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“Development on the margin”

The Global Food Crisis and Food Security in Tajikistan

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Abstract

As a result of both internal (price, land and institutional reforms) and external (trade) factors, food security in Central Asian countries has improved significantly since the mid 1990s. However, the recent surge in global food prices shows that the countries of the region, especially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are highly vulnerable to external shocks. This paper examines the impact of recent global food crisis on domestic food security and household welfare in Tajikistan, a country with an extensive rural population (74%), a high poverty rate (about 40%), and a large share of rural households engaged in agricultural sector. First, we thoroughly analyse the transmission from global to domestic food prices using time series analysis. Then, using the 2007 and 2009 Tajikistan Living Standards Survey (TLSS), we examine the welfare effects of increasing food prices at the household level. The sample size in the 2007 TLSS was 4860 households. The 2009 TLSS is a panel survey of 1500 households from the 2007 survey. The theoretical foundation for this analysis is a concept similar to that of compensating variation, which is the money-metric change in welfare due to changes in food prices. We show the heterogeneity of impacts of the food crisis across different segments of households (rural, urban, farmer, non-farmer, size of land, mountainous and remote areas, etc.). This has important policy implications because understanding the heterogeneity of impacts allows for the design and targeting of specific policies aimed to support different segments of the population. The paper also discusses the major constraints on long-term food security in the country.

Keywords: Agriculture, food prices, food security, global food crisis, household welfare