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

Food Security and Safety: the Role of Ucc in Asikuma- odobeng-brakwa District of Ghana

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Abstract

Food security and safety has remained a worldwide phenomenon. Globally, approximately one billion people are suffering from malnutrition and hunger. In most African countries, food security is unattainable, with the larger population still undergoing hunger and undernutrition. This gives credence for goal 2 of the SDGs to be realised, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, which remains the most food insecure in the world. This study investigated the dynamics of food insecurity in the Asikuma-Odobeng-Brakwa District of Ghana through the lens of the University of Cape Coast's (UCC) social laboratory programme: a development approach, where postgraduate students of UCC immersed themselves into the local contexts of small-scale farmers with the aim of unearthing the lived experiences of peasant farmers. The methodology for the study was qualitative. Data were gathered through observation and focus group discussion (FGD) with an interview guide that covered a wide range of questions on food security. With the consent of the district chief, the FGD session was conducted with fifteen residents, comprising both males and females, which also included the chief. Data collected were contextually analysed. Findings showed that the dominant crop in Asikuma-Odobeng-Brakwa district was cocoa, while cassava, plantain and tomatoes constituted food crops. A major hindrance to food security in the study area stems from extension officers' support in the development of cocoa, a cash crop, to the neglect of food crops. Prevalence of pests and inability to preserve most of the perishable crops were also a major challenge. Majority of the harvested crops were for the landowners and two-third of one hectare used for planting, got rotten. The remaining harvested crops were always insufficient for consumption and this invariably, created cyclical trends of poverty. The period of hunger for the community was always from January to June. However, the people survived by purchasing food from the market and through communal relations. Consequently, in ensuring the SDG2, the study recommended the UCC to assist in addressing the most pressing need of the district and a reversal of extension approaches that subjugate support in food crop production in favour of cash crops.

Keywords: Food security and safety, Ghana, Sustainable Development Goal 2, University of Cape Coast