Many voices, one goal: Achieving food security for all. FOODSECURE conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 7-9, 2013.

Around 80 researchers from Africa, China, Ethiopia, Europe, and the U.S. met at the ILRI campus in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from October 7-9, 2013. They discussed and worked out sustainable strategies for addressing and achieving global food and nutrition security.

The conference comprised two days of research discussions and exchange (October 7-8) and one day of engaging with African stakeholders at a roundtable (October 9).

Impressions of Addis: “The conference started with a great overview of the food situation in 4 critical regions. While overall malnourishment has improved relatively all over the world, it has become worse in Africa. This is the only region where agricultural productivity growth has been slow or declining. Farming is mostly done by women who work in smallholder farms, as well as older populations while the unemployed youth is shunning farming. The regions suffer from poor infrastructure (roads), low input use and weak institutions.

Furthermore, Africa is threatened by climate change and population growth could make a bad situation worse. Yet there are a lot of opportunities as well. Africa can be a breadbasket with investment in infrastructure, increased irrigation, input use, improved technology and removal of trade barriers between countries. It needs an institutional and technological revolution. There are good signs, such as the cellphone revolution, the emergence of entrepreneurial class and improved governments in some countries.” (Excerpt from a blog by David Zilberman, member of FOODSECURE’s scientific board. For the full blog see: http://blogs.berkeley.edu/2013/10/15/addis-locy-and-food-security/)

You can also read and watch the full conference documentary (including research presentations, photos, interviews and a short movie) on http://foodsecureblog.wordpress.com/

Voices from the FOODSECURE scientific board

(Alan Matthews, Mahendra Dev, David Zilberman, Willis Oluoch-Kosura)

FOODSECURE covers main research and policy questions with regard to food and nutrition security and integrates the key issues of their availability, accessibility, utilization and stability. Moreover, the project offers some innovations such as: adding nutrition and its impact to the research and policy agenda; applying an improved scientific methodology (e.g. on food price volatility) in the realms of economic modeling and scenario analysis; setting up a conceptual framework and a typology of countries. The overall goal is to produce policy-relevant scientific outcome.

Keeping in mind that the project’s research cannot address all aspects of FNS especially considering the time frame – and has to set priorities we should be aware of gaps and “blind spots” such as: geographical focus seems to be on Africa, whereas we should not forget the changing global picture; is there enough gender perspective?; are we focusing enough on future instead of past (especially in terms of innovation and technology); link to (public) health and to risk; impact of technological innovations (which go beyond agriculture) and their regulation; role of markets and of NGOs in the EU; FNS as part of bio-economy means optimizing complex “value-webs” instead of value chains only.
The conceptual framework (work package 1) forms the basis and umbrella of the project’s research. It consists of determinants and drivers of FNS - such as FNS relevant innovations (work package 3). Results from a literature review and own survey showed that innovation and TFP in agriculture are key to FNS, but so is the correlation between R&D per capita and innovation performance (e.g. in Brazil and China). The outcome of the survey seemed to be NGO-biased (e.g. critical of GMO) and some factors affecting especially consumers’ behavior are missing or underrepresented such as institutional and market innovations generated by the private sector (like fast food chains).

Another component of the conceptual framework is price volatility and its impacts on FNS. Robust findings in the literature say that short-term shocks influence nutritional status negatively.

This was basically confirmed by FOODSECURE research investigating two sides of the impact: price volatility and price risk, the latter being linked to insurance and saving mechanisms. Income of households and their risk management are interrelated. Moreover, research confirms that sanitation and female education play a crucial role in explaining differences in the nutritional status among countries and over time.

Another key research area is an FNS country typology for outcomes and determinants of FNS (work package 2). The modeling exercise is mainly based on socio-economic variables. To this research not only modelers, but also researchers working on stakeholders and policy contribute. Here, women characteristics and development over time will be included to achieve a realistic picture. The researchers envisage to identify “hot spots” where data collection and analyses can be intensified.

Long-term modeling and the development of scenarios (work package 7) belong to the most ambitious and scientifically challenging tasks in the project. Goal is to develop a modelling toolbox. This toolbox is to support long-term projections of future FNS outcomes and therewith answer the key questions facing (EU) decision makers with regard to global FNS such as: What price trend to expect in the future; will food process decline; will achieving FNS by 2050 require irreversible environmental degradation (such as deforestation the Amazon)?

At a round table on October 9, high-ranking African stakeholders raised the following points: The importance of regional integration in Africa and coordination of response to food and nutrition security; Prioritizing cross-cutting issues such as gender and adaptation to climate change. Panelists and audience jointly called upon the EC and African policy makers to establish long-term collaboration for basic and applied agricultural science between the African and European science communities, going beyond the usual project frames.
The main scientific challenges in the modeling exercise are:

- collecting (the right) data;
- how to incorporate drivers and indicators;
- how to connect drivers of change to the household level;
- linking models such as on technological change and yield, and adding factors such as nutritional components and household level aspects in the modelling exercise. Besides, researchers realize that scenarios must address risks (such as food-related conflicts) and support decision-making on policies that are robust to uncertain futures.

Stakeholders’ involvement and input (work package 5) contributes to and interacts with different research areas. The discussion at the conference dealt with possible deficiencies: The role of risks in the scenarios, missing role of nutrition/health/child mortality in the models; the need to broaden the stakeholder group involved to non-Europeans, private sector/business, you and to the people affected by food insecurity (e.g. in Africa).

EU-policies affecting FNS and developing countries (work package 11) were discussed:

- **CAP**: Decoupled intervention is less relevant to FNS and has less impact on world markets.
- **ETS on carbon emissions** (before economic crisis): low market prices, over-allocation of quotas.
- **Biofuel policies**: Since the set-up of an EU-wide framework in 2003 added by compulsory objectives in 2009, dynamics have changed, stretching from subsidies to tax exemptions, centered on biodiesel.
- **EU has abolished export subsidies** but still uses contingent protection in its trade policies.

Countercyclical tariffs may have destabilizing effect on international markets.

Preferential policies can lead to trade diversion flows (impact between preferred countries) and to a decrease in variety of exports to non-referred countries.

International trade Domestic and international agricultural and trade policies of emerging countries (India, China and Latin America) change world market dynamics. The world is more integrated and less protected. Instead of a few dominating countries, the classical global players, there is a multiplicity of leaders influencing international food prices.

Leading role of US and EU in terms of non-tropical food exports share, wheat exports, storage capacities and surpluses (also affecting food aid) has diminished over past decade.

Accordingly, the relevance of the WTO has eroded, since it was centered on ensuring exports. Food insecure people are much more affected by local and national food policy than by international.

To address global food security in an effective way, national determinants of food policy should be addressed and changed.
Voices from Africa: Stakeholders, colleagues and guests

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) kindly supported the participation of a group of African colleagues. We are grateful for the partnership with CTA on informed policy dialogue on FNS in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. See http://www.cta.int/

Samuel Asuming-Brempong, a senior lecturer from the university of Ghana stated: „The major problem in Africa on food and nutrition security concerns young people, children and mothers. Other big issues in most African countries are a lack of knowledge, information, teaching and training as well as low agricultural productivity. We therefore need investments in agriculture as well as in infrastructure, so we can get the agricultural products to the markets“ he said.

Kenneth Masuki, programme manager at ASARE-CA in Tanzania explained that productivity among African farmers is low because the use of agricultural technology and input such as fertilizers is low. Around 40% of the crops are lost because of post-harvest mismanagement, Masuki tells. Asked for solutions, Masuki poses that in fact there are good policies, but there is a lack of implementation. African farmers actually still need subsidies to produce adequately. „We also need more trade among African countries“ he concluded.

Claude Adandjedan, Professor at the University of d’Abomey-Calavi, Benin, said that one of the things that can help Africa in the long run is creating sustainable agricultural systems. „Therefore, modeling the variability of resources and factors such as climate change can be a useful contribution of research such as conducted in FOODSECURE for us“, he said.

We thank Bence Toth at DG AGRI for his support in organizing the debate, and participants for their contributions. FOODSECURE will continue to organize meetings and briefings at the EC.

Imprint

Publisher:
FOODSECURE project office
c/o LEI Wageningen UR
PO Box 29703
2502 LS The Hague
The Netherlands
foodsecure@wur.nl
www.foodsecure.eu

Editor: Alma van der Veen (ZEF)
Layout: Sebastian Eckert (ZEF)
Photos: ZEF

March 2014