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A Discourse Analysis on Covid-19 Impacts on Food and Nutrition Security in Kenya and Ghana

JEMIMA MAGAK¹, REGINA BIRNER², CHRISTINE BOSCH³

¹*University of Hohenheim, Germany*

²*University of Hohenheim, Inst. of Agric. Sci. in the Tropics (Hans-Ruthenberg-Institute), Germany*

³*University of Hohenheim, Inst. of Agric. Sci. in the Tropics (Hans-Ruthenberg-Institute), Germany, Germany*

Abstract

For most developing countries, food insecurity is a major problem resulting from weak food systems. Majority of their populations' livelihoods were disrupted by COVID-19 through lock-downs and restriction measures put in place by the country governments to control the spread of the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 was similar to Ebola and the Food Price crisis, and it is not clear what we learnt from these past crises regarding the impacts on food security and nutrition. This led to find out how the organisations reacted similarly or differently to the pandemic and if they learnt from Ebola. Looking at three major agricultural international organisations, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the study aimed to: (i) identify the role played by governments and international organisations to combat food and nutrition insecurity during the pandemic, (ii) assess the policies adopted to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 and (iii) outline the impacts of COVID-19 on food and nutrition security. This was evaluated by conducting a discourse analysis of the press releases, official statements and newspaper articles from these organisations and the two study countries, Kenya and Ghana. A comparison between presence and absence of other crises, COVID-19 cases and the Stringency Indexes were used as criteria for the country selection. The results show that the pandemic slowed down economic activities which affected peoples' livelihoods through loss of employment and reduced incomes. Movement restrictions affected trade which in turn affected producer incomes and further production, thereby reducing food availability. FAO and IFPRI talked more on the impacts on food availability as compared to WFP which emphasised more on food access. Referring to past crises, these organisations majorly recommended countries to secure trade flows, strengthen social protection mechanisms and improve resilience in the medium and long term. The study concludes that the restriction policies implemented by the countries affected food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable populations. The given organisation recommendations were feasible but rather came after the countries had already implemented the restriction policies.

Keywords: COVID-19, food access, food and nutrition security, food availability, international organisations, restriction policies

Contact Address: Jemima Magak, University of Hohenheim, Elfenstrasse 40, 70567 Stuttgart, Germany, e-mail: jemimamagak@gmail.com