

Governing food security globally - stakeholders` opinions

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ABSTRACT

While more than 850 million people are starving (FAO, 2012) around the world, agricultural production grew at about 2.3% per year in the past 50 years and access to food increased with an even higher rate. By 2012, almost 65% of all implemented agricultural policies (focused at national, regional and global level) that have a reference on food security only aim on solving present day crisis, without integrating policies for preventing future ones.

While the League of Arab States (LAS) called for an integrated Arab approach to agricultural policy to the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the League of African Nations did not yet agree on common objectives in matters regarding agriculture and rural development despite AGRA Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, a network of US based iNGOs` who`s board is chaired by Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, took on the challenge of reforming this continent`s agriculture. Although the European Union has the Common Agricultural Policy that works on a 7 years framework with a wide budgetary support from the European Commission and all 27 Member States and China has an agricultural policy working under the ridged 5-years system, food security and food quality are becoming the main concerns in the world leaders minds with the population reaching 7 billion on October 31st 2011 and resources becoming scarce.

This paper analyses the stakeholders` opinions on the possibility of changing the policy instruments status quo that would enable a coherent exchange of good practices and information throughout the world to a global approach to food security and food quality that is necessary for overcoming problems like famine in Africa, obesity in North America and high risk and vulnerability for human health and the environment.

The key questions that are answered in this paper are:

What are the common elements of agricultural policies with regional reach that can constitute objectives for a Global Agricultural Policy (GAP)?

Which organization could manage a GAP and what would be its main driving mechanisms?

What kind of impact would have a global mechanism in agriculture and rural development acting at different levels?

What are the determinants for the successful creation and implementation of a GAP?

KEY WORDS

Global Agricultural Policy, food security, stakeholder, governance

INTRODUCTION

The world agrifood system continues to be in a vulnerable state as we fast approach the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger. Although a number of countries have made important changes towards developing food related policies, at the level of the global community,

the challenge of food (in)security has not been able to push policy makers to develop a common solution to be applied, a solution that could include the regional and national specificities registered around the world, while also integrating a global view of increasing agricultural productivity, higher farm competitiveness (for both smallholder farming and industrial type farming) and without relinquishing the national or individual right for food governance.

The present paper is a result of a long term analysis of food-related policies. At different levels of deployment (global, regional, national), both agricultural and rural policies (such as the EU Common Agricultural Policy or the US Farm Bill) have been taken into analysis, as well as macro and microeconomic policies that impact the agrifood system (trade agreements, bilateral cooperation plans etc.) or influence global food security (development aid policies). The purpose of the research was to analyze if present policy options are adequate to use in solving the food crisis and if new policy solutions can be developed and implemented.

The second part of the research, related to global food security governance, was developed in order to assess the creation of new policy options. For this, the methodology was based on a series of questionnaires containing eleven (11) open ended questions grouped in 4 categories: current status of food security policies, acceptance of a Global Agricultural Policy (GAP), managing the GAP, the perspective of a GAP. The questionnaire was sent to a pre-selected sample of policy makers that included: 189 Ministers of Agriculture (or equivalent) in countries signatory of the Millennium Declaration, top 25 international agribusiness corporations (according to revenue in 2011), 2250 smallholder farmers in 27 countries (Europe, Africa, Asia, South America), international organizations (FAO, UNCTAD, UNEP, WFP, IFAD, WB, IMF, EP, EC), 12 development agencies, AR4D networks (GFAR, EFARD, FARA, YPARD), farmers unions & associations and food security experts (10 at selected universities worldwide).

The following answers were received:

- 21 out of 189 Ministers of Agriculture have answered;
- 7 international agribusiness companies have answered;
- 1721 smallholder farmers in 21 countries have answered;
- 8 international organizations have answered by assigning the task to experts (FAO, UNCTAD, UNEP, WFP, IFAD, WB, EP, EC-DG Agri). The IMF declined to answer;
- No development agency answered the questionnaire;
- No AR4D network answered the questionnaire;
- 4 food security experts have answered (from Stanford, Yale, Harvard and Washington State University);
- 6 international farmers unions and associations have answered (Copa Cogeca, European Coordination Via Campesina, European Landowners` Association, Young Friends of the Countryside, Youth Food Movement).

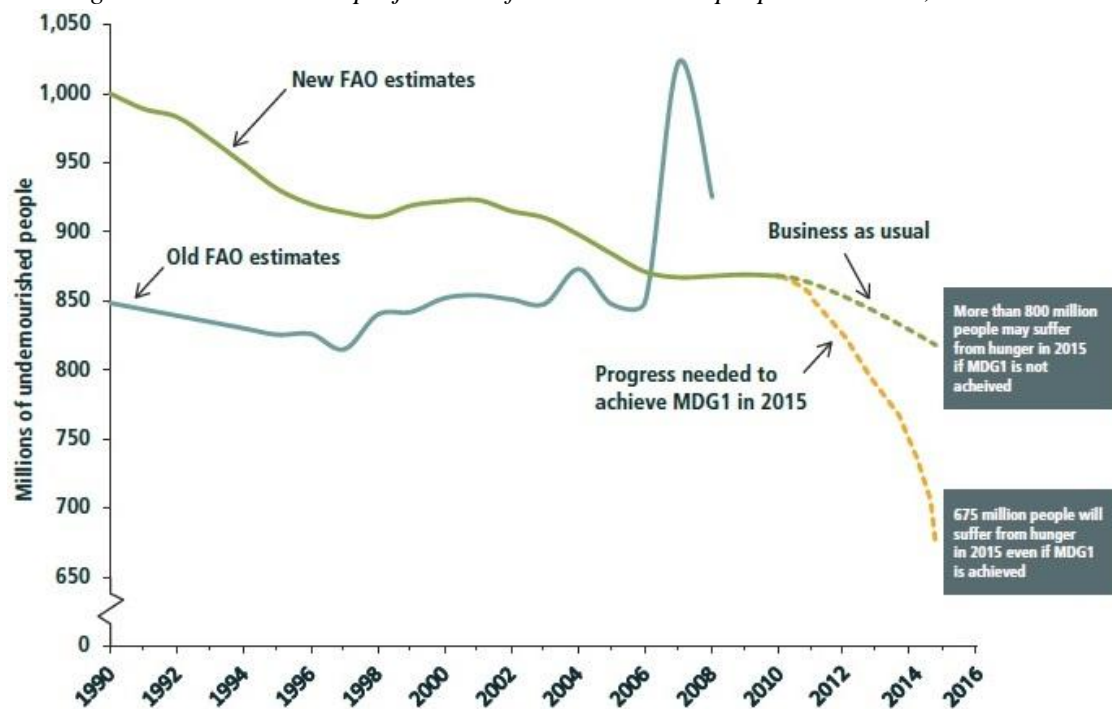
The questionnaires` answers have been critically analyzed and the results classified according to the respondents groups.

1. Leveraging current resources for future needs

Despite the revision of methodology and data used by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to measure food security and, more precisely, the number of undernourished people, the new data shows few reasons to be optimistic in the fight to solve food insecurity. While older estimates showed an upward trend for global hunger with a spike in 2008 and 2009, the new estimates show that significant progress has been made in reducing severe and chronic undernourishment, especially in some regions of Asia and Latin America and Caribbean (LAC). This progress was slowed down or, in some cases, halted in 2007 because of the impact that the global financial crisis had on both developed and developing countries. Despite the recorded progress, the number of chronically undernourished people still remains high, at 870 million in the 2010-2012 period.

If the Millennium Goal of halving undernourishment by 2015 is to be reached, we need to use current resources to meet future needs and demands, while integrating them in a global context. In Figure 1 we can see clearly that a paradigm shift is required in order to cut the number of undernourished people and reach the target of MDG1, as carrying with "business as usual" will not only not ensure reaching the goal, but there is also the possibility of worsening the situation as the world's financial situation is worsening and development aid is being affected.

Figure 1. Estimates and projections of undernourished people worldwide, 1990-2015

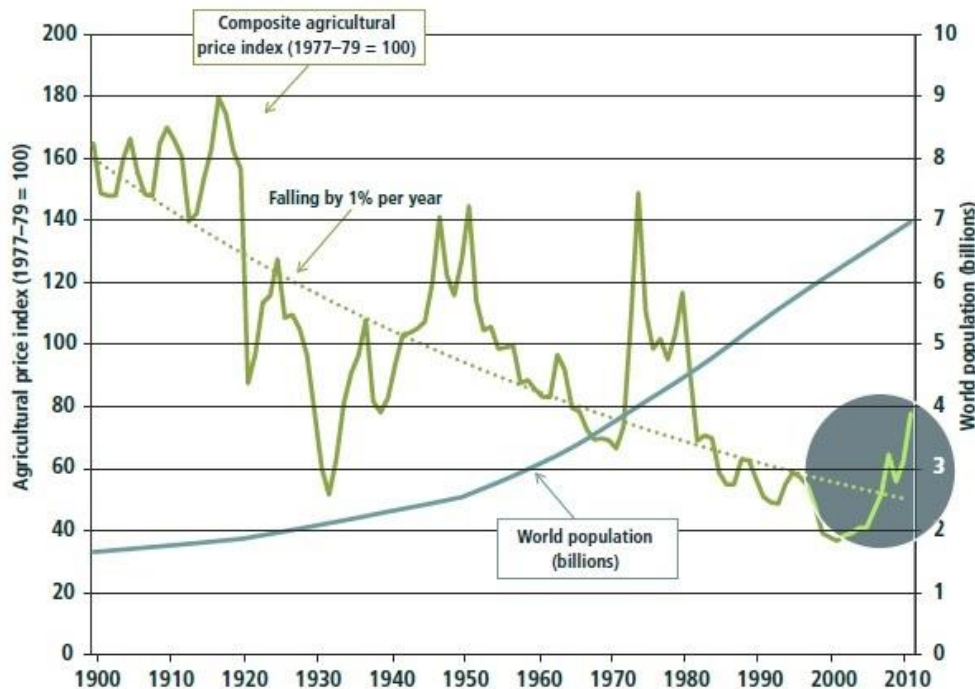


Source: Global Food Policy Report, FAO (Rome, 2012)

1.1. Trends of current resources

It has been said that increasing agricultural productivity is critical if we want to be able to feed 9 billion people by 2050. In 1961 the world was feeding approximately 3.5 billion people by cultivating 1.37 billion hectares of land. A half century later, the world population had doubled to 7 billion while land under cultivation increased by only 12 percent to 1.53 billion hectares. While in the past, it seems that increasing agricultural productivity was the key to ending the food crisis, certain elements show us today the opposite. Between 1961 and 2011, the agricultural production tripled while the agricultural land grew by just 200 million hectares. This was due mainly to an unprecedented yield increase. At the same time, the world saw a fall of agricultural prices of approximately 1%/year. While it seems that the solution that we need to promote in order to end the global food crisis is a two-way one (increase yield together with land), the past years have shown us that we need to take into discussion a more applied approach. Since 2000, the amount of food wasted at global level has risen, with a maximum of 1 billion tones wasted in 2012 of which 2/3 are at farm gate level. Although agricultural products prices have begun dropping by 1%/year since 1961 onwards (with a few spikes every decade), starting in 2000 we have noticed yearly (and monthly) prices increases (with spikes in 2007, 2008 and 2010) as you can see in Figure 2. These increases have put a higher impact on the food chain as, at the same time, the world population grew with approximately 1 billion and the land available for agriculture/food production decreased due to high demands in other fields (biodiesel, growth of communities etc.).

Figure 2. Agricultural price index and population trend, 1900–2010



Source: K. O. Fuglie and S. L. Wang, “New Evidence Points to Robust but Uneven Productivity Growth in Global Agriculture” (2013)

2. A food security policy for all

Tackling global food security must be done through an integrated approach that takes into account all solutions proposed and weighs in the regional and national specificities, as the needs and demands of Europe might not be the same as those of Africa, Asia or the Americas. Robert Paarlberg, food security expert at Harvard University, also mentioned that we should go even further as "*International standards are not a central concern for poor, hungry smallholder farmers in Africa. Almost none of their production enters international trade. In addition, I would not want to force poor farmers in Africa to meet rich country's standards for things like packaging, labeling, cosmetic standards, chemical residues etc.*".

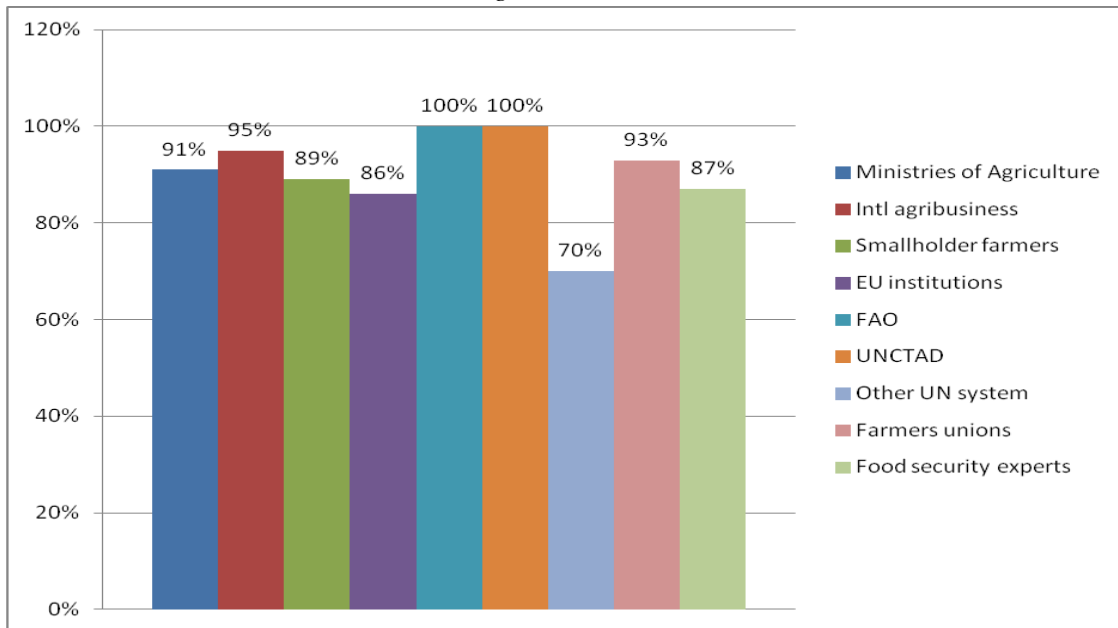
2.1. Moving on from the status quo to a global approach to agriculture

While researching possible solutions for global food security, it was clear that tens of solutions have been proposed in the past 50 years, proposals ranging from those with high feasibility (development assistance to poor countries, aid for agricultural competitiveness growth etc.) to unlikely (moving all people out of Africa) and scary ones (another World War was proposed by a person). Over the course of years, few proposals have been in the policy fields, all of them proposing either changes in trade policies or in development assistance.

In the past two years, when the reforms of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the U.S. Farm Bill began to come into the spotlight, the debate about a Global Agricultural Policy began, the emphasis being put on the trade of agricultural products. In 2012, Jim Harkness, President of the Institute for Agricultural Trade and Policy, declared that such a policy would increase the discrepancies between regions and the number of undernourished people because "*the poor would engage into a bidding war with the wealthy*". Although he is not wrong, a policy should not be analyzed just from one perspective. An agricultural policy (local, national, regional or global) is not merely a trade policy for agricultural products. If we look at the CAP, we see that the emphasis is put on agricultural competitiveness and development of rural communities.

When being asked about the possibility of a Global Agricultural Policy being developed, Victor Villalobos, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), responded "*I think all countries ideally would support such a policy, but the conditions are the sticking point. We all know that the work of global organizations in this area is complicated and achieving agreement on standards, trade, supports, levels of aid, etc. are always going to be a challenge*". While the creation of such a policy is welcomed (see Figure 3) by 90,11% of all respondents and by all respondent groups, there is an unanimous opinion that it would be a challenge to obtain a consensus among the countries regarding its development and implementation.

Figure 3. Stakeholders' opinions(%) on the necessity of an integrated approach for global agriculture

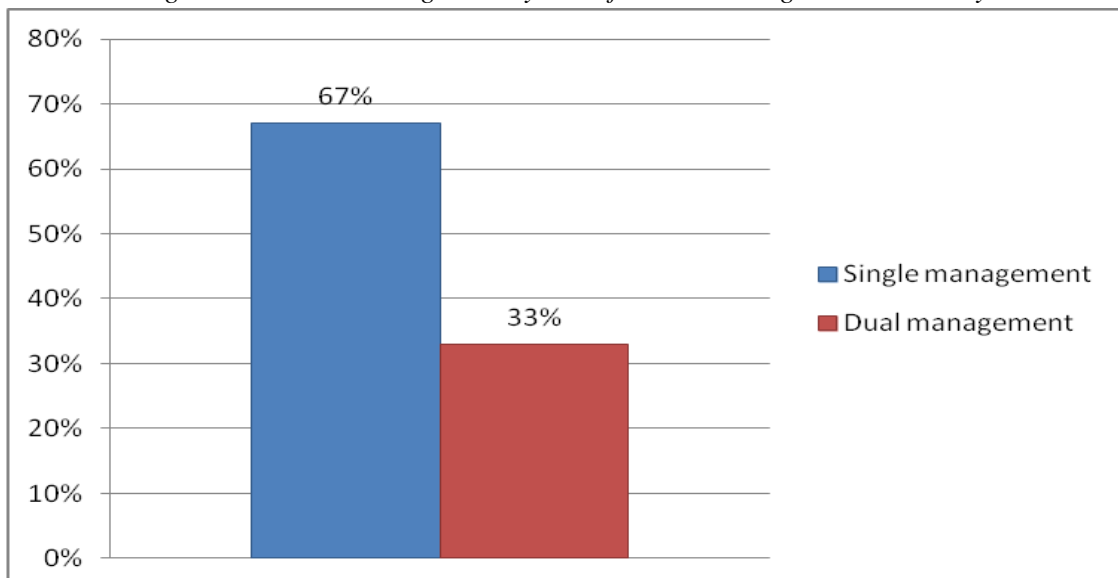


Source: Elaborated by author using data from own research (2013)

While a policy for regulating global agriculture in order to ensure global food security is perceived as a possible approach for integrating all proposed solutions, respondents fear that the management of such a global policy might lead to the overregulation of agriculture and, as a consequence, to the increase of the number of undernourished people.

When asked how they envisage the management of such a policy, two types of proposed management schemes emerged (among others) as you can see in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Possible management systems for a Global Agricultural Policy



Source: Elaborated by author using data from own research (2013)

The respondents have said that the most feasible way that they envisage that such a global policy could be implemented would be either through a single or dual management system.

The single management system was explained as management of the policy by either a newly created institution or by an organization in the United Nations system which has both the technical and financial expertise for managing such projects. When further discussed, the option of single management by a newly created institution was thrown out because of high implementation costs, lack of technical expertise, human resources and infrastructure to support it and the amount of time that it would take to create the institutional framework. When looking into having a single UN system organization, 71% proposed the FAO as a possible single management institution (holding the technical expertise) , 22% proposed the World Bank (having the financial background, while also having expertise in agricultural development and policy) and 7% voted for other institutions among which were UNCTAD, UNEP and the IMF.

The dual management system was explained as a system where one institution takes care of the technical implementation of the policy, while a secondary one is in charge of the financial aspects of it. Among several proposals of institutions that could be implemented in case such a system would be preferred, the best preferred by the respondents was the FAO - World Bank dual system, in which the FAO manages the technical implementation and the World Bank has the financial management. The biggest concerns that such a system raised is linked to the "delay in response" between the two implementing institutions and the beneficiaries of the project.

Robert Paarlberg summarized the current status of global food security policies: *"There are national policies, but very few "world" policies, unless you count things like development assistance and food aid - that are still financed by national governments. Regions that are facing serious undernutrition such as Africa will need more development assistance in order to be well fed by the year 2050"*. While all stakeholders groups seem to agree that the status quo cannot bring change to the way global food security is handled and most agree that a shift in the paradigm is mandatory, when asked if they would support the development of such a policy, 74,3% of all respondents answered that "a clear and precise proposal must be put forward by someone else". Such a proposal, while focusing on diminishing the number of undernourished people, should also include the regulation of other fields in agriculture such as the use of chemicals (pesticides, fertilizers etc.), biotechnology, agritrade, governance etc., in order to have a clear starting point for negotiations.

CONCLUSION

The "limits of growth" of Malthus (1798) were those that first stated the risk of food security. Since then, the interest for measuring the number of undernourished people (and diminishing it) has increased considerably, becoming a clear objective of the United Nations Secretary General.

In order to achieve global food security, stakeholders in agriculture agree that we need an integrated approach that should go past the current views of simply increasing agricultural productivity. An integrated approach must be capable, whilst it would lead to the increase of productivity, to reduce food waste, increase competitiveness of developing countries, regulate the use of chemicals and GMO`s and others. It must be able to give support to a simple, applied manner as, currently, agriculture in one of the most regulated fields.

"We are now in the era where the homeland security is food security" (Makthesim Agan respondent) and this means that countries look each day for new approaches to ensure its citizens food security. Although individuals may not see the need of a global approach to food security as required because *"many don't actually see a food crisis coming"* (Via Campesina respondent), decision makers must push forward bold proposals in order to prevent future food crises, not just fight to diminish their effects.

Creating the policy framework at global level based on stakeholders needs and demands requires a more indepth analysis related to the regulation of each field (agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishery etc.), support mechanism, risk management schemes and others. It has to be complemented, in order to be implemented, by a strong institutional framework supported by both a bottom-up and a top-down approaches, thus ensuring a higher particularization of projects and programmes.

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