

FSN FORUM - DISCUSSION TOPIC NO. 21, 2008
LINKING FOOD AID AND PRO-POOR GROWTH

Dear Forum Members,

I Am Mr. MHGOUB Emad Ahmed, working at the Agricultural Economic & Policy Research Center of Agricultural Research Corporation, Sudan.

Sudan is a poor country facing so many obstacles; the most important is the political stability, economic growth, and the availability of aid for the matter of fighting the poverty.

It is common these days to talk of the 'shifting landscape' of aid. Official development assistance has more than quadrupled in the past 25 years, and the numbers of both aid actors and aid channels have soared. The number of official donors has increased, including, most recently China, India and Brazil.

Some actors talk of raising funds vertically but spending horizontally. Initiatives such as the International Health Partnership, which aims to improve the way international agencies, donors and poor countries work together on health plans, go some of the way. But in the end, effective engagement on global issues requires the strong engagement of recipient countries.

As the World Bank reports, 'not all countries may feel equipped to take on this challenge and should demand and receive special support' to make it happen. Yet the context in which recipient countries are being expected to assert their leadership over the aid agenda is also problematic. Domestic political incentives play a big part. Adverse global economic trends also play a role as national governments turn their attention to short-term crisis management rather than longer-term institutional change and development.

I am currently working on this important issue and conducting a study of which the main topic is: **"Food Aid and Pro-Poor Growth: the Functional Relationships between Food Aid, Food poverty and GDP in Africa and Middle East"**.

This research aims to determine food aid's functional relationship to per capita GDP through an empirical study of its relative contribution to dietary intake for several African and Middle-Eastern countries. Two questions are the paramount issues of the study. Does better nutrition status contribute to faster economic growth? If it does, what is the magnitude and persistence of this effect? These If indeed the answer is yes, and the effect is appreciable, then food aid to those low-income-food-deficit (LIFDCs) and least developing countries (LDCs) will not only improve the human welfare in the regions but also enhance economic growth so that they can eventually grow out of poverty.

Overall, the research presupposes that food aid is part and parcel of the globalization process: a political instrument to initiate economic and trade relations between donors and recipient countries. As today, there are two stands in the globalization debate. One argues that globalization promotes growth. The other claims it does not. As such, the role of food aid in promoting growth warrants investigation. In other words, what have been the comparative advantages in terms of pro poor growth of the world food assistance?

To advance and form the basis for my study arguments, I would like to know your opinion and insights on the following issues:

- What is the **Food Aid role** in alleviating immediate hunger and reducing the costs of hunger?
- Which are the **Food Aid implications** for nutrition, health, Household coping strategies, human capacities, and policies?
- What are the **long-term implications/impacts** on the economic growth?
- How to make **Food Aid more effective**? In particular, how to ensure that the aid system can deliver effectively in response to global risks and challenges, while remaining committed to the country-led approach to development

It is imperative to investigate the overlapping effects of such serious issues of nutritional status, economic growth, terms of trade, food aid, agricultural production and export performance and equity in order to advise policy makers running the small economies of Africa and the Middle East, in a global context.

Fighting against hunger is not only an act of keeping food sufficiency for developing countries, but also for enhancing future economic growth and development. The resolution of fighting against hunger has sent a clear and strong message to all countries that having hunger is very costly in terms loss economic growth.

Truly.

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