



Agriculture Resilience in a World of Crises and Instability

Global Food Shocks

Food might be essential to human life, but when the whole world is going through a global crisis, it is not something to be taken as an absolute certainty.

The extreme weather that resulted in the 2022 floods devastated farmland and disconnected the markets of a community. Food security, fundamentally, is about an adequate and sustained supply of safe and healthy food available to all persons, at all times and in all parts of the world. Food security is the foundation on which all aspects of a healthy life are built. But the reality is that it has become increasingly difficult to sustain, and no place exemplifies the issue more starkly than Pakistan.

While COVID-19 restricted trade, making it harder for Punjab farmers to sell their produce, food prices reached unsustainable levels in cities such as Karachi and Lahore. Extreme weather events, including the disastrous floods of 2022, destroyed agricultural land and fragmented local markets. Increasing prices for fuel and transport, partly driven by regional geopolitical tensions affecting oil imports, has made essential commodities, even basic groceries, all the more expensive. The combined effects of these shocks illustrate precisely how fragile many of our established systems are, and how easily local and international crises can devolve into real life struggles.

The issue of food security, while ever present in the mind of governments, has in recent years assumed an even more urgent and overwhelming stature. At its heart, food security relies upon four pillars, availability, access, utilization, and stability. This means that sufficient food must be available on a sustained basis, accessible to all, nutritious, and properly utilized. It becomes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the fragility of every pillar at the same time, exposing vulnerabilities across all of them. Pakistani farmers of Punjab and Sindh could not sell their products when markets closed. For wheat, rice, and vegetables, prices skyrocketed for citizens of Karachi and Lahore. In Sri Lanka

there were constant scarcities of fuel and food. In Africa there were market failures resulting in over ten million people being unable to feed themselves, surviving only on foods of minimal nutritional value.

This crisis in itself provides a terrible wake up call to show that a faraway crisis will come back to the dining table at home. Politics is still the biggest factor in food security issues. When conflict occurs, food production can be disrupted, transportation networks and storehouses can be damaged, and interstate trade is hampered. One such issue that remains prominent today is the ongoing tensions within Iran and its implication for oil and petroleum supplies within the region. Also at play is the world's reliance on energy markets. A rise in the price of oil, as experienced due to conflict, often translates into a subsequent rise in the price of food because farming and agriculture are fuel dependent. Food production, transportation, and processing all consume large amounts of fuel.



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The current situation in Iran has raised oil prices, thus raising the price of transport, electricity, and agriculture. This has the cumulative effect of raising food prices for everyday families. This has made everyday foods such as wheat, rice, and cooking oil unaffordable. Although they are still available in markets, households simply do not have the money to purchase them, resulting in widespread food insecurity. As a result, in 2026 increased oil and gas prices have translated significantly into inflationary pressures and food insecurity, especially within developing nations.

Import dependent and poorer countries are highly susceptible to these shocks and lack the ability to cope. For countries like Pakistan, dependent on the import of oil, costs of transportation and production have increased, thus resulting in heightened inflation. In conjunction with global supply chain disruptions and a rise in food prices, this is

rendering normal household's incapable of meeting their daily needs. This clearly illustrates that food security is more than just a matter of economics, rather it is deeply connected to international politics and energy security as well.

Climate and Geopolitics

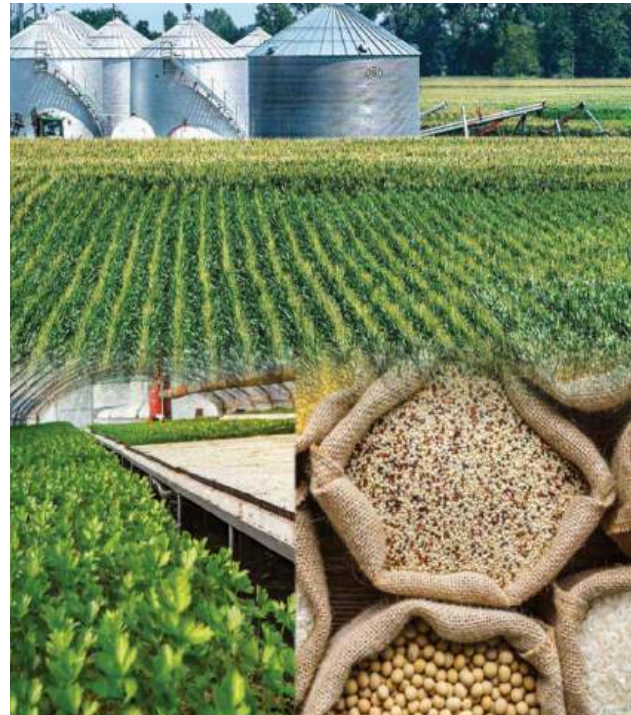
Climate change is significant, and it is not necessarily the dramatic shifts that people often discuss. It is the slow and continuous change over long periods of time that can have the most significant impacts.

As an instance, consider what is happening in Pakistan. The ongoing environmental stresses have long term effects on agriculture, which combined with the fact that food systems can no longer guarantee a consistent supply of food at a stable price, can create massive problems such as food shortages and rising prices, which affect some communities particularly heavily.

In turn, all these factors accumulate to increase the prices of everyday food for the average household. Ordinary foods such as rice, wheat, and cooking oil have all risen beyond what many families can afford. While these items are still available in markets, people simply cannot afford them, and this results in hunger among the common man. The effects of financial instability can sometimes be quite startling. For example, if we take into account what is occurring in Pakistan.

It is really frightening that we are going to get groups of global shocks. Take what has just been going on in Pakistan where there were financial problems and natural disaster. Pakistan had devastating floods in 2022 which destroyed crops and farmland, as well as rising food prices making it extremely difficult for people to buy food in the first place. It is serious when people are not even able to afford to eat as that problem can lead to many more. Many countries are struggling in similar ways, and we are going to have to work on helping them recover.

The way in which food is produced, traded, and consumed globally is deeply intertwined. It is now the case that most countries around the world rely on food imports to feed their citizens, and thus a vast system of food production and trade has emerged. Although globalization has facilitated access to a variety of food products worldwide, it has also rendered the system more vulnerable than it may otherwise be. Where any kind of crisis arises, whether war, trade restrictions, or natural disaster in one part of the world, this is likely to have immediate repercussions for food prices and availability in others, as shown in the case of recent fertilizer shortages which have impacted farmers globally.



Building Resilience

To improve food security, we need to develop more robust and adaptable supply chains. For a country such as Pakistan, this can be tackled by encouraging domestic production, investing in food systems, and improving storage and transportation networks, particularly in rural areas, thus enabling food access for all, even in adverse conditions.

If support is provided to small farmers of Pakistan, it would go a long way. A large number of farmers lack resources, equipment, and access to markets for their produce. Aid in the form of tools and funding can enable them to increase production, help the nation meet its food requirements domestically, and reduce dependence on external sources. Hence, support to small farmers will benefit both farmers directly and Pakistan in general. The techniques for improving current methods can work through new agricultural technologies and appropriate tools. For example, in areas where there is lack of water or flooding, it would be a good remedy to implement smart irrigation and cultivate climate resilient crops. However, these solutions must be viable for local farmers to be effective.

The government needs to formulate schemes for managing disasters and economic shocks and provide relief measures for low-income families whenever prices are inflated. The Benazir Income Support Programme has proved its importance in Pakistan for assisting needy families. Such programs are certainly helpful in combating food security issues, but to meet ever increasing needs it is imperative to extend their scope by ensuring support reaches every needy person.



Food security is not only a Pakistani issue, it is a global issue that requires international cooperation and countries working together to cope with the problem. We are all part of it and need to support each other to achieve adequate food availability. It is important to work collectively to solve the issue of food security so that no person is deprived of food in this world. To uplift communities at large, we must always take small steps. For large cities of Pakistan such as Karachi and Lahore, it is important that people reduce food wastage by being mindful while buying and using goods. Also, support for local food producers by purchasing locally grown food should be promoted. Such steps, taken individually, may seem small, but if adopted by the whole population simultaneously, they would have a significant impact on the system.

It is not only an issue that is subject to policy changes, it is an issue faced daily by thousands, even millions globally. Health pandemics, war, climate instability, and financial hardship all cumulatively affect families' ability to source the food they require to live. However, it does not require predicting all potential eventualities. We can work to ensure systems remain robust, innovation can be implemented, and cooperation across communities and borders remains strong. Food security is not merely about ensuring individuals do not starve, it is about implementing resilient, responsive, and equitable food systems. At its heart, ensuring availability of food is not a luxury, it is a necessity of existence. We must ensure our systems are resilient and capable of responding to all circumstances and ensuring access to food needed for survival. This can be done with collective action.

It is not just about food or money that we are talking about, it is about lives. We need to resolve today's problems, otherwise they become tomorrow's disasters. The whole

world stands at a threshold, and what we do now will be remembered in the future. When systems fail, numbers are not hurt, people are hurt. If we hesitate to resolve today's issues, they may become irresolvable.

Hunger is not just a crisis; it is a consequence. Consequences do not wait for anyone.

The greatest danger that we will encounter will not be that we will run out of food, but that we will do nothing about it when it matters. The sheer quantity of food available in this world to feed its population is astounding. The question is: will it? Because when it all goes wrong, it is not markets that fail, it is lives that fail.

History will judge us not on the fact that we owned it, but on whether we chose to use it when everything that we possessed was being taken.



About the Author: Ms. Humaira Kanwal is an Associate Member of ICMA, working as Senior Accounts Manager at Al Haram Taka, UAE. Previously, she worked as an Assistant Manager Accounts at Al Muhairy Group, Abu Dhabi. She possesses professional experience in accounting, financial management, and business operations, with expertise in handling financial reporting, accounts management, and organizational financial processes.