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Investigation of Food Insecurity in Rural Iran: Application of Sen's Entitlement Framework

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Abstract

While farm households are the main food producers, various researches have demonstrated prevalence of food insecurity among farm families of Iran. Food insecurity leads to compromised hunger and malnutrition and poses serious challenges to rural people and governmental institutes. In attempting to enhance food security, there is a great emphasis on food production, while Sen's entitlement framework proposes that food insecurity is heavily tied to poverty and economic constraints. In this respect, this study attempts to apply Sen's entitlement theory to investigate household level issues that inhibit access to sufficient food in rural Iran. With this purpose, meta-analysis was adopted using 28 studies that were in the public domain by January 2018. Findings revealed that rural families of the least developed areas (e.g. Chahar Mahal & Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh & Boyer-Ahmad and Sistan & Baluchistan provinces) or arid and semi-arid regions of the country (e.g. Yazd and Kerman provinces) have lower access to safe food and the calorie content of their foods is lower than most developed areas. Moreover, it was declared that food insecurity in rural areas is the result of a combination of economic, socio-political, scientific and technological, physical, biological and chemical and also, demographic factors, rather than being just an outcome of production shortfall. So that, economic, socio-political, scientific and technological factors account for 53% of the identified drivers of food insecurity. Furthermore, the findings underscore the need to promote knowledge and information systems, in addition to the social and human capitals of farm households, to increase their access to food. Also, targeting income transfer programs and food subsidies to rural poor households can help them to improve their financial sustainability and reduce their food vulnerability.

Keywords: Food insecurity, Iran, Meta-analysis, rural families, Sen's entitlement theory