

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION

DO POPULATION DYNAMICS AGGRAVATE FOOD AND NUTRITION INSECURITY? - MONITORING CHANGE IN COMPLEX TIMES APRIL 2009

Proceedings available at

http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS_PopulationDynamics_and_FS.doc

I. ISSUES RAISED

Issues for discussion (raised by C. Teller) include:

- What are the recent effects/impacts of demographic dynamics on specific and different food/nutrition insecure and vulnerable populations?
- Who, when and where are the most vulnerable population groups, communities and agro-ecologies affected by demographic changes?
- What are the policy and program responses (if any) to these various population trends and its implications?

II. OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- In order to provoke policy and programme responses, an adequate communication of findings/analysis on population and food security is needed:
 - Communication through many channels web, media dissemination, workshops, etc. “feeding” policy makers with digested data which correspond to their need
 - Involving policymakers in the research process (J. du Guerny, C. Teller)
- To be effective, recommendations/suggestions made by research/project should be specific about who should undertake the suggested actions, under what authority they operate, what management bodies they use, and what resources they have to work with (G. Kent)
- Reflection on the use of the technical document “Food Requirements and Population Growth” (J. du Guerny):
 - It is difficult for political bodies to take long-term issues into account. This challenge is greater in the case of population issues, which involve a half century time horizon. In fact, the document didn’t have much impact on the intended audience, i.e. ministries of agriculture.
 - The document generated an interest and impact where it was not anticipated. There were reactions from military and geo-strategic organizations who felt such issues and scenarios needed to be taken into account within an evolving concept of security. There were also some symptoms of interest from agribusiness and pharmaceuticals. This appears logical in view of the need for long term strategies and the time necessary to develop new products.

- Traditional geographic divisions, Africa, Asia, Latin America are not adequate when dealing with issues such as food requirements. Tables of requirements are presented in the document using this classical typology and using a typology based on dietary patterns. Although the dietary patterns are rough, the sharpness of needs appears much more clearly. It would be helpful to go down to finer geographical detail to establish dietary patterns and these could then be also refined.
- Dietary patterns: one factor appeared crucial: increase in meat consumption and shift upscale in plant calories needed to feed the animals, from chicken to cattle. The document makes implicitly clear that meat consumption could create havoc in increases in food production. Such a change is now occurring with emerging economies. There was also a shift away from certain traditional diets based on roots and tubers towards cereals and maize.
- The scale of certain of the food requirements was unexpected and mostly concentrated in Asia and Africa. Asia's needs were to more than double and certain parts of Africa's increase by 5 and even 7 times depending on the dietary pattern. This has important implications on land, among others,
- The main demographic driving factor identified for food requirements was population growth and therefore fertility remains a crucial variable. Now it's needed to added to this changes in dietary patterns which might be somewhat dampened by increases in prices and changes in poverty levels.
- The document tried to convey in an acceptable diplomatic manner a sense of urgency if needs were to be met and that food production should be an inescapable priority. The expression was maybe too diplomatic.
- Current considerations on food requirements and population (C. Teller):
 - Mortality has declined more rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa than fertility, so that this is contributing to maintaining high population growth rates
 - Urbanization and changing urban diets is increasing requirements
 - Where fertility has declined, there is still much demographic momentum, and the working age bulge in the population. Pyramid also feeds greater consumption needs.

III. REFERENCES

- Note on the preparation of the World Food Summit technical background document N°4 "Food Requirements and Population Growth" (Jacques du Guerny)
http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/Note__WFS__TechnicalBackgroundDocument.doc
- Food Requirements and Population Growth, technical background document N°4, World Food Summit 2006 (Jacques du Guerny)
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w2612e/w2612e04a.htm>
- Are Malthus's Predicted 1798 Food Shortages Coming True? ((Jacques du Guerny)
<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=are-malthus-predicted-1798-food-shortages>

- The Links between Nutrition and Demographic Change (Cristina Lopriore)
<http://www.unscn.org/Publications/foundation4dev/03Population.pdf>

- The Growing food crisis: demographic perspectives and conditioners (Jose Miguel Guzman)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=728&nocache=1

- Long-Term Rural Demographic Trends (Gustavo Anríquez)
http://www.fao.org/es/ESA/riga/index_19_en.htm

- Population and Poverty: the Policy Issues (Geoffrey McNicoll)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=748

- Countries with Rapid Population Growth and Resource Constraints: Issues of Food, Agriculture, and Development (Nikos Alexandratos)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=754&nocache=1

- Managing Population–Environment Systems: Problems of Institutional Design (Geoffrey McNicoll)
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