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“Global food security and food safety:
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Dimensions of Vulnerability to Rural Food Insecurity: Empirical Evidence from Kwazulu-natal (South Africa) and Implications

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Abstract

Using a result household survey data from a rural area in South Africa, Umzimkhulu municipality, this study examines vulnerability to food insecurity (VFI) using the Vulnerability as Expected Poverty (VEP) model, Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and cluster analysis. The study identifies households vulnerable to food insecurity and profiles the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the most vulnerable. The findings suggest that it is not mere access to resources but utilisation (a function of positive psychological capital endowment) that matters most to address current food insecurity and vulnerability in the future. Social and human capital (especially the education level of breadwinners), gender and age-related deprivations and the resilience of households to shocks are the most important influencers. An increase in age is an asset until about 65 beyond which it starts to become a liability. Unlike many studies in the past which do not distinguish consumption and production credit, the results in this study show that easy consumption credit improves access to food in the short-term but depletes asset base in the long-term and exacerbates vulnerability to food insecurity. Credit and finance institutions operating in rural areas have to be better regulated so that they can focus on production not consumption credit. On equity grounds, decision-makers will have to target the vulnerable segment of the population, including those households that are currently food insecure but more likely to be secured (transient), food insecure and vulnerable, and currently food secure but vulnerable. The last group can easily remain food secure with marginal and less costly interventions.

Keywords: Consumption credit, dietary diversity, KwaZulu-Natal, typology of vulnerability, vulnerability to food insecurity