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# Agricultural Policy and Food Security: Trends on A Global Scale and Future Trajectories

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## Introduction

### Background and Importance:

Food security, defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as "all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2015), remains a critical global challenge. Despite significant progress in recent decades, hunger and malnutrition persist, threatening the well-being of millions. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that nearly 768 million people were undernourished in 2020 ((FAO, 2021). This number is projected to rise due to a confluence of factors, including:

- **Population growth:** The global population is expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, placing immense pressure on food production systems (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022)..
- **Climate change:** Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events are disrupting agricultural production and jeopardizing food security, particularly in vulnerable regions (The World Bank, 2019).
- **Resource scarcity:** Land and water scarcity are growing concerns, limiting the availability of resources for sustainable food production (The World Bank, 2019).
- **Economic inequality:** Poverty and lack of access to resources continue to limit people's ability to afford nutritious food (World Inequality Lab., 2021).



## Role of Agricultural Policies in Addressing Food Security:

Agricultural policies play a pivotal role in shaping food security outcomes. These policies influence a wide range of factors, including:

- **Productivity:** Policies that incentivize investment in research and development, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and improve access to inputs like fertilizers and seeds can significantly enhance agricultural productivity (FAO, 2013).
- **Trade:** Trade policies can affect food availability and affordability. While open trade can increase access to diverse foods, it can also disadvantage small-scale farmers in developing countries (UNCTD, 2020).
- **Market access:** Policies that facilitate access to markets for small-scale farmers and improve rural infrastructure can enhance food security by connecting producers to consumers effectively (IFAD, 2020)
- **Social protection:** Safety net programs and social transfers can help ensure that vulnerable populations, particularly those affected by shocks and crises, have access to adequate food (IFAD, 2020).

By implementing well-designed agricultural policies, governments can contribute significantly to achieving food security for their citizens. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends on various factors, including the specific context of each country, the needs of its farmers and consumers, and the global food security landscape.

## Historical Context of Agricultural Policy and Food Security

Understanding the historical evolution of agricultural policy is crucial for navigating the complexities of food security in the 21st century. This section delves into key milestones, their impact on food security, and explores case studies from different regions.

### Evolution of Agricultural Policies:

#### 1. Early Approaches (Pre-20th Century):

- **Subsistence Farming:** Historically, agriculture focused on meeting the basic needs of a community or nation, with limited policy intervention. While ensuring local food security, this approach struggled to cope with population growth and external shocks.

#### 2. Rise of Modern Agricultural Policy (Early 20th Century):

- **Industrialization and Urbanization:** Growing urban populations in the early 20th century spurred government intervention to ensure stable food supplies and manage price fluctuations. Price supports and import controls became common tools (Clapp, 2012).



### 3. The Green Revolution (Mid-20th Century):

- **Technological Advancements:** The Green Revolution, starting in the 1940s, introduced high-yielding crop varieties, fertilizers, and irrigation techniques. While significantly increasing food production in Asia and Latin America, it also led to environmental concerns and dependence on external inputs (Evenson & Pingali, 2007).

### 4. Neo-Liberalism and Trade Openness (Late 20th Century):

- **Globalization:** The latter half of the 20th century saw a shift towards market-oriented policies and trade liberalization. This aimed to improve efficiency and access to diverse food sources, but also exposed vulnerable farmers in developing countries to competition from subsidized producers (Josling et al., 2013)

### 5. Multi-Stakeholder Approaches (21st Century):

- **Sustainability and Equity:** Today, agricultural policies recognize the interconnectedness of food security, environmental sustainability, and rural development. Policies promote sustainable practices, social protection programs, and empower small-scale farmers (FAO, 2021).

### Historical Impact on Food Security:

The evolution of agricultural policy has had a mixed impact on food security. While advancements like the Green Revolution led to increased production, they often came at the cost of environmental degradation and social inequities.

### Case Studies:

#### 1. The Green Revolution in Asia:

- **Impact:** The introduction of high-yielding varieties significantly boosted food production in India and other Asian countries, averting major famines.
- **Challenges:** Reliance on chemical inputs and water-intensive practices led to long-term environmental problems and debt burdens for farmers.

#### 2. Agricultural Reforms in Africa:

- **Pre-Reform:** Pre-colonial and colonial approaches often focused on cash crops for export, neglecting food production for local consumption, leading to food insecurity.
- **Post-Reform:** Since the 1990s, many African countries have implemented reforms emphasizing food security, such as promoting local seed varieties and supporting small-scale farmers. These efforts have shown promise in improving food security, but challenges remain, including limited infrastructure and climate change risks (Jayne et al., 2013).



## **Current Trends in Agricultural Policies**

### ***A. Policy Approaches by Region***

#### **North America**

In North America, agricultural policies focus on subsidies, trade policies, and technological innovation. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers a variety of subsidy programs, including direct payments, crop insurance, and disaster aid, aimed at stabilizing farmers' incomes and managing market risks (USDA, 2020). These subsidies help farmers mitigate the impacts of price volatility and adverse weather conditions, ensuring a steady income.

Trade policies in North America, particularly through agreements such as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), are designed to enhance market access and regulatory cooperation among the three countries (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2020). These policies promote the export of agricultural products, thereby supporting farmers' economic viability and contributing to the global food supply.

Technological innovation is a significant component of agricultural policy in North America. The USDA invests heavily in research and development to advance precision farming technologies, which include GPS-guided equipment, drones, and big data analytics. These technologies enhance farming efficiency, reduce environmental impact, and increase crop yields (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2020).

#### **Europe**

Europe's agricultural policies are dominated by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and sustainability initiatives. The CAP provides financial support to farmers, aiming to ensure a stable supply of affordable food, preserve rural communities, and protect the environment (European Commission, 2020). Recent reforms of the CAP have increasingly focused on sustainability, introducing measures to promote biodiversity, soil health, and water quality.

Sustainability initiatives are integral to European agricultural policies. The European Green Deal, introduced in 2019, sets ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable farming practices. This includes the Farm to Fork Strategy, which aims to create a fair, healthy, and environmentally-friendly food system by reducing the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and antibiotics (European Commission, 2019).



**Asia**

In Asia, agricultural policies emphasize food security programs, technology adoption, and rural development. Countries like China and India have implemented extensive food security programs to ensure an adequate food supply for their large populations. These programs include price support mechanisms, public distribution systems, and strategic food reserves (The World Bank, 2020).

Technology adoption is rapidly transforming agriculture in Asia. Investments in advanced technologies such as high-yield crop varieties, precision agriculture, and digital platforms enhance productivity and address challenges posed by climate change. For example, India's Digital India initiative promotes the use of digital technologies in agriculture to improve farmers' access to information and markets (Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, 2020).

Rural development remains a critical focus, with policies aimed at improving infrastructure, access to credit, and rural livelihoods. China's Comprehensive Rural Development Program is an example of a policy aimed at reducing rural poverty and promoting sustainable agricultural development (China Daily, 2020).

**Africa**

Africa's agricultural policies are centered on agricultural transformation agendas and support for smallholder farmers. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is a continent-wide initiative aimed at improving food security and nutrition, and increasing agricultural productivity through investment in agriculture (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, 2020).

Support for smallholder farmers is crucial, as they constitute the majority of the farming population in Africa. Policies focus on providing access to credit, training, and technology to enhance productivity and resilience. Initiatives like Ethiopia's Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) work towards modernizing agriculture and improving smallholder productivity through innovative solutions and capacity building (Agricultural Transformation Agency, 2020).

**Latin America**

In Latin America, agricultural policies emphasize market-oriented reforms, export strategies, and social safety nets. Countries like Brazil and Argentina have liberalized their agricultural sectors, encouraged private investment and enhanced competitiveness in global markets. These reforms include reducing tariffs, deregulating markets, and promoting export-oriented agriculture (OECD, 2020).



Export strategies are a significant focus, with policies aimed at expanding market access and improving the quality and competitiveness of agricultural products. Brazil's Agricultural Plan focuses on increasing agricultural exports through technological innovation and infrastructure development (The World Bank, 2020).

Social safety nets are also critical, providing support to vulnerable populations and smallholder farmers. Programs such as Brazil's Bolsa Família and Mexico's PROSPERA provide cash transfers to low-income families, improving their access to food and other basic necessities (The World Bank, 2020).

## ***B. Global Policy Frameworks***

### **United Nations and FAO Initiatives**

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing food security and promoting sustainable agriculture. Goal 2 aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 (United Nations, 2019).

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) plays a pivotal role in global food security efforts by providing technical assistance, policy advice, and capacity building to member countries. The FAO's initiatives, such as the Food Security and Nutrition Policy Assistance (FSNPA) program, help countries develop and implement effective food security policies (FAO, 2020).

### **Trade Agreements and Food Security**

Trade agreements, such as those facilitated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), significantly impact global food security. These agreements aim to create fair trading conditions, reduce trade barriers, and ensure that food can move efficiently from surplus to deficit regions (WTO, 2020). Regional trade blocs, like the European Union (EU) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), also play essential roles in enhancing regional food security by promoting intra-regional trade and cooperation (WTO, 2020).

## ***C. Technological and Innovation Policies***

### **Digital Agriculture**

Digital agriculture, encompassing precision farming and big data analytics, is revolutionizing agricultural practices. Precision farming uses GPS, sensors, and drones to monitor and manage crops with high accuracy, optimizing inputs like water, fertilizers, and pesticides. This leads to increased efficiency, reduced environmental impact, and higher yields (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2020).



Big data analytics involves collecting and analyzing vast amounts of agricultural data to inform decision-making. By leveraging data on weather patterns, soil conditions, and crop performance, farmers can make more informed choices, improving productivity and sustainability (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2020).

### **Biotechnology**

Biotechnology, including genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and CRISPR gene editing, offers significant potential for enhancing crop yields and resilience. GMOs have been developed to resist pests, tolerate herbicides, and withstand adverse environmental conditions, contributing to food security. However, the use of GMOs is subject to strict regulatory environments and public debate regarding their safety and environmental impact (OECD, 2020).

CRISPR technology allows for precise editing of genetic material, offering opportunities to develop crops with desirable traits such as drought tolerance, disease resistance, and improved nutritional content. Regulatory frameworks are evolving to address the ethical and safety concerns associated with CRISPR and other gene-editing technologies (OECD, 2020).

### **Sustainable Practices**

Sustainable agricultural practices are increasingly being promoted to address environmental challenges and ensure long-term food security. Organic farming, which avoids synthetic inputs and emphasizes ecological balance, is gaining traction as a sustainable alternative to conventional agriculture. Policies supporting organic certification and market development are crucial for the growth of organic farming (FAO, 2020).

Agroecology, which integrates ecological principles into agricultural systems, aims to create sustainable and resilient farming practices. This approach includes diverse cropping systems, agroforestry, and soil conservation techniques. Agroecological practices can enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, and increase resilience to climate change (FAO, 2020).

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) encompasses practices and technologies that mitigate climate change impacts while improving productivity and resilience. CSA includes measures such as conservation tillage, water-efficient irrigation, and the use of climate-resilient crop varieties. Policies supporting CSA are vital for adapting to climate change and ensuring food security in vulnerable regions (FAO, 2020).



## **Challenges and Barriers to Effective Policy Implementation of Agricultural Policy and Food Security**

### ***Political and Economic Constraints***

One of the primary challenges in implementing effective agricultural policies is the political and economic landscape within which these policies operate. Governance issues, such as weak institutional frameworks and corruption, significantly impede policy effectiveness. In many developing countries, the lack of transparent and accountable governance structures leads to the misallocation of resources meant for agricultural development (World Bank, 2020). Corruption can divert funds away from critical projects, undermining efforts to improve food security. Additionally, political instability can disrupt policy continuity and effectiveness, as changes in government often lead to shifts in policy priorities and strategies (FAO, 2019).

Economic constraints also play a crucial role. Limited financial resources can restrict the scope and scale of policy implementation. For example, in low-income countries, budget constraints often result in inadequate funding for agricultural research, extension services, and infrastructure development (OECD, 2020). Moreover, global economic fluctuations, such as commodity price volatility, can affect national budgets and the financial viability of agricultural initiatives, making it challenging to sustain long-term policy commitments (FAO, 2020).

### ***Socio-Cultural Factors***

Socio-cultural factors significantly influence the acceptance and success of agricultural policies. Traditional farming practices and resistance to change can be substantial barriers. Many farming communities rely on age-old agricultural methods that have been passed down through generations. Introducing modern agricultural techniques or new crop varieties may meet resistance due to a lack of trust in new methods or fear of potential risks (World Bank, 2020).

Additionally, cultural beliefs and practices related to land ownership and use can affect policy implementation. In some regions, communal land ownership systems can complicate the adoption of policies that require individual land tenure or large-scale land reforms. Gender norms also play a critical role; in many cultures, women are the primary food producers, yet they often have limited access to resources, technology, and decision-making processes (FAO, 2020).

### ***Technical and Infrastructure Barriers***

Access to technology and infrastructure development are pivotal for effective agricultural policy implementation but often face significant barriers. Technological adoption is hindered by factors such as high costs, lack of technical knowledge, and inadequate support services. For instance,





precision agriculture technologies require significant investment in equipment and training, which may be beyond the reach of smallholder farmers (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2020).

Infrastructure deficits, including poor transportation networks, insufficient storage facilities, and limited access to markets, pose substantial challenges. In many rural areas, inadequate road networks make it difficult for farmers to transport their products to market, leading to high post-harvest losses and reduced incomes (OECD, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of reliable electricity and water supply systems can hinder the adoption of modern irrigation techniques and other agricultural innovations (World Bank, 2020).

## **Policy Recommendations**

### ***Strategic Interventions***

To enhance food security, targeted policy actions are essential. These should include increasing investments in agricultural research and development to promote sustainable farming practices and improve crop yields (FAO, 2020). Policies should also focus on enhancing access to credit and financial services for smallholder farmers, enabling them to invest in new technologies and inputs (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, establishing robust social safety nets can protect vulnerable populations from food insecurity and market shocks.

### ***Multi-Stakeholder Approaches***

Engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation of agricultural policies. Governments, the private sector, and civil society must collaborate to create inclusive and sustainable food systems. Public-private partnerships can drive innovation and investment in agriculture, while civil society organizations can ensure that the voices of smallholder farmers and marginalized groups are heard and their needs addressed (FAO, 2020).

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are vital for assessing the impact and effectiveness of agricultural policies. Implementing robust data collection and analysis systems can help track progress and identify areas for improvement. Regular impact assessments and feedback loops should be established to adjust policies based on empirical evidence and changing circumstances (OECD, 2020). This ensures that policies remain relevant and effective in addressing the dynamic challenges of food security.



## **Policy Recommendations**

### ***Strategic Interventions***

Strategic interventions are essential to address the multifaceted challenges of food security. One key action is increasing investments in agricultural research and development to promote sustainable farming practices and enhance crop yields (FAO, 2020). This can include breeding programs for climate-resilient crops and advancements in soil health management. Additionally, policies should aim to improve farmers' access to credit and financial services, which enables them to invest in modern technologies and inputs necessary for increased productivity (World Bank, 2020). Strengthening social safety nets is also critical; programs like conditional cash transfers can help buffer vulnerable populations against food insecurity and market volatility (OECD, 2020).

### ***Multi-Stakeholder Approaches***

Engaging a broad range of stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation of agricultural policies. Governments, private sector entities, and civil society organizations must collaborate to create inclusive and sustainable food systems (FAO, 2020). Public-private partnerships can drive innovation and investment in agriculture, leveraging the strengths of each sector. For instance, private companies can provide technological solutions and infrastructure, while civil society organizations can ensure that the needs of smallholder farmers and marginalized groups are addressed. Such inclusive approaches ensure that policy interventions are comprehensive and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders (World Bank, 2020).

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are vital to assess the impact and effectiveness of agricultural policies. Implementing robust data collection and analysis systems can help track progress and identify areas needing improvement. Regular impact assessments should be conducted to evaluate the outcomes of policies and programs (OECD, 2020). Feedback loops are essential for adjusting policies based on empirical evidence and evolving circumstances, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective. Establishing transparent and accountable monitoring frameworks can also enhance policy credibility and public trust, leading to better compliance and outcomes (FAO, 2020).



## Conclusion

### *Summary of Key Findings*

This review has highlighted several key points regarding agricultural policies and food security. It has outlined the significant challenges and barriers to effective policy implementation, including political and economic constraints, socio-cultural factors, and technical and infrastructure barriers. Additionally, it has discussed current trends in agricultural policies across different regions and the role of global policy frameworks in promoting food security. The review also emphasized the importance of technological and innovation policies in modernizing agriculture and enhancing productivity.

### *Final Thoughts*

Achieving global food security requires adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking policies. Policymakers must consider the complex and dynamic nature of food systems and the diverse needs of different regions and populations. Strategic interventions should focus on sustainable agricultural practices, investment in research and development, and robust social safety nets. Multi-stakeholder approaches are essential to ensure that policies are comprehensive and inclusive, leveraging the strengths of governments, the private sector, and civil society. Finally, effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks are crucial for assessing policy impact and making necessary adjustments. By embracing these principles, we can work towards a more food-secure world, capable of meeting the needs of current and future generations.

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