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“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

Role of African Universities in Promoting Food Security: the Case of Pastoral and Crop Producers

JEROME GEFU

Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, National Animal Production Research Institute, Nigeria

Abstract

The traditional role and calling of the academia, notably universities the world over, is teaching, research and community service. In most African universities, however, teaching and mentoring of students and junior academics has often taken the centre place with a proportionally less time invested in the other component of research and community service. It can be argued that African universities have a unique opportunity in contributing to agricultural and rural development by their very nature of natural advantage the continent has in contributing to increased food production, direct and indirect employment generation, improved income and food security for the ever growing population in the face of the attendant threat to food availability. This has recently been exacerbated by regional and national conflicts and insurgencies occasioned by socio political and economic crises. Not only has food demand out-shot supply in quantity and quality in most countries in recent times, but food of animal origin is facing new challenges as a result of resource-use competition between livestock and arable producers. While acknowledging the impact of climate vulnerability on various systems of production, livestock and arable farming is at a cross roads with severe implications for food security and rural development in Africa. Citing relevant instances from across the African continent, the paper undertakes a critical analysis of emerging conflict situations between pastoral and crop producers and the resultant attrition on the livelihoods of the peoples of Africa. The role researchers in African universities can play in ameliorating competition between pastoral and crop producers on the one hand while growing both sectors on the other are highlighted.

Keywords: African universities, agricultural and rural development, conflict, food security