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Addressing Food Insecurity and Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030

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ABSTRACT | Objective: This paper aims to assess the progress and challenges associated with Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), focusing on the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, and the implementation of resilient food systems by 2030. **Method:** A review of secondary data from published literature and United Nations reports was conducted. The analysis compares global food security trends, examines the root causes of hunger, and discusses mechanisms to achieve the Zero Hunger goal. **Results:** Despite global efforts, hunger and food insecurity have increased in recent years, with 690 million people affected. Key challenges include climate change, conflicts, and the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data suggest that agricultural investments, gender equality in resource access, and social protection programs are essential for reducing hunger and achieving sustainable food systems. **Conclusions:** Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 requires concerted global efforts, particularly in developing countries. Immediate actions must be taken to strengthen food supply chains, promote agricultural productivity, and address the vulnerabilities exacerbated by recent crises. Continued focus on gender equality and climate-resilient agriculture is crucial for long-term food security.

Keywords | Zero Hunger, Food Security, Sustainable Development, Agriculture, Food Systems

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1. INTRODUCTION

Food is one of the most cited in the international document on fundamental human rights and ironically the most violated where the daily per capita food consumption between 1980 and 1998 in 48 least developed countries declined and that of the developing countries actually improved. Africa has not been able to feed itself since 1970s and may be unable to do so soon this Martin (2004) alluded to as the greatest reality that stakeholders in the food industry in the sub-Saharan Africa often sigh away from but it is real. Wu et al. (2011) also posited that African countries may face decline in per capital food availability in coming years. Agriculture is undoubtedly the largest components of the rural economy in most sub-Sahara African countries (Ogundari, 2017). The production on the other hand has depended largely on the family needs and available resources mostly manpower because the production to a large extent still depend on crude means and has been largely subsistence in nature even in the presence of technologically advanced alternative methods. This is so because agriculture has not been fully considered as a big enterprise capable of generating employments in addition to assist in developing the economies of the affected countries.

This is an indictment on the path of stakeholders including local, regional, NGOs, international development agencies among others that have one or two things to do with the food security of people (FAO, 1996 and Mamadou, 2006). It is pertinent to note that despite the importance of concept of food security, there have neither been comprehensive nor many studies that render detail accounts of its status among Nigerian people due to the absence of centrally processed official data thereby making planning a very difficult if not impossible task (Olanike et al. 2007 and Sanusi et al. 2006).

In many or most African countries, food security at both national and household levels is still not encouraging. The per capita growth rate in food production in some of these countries is still far lesser than corresponding growth in population which is not enough to meet the rising demand for food at household level leaving many undernourished thus creating an embarrassing gap between food supply and demand. For instance, the Nigerian population annual growth rate is around 3.5 percent with accompanying 2.7 percent growth rate or less in agriculture which is largely insufficient to meet food needs of the entire population (Ogundari, 2013). Before now, agriculture especially food production used to be an important sector of the Nigerian economy because of its significant contribution to national economic growth. As of 2000, it constituted 30% of the annual GDP, 70% of the labour force, 70% of the non-oil exports and 80% of the food requirements of the nation (Adegboye, 2004). Of the Nigerian total GDP, as of 2014 according to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) data as obtained, agriculture constitutes 20.24 percent; of this percentage crop production constitutes 87.76 percent, livestock 8.73 percent, forestry 1.15 percent and fishing 2.36 percent (CBN, 2016).

Starting from the 70s, food security as currently being referred to was defined in the 1974 World Food Summit as “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (UN, 1975). Though some authors believe that food security studies predated this period as confirmed in the early statements “food security as currently being referred to”. Generally, there is a common agreement among researchers and stakeholders as to the word “food security” as currently being pursued was fallout of the world food summit of 1974.

Therefore, to address the challenges of food insecurity as stated above, the SDGs were formulated to address the deficiencies noticed in the MDGs which failed to achieve its stated objectives (Adegbami and Adesanmi, 2018). The specific goal that aims to address food insecurity and hunger is Goal 2 which targets zero hunger otherwise known as Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2). Goal 2 is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. The Zero Hunger (SDG2) of the United Nations has five (5) as follows:

1. End hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food,



2. End all forms of malnutrition,
3. Double the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers,
4. Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices,
5. Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, plants and animals.

1.1. Implementing Mechanisms of Goal 2

The Zero Hunger target is to be achieved through three main mechanisms:

1. Increase investment through enhanced international cooperation,
2. Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets,
3. Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information.

1.2. Importance of Zero Hunger (ZH)

Zero Hunger pledges to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and encourage agricultural sustainability by 2030. Extreme hunger and malnutrition remain as barriers to sustainable development and create trap to vulnerable people across the world. Hunger and malnutrition result to less productivity among individuals who are more prone to disease and thus often unable to earn more and improve their livelihoods. Without ending hunger and malnutrition by sustainable and resilient, climate compatible agriculture and food systems, SDGs cannot be achieved. Therefore, a world with zero hunger is capable of impacting the economies, health, education, equality and social development in the world positively. Zero Hunger is key to building a better future for everyone.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper reviewed the food insecurity and hunger based on United Nations affirmative action on these concepts and the prospects of achieving SDGs which included Zero Hunger by 2030 as outlined by United Nations. To achieve the objectives of the paper, it reviewed similar papers published by eminent scholars in development studies and United Nations documents and statistics. The findings and conclusions of these documents were compared to come up with policy recommendations and inferences to provide relevant guides for the implementation of food programmes that targets achievement of zero hunger target.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As stated in the introductory section, zero hunger requires a multi-dimensional approach from social protection to provision of safe and nutritious food particularly for children through transformation of food systems that will guarantee more inclusive and sustainable world where people irrespective of their age, race and other demographic features have access to safe, nutritious and healthy food in right quantity and quality. SDGs are interdependent goals in the sense that the success of one will amplify the improvement in others and vice versa. For instance, the zero-hunger goal cannot be met without achieving the climate action, peace and justice goals of the SDGs which are necessary to guarantee access of people to productive resources necessary for sustainable food production and supplies. The state of food insecurity in the world indicated that over 688 million individuals were in dire need of food by end of 2016 from 150 countries identified with severe food insecurity



issues (FAO, 2017). Hunger as we all know limits human developments since it is a key ingredient for achieving other SDGs such as education, health and gender equality. The number of undernourished people has dropped by almost half in the past two decades because of rapid economic growth and increased agricultural productivity in response to growth in population.

After a period of sustained decline, the absolute number of undernourished persons increased from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016 and 821 million in 2019 which is explained by two major factors, conflicts and climate induced droughts in vulnerable regions. Therefore, zero hunger goal (Goal 2) cannot be met without achieving the climate action (Goal 13) and peace & justice (Goal 16) of the SDGs (FAO, 2017). Insecurity and instability in some parts of the world have contributed largely to declining food production and food scarcity which has led to high food prices (Fawole et. al 2016). To mitigate all these challenges, agricultural investment is critical for reducing hunger and poverty, improving food security, creating employment and building resilience to disasters and shocks. It is worthy of mentioning that if women farmers had equal access to resources as men, the number of hungry people in the world could be reduced by 150 million which necessitates the gender equality in accessibility to production resources to guarantee improved livelihoods which is a basic requirement for zero hunger world (Fawole, 2017). To achieve this, there is also need for investment in social protection that will target poor people living in rural and urban areas to improve their livelihoods to have access to basic food and nutrition.

Currently, the world faces a new wave of challenges that jeopardize reaching zero hunger target in the world by 2030 not only to the current generation but also to future generations which is the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the worse problems of vulnerability and inadequacy of food system in the world. The unprecedented consequences of this pandemic in health, economic and social well-being threatened the livelihood of many people in the world, making the progress toward the achievement of SDG zero-hunger goals more challenging. The pandemic coupled with other challenges like conflict and climate shocks, poses an additional threat to food systems which is capable of making more millions to slide into food insecurity thereby posing another challenge to ending hunger in the world by 2030 as targeted by SDGs. Even though, no area has been spared of the consequences of the novel coronavirus, the intensity has been more pronounced in developing countries especially among the vulnerable groups including the elderly, children, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees. Therefore, the goal of eradicating hunger in the world remains a challenge especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. During the pandemic process, production and distribution in the food sector has been disrupted all over the world and food insecurity has increased as the purchasing power of individuals has decreased (Gizem Deniz et. al 2020).

Extreme hunger and malnutrition remain one of the huge barriers to development in many countries particularly developing ones. Current estimates indicate that nearly 690 million people are living with hunger. This means that 8.9 % of the world population is hungry (up by 10 million people in one year and by nearly 60 million in five years). Majority of the world's undernourished which are estimated at 381 Million are found in Asia while more than 250 Million live in Africa where the number of undernourished is growing faster than anywhere in the world (FAO, 2017).

According to WHS, about 821 Million people suffer from hunger in the world and half of these people are small scale farmers who are in rural areas and hungry people are also found in urban areas. There are also hungry people living in urban areas. This means that more than one in nine of the world population do not get the privilege to eat enough in right quality and quantity. One in every three of the world population experience undernourishment. The undernourishment and severe food insecurity appear to be increasing in almost all regions of Africa, as well as in Southern America. Over 90 million children under five are dangerously underweight with about 2 billion people in the world do not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. Nearly 750 million (one in every ten people in the world) are exposed to severe levels of food insecurity



(FAO, 2017). Furthermore, 144 million children under the age of 5 were stunted with three quarters living in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and another 47 million children under 5 are affected by wasting or acute undernutrition due to the limited nutrient intake and infection.

4. CONCLUSION

The quest for achievement of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) is on course and should be supported by relevant stakeholders to ensure the targets are met. This could be achieved by mitigating the threats posed by the pandemic to vulnerable population. All countries particularly the developing ones need to take immediate actions to strengthen food supply chains and increase food production to meet increasing demand due to growing population. The stakeholders must be firm in their commitment and should not allow the pandemic and other threats deter them from achieving the set targets. Consequently, the number of people going hungry and suffering from food insecurity had been gradually rising since 2014. An estimated 25.9 percent of the world populations were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2019, an increase from 22.4 percent in 2015. The fastest rise in Latin America and the Caribbean, although the highest levels were in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP Report, 2020). The situation is likely to deteriorate even further due to the COVID-19.

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