

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY VS FOOD SECURITY: Implications for the Ghanaian Economy

By: **MRS. WIHELMINA QUAYE**
Food Research institute

Food Sovereignty has been defined in recent years as the right of people and communities to decide and implement their agricultural food policies and strategies for sustainable production and distribution of food (People's Food Sovereignty Network, 2004). The concept of Food Sovereignty was mooted by social movements in 1996. To the social movements, hunger and poverty are not caused by food shortage, or scarcity but rather by implementation of wrong policies. Currently there is global food surplus but the majority of poor people are starving and suffering from malnutrition. Hunger has to do with lack of access to food, inadequate income and lack of access to productive resources. The concept of food sovereignty was developed as a result of loss of confidence in conventional mainstream policies and strategies to solve problems causing hunger, malnutrition and poverty that has characterized rural economies over the years. Food sovereignty has four key elements. These include;

1. Right to safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. This is more of a human right. The implication is that state managers at both national and international levels must have the political will to ensure food availability to all people
2. Access to productive resources (land, water, genetic and other natural resources). Unlike food security which does not give credence to where food is

produced, Food sovereignty concept emphasizes local production using ecologically sustainable management systems and giving landless and vulnerable especially women, ownership and control over production resources

3. Mainstream Agroecological Production - this promotes family and community-based agroecological models of food production/sustainable care and use of natural resources
4. Trade and local markets development - food sovereignty is not against market based policies but emphasizes fair and equitable trade.

Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security and the right to food can be seen as a tool to

achieve it. Windfuhr (2005) described food sovereignty as a legal and political concept while food security has been criticized as being technical. Food security policies favor global food production systems with high yielding technologies regardless of their negative effect on smallholder farmers and the environment. Food security programme mostly use top-down approach. On the other hand food sovereignty, focuses on location-specific tailor-made and ecologically adaptable technologies typical of resource-poor farmers (Altieri, 2002) using the bottom up approach. Food sovereignty framework is written from more rural perspectives and can be seen as the blue print for rural development policies, and an alternative policy proposition to liberalized industrial agriculture. Table 1 provided a distinction between these two concepts.

Table 1: Differences between Food Security and Food Sovereignty

Issue	Food Security/Dominant Model	Food Sovereignty Model
Food	A tradable commodity could be produced anywhere and any how	A human right; should be healthy, culturally appropriate and locally produced
Being able to produce	More on comparative advantage, an option for the economically efficient	More of a right of rural economies, empowering rural economies to produce
Control over Productive Resource	Seed is a patentable commodity, Access to land via the market and access to water privatized	Seed a common heritage of humanity, held in trust by rural communities, Community control over resources
Farming technology	Industrial, monoculture, chemical intensive	Agroecological, sustainable farming methods
Market access	Access to foreign markets	Access to local market; an end to the displacement of farmers and farm workers and a life with dignity
Production priority	Agro exports	Food for local markets
Crop Prices	Prices determined by market forces	Fair prices to recover production cost

Source: Rosset 2006

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There is growing consensus that agricultural growth is critical to meet the ambitious Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of combating poverty and hunger. Various studies highlight that the distribution and incidence of poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon (UN Millennium Task Force on Hunger 2005). In Ghana over 60% of the population depend on Agriculture for their livelihood, and typically they cultivate small acreages. The Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (for 2006-2009) builds on creating favorable conditions for private-sector-led growth, improving the delivery of basic social services, and raising the efficiency of the public sector with special emphasis on improving the agricultural sector. Ghana is acclaimed to having achieved impressive success in improving its food security situation during the last decade, one of the best performers in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (FAO, 2005). However there are growing concerns of inadequate nutrition among the rural and the urban poor. Adequate nutrition is the first requirement for development. Without proper nutrition, children will be stunted mentally, physically, and socially.

With a population of close to 21million, more than 30% of Ghanaians live below the poverty line (UNDP, 2005) and per capita income is a little over \$600. However, Ghana is determined to reduce the proportion of people whose income are less than one dollar a day and most likely to suffer from hunger by 2015. Nevertheless, the effort must be directed towards self discipline and commitment by all people. Ghanaians must be committed to transforming the economy, which have been linked directly to the improvement in the agricultural sector. It is important

that agriculture policy addresses the concerns of the vast majority of Ghanaians especially the resource and the vulnerable in the society. The concept of food sovereignty has some implications for the Ghanaian economy.

1. Reduction of Food Imports

Food supply must be internally generated instead of imported. Food sovereignty argues that feeding a nation's people is an issue of national security. If the population of a country must depend on the vagaries of the global economy, on the goodwill of a superpower, on the unpredictability and high cost of long-distance shipping, then that country is not secured (Rosset, 2003). Farmers must be empowered to produce and consumers encouraged to consume locally grown food. Currently, a lot of consumers have been disconnected from locally produced healthy foods (Nicolosi, 2006). Developing taste for foreign foods put money in other economies. Food product regains its social significance, nutritive value and health if grown locally and first accepted locally.

2. Generation of Internal Markets

When markets are internally generated, jobs are created and local people (especially small-scale farmers and processors) regain their economic power. One way to promote local economic development is to create local circuits of production and consumption, where farmers can sell their produce and in turn buy other necessities from local artisans and merchants. This has been demonstrated in a recent landmark study in Brazil (Leite *et al* 2004). The authors described how local towns benefit from the

commerce that is generated when estates belonging to absentee landlords are turned into productive family and cooperative farming enterprise through land reform. Another typical example is the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP), which is strategically designed to fight hunger and reduce poverty. The GSFP is based on a concept that all the food inputs of the programme should be purchased from the locality using locally grown foodstuffs like maize, rice, soyabean, cowpea, millet and sorghum. The GSFP has wider implications for farmers by strengthening community food production and consumption systems through reduction in post harvest losses, provision of ready market for farm produce and incentives for increased production which will ultimately enhance food sovereignty.

3. Reconnecting Agriculture To the local Environment

Food Technologies must be location specific and Agricultural products reconnected to local consumption patterns. Improved technologies should be developed and existing ones redesigned to suit local conditions. Over reliance on foreign technologies has resulted in disconnections in production-consumption systems. Examples of disconnections in conventional production-consumption systems have been cited as appropriation and substitution of farmers' activities through agroindustrial processes such as breeding of new cultivars and the maintenance and propagation of basic seeds that was originally done by farmers but now completely taken over by international organizations Ruivenkamp (2005). Other examples are the use of synthetic sweeteners, chemical fertilizers, enzymes, and microbio-logically produced fatty and amino-acids in preservation and processing methods.

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In an effort to reconnect food production and consumption patterns, an interdisciplinary research program called Tailoring Food Sciences to Endogenous Patterns of Local Food Supply for Future Nutrition (TELFUN), consisting of plant breeders, food technologists, nutritionists and social scientists from Benin/Ghana, Ecuador and India with funding from Interdisciplinary Research and Education Fund (INREF) has been launched. TELFUN addresses the issue of poor nutrition by enhancing food sovereignty in local food networks. The broad objective is to use the bottom up approach by relating food technology designs to location specific sustainable developments. The networks researched are the mungbean network in India, the cowpea network in West Africa, the lupin network in Ecuador.

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