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## AN ECONOMIC STUDY OF ARAB FOOD SECURITY

Nagwa M. El-Agroudy, Monia Bahaa El-Din Hassan, Fatima A. Shafiq and Soheir Mokhtar Department of Agricultural Economy, National Research Centre, Cairo, Egypt.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

he study aims at identifying the root of the food crisis in the Arab world and analyzing the underlying factor behind. Among these factors are; the total agricultural domestic production and the large and continuing increase in the number of population in most of Arab countries, Egypt occupies the top position, along with the agricultural production of these countries, the average of the individual's share, the food gap and its causes in order to reach some solutions that will contribute to find out solutions to those problems. Moreover, this study depended on the style of the descriptive statistical analysis to describe the data. Also, this research relied on published and non-published data from the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development along with many of the websites and studies that are relevant to this topic. Finally, the study has concluded that there is an increase in the size of the food gap for each of the following; (refined sugar 65.78%, vegetable oils 64.26%, wheat and flour 54.98%, 41.71% for rice, meat 22.6%) in 2015 in comparison with its counterpart in 2000 that reached about 13.7%, 32%, 52.6%, 55%,

63%, while this self-sufficiency ratio was declined in wheat flour, rice, vegetable oils, meat and refined sugar to about 34.22%, 77.4%, 35.74%, 58.29% and 41.02% during the same year in comparison with its counterpart in 2000. Also, this study has illustrated that the proportion of the exported crops to the imported ones from some crops such as wheat, rice, potatoes, beans, vegetables, fruit, sugar, vegetable oil, red meat, white meat, milk and its dairy products (35.1%, 5.12%, 12%, 17.5%, 5.01%, 124.9%, 346.02%, 23.1%, 150.2%, 5.9%,1.4 %) for each of them, respectively. Thus, the study recommends the need for attention and taking it seriously enough before it is too late, especially Arabs own an arable land (Sudan), manpower and expertise (Egypt), Capitalism (Gulf States). Additionally, the closeness of Arabic tastes and the near distances between them reduce shipping coasts and all of those are positive factors for increasing the intra-Arabic exports Arab as well as to avoid the political decisions and completely separate them from the economic decisions which can destroy everything and everybody.

**KEYWORDS** :Arab Food Security - Food Imports - Food Exports - Food Gap – Water Default.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Agriculture and food conditions enrolled a critical stage in the Arab world since the mid-seventies that represented in the growing demand for agricultural products in general as well as food in particular. This occurred as a result of the increasing rates of the population growth along with the qualitative jump in the individuals' capita incomes in some Arab countries (especially the countries of oil). Moreover, there was an increase in the food prices in Global markets. Also, there was a decline in the relative importance of the agricultural sector in the Arab economic structures. Consequently, this situation led to an exacerbation in the food shortage and therefore resorted to foreign sources to overcome this shortage.

The causes of the Arab food gap are multiple and complex. The role that is played by these reasons is different concerning deepening the crisis according to

#### AN ECONOMIC STUDY OF ARAB FOOD SECURITY

the nature of the countries in terms of its population number and their distribution between rural and urban areas along with the scarcity or limitedness of the natural and financial resources, or the lack of success of the administrative and organizational structures in these states, and the lack of attention to agriculture within the development schemes. These are factors that have a direct or an indirect impact on production, productivity and the utilization of the available powers.

#### **PROBLEM OF THE STUDY:**

There is an agreement that the food crisis in the Arab world reached a critical point that is clearly reflected in the growing reliance on outside sources to gain food. However, there is a decline in the individual's share of the agricultural product, as well as a decline in the contribution of the agricultural sector in the total local production. Consequently, the growing food gap has been increased lately.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The study aims at identifying the root of the food crisis in the Arab world and analyzing the underlying factor behind. Among these factors are; the total agricultural domestic production and the large and continuing increase in the number of population in most of Arab countries, Egypt occupies the top position, along with the agricultural production of these countries, the average of the individual's share, the food gap and its causes in order to reach some solutions that will contribute to find out solutions to those problems.

#### **METHOD OF RESEARCH AND DATA SOURCES**

This study depended on the style of the descriptive statistical analysis to describe the data. Also, this research relied on published and non-published data from the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development along with many of the websites and studies that are relevant to this topic.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

It is a fact that many studies have addressed the food crisis in the Arab world; however, this is another study attempt to determine the current status of the agricultural inputs of those countries. It becomes clear from Table (1) that there is an increase in the individual's share of the agricultural production by about 35.2% in 2015 for its peer in 2000, while the agriculture contribution in the domestic product is decreased by about 11.3% in 2000 to about 5.5% in 2015. Thus, the individual meets about 64.8% out of his needs of the agricultural production as an increase in the amount of the agricultural imports.

#### Table 1: The Total and Agriculture Domestic Production of Arab Countries during the period (2000-2015).

Statement	2000	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP in billion dollars	709	2681.8	2650.6	2796	2828.8
Agricultural output (Billion USD)	80.3	140.4	148.8	155.2	161.5
Agricultural output/GDP (%)	11.3	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.5
Per capita agricultural output/dollar	298	377.97	389.92	397.00	403

Source: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development - Annual Statistical Book- Volume No. 34. 2015. Arab Organization for Agricultural Development-Conditions of Arab Food Security- 2015(1).

Besides, the large increase in the population that reached about 3% during that period and exceeded the average rates of the agricultural production growth of the same period had its negative impact on the disruption level of food demand and supply. Also, the rural migration to towns had its impact on bringing about a fundamental change in the population distribution between urban and rural areas. Therefore, it led to a decline in the performance of the agricultural sector. Additionally, the improvement of the economic situation in most of the Arab countries in the past decade had its impact on raising the levels of the individual incomes and thus, as it was previously mentioned, his share of the agricultural production was increased. Moreover, it is worth

mentioning that the problem of water scarcity in the Arab world has led to a deepening of the food problem increasing its severity. The cultivable area in the Arab world reached about 197 million Hectares. Also, it becomes obviously clear from the study that there are many factors that were responsible for the failure of Arab agricultural production from satisfying the nutritional needs, perhaps the most important factors are:

1- Only 14.1% of the total agricultural land was exploited, out of the total arable land that reached about 35 %. Thus, it referred to the low percentage of what is already implanted.

2 - Water scarcity and its poor exploitation: while the region included more than 4.5% of the world's population, this region had only 1% of the renewable global water resources, approximately. Besides, the rate of the individual's share of water resources was only about 10.9% of the per capita in the whole world. The available water resources among Arabs was estimated by about 265 billion cubic meters yearly, distributed as follows (230 billion cubic meters of the surface water, 35 billion cubic meters of the underground water which is very limited). Therefore, the rate of the water shortage that was necessary for locally producing this food was equivalent to 72% of the available water resources. However, agriculture used 87% which was equivalent to 166.5 Billion cubic meters per year.

#### The Contribution of Plant, Animal and Fish Production in Meeting Food Needs:

It is shown from Table (2) that there was an increase in the production of (cereals, wheat, sugar, fruit, vegetables, pulses, vegetable oil) in the Arab countries by about 11.8, 4.1, 41.2, 32.6, 41.7, 61.9 and 55.1% for each of them respectively in 2015 in comparison with its peer in 2000. This increase in the production actually contributed to decrease the food gap. Also, it led to an increase in the self-sufficiency rate in a number of some crops, while no increase occurred in the production of rice. Additionally, the Arab countries had a great animal wealth that reached about 55.1, 4.4, 184.2, 91.316.7 million heads of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats and camels. Thus, the table indicated an increase in the production of meat and milk by about 38.3% and 47.2 in 2015 in comparison with its counterpart in 2000. Also, this contributed to partly encounter the burgeoning demand for livestock product since it was considered an important element in the Arab food security. The size of fish production had risen by about 60% between the same two years.

Commodity groups million tons	2000	2012	2013	2014	2015	Rate of change (%) 2000 -2015
Grain	37.6	51.8	61.8	55	58.33	55.1
Wheat	16.8	26.1	30	26.7	27.2	61.9
rice	6.1	6.6	6.8	6.1	6.2	1.6
Legumes	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.25	4.1
Vegetable oils	1.7	2.1	2.4	1.8	1.9	11.8
Sugar	2.4	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.4	41.7
Fruit	27.3	32.6	33.5	34.6	36.2	32.6
Vegetables	39.1	52	51.8	52	55.2	41.2
Meat	6.3	7.8	8.1	8.2	9.3	47.6
Milk and milk products	19.3	26.2	27	27.6	26.7	38.3
Fish	3.0	4.3	4.6	4.6	4.8	60

## Table 2: Development of the Production of the Major Food Commodities in the Arab World during theperiod from (2000-2015).

Source: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development – Annual Statistical book - Volume No. 34. 2015(1). The Evolution of Major Food Commodities Imports and Exports:

The Arab world is suffering from a severe food gap that increases with time since the beginning of the nineties. Besides, financing the food import becomes a burden under its brunt most of the financial budgets of most of the Arab states are reeling. Also, it drains a significant part of the Arab national income that is directed towards global markets to fill the growing need for food in the Arab world. Perhaps this may be due to many of the facts that perhaps among its most important are that the commodity compositions of Arab food imports

reflect the significance of the essential commodities for life which are so difficult to do without or easily to reduce its consumer size. However, it may be slightly reduced in some crops, such as grain, as well as the nature of the global food markets. Yet, these markets are monopolized by a handful of countries and multinational companies.

Besides, these forces owned the possibility to influence these markets and control the prices of these food commodities. Also, these forces used food as a weapon for pressure and punishment to rogue the opposite governments, from their perspective. Also, the weakness of the bargaining ability of the food-importing nations and its individual dealings with active forces in the international food markets led to a weakness in the dealing margin resulting from the importance of food and its role in the political and economic stability of those countries. The grain, especially wheat, is considered one of the most important imported food commodities since the proportion of its imports represented about 50% of the food imports. The rate of change reached about (103.4, 188.5, 200.2, 221.7, 273.6, 342.8, 365.9 and 368.8 %) for each of the meat, raw sugar, , fruit, grain, vegetable oil, beans, potatoes and vegetables for each of them respectively in 2015 in comparison with its counterpart in 2000 as it was illustrated from Table (3).

## Table 3: Development of Arab Imports of the Major Food Commodities during the period from (2000-2015).

Item	Quant imports (to to)	housand	Rate of change (%) 2000-2015	Import value (Million dollars)		Rate of change (%) 2000 -2015
	2000	2015		2000	2015	
Grain and flour	47307	73074	54.5	7254	27098	273.6
Potato	554	1060	91.3	208.	600	188.5
Raw sugar	5408	12771	136.1	1358	6327	365.9
Legumes	921	1406	52.7	436	1309	200.2
Vegetable oils	2630	4607	75.2	1509	4854	221.7
Vegetables	1758	2821	60.5	756	1538	103.4
Fruit	2377	5335	124.4	791	3503	342.8
Meat	521	1009	93.7	945	4430	368.8
Milk and milk products	8973 13640		52	2289	8822	285.4
Fish	409	1003	145.2	572	2328	307

Source: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development – Annual Statistical book - Volume No. 34. 2015(1).

As for Arab exports, it has been shown in Table (4) that the rate of change in the value of exports in 2015 for its counterpart in 2000 reached about (110, 455.1, 506, 0.513,% 1076, 1129.5%) for both grain, flour, sugar, milk, dairy products, raw sugar, vegetables, potatoes, fruit, grain, flour, respectively. As for vegetables, fruit, meat and fish, the rate of change has reached about between the same two years 27.3, 73.7, 455.1, 513.5, respectively.

Amount of exportsItem(thousand tons)		Rate of change (%)Export value (million dollar)		•	Rate of change (%)	
	2000	2015	2000 - 2015	2000	2015	2000 - 2015
Grain and flour	1559	1355	-13.1	322	677	110
Potato	354	1101	211	78	473	506
Raw sugar	233	2225.	855	58	1176	1076
Legumes	78	284	264	52	379	628.8
Vegetable oils	434	936	115.7	448	1511	237.3
Vegetables	1.460	4.1	180.8	503	3086	513.5
Fruit	1.584	4.5	18.1	709	3936	455.1
Meat	52	82.4	58.5	88	241	73.7
Milk and milk	570	2649	364.7	200	2459	1129.5
products						
Fish	621	885	42.5	708	2643	27.3

#### Table 4: Development of the Arab Exports of the Major Food Commodities during the period (2000-2015).

Source: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development – Annual Statistical book - Volume No. 34. 2015(1).

#### **ARAB FOOD GAP:**

Arab food gap is characterized by its fluctuation from one year to another due to changes in (Plant and animal) agricultural production, the amount of consumption and the vagaries of the international prices of food commodities. It becomes obviously clear from the Table (5) that there is an increase in the size of the food gap for each of the following; (refined sugar 65.78%, vegetable oils 64.26%, wheat and flour 54.98%, 41.71% for rice, meat 22.6%) in 2015 in comparison with its counterpart in 2000 that reached about 13.7%, 32%, 52.6%, 55% and 63% while it was decreased for each of the following; (cereals54.84%, pulses 36.42%, milk 16.4% and its dairy products) to about 27.8%,40%, 55.2% for the same two years respectively.

Additionally, it becomes evident from the same table that the Arab countries have achieved selfsufficiency in potatoes, vegetables, fruit and fish during 2015, while this self-sufficiency ratio was declined in wheat flour, rice, vegetable oils, meat and refined sugar to about (34.22%, 77.4%, 35.74%, 58.29% and 41.02%) during the same year in comparison with its counterpart in 2000. Besides, the ratio for each of cereals, potatoes, beans, vegetables, fruits, milk and fish was increased to reach about (110.4%, 83.6%, 106.4%, 108.19%, 63.6%, 93.105% and 45.16%) during the same year for each of them respectively. From what has been mentioned above, it becomes clear that there is an increase in the size of the food gap as well as deterioration in the Arab self-sufficiency ratio of the major commodities for all Arab countries. Thus, it represents a threat on the Arab food security, economically and politically.

#### VIRTUAL WATER IN THE FIELD OF FOOD COMMODITIES TRADE:

The defaulting water topic obtains an increasingly important in the field of food commodities trade. However, the states that encounter scarcity of their water resources can enhance their water security through importing food goods that are intensive in its use of water. Also, these states must concentrate on the cultivation of high-efficiency crops in their use of water.

			2000			2015				
Item	Output	Net imports	Consu mption	Ratio gap	Self- sufficiency ratio	Output	Net imports	Consu mption	Ratio gap %	Self- sufficiency ratio
Grain	37.6	46.4	84.0	55.2	44.8	55	72.1	121.6	54.84	45.16
Grain and flour	16.8	18.5	35.4	52.6	47.4	26.7	35.4	65.1	58.98	41.02
rice	6.1	2.9	9	32	68	6.1	4.7	10.5	41.71	58.29
potato	16.8	0.5	7	1	99	26.7	0.3	14.2	-	105.93
Sugar cunning	6.1	4	6.5	63	37	3.1	8.1	9.2	65.78	34.22
Legumes	1.2	0.7	2	40	60	1.3	1.	2.1	36.42	63.58
Vegetable oils	1.7	2.6	3.8	55	45	1.8	4.3	5	64.26	35.74
Vegetables	2.4	0.2	39.4	0.8	99.2	3.3	.0 15	48	-	108.19
Fruit	27.3	0.6	28	2.5	97.5	34.6	2.4	32.5	-	106.40
Meat	39.1	1.1	7.3	13.7	86.3	52	2.6	10.5	22.6	77.40
Milk and milk products	6.3	8.1	26.7	27.8	72.2	8.2	8.1	33.1	16.4	83.60
Fish	3.0	-0.2	2.8	-	107	4.6	.0453	4.1	-	110.40

## Table (5) the development of production, consumption, the gap and the proportion of self-sufficiency of major food commodities in the Arab world during the period (2000-2015) [Quantities million tons].

Source: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development – Annual Statistical book - Volume No. 34. 2015(1)

Moreover, the amount of water used in the production of major food commodities in the Arab world is estimated by about 280.7 billion cubic meters, while the amount of the Arab world's exports of water in the form of food commodities are estimated by about 19.5 billion cubic meters in 2015 compared to imports in the form of food commodities valued by 166.5 billion cubic meters, which means that the balanced power is still in favor with the Arab world concerning water imports in the form of agricultural crops. Additionally this default means that there is a need to about 147 billion cubic meters of extra water yearly in the Arab world for the production of the main exported food commodities. The exported quantities are valued in comparison with the proportion of the imported ones from some crops such as wheat, rice, potatoes, beans, vegetables, fruit, sugar, vegetable oil, red meat, white meat, milk and its dairy products 35.1%, 5.12%, 12%, 17.5%, 5.01%, 124.9%, 346.02%, 23.1%, 150.2%, 5.9%, 1.4 % for each of them, respectively. Thus, it is clear that the Arab countries import all crops that are shown in the table by rates that exceed 60%, except potatoes, vegetables and fruit.

Item	Virtual water (m <sup>3</sup> /ton)	Arab world production (Thousand ton)	Amount of water used in production (Billion m <sup>3</sup> )	Quantity exported to outside the Arab world (Thous and tons)	Quantity imported from outside the Arab world (Thousand tons)	Water exported in the form of food products (Billion m <sup>3</sup> )	Imported water in the form of food products (Billion m <sup>3</sup> )	Net virtual water (Billion m <sup>3</sup> )
Wheat	1334	27187.6	36.3	442.9	32173.4	0.6	42.8	42.3
rice	2291	6405.4	14.2	291	4921.1	0.7	11.3	10.6
potato	255	14421.8	3.7	958.6	638.2	0.2	0.2	(.1)
Legumes	3865	1245.8	4.8	274.4	1188.1	1.1	4.6	3.5
Vegetables	372	55183	20.5	4082.4	1179.8	1.5	0,4	(1.1)
the fruit	1032	36175	37.3	4460.7	3571.3	4.6	3.7	(.9)
Sugar cunning	1929	3425	6.6	376.2	7508.2	0.7	14.5	13.8
Vegetable oils	6274	1885	11.8	630.9	3603.3	4	22.6	18.6
Red meat	13500	4832	65.2	96.9	806.7	1.3	10.9	9.6
White meat	4100	4412	18.1	87.5	1682.4	0.4	6.9	6.5
Milk and milk products	790	26721	21.1	2718.6	7739.8	2.1	6.1	4
Total	-	-	280.7	-	-	19.5	166.5	146.9

#### Table 6: Virtual water in the trade of major food commodities in the Arab world in 2015.

Source: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development - Conditions of Arab Food Security-2015(2).

#### AN ECONOMIC STUDY OF ARAB FOOD SECURITY

From what has been mentioned above it becomes obviously clear that the population growth rate exceeds the average of the growth rates of agricultural production during the period of study, leading to a disruption in the level of food demand and supply. Also, it leads to an increase in the food gap size for each of the following (refined sugar 65.78%, vegetable oil 64.26%, wheat and flour 54.98%, rice 41.71%, meat 22.6%) in 2015 in comparison with its counterpart in 2000 that reached about 13.7, 32, 52.6, 55 and 63%. Besides, self-sufficiency ratio of wheat, flour, rice, vegetable oils, meat and refined sugar were decreased to about 34.22, 77.4, 35.74, 58.29 and 41.02% during the same year 2015 in comparison with its counterpart in 2000.

Also, the study illustrated that the quantities of the proportion of the exported crops to the imported ones of wheat, rice, potatoes, legumes, vegetables, fruit, sugar, vegetable oil, red and white meat, milk and its dairy products reached about 12, 17.5, 5.01, 124.9, 346.02, 23.1, 150.2, 5.9, 1.4, 35.1 and 5.12% to each of them respectively. Thus, it becomes clear that the Arab countries imported all crops that are described in the table at rates exceeding 60%, except potatoes, vegetables and fruit. However, the balance of the default water concerning the trade in food commodities is still in favor of the Arab world with regard to imports of water in the form of agricultural crops as well as the fact that it means by default that there is a need for about 147 billion cubic meters of additional water per year in the Arab world for the production of the main imported food commodities. Consequently, it becomes clear that the Arab food security is in danger due to the fact that we import the majority of strategic goods from abroad. Thus, Arab food does not have its freedom, which is readily visible in those days. Therefore, the study recommends the need for attention and taking it seriously enough before it is too late, especially Arabs own an arable land (Sudan), manpower and expertise (Egypt), Capitalism (Gulf States) and to avoid the political decisions and completely separate them from the economic decisions.

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