



Food crisis in Africa



Several factors have contributed to the **food crisis in Africa**, each to different extents.

To illuminate this complex landscape, **Prof. Ali Bougatef** and **Prof. Mohamed Makni** from the Food Department at the High Institute of Biotechnology of Sfax, **University of Sfax-Tunisia**, share with us their valuable expertise and knowledge in Food Systems transformation, Food insecurity and Food for Health.

Several factors have contributed to the food crisis in Africa, each to different extents. In all affected countries, poverty and vulnerability, adverse weather conditions, poor governance, misguided advice from donors, and economic collapse have played roles. Additionally, high rates of diseases have left people unable to manage further hardships.

What are the causes of food crises in Africa?

Food crisis in Africa stems from a complex interplay of climatic, socio-political, and economic factors. Climate change is a significant driver, causing extreme weather events such as droughts and floods that disrupt agricultural activities. These climatic challenges are compounded by conflicts and political instability, which displace populations and destroy vital agricultural infrastructure, further exacerbating food insecurity. Economic issues also play a critical role; widespread poverty and limited market access hinder both the availability and affordability of food. Agricultural challenges, including the lack of modern farming techniques, quality seeds, fertilizers, and efficient irrigation systems, result in low crop yields. Additionally, rapid population growth places further strain on the food supply, creating a persistent cycle of food insecurity.

What is the impact on health and nutrition?

The health and nutritional impacts of the food crisis in Africa are severe and far-reaching. Malnutrition is rampant, particularly among vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly, leading to stunted growth, weakened immune systems, and a heightened susceptibility to diseases. Acute food insecurity drives up morbidity and mortality rates due to illnesses related to malnutrition. Micronutrient deficiencies become widespread due to a lack of dietary diversity, leading to conditions like anemia, scurvy, and rickets. The long-term effects are especially detrimental for children, resulting in irreversible cognitive and physical impairments that hinder educational

attainment and economic productivity. Consequently, food crises impose immediate health risks and long-term developmental challenges.

How does political instability affect food security in Africa?

Political instability profoundly affects food security in Africa by disrupting agricultural production, supply chains, and markets. Conflicts and civil unrest can displace farmers from their land, reduce access to essential resources, and destroy infrastructure crucial for food distribution. In politically unstable regions, government policies and programs aimed at supporting agriculture and food security are often poorly implemented or neglected. This instability also discourages investment in the agricultural sector, limiting technological advancements and improvements in farming practices. Moreover, aid and assistance from international organizations can be hindered or mismanaged in such environments. **Addressing political instability through peacebuilding efforts, good governance, and inclusive development is essential for creating a stable environment** where food security can be effectively achieved.

What measures can be taken to effectively address the food crisis?

Effectively addressing the food crisis in Africa requires a comprehensive approach that integrates immediate relief with sustainable long-term solutions. Immediate actions include providing emergency food assistance, improving access to clean water, and ensuring humanitarian aid reaches conflict-affected areas.

Long-term solutions focus on **building resilience through sustainable agricultural practices, infrastructure investments, and economic development.** Enhancing agricultural productivity through the adoption of drought-resistant crops, improved irrigation techniques, and better storage facilities can mitigate climate change impacts. Strengthening local economies and creating job opportunities can reduce reliance on food aid and improve purchasing power. Moreover, **fostering peace and stability is crucial for creating an environment where food security can be sustainably achieved.**

Authors:

Ali Bougatef, Professor of Food Sciences and Technology

Mohamed Makni, Professor of Food Sciences and Technology

The High Institute of Biotechnology of Sfax, University of Sfax-Tunisia



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