

REGIONAL ECONOMY

UDC

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THE ESSENCE OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOOD SECURITY SYSTEM FUNCTIONING IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEMBER STATES

Introduction

Food security is of fundamental importance to human existence. It is considered to exist when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets food needs and preferences necessary for an active and healthy life.

Food security is ensured when the following three conditions are met simultaneously:

- Physical availability of food products - which means that the national economy ensures that at least the minimum physiological demand is met, and imports provide food that exceeds this minimum demand; the physical availability of food is linked to the need to maintain food reserves.

- Economic availability of food products - indicates that economically weakest households have access to essential food (due to various types of food aid); a consumer should have the purchasing power to facilitate the purchase of essential goods and services on the market; the purchasing power of a consumer on the food market depends on the income and prices of food, as well as the prices of other goods and services.

- The health value of a single food product (food without substances harmful to health, e.g. pesticide residues, antibiotics, dioxins and harmful dyes, as well as



poisonous substances and pathogenic microorganisms) and food rations (balanced rations), such as the required level of energy and the appropriate proportions of nutrients depending on age, sex and type of work (Kwasek, 2013).

Food safety is an integral part of food security. For the consumer, food safety is the most important feature of its quality. The consumer needs to know that the food he buys complies with his safety requirements and does not harm in any way his health or that of family members.

Historical findings

Food security concerns can be seen since the 1943 Hot Springs Conference on Food and Agriculture, and since then the concept has gone through several redefinitions. The 1943 conference developed the concept of "safe, adequate and suitable food supply for everyone", which was later taken up internationally. The next step was the establishment of bilateral agencies by donor countries, such as the USA and Canada in the 1950s, through which their agricultural surpluses were to be shipped abroad to countries in need of these products (Naples, 2010/2011). By the 1960s, governments of developed countries realized that food aid could, in fact, impede a country's progress toward self-sufficiency, thus laying the groundwork for a new concept - food for development. The issue of food security really came to the fore in the 1970s, and at the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome, the first explicit recognition was presented that emphasized that this issue concerned all humanity: "Every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to fully develop and maintain their physical and mental faculties. (...) Consequently, the eradication of hunger is a common goal of all countries of the international community, especially of the developed countries and others able to help" (United Nations, 1975).

The most widely accepted definition of food security was presented at the World Food Summit (WFS) in November 1996: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food products which meet their food needs and preferences for an

active and healthy life”.

Since the 1996 World Food Summit, food security has become the conventional way in international political circles to address the inadequacies of contemporary food systems. The definition of food security has changed significantly since its introduction in the 1970s. Starting with a discursive emphasis on the adequacy and availability of food supplies, with an emphasis on fluctuating food production and commodity prices, the concept has taken on a new meaning in the 1980s, associated with food preferences and lifestyles, as well as connections to health and well-being (SAPEA, 2020). Midgley (2013) provides a detailed breakdown of these discursive changes, describing the concept of food security as “chaotic and contested”. Midgley argues that the political debate on food security has intensified in times of crisis, when acute food shortages arise as a result of natural disasters or short-term price increases. This affects the way food insecurity is measured and the way it is experienced at various geographical scales. Critics have referred to food security as a “consensus framework behind which considerable dissent lies” (Maye & Kirwan, 2013; Mooney & Hunt, 2009).

Today, the concept of food security is generally considered to include four main components: availability, access, use and stability. For food security to exist, all of these components need to be sufficiently present.

European Union food security system

European Union (EU) member states have always been interested in ensuring and maintaining food security at both national and Community level. The development of states, as well as the well-being of the population in general, largely depends on this. The EU does not have an institutionalized food security system, with specific monitoring and control bodies or a legislative framework dedicated exclusively to food security. However, food security is a key objective in the EU, being highlighted in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which directly and indirectly contributes to ensuring it.

Common agricultural policy. Launched in 1962, the EU's common agricultural policy is a partnership between agriculture and society, as well as between Europe and



the farmers working on its territory. It aims to:

- support farmers and improve agricultural productivity, ensuring a stable supply of food at affordable prices (availability and stability);
- protect farmers in the European Union in order to lead a reasonable life (stability aspect);
- contribute to the fight against climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources (usage aspect);
- maintain rural areas and landscapes across the EU;
- keep the rural economy alive by promoting jobs in agriculture, the agro-food industries and related sectors (access and availability aspect) (The common agricultural policy ..., 2020).

As a result, food security issues such as availability, access, use and stability are found for the purposes stated above.

The CAP is a common policy for all EU member states. It is managed and funded at European level from EU budget resources. Agriculture normally differs from most businesses in that the following special considerations apply:

- despite the importance of food production, farmers' incomes are about 40% lower than incomes from other activities, such as non-agricultural activities;
- agriculture is much more dependent on climate and atmospheric phenomena compared to other sectors;
- there is an inevitable gap between consumer demand and the ability of farmers to supply more products. Growing a larger amount of wheat or producing a larger amount of milk inevitably requires additional time and extra effort.

Existing trade uncertainties and the impact of agriculture on the environment justify the significant role that the public sector plays for EU farmers. In this respect, the CAP acts with:

- income support through direct payments, which ensures income stability and remunerates farmers for organic farming and the delivery of public goods that are not

normally paid by the market, such as caring for the countryside;

- market measures to deal with difficult situations, such as a sharp drop in demand due to fears about the effect of a product on health or a fall in prices due to a temporary oversupply on the market;

- rural development measures with national and regional programs to address specific needs and challenges facing rural areas (The common agricultural policy ..., 2020).

To ensure food security and sustainable development of EU Member States, the CAP defines the conditions that will allow farmers to perform their functions in society in the following ways:

a. Food production

There are around 10 million farms in the EU, and 22 million people work regularly in this sector. This offers an impressive variety of abundant, affordable, safe and good quality products. The EU is known worldwide for its food and culinary traditions and is one of the world's leading producers and net exporters of agro-food products. Due to its exceptional agricultural resources, the EU could and should play a key role in ensuring food security for the whole world, not just the Member States.

b. Rural community development

In rural areas and its precious natural resources, there are many jobs related to agriculture. Farmers need cars, buildings, fuel, fertilizers and medical care for their animals, also known as "upstream" sectors. Other people are involved in "downstream" operations - such as food preparation, processing and packaging, as well as food storage, transport and retail. The agricultural and food sectors together provide almost 40 million jobs in the EU. To function efficiently and remain modern and productive, the upstream and downstream sectors need easy access to the latest information on agricultural issues, farming methods and market developments.

c. Ecologically sustainable agriculture

Farmers have a double challenge - to produce food while protecting nature and

protecting biodiversity. The prudent use of natural resources is essential for food production and for the quality of life today, tomorrow and for future generations (The common agricultural policy ..., 2020).

Policies to improve EU food security reflected in the CAP 2007-2013. The Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2007-2013 placed particular emphasis on ensuring EU food security. The two main instruments of the CAP 2007-2013 were support for agricultural income (through the single farm payment and the single area payment) and support for the market price (through tariffs, export refunds and other subsidies). However, according to some researchers (Zahrnt, 2011) it is not clear whether these tools have a positive or negative impact on short-term food security. In general, the instruments set out are intended to preserve land and labor in agricultural production. Keeping uncultivated land and returning it to production, if necessary, can increase the production potential compared to the scenario in which it is constantly cultivated on as much land as possible. At the same time, according to the same researcher, one point against any short-term benefit of food security from income and price support is that these tools slow down productivity by improving structural change. However, despite these shortcomings, short-term food security is not endangered in the EU.

Where food security should be a concern for policy makers, the focus should be on the 2050 target and beyond. In this long-term perspective, many instruments of the 2007-2013 CAP can be detrimental, as they stimulate more intensive production that weakens the ecological sustainability of agriculture. To ensure long-term food security, two key topics emerge. One is investment in research and development, and the other is the protection of genetic and other environmental resources. This challenge goes beyond agriculture: for example, when it comes to protecting water and limiting urban sprawl. A third topic, which may be less important, is energy. Food security can be increased by reducing the energy intensity of agriculture (especially by reducing the use of fertilizers) and by avoiding excessive dependence on the production of biofuels that compete with food production.

The European Commission, the European Parliament and many Member States

have suggested food security as a key topic for the post-2013 CAP. In its Communication on the CAP towards 2020, DG Agriculture, for example, emphasizes the need to preserve the EU's food production potential, "in order to ensure long-term food security for European citizens". All this has turned food security into the most widespread and strong argument of those calling for the protection of EU agriculture. This raises three questions: firstly, to what extent is food security actually endangered in the EU? Secondly, what exactly are the dangers to the EU's food security and what are the most appropriate policy instruments to counter them? Thirdly, how should the EU contribute to global food security? These questions are of crucial importance as the EU seeks a new policy model for its agricultural subsidies (Zahrnt, 2011).

As a result, the EU's food security system in 2007-2013 focused on supporting agricultural producers through subsidies to produce high-quality goods, which ensures, including food security. At the same time, more attention was needed in the new CAP to ensure food security, which was taken into account by the group involved in drawing up the 2014-2020 CAP.

The 2014-2020 CAP is still a large, albeit declining, part of the EU budget (37.7% of total EU spending planned for 2014-2020) and was designed to address the main food challenges, identified as economic (food security, price volatility, higher entry prices and the deteriorated position of farmers in the food supply chain), environmental (resource efficiency, soil and water quality, as well as threats to habitats and biodiversity) and territorial (demographic changes, economic and social development in rural areas).

These challenges translate into three long-term CAP objectives: 1) sustainable food production; 2) sustainable management of natural resources, together with climate actions; and 3) balanced territorial development. To achieve these objectives, the new CAP instruments, which were first adopted by co-decision between the European Parliament and the Council, are defined in 4 regulations, covering:

- Rural development (Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013)
- Horizontal issues such as funding, management and monitoring (Regulation

(EU) No 1306/2013)

- Direct payments to farmers (Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013)
- Market measures (Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013)

The 2014-2020 CAP remains structured in two pillars:

Pillar 1 - including revenue and market support - financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF):

- Income support for farmers and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices: direct payments, representing about 70% of the CAP budget. Direct payments include three common schemes: (1) the basic payment scheme; (2) ecological payment, related to the observance of sustainable agricultural practices (crop diversification, maintenance of permanent grasslands or conservation of ecological areas); and (3) payment for young farmers. In addition, Member States have the option of applying several voluntary schemes: redistributive payments, support in areas with natural constraints and voluntary coupled support.

- Market support measures: sector-specific support to improve the functioning of agricultural markets. Payments for these measures represent about 5% of the CAP budget.

CAP 2014 - 2020 places special emphasis on organic farming, conservation of environmental resources, compliance with crop rotations, etc. This is a qualitative step in ensuring the EU's food security, both through food safety and sufficiency, and through the protection of natural resources.

Pillar 2 - rural development policy - funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD):

- Rural Development Programs (RDPs): policy measures designed to help EU rural areas meet their specific economic, environmental and social objectives. They are multi-annual, partly funded by the Member States and represent almost 25% of the CAP budget.

With the 2014-2020 CAP, Member States have gained flexibility to implement policy instruments under both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2. First, Member States have the

flexibility to transfer 15% of the direct payment package from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2 or from Pillar 2 to Pillar 1. In the case of a transfer from Pillar 2 to Pillar 1, a supplement of 10% is allowed to 12 Member States, increasing the maximum to 25% in this case (Article 14 of Reg. (EU) No. 1307/2013). Secondly, under Pillar 1, Member States have the flexibility to apply more voluntary schemes (redistributive payments, support in areas with natural constraints and voluntary coupled support). Finally, under Pillar 2, Member States can choose the focus of the measures for the six priorities. The wide range of implementation options chosen by Member States could have a significant influence on the achievement of the objectives of the CAP, as well as on its development and food security effects (Blanco, 2018).

The European Union's agricultural and fisheries policies have been designed to achieve commendable goals, such as a competitive economy, regulatory harmony throughout the Union, and ensuring the EU's food security. In recent years, as global food chains have expanded, there have been numerous academic, political, technical, and civil debates about possible innovative reorganizations of food supply chains to reconnect producers and consumers, to re-establish food production and address imbalances along the supply chain, as well as those between rural and urban areas. These include short supply chains, alternative food networks, local farming systems and direct sales. In terms of policy, several EU Member States have developed legal frameworks and incentives to support such innovations. However, at EU level of governance there is a neutral perception of end-to-end food safety policies. Safety concerns extend along the supply chain, starting with production inputs on the farm, such as animal feed, and ending with processing and manufacturing practices. The response at both EU and national level has been to bring about a phase of institutional change in food safety and standards, with a focus on consumer safety and health (SAPEA, 2020).

The EU's global efforts to ensure food security

At present, the European Union is committed to global efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition, specifically through the Global Network Against Food Crisis

(GNAFC). GNAFC is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors united by a commitment to address the root causes of food crises and to promote sustainable solutions through shared analysis and knowledge, enhanced coordination in evidence-based responses and collective efforts. GNAFC was launched by the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP) at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to address the demand for new approaches to tackling protracted crises and disasters, reducing vulnerability and managing risk by cutting the gap between humanitarian and development partners.

GNAFC partners operate nationally, regionally and globally along three pillars:

- understanding food crises and generating evidence-based information and analysis;
- capitalizing on strategic investments to prevent and respond to food crises;
- moving beyond food - encouraging policy-making and functional coordination between groups / sectors to address other dimensions of food crises (EU Action..., 2020).

In addition, in 2010, the European Union and its Member States, together with all partners, sought to address food and nutrition security by adopting an EU-wide policy framework for food security. An implementation plan for food and nutrition security has been developed and divided into six policy priorities:

- improving the resilience of small farmers and rural livelihoods (e.g. providing rural people with the tools they need to manage and diversify their crops, reduce post-harvest losses and improve storage facilities);
- supporting effective governance (e.g. helping to ensure responsible governance and policy-making);
- supporting regional agriculture and FNS policies;
- strengthening social protection mechanisms for the FNS (i.e. developing comprehensive social protection systems owned and run at national level to support the most vulnerable in times of difficulty);
- improving nutrition, especially for mothers, infants and children;
- improving coordination between development and humanitarian actors to build

resilience and promote a sustainable FNS (European Commission, 2010).

EU policies related to food security and food crises

“From Farm to Fork” strategy aims to make food systems correct, healthy and ecological. The EU's goals are to reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system and strengthen its resilience, ensure food security in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss, and lead a global transition to farm-to-fork competitive sustainability and seize new opportunities. This means:

- ensuring that the food chain, which covers the production, transport, distribution, marketing and consumption of food, has a neutral or positive impact on the environment, the conservation and restoration of the terrestrial, freshwater and marine resources on which the food system depends; contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation; protecting the health and well-being of the land, soil, water, air, plants and animals; and reversing biodiversity loss;

- ensuring food security, nutrition and public health - ensuring that everyone has access to sufficient, nutritious and sustainable food that supports high standards of safety and quality, plant health and animal health and welfare, while meeting dietary needs and food preferences; and

- maintaining the accessibility of food, while generating more equitable economic returns in the supply chain, so that eventually the most sustainable food becomes the most accessible, encouraging the competitiveness of the EU supply sector, promoting fair trade, creating new opportunities while ensuring the integrity of the single market, as well as health and safety at work (Farm to Fork Strategy, 2020).

The opportunity to ensure food security argues that a sustainable food system must always ensure a sufficient and varied supply of safe, nutritious, accessible and sustainable food for people, including times of crisis. Events that affect the sustainability of food systems do not necessarily come from the food supply chain, but can be triggered by political, economic, environmental or health crises. Although the current COVID-19 pandemic does not appear to have a significant impact on the EU's food security, such a crisis could jeopardize both food security

and livelihoods. Climate change and biodiversity loss pose imminent and lasting threats to food security and livelihoods. In the context of this strategy, the Commission will continue to monitor food security as well as the competitiveness of farmers and food operators.

Given the complexity and number of actors involved in the food value chain, the impact of crises is quite different. Although there was generally a sufficient supply of food, this pandemic presented many challenges, such as supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, the loss of certain markets and changing consumer patterns, which have an impact on the functioning of food systems. This situation is unprecedented, and the food chain faces increasing threats each year, with recurring droughts, floods, forest fires, biodiversity loss and new pests (Farm to Fork Strategy, 2020).

EU strategies related to food security and food crises

Resistance to food crises. The EU is the largest development player in food and nutrition security, providing substantial financial and political support. The EU helps partner countries strengthen the resilience of households and communities vulnerable to food crises, in particular by investing in their livelihoods based on agriculture and economic opportunities, disaster preparedness and systems that provide timely assistance, such as social remittances. Strengthening partner countries' resilience to food crises helps them to become aid-independent and therefore contributes to their sustainable development.

DG DEVCO - Combating malnutrition. Poor nutrition affects the most vulnerable categories of people, especially children and women, the poorest and least educated; these are the people who have the most to gain from improved nutrition. A good diet is a fundamental human right, as well as a prerequisite for fulfilling the full potential of the individual. The EU Nutrition Action Plan outlines how the EU intends to meet its commitment to reduce growth retardation in children under five by at least 10% (7 million children) of the World Health Assembly target by 2025. The action addresses the strategic objectives in the areas of governance, interventions and extensive research and how these objectives will be achieved. It emphasized the need

to work closely with developing actors and partner countries.

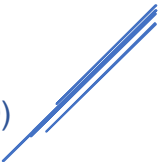
DG ECHO - Combating malnutrition. Malnutrition has devastating consequences for children's survival and development. Every year, almost half of all deaths in children under 5 are due to malnutrition. The European Union addresses and finds solutions to acute malnutrition through an integrated multisectoral approach to nutrition, which combines the assessment of children's nutritional status, the treatment of acute malnutrition and the prevention of all forms of malnutrition.

Cessation of hunger. The second goal of sustainable development aims to end world hunger by 2030 and ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food for everyone throughout the year, especially by promoting sustainable agriculture. The EU is firmly committed to achieving this goal and has worked with partners to collectively step up support to end hunger, ensure food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

Investments in agriculture and sustainable food systems. Three-quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend heavily on agriculture. Moreover, in developing countries, the livelihoods of most people come from agriculture, especially small-scale agriculture. Stimulating investment and supporting innovation in this sector promotes inclusive growth and thus helps partner countries to better feed their populations, while protecting their natural resources.

Food assistance. Food assistance is provided in anticipation, during and after a humanitarian crisis. Its aim is to save lives and livelihoods to avoid emergency rates of acute malnutrition or harmful coping mechanisms. Through humanitarian food assistance, the European Union aims to ensure the availability, access and consumption of safe and nutritious food for the most hungry and vulnerable in crisis.

Resilience and the link between humanitarian development and peace. The recurrent, prolonged and complex nature of many crises reinforces the importance of developing long-term interventions that address humanitarian needs, as well as the challenges of developing and consolidating peace. Resilience is the ability of a person, a community or a country to cope, adapt and recover quickly from the impact of a



disaster, violence or conflict. Resilience covers all stages of disaster, from prevention (when possible) to adaptation (when needed) and includes positive transformations that strengthen the ability of current and future generations to meet their needs and withstand crises (EU Strategies, 2020).

In conclusion, we can mention that the food security system of the European Union is found in the policies promoted by it, being aimed both at ensuring food security at EU level and outside the Community. The Common Agricultural Policy is the main tool for ensuring food security throughout the EU in general, as well as in the Member States in particular. The CAP plays an important role in protecting the EU's agricultural sector and in regulating and ensuring the stability of incomes, the market and rural development measures. The CAP has helped reduce Europe's dependence on imports and increased the EU's role on international markets through an export-based approach, but has also led to overproduction and surplus of food and drink. CAP provides European countries with a stable supply of food at reasonable prices. As climate change, such as global warming, has an increasing impact on crops and production, over time, it becomes increasingly important to protect and support the supply of EU member countries with food of local origin. Recent reforms present the EU as one of the world leaders in promoting food security and organic product development. In this respect, there is currently no doubt about the sufficient supply of food to EU countries, as their food security is not endangered in any way.

At the same time, the EU's internal stability in food security has led to a growing concern about the ability of other countries to deal with food insecurity issues. In this regard, the EU places particular emphasis on initiating global policies and strategies that will increase the resilience of other countries to existing food crises, combat malnutrition, eradicate hunger, and create sustainable agricultural systems based on targeted and logical investment.

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