

Food Security in Southern Africa: Silent Crisis?

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Structure of the Presentation

- ▶ Setting the Context: Africa and the Global Political Economy in the 21st century
- ▶ Defining a Contested Concept : Unpacking *Food Security*
- ▶ Major Food Security Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa
- ▶ Structural Causes of the Food Crisis
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Setting the context: Africa and the Global Political Economy in the 21st century

- ▶ International relations are dominated by a narrow security discourse: hierarchical and ignores socio-economic insecurity & slow violence
- ▶ Seven of the thirteen fastest growing economies in the world are African (World Bank 2015)
- ▶ Is Africa really rising? Low-levels of social protection; unemployment; poverty; food security ; GDP as measure of development?
- ▶ Socio-economic indicators debunk this thesis, including food security
- ▶ The discussion on food security cannot be separated from the transformation of the global and domestic political economy over different epochs.
- ▶ Agrarian systems are shaped and reconfigured by the mode of production in a specific era (Bernstein 2014; Friedmann & McMichael 1989 ; Wittman 2009).

Setting the context: Africa and the Global Political Economy in the 21st century (2)

- ▶ Interconnection between regional and global food security challenges or crisis
- ▶ food regime approach: analyze food systems within the context of a dominant international developmental paradigm during a particular epoch.
- ▶ Method which focuses on “the rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale”(Friedmann 1993)
- ▶ Major question: how does the global political economy shape the functioning of food systems and regimes ?

Defining a Contested Concept: Food Security?

- ▶ Food security “*all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.*”(World Food Summit 1996 ;FAO 1996)
- ▶ This definition over-emphasizes consumption; ignores production
- ▶ Reduces food crisis to a social security or welfare issue = food aid or programmes
- ▶ Silent on the nature of power relations that reproduce international food regimes and systems. (Bernstein 2014; Hilary 2013; La Via Campesena1996)
- ▶ Gender blind
- ▶ Definitions are important!!!! They shape policy proposals and state intervention in food systems

Major Food Security Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa

- ▶ Global crisis: 868 million people = chronically undernourished, 1.52 billion people without enough food (FAO 2012). FAO(2014)= 805 million
- ▶ Most of these food insecure citizens reside in developing countries: 791 million (FAO 2014).
- ▶ SSA ranked lowest in the Global Food Security Index (Economist 2014). 220 million people undernourished 2014-16
- ▶ SSA region has made least progress: One person in four is undernourished (FAO 2014; WFP 2014)
- ▶ $\frac{3}{4}$ of EAP in the region = small family subsistence farmers who live in poverty (Barret 2011)
- ▶ Gendered hunger (more susceptible) ; women make up over 50% of the workforce in agriculture in the region; produce 80% foodstuffs for household consumption (Ari 2014)

Structural Causes of the Food Crisis

- ▶ Land question?
 - ▶ 75% of farms in low/middle income countries = less than one hectare . 65% of SSA = low-income countries (Economist 2014;FAO 2015)
 - ▶ Land grabbing: 83 million hectares of land in global south acquired through transnational agri-investment; 99 year leases (Hilary 2013)
 - ▶ Drivers of land grabs: biofuels, extractive Industries, and farmer migration (Hall 2011)
 - ▶ Neo-patrimonialism and the traditional-authority-ruling-party-complex(Southall 2013)
 - ▶ *Accumulation by dispossession* (Harvey 2003)

Corporate Control

- ▶ Economic concentration along the entire global food value chain
 - ▶ Three TNCs control over 50% of commercial seed production in the world: Monsanto, Du Pont & Syngenta (Hilary 2013)
 - ▶ All 3 are in the top ten list of global agro-chemical companies; major players in the biotechnology sector
 - ▶ 28% of the global food processing market is controlled by 10 corporations: Nestle is the biggest player
 - ▶ Largest 10 food retailers have doubled their market share in last 10 years. Expanding into global south
 - ▶ 40 large corporations control the global food system(food to fork)
 - ▶ Conventional food security policy discourse is silent on corporate power. Why ?

Third International Food Regime: late 1970s-current epoch

- ▶ Food regime: “rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale” (Friedmann 1993)
- ▶ Minimal state intervention and privatization: market-led global food system (Alkon 2013)
- ▶ Trade and financial liberalisation
- ▶ Over-financialization of the food system (trading companies, pension funds, investment agents expanded into global agri-food chains)
 - ▶ *Pension funds hold between five and fifteen billion dollars in assets linked to rural areas (Clapp 2013).*
- ▶ Accelerated agro-industrialisation driven by rapid introduction of new forms of privately-owned biotechnologies
- ▶ Dominance of the global food and fuel nexus (Bernstein 2014; Hall 2011).

Third International Food Regime(2)

- ▶ WTO TRIPs : extension of intellectual property rights to cover natural plant life = restrict sharing and saving of seeds. Ignores and devalues indigenous knowledge
- ▶ Global food production is increasing; but hunger persists and increases in some regions such as SSA (FAO 2015). Problem is distribution not production
- ▶ Agricultural products from developing nations face protection that is four to seven times higher than goods produced in the OECD countries (Newframer 2006)
- ▶ US and Europe support local or domestic producers.
 - ▶ For example : quotas, high tariffs or subsidies which ensure that exports from developing countries remain unattractive and also cause global price instability.
- ▶ Result: marginalization of small farmers in LDCs

Extractive economies and Africa Rising Myth

- ▶ These economies are driven by extractive economic activities: mining, oil and gas exploration and forestry (World Bank 2015)
- ▶ Primary case studies have proven that expansion of extractive industries has had adverse effects on food security in SSA. (BFAP 2012)
- ▶ Hall (2011) “non-sustainable forms of resource extraction that are repatriated as profits to corporations outside the locality”
- ▶ Extractive industrial agriculture reliant on high usage of agro-chemicals. Export-orientated: global markets integration over localization
- ▶ Based on Harvey’s(2003) notion *of accumulation by dispossession*
- ▶ Extractive global political economy has produced the ecological crisis: increased emissions, soil degradation, water pollution and commodification of global commons (Naomi Klein : 2014): *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*

Alternative Food Systems Debate

- ▶ Alkon's (2013) categorization of alternative policies on global food production
- ▶ Environmentalist approach:
 - ▶ creating a food system that produces less negative ecological effects
 - ▶ Organic farming ; less environmental degradation and unsustainable natural resource use
- ▶ Community approach
 - ▶ ensuring food security within local communities.
 - ▶ food and nutrition insecurity challenges experienced by poor or low-income communities.
- ▶ Food Justice approach
 - ▶ broader racial and economic disparities are reflected “within the production, distribution, and consumption of food
- ▶ Food Sovereignty movement