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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Food and Nutrition Security and Differing Capacities

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Abstract

Food and nutrition security (FNS) is a complex, multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral issue, with links to health, economic development, environmental sustainability, and trade. The food and economic crisis of 2007/2008, a world population that is expected to reach 9 billion or more by 2050, climate change, diminishing natural resources — land, biodiversity and water have put FNS and improving nutrition outcomes on the global policy agenda requiring international science and technology cooperation and social and technological innovation among other interventions. Yet, FNS is the responsibility of nation states, requiring policy responses and actions by governments, the research and academic community and the private sector. FNS is also on the radar of major economic blocs and global private sector corporations. Herein lies the tensions in the quest for producing and accessing ‘new’ knowledge for addressing the global FNS challenge with its related national dimensions while operating within a complex global system involving multiple actors with differing interests and resources. What are the implications for research partnerships; North-South, South-South, public-private? Who determines the research priorities and how? What criteria will be used for dispensing funding — scientific merit vs social relevance or both? Whose interest will be served — public or private? Who will own the knowledge generated — knowledge as a public good and what will be the role of traditional knowledge? Using cases from across Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) and lessons from ACP-EU research cooperation and international trends; this presentation will explore these related issues and posit that progress can only be made in addressing global challenges which have national dimensions through investments in science, technology and innovation, if we acknowledge the limitations in capacities and resources and are willing to address them at national and global levels.

Keywords: Economic development, food security