



## Food Security and Food Rights Challenges: A Policy Perspective from Pakistan

**Abdul Rasheed** Visiting Lecturer Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Bahria University Islamabad  
[rasheedbaig312@gmail.com](mailto:rasheedbaig312@gmail.com)

**Majid Hussain Alias Ghalib Hussain** Assistant Professor Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Bahria University Islamabad  
[majidtalairi@gmail.com](mailto:majidtalairi@gmail.com) / [majid.buic@bahria.edu.pk](mailto:majid.buic@bahria.edu.pk)

**Ghulam Ahmad** District Education Officer Literacy Lahore  
[ghulamahmadakash@gmail.com](mailto:ghulamahmadakash@gmail.com)

**Akbar Ali** Lecturer Sociology Kohsar University Murree [msakbarali785@gmail.com](mailto:msakbarali785@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** The situation of food security in Pakistan has always been an issue. One set of opinion-makers keeps thanking God for bestowing this country on them, highlights all the resources and potentials of this nation, problems notwithstanding, and is hopeful that this country will emerge as a strong and prosperous nation of the world—*Insha Allah* (if Allah likes). These people are generally the spokespersons of governments, military, civilian bureaucracy, traders, landlords, clergy, and overall literate and well-off people. Quite contrary to this, a tiny group of intellectuals and knowledgeable individuals considers it a failed state; it faces serious threats to its existence and has already become a soar point on the globe. Unfortunately, the latter view is agreed to and shared by the international community of opinion makers. Under these two streams, on the one side, Pakistan is a nuclear power, has a strong army, a very dynamic stock of human beings, rivers (water), fertile lands, enviable biodiversity, along the coast, and so on; on the other, its economy is in shambles; the country is heavily indebted and spends about half of its budget on debt servicing; is trapped into nagging crises of inflation, terrorism, emergencies, and corruption; and presently is acutely short of electricity, fuel, infrastructure, and developmental activity. Food availability, which it had been managing to some extent, is emerging as a new crisis. Roughly, a decade ago, shortages of single food items following the respective price hikes started; at different times different items were hit.

**Key Words:** Food Security, Food Rights, Food Sovereignty, WTO

### I. INTRODUCTION

Humanity has been facing hunger, malnutrition, and malnourishment despite all the development and progress. Food remains the concern of billions of human beings. Debates around and discourse of food security have been going on for decades but the number of hungry people couldn't be reduced and now FAO estimates the number of hungry populations to be 1.02 billion. In its report "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009" confirms that the increase in food insecurity is not a result of poor crop harvests but because high domestic food prices, lower incomes, and increasing unemployment have reduced access to food by the poor. In other words, any benefits from falling world cereal prices have been more than offset by the global economic downturn (WFP & FAO, 2009). This crisis was brought about by the advanced world. Similarly, the WFS declaration of 2009 says, "*We are alarmed that the number of people suffering from hunger and poverty now exceeds 1 billion. This is an unacceptable blight on the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of one-sixth of the world's population. The effects of longstanding underinvestment in food security, agriculture, and rural development have recently been further exacerbated by food, financial and economic crises, among other factors*" (FAO, 2009). Meanwhile, food security assessments in Pakistan point towards the deterioration of the situation as compared to 2003, and 61% of the districts are not food secure (Hussain & Routray, 2012).

Civil society has expended a lot of energy to raise the concerns about food security and its various dimensions and has put forward the alternative concept of 'food sovereignty' and meanwhile has advocated that the states take the 'Right to Food' obligations seriously. Sustainable Agriculture Action Group (SAAG) in Pakistan is a network of NGOs/CSOs that has been striving to spread awareness about the food security related issues of food production, food trade, and sustainable agriculture. After the two crises – the food crisis of 2006-7 and the financial crisis of 2009-10 (Shabnam et al., 2016) – it considers necessary to take a fresh look at the food security and the related issues. Besides, Pakistan is passing through a flood emergency which has serious threats of food insecurity in its store. In any case, SAAG planned to review the situations in a way of updating the network's members and other sections of civil society about the discourse of food security in this crisis-ridden situation of the country. To start with, the

study introduces and discusses the concepts of food security, food sovereignty, and right to food by putting these together in a perspective.

## II. FOOD SECURITY AND RELATED CONCEPTS

In the wake of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the discourse of food security gained substantial currency in civil society circles. Food security then was defined in a commonsensical manner as food is available, accessible to everyone at all times, nutritious, and culturally acceptable (Gibson, 2012). The discussions and concerns were aimed at the possible threats of destabilization of food markets as the agricultural products were going to be traded heavily under WTO. Food security has been defined at various points in time, basically starting in 1970 when the presence of adequate food supplies was equivalent to food security. Nonetheless, under the umbrella of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the definition of food security was concretized as “*Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*” (FAO, 1996). Besides the related components/dimensions of food security such as availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability were also defined.

Accordingly, the definition primarily referred to food security within the confines of a nation-state, but between the lines, it meant that international mechanisms such as WTO could help ensure it across the nations. Such a definition also made it clear that the scale of food production in a particular country would not guarantee the food security of that nation because it is economic strength that would make a nation-state food secure. This in turn meant that it would depend on the country’s policy on how to utilize its land and resources and not necessarily go on managing their agriculture as was done traditionally. Hypothetically speaking, a country could prefer cash crops to earn more money by selling the products and then buy cheap food – for instance genetically modified food – from other countries.

In other words, it disregarded the centuries-old livelihood patterns of farming communities as well as the socio-economic conditions of agricultural countries. The first World Food Summit (WFS) in its Plan of Action for food security said that each nation is required to adopt a strategy consistent with its resources so that it may achieve individual goals as well as cooperate regionally and internationally (FAO, 1996). On the one hand, it suggested that each nation may be free in devising strategies to ensure the food security of its citizens, on the other, it emphasized the necessity of international trade to collaborate with the vision of WTO, which had authoritatively declared that historically food security does not equal self-sufficiency of a country. Hence it needs international trade in food products to meet its needs in crisis (FAO, 1996; Murphy, 2015).

Various countries felt helpless in arguing their case in WTO negotiations and CSOs / NGOs saw through the whole game played by the agents of globalization on the stage of WTO. As a response to this emerging scenario, farmers’ organizations, human rights organizations, CSOs, and social/political activists questioned the very notion of FAO-defined food security and brought forward the concept of food sovereignty. Food is considered a basic human right that can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed. It is the responsibility of every state to develop and also maintain its capacity to produce food for its citizens through its territory. Food security has a direct link with food production.

Further, International Planning Committee (IPC, 2015) elaborated that sovereignty of food comprises four priority areas including (1) the right to food; (2) access to productive resources; (3) mainstreaming of agro-ecological production; and (4) trade and local market. These four major pillars of food security are interconnected and can not be isolated from each other and that reform of food and agriculture required fundamental changes.

Moreover (Lee, 2007) in his study quoted the findings of the World Forum for Food Sovereignty convened in Mali and shared seven themes in this regard including; (1) trade policies and local markets; (2) local knowledge and technology; (3) access to and control over natural resources; (4) sharing territories between sectors; (5) conflict and disaster response; (6) migration; and (7) production models. The prime importance is to promote the use of locally-controlled, diverse, small-scale agro-ecological production methods and artisanal fisheries in all regions of the world.

**Right to Food:**

Regarding the issue of food security, there were many global developments. During this time, various discussions and meetings were held on the platform of UNHCHR and International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); meanwhile, FAO developed Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (VGRF). In short, at WFS 2009, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that the right to food means every woman, man, and child has the right to access, at all times, affordable and adequate food. In other words, it would depend on the functionalities of a certain state and the political will of the respective rulers which concept they prefer—their definition of national interest and sovereignty would be the key to the choice. So far, there is hardly any state which wants to abide by the prescription of food sovereignty as most of the countries are members of WTO and United Nations (UN) and find it difficult to take the route of food sovereignty. As regards the 'right to food' path, as Graham Riches establishes, even the rich countries and welfare states are not following it correctly. The main problem is that the food is considered a commodity in the way of realization of this right (Riches, 2002).

Similarly, these can be considered as relating to the individual, national and multinational domains. Yet, from another angle, 'right to food' can be set as a goal; food security as the means to achieve that goal, and food sovereignty as a policy to achieve such means. But in the real world of power-play, inequality, search for dominance and wealth, only the concept of food security seems to stand the ground. One of the reasons is the overwhelming power of the UN in setting the agenda for the donor community. The language and the objectives of the projects funded by the donors keep revolving around the notion of food security and thus most of the NGOs had to revert to the litany of food security. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, due to the impact of the discourse of 'right to food' and food sovereignty, the very concept, and definition of food security have undergone a substantial change. In short, the concept of food security has been broadened to include every perceivable aspect of food and it is open for including more dimensions to it.

**Issues and Crises Facing Food Security**

With the broadening of the concept of food security, food has captured the central stage of a country's policy. Several issues are related to it and food security can be affected and influenced by almost all types of crises—financial, energy, conflict, climate change, natural calamities, emergencies, etc.—and thus this needs the right governance with careful planning in advance.

Keeping in view the earlier discussion on Food Security, Food Rights, and Food sovereignty (WFP & FAO, 2009) defines the basic concept of availability of food means the availability of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production or imports (including food aid); access to food means access by individuals to adequate resources for acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet; and utilization of food means utilization of food through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation, and health care to reach a state of nutritional well-being where all physiological needs are met. This brings out the importance of non-food inputs in food security.

**Food Safety and GMOs**

Technological advances in agriculture and particularly in food production have made it possible to produce food in abundance with enhanced and desired qualities; this food in turn would be cheap and thus affordable for poor people. But, with the introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), sharp criticism of GM food has emerged and a lot of issues have been raised. Besides the main issue of control of GM seeds by big companies coupled with the negative effect on the livelihood of poor farming communities, environmental concerns and safety of such food have been raised on various forums. FAO has brought out the debate and the relevant concerns in its publication called ethical series (FAO, 2001). Meanwhile, countries are required to frame bio-safety guidelines before they start experimenting or producing GM crops and plants. In this regard, the experience of the green revolution shows that once the new seeds came, these automatically replaced the old seeds and gradually the latter just vanished; hence the world is stuck with the seed varieties of the green revolution despite their defects. Same way, once the GM seeds dominate agriculture, there would be no returning. So extreme caution is being suggested all around meanwhile there is a strong campaign against GM crops and GM food.

**Crises—Lack of Stability**

The report of (WFP & FAO, 2009) stated each and every individual should have right to access the food items at any time. No one should feel risk of losing food. Such kind of concept regarding food security addresses the access and availability of food. There are multiple factors for food security. The most

observable of these factors include drought, a bad crop, low yield, low rainfall, pest attacks, increased input costs (of electricity, diesel, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds), highly fluctuating production scenes, diversion to a cash crop, floods, and natural disasters. All these could cause food shortages and hence could trigger a situation crisis. Other than this long list of factors Pakistan is facing multiple crises already – related to governance, political instability, national insecurity, terrorism, ineffective regulatory mechanism, defective policies, shortage of water and energy, deforestations, land degradation, faulty distributional mechanisms, and overall corruption. As a whole, the country is facing sustainability issues in almost every field and on every front.

### **Another Way to Look at the Issues – IAASTD**

Although International knowledge of agriculture, modern science and technology can bring a boom in food production and result in the reduction of hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods and human health, and facilitate equitable, environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable development. But in the case of Pakistan, this has not come true as it requires a huge cost to shift traditional cropping patterns to modern ones (Oxfam International, 2008; Raza, 2020; Yazdani & Ali, 2017). Owing to this reason the food security is a challenge for Pakistan now.

Some bold observations might have pinched the winners of the food trade; that is probably the reason that its global report didn't win the agreement from the USA, Canada, and Australia, while 58 countries accepted it. As in its report (World Bank, 2009) mentioned in its that economic benefits can be obtained through opening national agriculture markets to international competition, but can lead to long term negative effects on poverty alleviation, food security, and the environment without basic national institutions and infrastructure being in place. Furthermore, it sheds light on the effects of intensive export-agriculture and the adverse consequences depending on circumstances such as the exportation of soil nutrients and exploitative labor conditions. Overall, all these various assessments raised the concerns of the poor farmers, rights of the farming communities, women rights in agriculture, about the safety of GMOs and GM food, long term benefits of sustainable agriculture.

### III. PAKISTAN'S SITUATION

The food security situation in Pakistan could become a peculiar and interesting case study. One set of opinion makers keeps thanking God for bestowing this country on them, highlights all the resources and potentials of this nation, problems notwithstanding, and is hopeful that this country will emerge as a strong and prosperous nation of the world – *inshaAllah* (if Allah likes). These people are generally the spokespersons of governments, military, civilian bureaucracy, traders, landlords, clergy, and overall literate and well-off people. Quite contrary to this, a tiny group of intellectuals and knowledgeable individuals considers it a failed state; it faces serious threats to its existence and has already become a soar point on the globe. Unfortunately, the latter view is agreed to and shared by the international community of opinion makers. Following these two streams, on the one side, Pakistan is a nuclear power, has a strong army, a very dynamic stock of human beings, rivers (water), fertile lands, enviable biodiversity, along the coast, and so on (Ringler & Anwar, 2013); on the other, its economy is in shambles; the country is heavily indebted and spends about half of its budget on debt servicing; is trapped into nagging crises of inflation, terrorism, emergencies, and corruption; and presently is acutely short of electricity, fuel, infrastructure, and developmental activity. Food availability, which it had been managing to some extent, is emerging as a new crisis. Roughly, a decade ago, shortages of single food items following the respective price hikes started; at different times different items were hit (Ahmad & Farooq, 2010). But for the last five years, a combined and overall crisis of price-hike in the food sector has come and threatens to set in.

#### **Food Production**

From the very beginning, Pakistan is considered an agricultural society and country. The performance of the agricultural sector has a direct bearing on food production because this includes almost every form of food production—food crops, livestock, fisheries, and poultry. According to the introductory section on agriculture in the Economic Survey of Pakistan (ES), the Agriculture sector continues to play a central role in Pakistan's economy. It is the second-largest sector, accounting for over 21 percent of GDP, and remains by far the largest employer, absorbing 45 percent of the country's total labor force. Nearly 62 percent of the country's population resides in rural areas and is directly or indirectly linked with agriculture for their livelihood (Farooq, 2010).

ESP 2009-10 seems to break the tradition and has raised some alarms, although the production is not drastically different, given the usual erratic trend of Pakistan's crops' production if seen over a long period. The performance is represented by the following Table No. 1 of the survey. Another typical paragraph of the agricultural section of these surveys which is representative of Pakistan's crops is repeated in every survey with new figures. Couple of seasons of crops prevail in Pakistan. One season is named as Kharif and its sowing seasons starts from May-June and ends this season in November or December. Rice, sugarcane, cotton, maize, mung, mash, bajra, and jowar are "Kharif" crops while wheat, gram, lentil (masoor), tobacco, rapeseed, barley and mustard are "Rabi" crops. Major crops, such as wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane. The following table shows detailed picture of seasonal crops in Pakistan.

**TABLE 1 Agriculture Growth (Percent)**

Year	Agriculture	Major Crops	Minor crops	Livestock	Fishery	Forestry
2003-4	2.4	1.7	3.9	2.9	2.0	3.2
2004-5	6.5	17.7	1.5	2.3	0.6	32.4
2005-6	6.3	3.9	0.4	15.8	20.8	1.1
2006-7	4.1	7.7	1.0	2.8	15.4	5.1
2007-8	1.0	6.4	10.9	4.2	9.2	13.0
2008-9	4.0	7.3	1.7	3.5	2.3	3.0
2009-10	2.0	0.2	1.2	4.1	1.4	2.2

**Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics** (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020)

From these economic surveys and other statistics, one can derive some trends in Pakistan's food production. One, that wheat, rice, maize, grams, pulses, and oilseed crops are important food crops in Pakistan, which are essential to maintain the situation of food security in the country. Two, agriculture's contribution to the GDP has been decreasing by about 0.5 % a year but the workforce employed remains pretty much the same; it indicates falling incomes of the people making living through agriculture; which in turn adversely affects the accessibility dimension of food security. Three, the sector has been growing at the average rate of about 4.0 percent which is commensurate with its population growth. But it has been very erratic (with the extremes of -5.3% in 1992-93 to 11.7% in 1995-96). Four, value addition by the major crops has fallen from 41% in 2001-02 to 32.8% in 2009-10 while that of minor crops slightly increased. Nevertheless, a surprising change in value addition occurred in livestock from 25.3 percent in 1996 to 53.2 percent in 2009-10 (Farooq, 2010). As a whole, it seems that the major crops' scene is problematic. More serious than their falling share in the value addition is their erratic output, which may create crises from time to time.

A study on the food crisis in Pakistan says that overall, food crops' production in Pakistan can be considered adequate; shortfall and gaps in some crops can be covered by others - in quantity as well as value. As the area for the cultivation of cotton, sugarcane, and other cash crops has not been increasing at the cost of food crops' area, the fear of cash crops becoming the reason for low production remains unfounded. Nevertheless, Pakistan is regarded as a net food importing country because of imports of milk products and other food items like tea, processed foods, and luxury items (Oxfam International, 2008).

This doesn't mean that there is no need to improve agriculture; there is a lot of room for its development. All this means that as regards the supply side, the agriculture sector of Pakistan is quite adequate and can't be blamed for any food crisis.

### **Inflation, Incomes, and Expenditure on Food**

Price hikes of food items, inflation in general, and consequently falling incomes hamper the accessibility to food. According to ES 2008-9 and ES 2009-10, inflation of food group was 15.0, 26.6 and 14.5 percent respectively during the financial years 2007-8 (Finance Division, 2008), 2008-9 (Finance Division, 2009), and 2009-10 (Finance Division, 2010), while the general CPI (Commodity Price Index) stood at 10.2, 22.4 and 13.3 respectively (Finance Division, 2008, 2009, 2010). In other words, the total rise in food prices was about 66 % from July 2007 to April 2010. Incomes couldn't catch up so quickly and hence purchasing powers of a large majority were curtailed. As the following figure shows, about 80% of people spend more than 50% on food, beverages, and tobacco category.

Although this high inflation is explained by the inflationary trends in the world, particularly in oil prices; but in Pakistan, it is mainly due to a lack of regulatory mechanisms that are almost ineffective or non-existent.

### **Crises Facing Pakistan**

These can be divided into two sets; one set relates to current or potential crises that will directly affect the food production while the other set belongs to extraneous crises which could turn out to be disastrous for Pakistan because of its vulnerabilities.

#### ***Water***

ESP 2009-10 has regarded the water situation as very alarming as it says that Pakistan's agricultural performance is closely linked with the supply of irrigation water (Farooq, 2010). As shown in Table No. 2, against the normal surface water availability at canal heads of 103.5 million acre-feet (MAF), the overall (both for Kharif as well as Rabi) water availability has been less in the range of 2.5 percent (2005-06) (Finance Division, 2004) to 20.6 percent (2004-05) (Finance Division, 2005). However, it remained less by 2.5 percent in 2005-06 (Finance Division, 2006) against the normal availability. Relatively speaking, Rabi season faced a shortage of water during 2009-10 (Finance Division, 2010).

Table No. 2 Increase/decrease over the Average surface water availability (Ave.=103.5 MAF)

Year	% increase/decrease
2003-4	-5.9
2004-5	-20.6
2005-6	-2.5
2006-7	-8.9
2007-8	-4.6
2008-9	-11.3
2009-10	-9.9

Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2009-10

The trend seems alarming but more alarming is the suggested solution that this could be tackled by more reservoirs (indirectly stressing for constructing dams and barrages).

#### ***Land***

Problems of water scarcity may not be easy to solve. Previous solutions in the form of irrigation projects have caused permanent damages, one of which has been land degradation due to waterlogging and salinity. Then, the land reclamation projects came, which proved very costly and hence were not very efficient on the cost-benefit ratio (Ahmad & Farooq, 2010; Ringler & Anwar, 2013). Recently, the fresh legislation on Corporate Farming threatens to disturb the land entitlements. It proposes to do away with the land ceiling and to help create large farms which will be provided water, electricity and other facilities on a priority basis. This has attracted the foreign firms and the Gulf States to buy land from the state – mostly these would be shoddy deals any way (like the privatization deals).

For years the agenda for land reforms has been on the political burner and accordingly three efforts by the governments have been made (Gazdar, 2009). Now the things keep moving in the opposite direction, specifically after the Sharia Court's decision that fixing the land ceiling or taking away land from the individuals by the state is un-Islamic. Still, CSOs are campaigning about the land rights for women, tenancy rights, and land reforms.

Various assessments of food security, including the world development reports of the World Bank, have recommended that the entitlements of resources to small-scale farmers may have a positive effect on the food security of an agricultural country like Pakistan (World Bank, 2009). This is what the proponents of food sovereignty have been stressing that the realization of the rights of the poor farming communities, including the right to land, water seeds, the traditional agricultural practice would improve the food security situation of a country and also will help promote agro-ecology.

#### ***Seeds, Genetic Resources, and GMOs***

The main activity of the government seen in the field of agriculture is in the seed sector. According to ESP during the year 2009-10 (Finance Division, 2010), registration process of nineteen new seed companies were completed. Out of 19 registered companies, four were from public sector and five were multinational

companies. Fifteen crop varieties were approved and thirty-seven crop varieties were evaluated for registration. Similarly, local companies that have registered in the Seed Certification Department mostly sell the products on behalf of the foreign companies (Yazdani & Ali, 2017). It seems that over time all the local/indigenous seeds will be replaced by the new seeds or at least under the new ownership. Coupled with this control over the seed sector the monopoly over the credit sector could create a real vulnerability as regards the food security of Pakistan.

### ***Floods, Emergencies, Energy, and Terrorism***

Floods on a large scale have recently hit Pakistan with devastating effects and long-term repercussions on the agriculture sector and food production (Ali & Rahut, 2020). If the government agencies respond properly by providing credit, seeds, and other facilities and make sure that sowing will not be affected, this could turn into a boom in food production, but given the lack of capacity, inefficiency, and corruption in the government working, there is less hope for optimism.

There is always a danger in Pakistan that some other emergency comes up and takes the attention of the government away from the rehabilitation work. The energy situation is not less than a crisis itself. Why suddenly the electricity generation slumped on the eve of the change of the government in late 2007 will remain a mystery for all times to come. The shortfall in electricity affects all other sectors of life; basically, it hits at the very root of the economy, by reducing production, growth, and hence overall development. And, if it is coupled with the rising food prices, financial problems, and overall unrelenting inflation the situation gets really bad.

Terrorism is not yet over and keeps compounding other crises Pakistan is facing. Given already a dilapidated situation of food security, particularly the availability of food items, it may create a famine-like situation in the terrorism-affected FATA area.

To deal with such crisis-ridden situation governance of high quality would be needed. Unfortunately, the political instability, political confrontations, bickering among the premium institutions of the state, foreign interventions, and tensions in the region don't seem to subside shortly. And there is the main threat of acute food insecurity giving rise to malnourishment, hunger, and ultimately social strife.

## IV. ANALYSIS

A recent food security assessment report, in a way of summing up, says that around 61 percent (84 out of 137) of the districts are food deficient in terms of both agriculture and animal-based food availability. The number of surplus food producing districts has declined from 34 in the year 2003-04 (Finance Division, 2004) to 24 in 2009-10 (Finance Division, 2010). Proportionally, the food deficit districts have increased from 62 percent in 2003 to 76 percent in 2009. Factors for the decline in food availability include population growth, rapid urbanization, turning cultivable land into housing societies, climate change especially reduced water availability and brief rainy seasons, increase in prices of inputs, lack of coherent agricultural development policy, and shrinking investment both from the public as well as the private sector in agricultural research and development (SDPI et al., 2009).

The trend of moving from secure to food insecure and from low food insecurity to extreme food insecurity continues and during this study 45 districts reportedly were found extremely food insecure.

Theoretically speaking, the government of Pakistan can intervene in the agriculture sector by extending credit to attract the farmers towards sowing a particular crop. Further, it can give subsidies, control imports or exports and regulate the supplies through procurement & maintaining stocks. Another way is to ensure better quality seeds and chemical inputs for enhancing the yield or introducing technological innovations for better production. However, the realities are different. Though ESP 2009-10 (Finance Division, 2010) quotes that more than 166 billion Rupees as total credit extended during the financial year, the truth is that no funds are being injected into these institutions. Credit mainly is being given only on paper and credit is revolving from year to year—at the end of a year recovery is shown and another loan of the same amount is sanctioned. Food departments' role has already been curtailed and as a result procurement quota reduced; so now such steps can only be taken in emergencies. Similarly, the seed and chemical input market are mostly in private hands and the seed certification department is acting as a rubber stamp. All such options do need the funds too and if the state is already starved how can it inject some funds into the sector. The only option left is to control the export or import of food items and that too by bending the rules of WTO.

It is important to discuss the efforts of the government to improve food security. Mostly, it is collecting the statistics and producing various documents. Then, its various institutions under MINFAL are implementing various projects funded by the UN (FAO, WFP, etc.) and the donor community, the thrust of which is to develop certain scenarios and then argue in favor of transforming the institutions to get tuned to the trade liberalization ideology and the WTO regime. For example, several research centers for developing agriculture biotechnology have been set up with the help of donors' funding. Another area where the projects are coming is the livestock sector because the dairy products are almost in the hands of foreign companies and they want to see this sector a developed one.

The government doesn't have any effective regulatory mechanism to promote sowing, harvesting, or procurement. The total procurement target of wheat is only 20 percent of the total production, which it can utilize in responding to the shortages. However, it does arrogate itself the powers of awarding licenses to export or import. The government can play an effective role by improving data collection and analysis and pre-empting crises by distributing projections and alerts (Oxfam International, 2008).

This is an era of globalization and market forces are in command of all spheres of life. The agents of the phenomena, i.e. big powers and the corporate are its main beneficiaries; they are so powerful that the rest of the world has to get in line with their dictates. This prescribes a particular paradigm of development comprising the ideology of the neo-liberal economic model, and one likes it or not, has to follow it. The critics have equated it to an era of re-colonization.

At the larger international level what the civil society accomplished by stalling and suspending the WTO negotiations was a success story; still, the fight is not over. At the national level and particularly in a country like Pakistan, it can't play a pivotal role to fight the specter of food insecurity. Having said this, there is certainly a role for civil society. First, as the experience has shown, it needs to create a knowledge-based conceptual clarity about the issues at hand. This has been done and should continue through research and studies. Then, based on this knowledge, awareness campaigns may start; no matter these have a limited impact. In line with this, following the available resources the right holders, victims, losers, vulnerable or affected communities may be organized to mitigate the threat of food insecurity. The existing strategies of advocacy, networking, and community organization should also aim at the government. Farmers' charter of demands, poor people's "rights to food" agenda, and women's land rights, etc., etc. may be formulated, and lobbying with the government may be carried out.

At the minimum, civil society should express its position on the subject. SAAG's statement on the food crisis of 2008, which is given in the following, is the best example.

### **Country-Specific Issues and Pakistan**

Issues and possible crises may differ from country to country, to such an extent that an advantage of a country could damage another country. That's why the efforts to evolve a fair multilateral system are being made. If a country produces surplus food, it would like to sell it, at the same time would like to capture a market for its economic sustainability and would like to maximize the profits. On the other hand, if a country is very deficient in food production, would also be in favor of promoting the trade of food products but at the cheapest possible prices. Those countries which have the reasonable status of self-sufficiency could be tempted to increase the production of a certain agricultural product, to increase the national revenues, but at the cost of their food crops. The real challenge for such countries is, whether they adopt a sustainable, safe, defensive, conservative approach towards their agriculture to ensure food security for their people or take the risk of following aggressive, greedy, and crisis-prone strategies for their agriculture. In the final analysis, it depends on their political circumstances which are crucial for choosing a particular course of action. Policy and governance aside, the actual productivity-related issues in Pakistan are land use including land reforms (Gazdar, 2009; Khan et al., 2001), water availability or water management (Ringle & Anwar, 2013), trade policy about food items, and other agricultural products (Gibson, 2012; Lee, 2007; Murphy, 2015), rural development, land rights for women and sustainable agriculture comprising agro-forestry, kitchen gardening, organic farming, etc.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Various perceptual flaws may complicate the situation for remedies and blur the vision for finding a way towards improving the state of food security in Pakistan. First, most people consider multilateralism as the right path for future development and is considered better than the bilateral mechanism of doing trade. This underscores the importance of globalization phenomena and its institutions like (WTO). In



other words, this suggests that the nations should agree to the global or international rules of the game whether in rulemaking or abiding by these rules. A major flaw in this whole thinking is that it is presumed that all nations believe in inequality and they have no vested interests to pursue for which they would easily trample over the weaker ones. Equality may be the ultimate goal of humanity but the reality dictates that nations want to maximize their wealth and power and there can't be a win-win situation in absolute terms. In other words, powerful states are not human rights organizations, out there to support and help the poor people of developing countries. Therefore the mechanisms and institutions they would create like WTO, World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and UN would serve their purpose as an ultimate consequence. Hence, becoming a part of all these global institutions may be considered as a compulsion—historic in nature—or because of ignorance.

Now, at the next level, the nature of the third world nation-states is such that these can't exist within the confines of a national boundary. Again, history aside, the reason is that these are hardly sovereign or representative of their people; following the procedures of representation notwithstanding. That means the people who are in control of these states have their interests in garnering power and wealth and not there to serve the people as it is generally perceived. If for a change, the elite of a country takes such a step to break free from the international stranglehold, it is continuously threatened by the world powers. In short, the rulers of the third world states don't want to put their power in jeopardy by resorting to a people-friendly and sovereign agenda. The truth is that the ruling classes have their vested interests in keeping intact the international system of governance and they fall in line with the agents of globalization; this is grossly against the interest of their masses. Simply put, it doesn't suit the decision-makers of the developing countries to challenge the interests of the powerful nations. As a result, they neither like to nor able to pursue the policies for national or people's interests. Besides, the decision-makers—politicians and bureaucracies—are socialized and trained in such a manner that they don't feel obligated to fight against hunger and poverty of their people.

At the third level, this is a misperception that civil society organizations or activists can solve the problem of the society. Pakistani civil society or the civil societies of developing countries are not too strong to bring a drastic political change in the country, even if we presume that they sincerely want to reduce the difficulties of the poor people. Generally, the CSOs/NGOs are dependent on the funds of their governments, international organizations, and powerful nations. In any case, civil society at least can make modest contributions by collecting the voices of the poor and the hungry and then spreading some awareness about the issues at hand. Something is better than nothing.

Lastly, the UN is the most deceptive institution; it seems from the language of its proceedings and declarations that this body wants to solve the problems of the poor and helpless around the world, but they want to bind these people through their governments so they may not break away from the shackles of such rules which have kept them in bondage for centuries. UN bureaucracies have the expertise of manifesting a hypocritical system which they inherit from the cold war era; on the one hand, to satisfy the socialist block and poor countries through composing humanitarian language and verses and on the other to serve the interest of capitalist block to facilitate them in penetrating the developing economies and the markets.

Thus, the way out should be based on what the poor and hungry themselves can accomplish, in a country like Pakistan. In the context of food security, the very producers of food have the least access to it. The first principle therefore should be that the producers secure the food as a priority. In other words, in Pakistan, where 88 percent of the farmers are small scale farmers owning less than five hectares of land, farmworkers should only sell the surplus food. This is very much possible by organizing them and making them aware of the threats of food insecurity for their households looming large during the coming days. The advice for mixed cropping patterns, seed saving, grain stocking, livestock for their household dairy needs, vegetable gardening, and appropriate agroforestry may be propagated among these communities.

The main problems for them may be the dependence (merely psychological or real) on chemical inputs and the need for credit. The next problem may be the greed to earn more money by sowing cash crops or risk their resources in some other adventure. The farmers' organizations should inculcate in the rural masses the traditional values, such as the sense of securing their annual quota of food grain, saving and sharing the seeds, and keeping intact the village level solidarity and cooperation. The next step is organizing them on the village level through cooperatives so that they collectively may control the pricing and marketing of their produce; keep an extra village level stock for emergency and advocate for the mitigation of their other difficulties. As a third step, every farm should start planning for organic farming. In accordance with the requirement, the farm should have enough livestock for manure and natural fertilizer. Similarly, there should be enough trees and plants which provide pesticides (like *neem*).

It is possible that the total production may not give the small farmers enough earnings for the whole family; in that case, some of the young men should volunteer to go to the urban centers to find jobs (as they generally do); but the basic economy and food stocks of the family should be kept intact. If the family members in the urban centers face difficulties they should be able to return and have at least food available for them and not vice versa.

All these farming communities and rural people should be made aware that what the rich farmers do and what the government officials recommend will never work for them or at least will not stay beneficial in the long run. What is being taught in the agricultural universities will hardly be of any use to them. All these chemical inputs, new seeds, modified seeds, so-called new varieties, and new technologies may not be appropriate for their kind of agriculture and life. Similarly, they should be made aware that all unconcerned / outsiders like urban traders, foreign companies, and the government officers have no interest in them—all they want is to take away food from them at the cheapest possible price or with a minimum possible reward. They want to ensure their food security at the cost of villagers' food security.

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