put the spotlight on youth issues. ■

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community, <http://archives.pireport.org/> (October 2010).

The Seoul G-20's Excluded Voices and Ending Poverty

The G20 meeting in Seoul was held on November 11-12, 2010. This Summit is a milestone as it is the first time that the G20 Summit has been held in the Asia Pacific region, now the emerging center of gravity for the world economy, where the dynamic economies of China and India are leading the global recovery. Under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, economists and representatives of 26 Asian countries gathered early November in Bangkok to reflect on the agenda of the Seoul Summit from the perspective of excluded poorer countries. G20 Summit has many challenges to address. However, with the changing economic geography and the rise of emerging market countries as growth poles of the world economy, the entire world economy has a stake in sustaining their dynamism. Hence, development becomes a key issue on the agenda. The new thinking in the post-crisis world is that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the narrowing of development gaps have a central place in achieving strong, sustainable and balanced growth. Specifically, the latent potential of the poor to generate aggregate demand can be harnessed through promoting agriculture and rural development, strengthening social protection, enhancing financial inclusion, and promoting job creation among other policies within the emerging markets and among the excluded and poorer countries. In this respect, the United Nations and the leaders of 20 nations should work together to seek a better future for all nations, and for the entire world's people. ■

Source: UN-ESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/oes/opeds/2010/seoul-summit.html> (11 November 2010).

Taking Social Development Seriously: The Experience of Sri Lanka

Laksiri Jayasuriya, Sage Publications India, 2010, ISBN 978-81-321-0465-0.

Social development, broadly defined as attainment of adequate standard of living, together with one's own capabilities and valuable functioning, has been the centre of debate of development policy ever since Adam Smith observed that societies cannot be 'flourishing and happy' if greater part of the members are poor and miserable. The current discourse on the issue underpins the capacity of people to have wider choices including higher incomes, if they so desire to achieve, better health, education, good physical environment, and freedom of action and expression for people to be happy. Societies all over the world have evolved divergent processes enabling people to achieve these goals throughout the human history, ranging from capitalist to central planning based on Marxist ideologies. The interplay between history, public policy, political economy and other social dimensions including religious foundations have played important and profound roles in shaping the outcome of these divergent processes to reduce poverty and destitution and improve human well-being. These experiences have been debated and analysed over many decades in the industrialized North, but such analysis and debates have been limited in the global South. Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya's book "Taking Social Development Seriously: The experience of Sri Lanka" is a landmark contribution in the social development discourse.

The book offers a rare window into Sri Lanka's unique experiments in the social policy and development through the British period up to the end of the conflict in 2009. This historical view, combined with analysis based on comparative social policy tradition and development studies, allows the reader to gain in-depth understanding of the forces that shaped the early social development policy, their fundamental factors, and dynamics that led to the 'retreat from welfare state' in the 1970s. Sri Lanka's treatment of access to education, health and social security as universal social rights of every citizen from a very early stage as in the 1930s, supported by a series of legislation and allocation of resources, has been recognized as the three pillars of the 'foundations of welfare state'. This policy framework allowed Sri Lanka to clearly stand out among non-industrialized developing countries as an 'over-performing' country in terms of the measures of social well-being such as life expectancy,

literacy, infant mortality, when juxtaposed its per capita GNP. As the author argued, Sri Lanka's Private Quality of Life Index (PQLI) rating in 1991 was 82 in comparison to Singapore's rating of 83 but in terms of per capita GNP it was US\$ 179 for Sri Lanka against US\$ 2,111 for Singapore. The liberal political culture and social democracy has been replaced in the post-1977 era with the dominance of ethnic identity politics and a 'residualist' welfare strategy in that welfare was directed primarily to relieving absolute poverty through safety nets, delivered through income transfers linked to productive capacity of the poor. Despite the rise of GNP, as in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, economic inequality has begun to dominate the social and economic climate, and marginalization of many groups in society has seriously diminished "the rights of citizenship and puts at risk the very foundations of freedom and political liberty which are critical for social well-being".

The ten chapters in the book are organized into three broad themes: social development and social policy; the evolution of social development in Sri Lanka; and the end of an era and reforming welfarism. It is fascinating to see how the author takes the reader through the social development history of modern Sri Lanka and develops a comprehensive view of the issues pertinent to social development. It is a much welcome addition to the literature on social policy and development. Replication of similar studies across the Asia-Pacific region will offer much more insight and allow researchers to compare across countries so as to identify what may or may not work in specific social-economic and political contexts. Such an attempt is the need of the hour in the Asia-Pacific region, as it is still home to the largest concentration of the poor in the world, totalling 578 million according to 2010 FAO estimates. In addition to the key areas covered in the book, the future research will benefit from further expanding the section on social security and its linkages to agricultural development given that a majority of the poor are dependent on agriculture for their survival. Taking social development seriously will be required if the region is to reduce poverty and improve human well-being. ■

Reviewed by Upali Wickramasinghe, Regional Adviser on Poverty Reduction and Food Security, CAPSA-ESCAP.

Dear Readers,

This December 2010 issue will be the last issue of FLASH in printed format. The new monthly E-FLASH will be released in 2011 and will provide you with updates, news and upcoming events related to sustainable agriculture, markets, poverty reduction and food security in the Asia and Pacific Region. To subscribe, please send in your email to: library@uncapsa.org.

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