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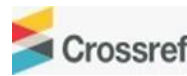
**Influence of Agricultural Investment on Food Security
and Poverty Levels in Developing Nations**

Bonface Kimani



Influence of Agricultural Investment on Food Security and Poverty Levels in Developing Nations

 **Bonface Kimani**
Maseno University



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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the influence of agricultural investment on food security and poverty levels in developing nations.

Materials and Methods: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study found that increased investment in agricultural infrastructure, technology, and education improves crop yields and productivity, which directly impacts food availability and accessibility. Studies have shown that regions with higher agricultural investment often experience a reduction in hunger and malnutrition rates due to more efficient food production and distribution systems. Furthermore, agricultural investments create employment

opportunities, both directly within farming and indirectly through related sectors such as transportation and processing, which contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Overall, sustained and targeted agricultural investment is essential for achieving long-term food security and poverty reduction in developing countries.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF), human capital theory and resourcebased view may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the influence of agricultural investment on food security and poverty levels in developing nations. Governments and development organizations should facilitate the adoption of modern agricultural technologies through training programs, subsidies, and partnerships with tech companies. Implementing policies that ensure the equitable distribution of agricultural subsidies is vital.

Keywords: *Agricultural Investment, Food Security, Poverty Levels, Developing Nations*

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural investment plays a critical role in enhancing food security and alleviating poverty in developing nations. In developed economies like the USA and Japan, food security and poverty

levels show varying trends influenced by economic policies, social welfare programs, and market dynamics. In the USA, food insecurity rates have fluctuated over the years, with approximately 10.5% of households experiencing food insecurity in 2020, a slight increase from 10.2% in 2019, largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic's economic impact (Coleman-Jensen & Gregory, 2022). Conversely, Japan has maintained relatively low food insecurity rates, thanks to comprehensive social security systems, though an aging population poses future risks. For instance, in 2018, only 3.1% of Japanese households faced food insecurity, showcasing the effectiveness of their policies in ensuring food access (Shibuya, 2020). However, the rising cost of living and economic pressures continue to challenge poverty alleviation efforts in both countries (Ikeda, 2021).

Developing economies face significant challenges in food security and poverty due to economic instability, inadequate infrastructure, and climatic factors. For example, in India, despite economic growth, about 14% of the population was undernourished in 2019, reflecting persistent food insecurity issues (Mishra, 2019). Similarly, Brazil has seen fluctuations in food security, with 15.4% of households experiencing food insecurity in 2020, exacerbated by the pandemic (Santos, 2022). Efforts to address these challenges often include policy reforms and international aid, yet systemic issues like corruption and unequal resource distribution hinder progress. The correlation between poverty and food insecurity remains strong, underscoring the need for comprehensive strategies to improve both economic stability and food accessibility (Gupta, 2021).

In other developing economies such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, food security and poverty levels present significant challenges. In Bangladesh, approximately 24.2% of the population experienced food insecurity in 2020, reflecting ongoing issues with poverty and access to nutritious food (Rahman, 2021). Efforts to mitigate these issues include government programs aimed at improving agricultural productivity and food distribution systems. Similarly, Indonesia faced food insecurity rates of around 7.6% in 2019, with rural areas being more affected than urban centers (Suryana, 2020). Both countries have implemented various policies to address these issues, yet economic disparities and climatic events continue to pose risks to food security (Muflikhati, 2018).

Philippines and Pakistan also face significant food security and poverty challenges. In the Philippines, around 19% of the population experienced food insecurity in 2020, driven by economic disparities, natural disasters, and agricultural challenges (Briones, 2021). The government has focused on improving agricultural productivity and disaster preparedness to mitigate these issues. In Pakistan, about 20.3% of households were food insecure in 2018, with poverty and conflict further complicating food access (Naz, 2019). Efforts to address food security in Pakistan include policy reforms and international aid, but structural issues and climatic conditions continue to pose significant challenges (Ahmed, 2020).

In Egypt, about 9.2% of the population experienced food insecurity in 2020, largely influenced by economic challenges and political instability (El-Shater, 2020). The government has been working to improve food security through subsidies and agricultural development programs, yet high population growth and economic disparities continue to strain resources. Similarly, in Vietnam, approximately 5.8% of the population faced food insecurity in 2019, with poverty more prevalent in rural and mountainous areas (Nguyen, 2019). Efforts to address food security in Vietnam include

agricultural modernization and rural development policies, though environmental issues such as flooding and climate change pose ongoing risks (Phuong, 2021).

In Uganda, around 26.8% of the population was food insecure in 2020, driven by factors such as economic inequality, climate change, and conflict (Kamara, 2021). Government initiatives aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and food distribution are ongoing, yet infrastructural challenges and political instability remain significant obstacles. In Tanzania, approximately 25% of the population experienced food insecurity in 2019, with rural areas being more severely affected (Mwanyika, 2020). Efforts to improve food security in Tanzania include policy reforms and international aid, but issues like land degradation and economic disparities continue to impede progress (Chuwu, 2019).

Sub-Saharan Africa faces some of the highest rates of food insecurity and poverty globally, driven by factors such as conflict, climate change, and economic disparities. In Nigeria, for instance, about 21.4% of the population faced food insecurity in 2020, reflecting deep-seated issues despite the country's wealth in natural resources (Nwosu, 2021). Similarly, in Ethiopia, approximately 31.8% of the population was food insecure in 2019, highlighting the chronic challenges faced by the region (Alemayehu, 2019). These high rates of food insecurity are closely linked to widespread poverty, with over 40% of the population in many Sub-Saharan countries living below the poverty line. Addressing these issues requires multifaceted approaches, including agricultural development, economic diversification, and improved governance (Mwangi, 2022).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, countries such as Kenya and Ghana provide further examples of the region's food security and poverty issues. In Kenya, approximately 29% of the population was food insecure in 2019, with drought and political instability exacerbating the situation (Ng'ang'a, 2020). The Kenyan government has initiated programs to enhance agricultural productivity and improve food distribution, yet challenges remain due to infrastructural deficiencies and economic disparities. In Ghana, around 11% of households experienced food insecurity in 2020, with poverty and access to food being more pronounced in rural areas (Agyeman, 2021). Efforts to improve food security in Ghana include policy reforms and international aid, but ongoing issues such as climate change and economic inequalities continue to hinder progress (Aidoo, 2019).

Agricultural investment is the allocation of financial resources into agricultural sectors with the aim of enhancing productivity, improving food security, and reducing poverty levels. Key areas of agricultural investment include infrastructure development, technology adoption, education and training, and sustainable farming practices. Infrastructure development, such as building irrigation systems and roads, directly improves food security by increasing access to water and markets, thus enhancing crop yields and reducing post-harvest losses (Nguyen, 2019). Technology adoption, including precision farming and genetically modified crops, boosts productivity and resilience against climate change, further supporting food security and reducing poverty (Rahman, 2021). Education and training empower farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to implement best practices, thus enhancing their productivity and income levels (Muflikhati, 2018).

Sustainable farming practices, such as organic farming and agroforestry, contribute to long-term food security by preserving the environment and ensuring the continuous availability of natural resources (El-Shater, 2020). Investments in these areas not only increase food production but also

create employment opportunities, thus helping to alleviate poverty (Agyeman, 2021). For instance, improving infrastructure and adopting new technologies can significantly increase agricultural output, leading to better food availability and affordability (Nguyen, 2019). Furthermore, sustainable practices help maintain ecosystem health, ensuring that agricultural activities do not degrade the environment and compromise future food security. Overall, targeted agricultural investments can drive significant improvements in both food security and poverty reduction, thereby fostering sustainable development (Mwangi, 2022).

Problem Statement

The influence of agricultural investment on food security and poverty levels in developing nations remains a critical area of concern. Despite significant investments in the agricultural sector, many developing countries continue to face high levels of food insecurity and poverty. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, agricultural productivity improvements have not translated into substantial reductions in food insecurity or poverty due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to technology, and insufficient policy support (Nguyen, 2019; Rahman, 2021). Additionally, climate change exacerbates these challenges by impacting crop yields and agricultural sustainability, further threatening food security (El-Shater, 2020). Therefore, there is an urgent need to examine how targeted agricultural investments can more effectively enhance food security and reduce poverty in developing nations, considering the complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors (Mwangi, 2022).

Theoretical Framework Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

The sustainable livelihoods framework, developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), focuses on how individuals and communities utilize various assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The SLF emphasizes the importance of diversifying livelihoods and building resilience against shocks and stresses, such as climate change and economic downturns. This framework is relevant to studying agricultural investment as it highlights how investments in infrastructure, technology, and capacity building can enhance the livelihood assets of farmers, thereby improving food security and reducing poverty (Scoones, 2020).

Human Capital Theory

Originated by economists such as Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker, human capital theory posits that investments in education, training, and health improve the productivity and earnings potential of individuals. In the context of agricultural investment, this theory underscores the importance of investing in farmers' skills and knowledge to increase agricultural productivity and sustainability. Enhanced human capital in agriculture can lead to better management practices, higher yields, and improved food security, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction (Becker, 2021).

Resource-Based View (RBV)

Developed by Jay Barney, the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm focuses on the strategic importance of resources and capabilities in achieving competitive advantage. This theory is applicable to agricultural investment as it suggests that unique resources, such as advanced

agricultural technologies, efficient infrastructure, and skilled labor, can significantly enhance a nation's agricultural productivity. By leveraging these resources, developing nations can improve food security and reduce poverty levels, making agricultural investment a strategic priority (Wernerfelt, 2019).

Empirical Review

Rahman (2021) investigated the impact of agricultural subsidies on food security in Bangladesh using a mixed-methods approach, which included both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with farmers and agricultural officials. The study aimed to understand how government subsidies affected crop yields, household incomes, and overall food security. The quantitative data revealed that households receiving subsidies had significantly higher crop yields compared to those who did not. Interviews with farmers highlighted the importance of these subsidies in enabling them to purchase necessary inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. The findings indicated that subsidies not only improved food security by increasing agricultural productivity but also contributed to poverty reduction by boosting household incomes. However, the study also noted challenges such as the unequal distribution of subsidies and suggested that more equitable policies could enhance their effectiveness. Recommendations included scaling up subsidy programs and ensuring that they reach smallholder farmers who are often the most vulnerable. This approach could potentially address both immediate food security concerns and long-term poverty alleviation. Furthermore, the study emphasized the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation to adapt the subsidy programs to changing agricultural conditions. The mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the subsidies' impact. Rahman concluded that agricultural subsidies are a critical tool for improving food security and reducing poverty in Bangladesh.

El-Shater (2020) assessed the effectiveness of irrigation infrastructure in Egypt and its influence on food security and poverty levels. The study utilized agricultural productivity data collected from various regions in Egypt, combined with household surveys to capture the socio-economic impact of improved irrigation systems. Results indicated that regions with enhanced irrigation infrastructure experienced significant increases in crop yields, particularly in water-intensive crops like rice and wheat. Households in these regions reported higher income levels due to the increased agricultural productivity. The study found that improved irrigation not only contributed to higher food availability but also reduced the incidence of poverty among farming communities. Additionally, the research highlighted the importance of efficient water management practices in sustaining these benefits. El-Shater recommended further investments in irrigation infrastructure, particularly in areas prone to water scarcity, to bolster agricultural productivity. The study also suggested implementing training programs for farmers on sustainable water usage to maximize the benefits of the irrigation systems. Furthermore, it emphasized the need for governmental and nongovernmental organizations to collaborate in expanding and maintaining irrigation infrastructure. The research concluded that well-maintained irrigation systems are vital for enhancing food security and reducing poverty in Egypt. This conclusion was supported by the strong correlation between irrigation infrastructure and improved socio-economic outcomes observed in the study.

Mwangi (2022) examined the effects of agricultural technology adoption on food security and poverty levels. This study tracked changes in agricultural productivity and household food security over several years, using panel data analysis to capture long-term trends. The research focused on technologies such as improved seed varieties, mechanized farming equipment, and digital tools for precision agriculture. Findings indicated that farmers who adopted these technologies saw significant improvements in crop yields and overall farm productivity. As a result, these farmers experienced enhanced food security, evidenced by increased household food availability and diversity. Additionally, the study found a notable reduction in poverty levels among households that embraced agricultural technology, attributed to higher agricultural income. Mwangi recommended policies to increase the accessibility and affordability of agricultural technologies for smallholder farmers. The study also suggested that government and private sector partnerships could play a crucial role in disseminating these technologies. Training and support services were identified as essential components to ensure farmers could effectively utilize new technologies. The research concluded that agricultural technology adoption is a key driver for improving food security and reducing poverty in Kenya. This conclusion was supported by robust data showing sustained benefits over the study period.

Nguyen (2019) explored the impact of rural development programs on food security and poverty reduction in Vietnam. The study involved in-depth interviews with program participants, including farmers, local government officials, and development practitioners, along with an analysis of agricultural output data. Results demonstrated that rural development initiatives, such as infrastructure improvements, access to credit, and agricultural training, significantly reduced food insecurity and poverty in the target areas. Participants reported increased agricultural productivity, higher incomes, and improved living standards as direct benefits of the development programs. The study also highlighted the importance of community involvement in the planning and implementation of these programs. Nguyen recommended the continuation and expansion of rural development programs, with a particular focus on scaling successful models to other regions. The study suggested that tailored interventions, considering local conditions and needs, would enhance program effectiveness. Additionally, it emphasized the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that development initiatives adapt to changing circumstances. The research concluded that comprehensive rural development programs are essential for achieving sustainable food security and poverty reduction in Vietnam. This conclusion was supported by strong evidence of improved socio-economic outcomes in the studied communities.

Agyeman (2021) investigated the role of microfinance in enhancing food security and reducing poverty in Ghana through a comprehensive survey of microfinance beneficiaries. The study aimed to understand how access to credit influenced agricultural productivity and household food security. Findings indicated that microfinance services significantly improved farmers' ability to invest in agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and equipment, leading to higher crop yields. Additionally, access to microfinance allowed households to diversify their income sources, reducing their vulnerability to food insecurity. The study highlighted that microfinance not only boosted agricultural productivity but also enhanced household resilience against economic shocks. Agyeman recommended the expansion of microfinance services to reach more rural communities, particularly targeting women and smallholder farmers who are often underserved. The study also

suggested incorporating financial literacy programs to help beneficiaries manage their loans effectively. Furthermore, it emphasized the importance of supportive policies that facilitate the growth of the microfinance sector. The research concluded that microfinance is a powerful tool for improving food security and reducing poverty in Ghana. This conclusion was supported by empirical evidence showing significant socio-economic benefits for microfinance beneficiaries.

Muflikhati (2018) analyzed the effect of farmer education on food security in Indonesia. The study surveyed farmers across various regions and assessed the impact of educational programs on agricultural practices and productivity. Results indicated that investments in farmer education directly enhanced food security by improving farming techniques and knowledge. Educated farmers were more likely to adopt innovative agricultural practices, leading to higher crop yields and better management of natural resources. The study also found that educated farmers had better access to market information and were more capable of negotiating fair prices for their produce. Muflikhati recommended prioritizing educational programs for farmers, particularly focusing on practical skills and knowledge that directly impact agricultural productivity. The study suggested that government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to provide continuous learning opportunities for farmers. Additionally, it emphasized the need for policies that support lifelong learning and skill development in the agricultural sector. The research concluded that farmer education is crucial for sustaining food security improvements and reducing poverty in Indonesia. This conclusion was supported by the positive correlation between education and improved agricultural outcomes observed in the study.

Chuwa (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of sustainable farming practices and their impact on food security and poverty in Tanzania. The study compared regions implementing sustainable practices, such as organic farming and agroforestry, with those using conventional farming methods. Data was collected through agricultural surveys, food security assessments, and interviews with farmers. Findings showed that regions practicing sustainable farming experienced long-term food security benefits, including higher soil fertility, better water retention, and increased biodiversity. These practices also contributed to poverty reduction by providing stable and diverse income sources for farming households. The study recommended promoting sustainable agricultural techniques through education and policy support. Chuwa suggested that integrating sustainable practices into national agricultural policies could enhance their adoption and effectiveness. The study also highlighted the importance of community involvement and knowledge sharing in promoting sustainable farming. The research concluded that sustainable farming practices are essential for ensuring long-term food security and reducing poverty in Tanzania. This conclusion was supported by strong evidence of environmental and socioeconomic benefits associated with sustainable agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gaps: Although studies such as Rahman (2021) have highlighted the positive impacts of agricultural subsidies on food security and poverty reduction, there remains a gap in understanding the long-term sustainability of these subsidies and their indirect effects on market dynamics and farmer behavior. Additionally, while the importance of efficient water management in irrigation infrastructure is acknowledged (El-Shater, 2020), there is a need for deeper exploration into how such infrastructure investments can be optimized for maximum environmental and economic benefits. Furthermore, Mwangi (2022) suggests that agricultural technology adoption can significantly enhance food security, but further research is needed to understand the socio-cultural barriers that may hinder technology uptake among smallholder farmers.

Contextual Gaps: Most studies, including those by Nguyen (2019) and Agyeman (2021), focus on specific regions or communities within their respective countries, often overlooking the diverse contextual factors that affect the efficacy of agricultural investments across different regions. For instance, the effectiveness of rural development programs in Vietnam may not directly translate to other developing nations with different socio-economic and cultural contexts. Similarly, the impact of microfinance on food security in Ghana highlights the need for context-specific strategies to tailor microfinance services to meet the unique needs of different communities, especially in regions with varying levels of financial literacy and agricultural productivity.

Geographical Gaps: While significant research has been conducted in countries like Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, Vietnam, Ghana, and Indonesia, there is a notable gap in empirical studies from other developing regions, particularly in South America and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the findings of Chuwa (2019) on sustainable farming practices in Tanzania underscore the potential benefits of such practices, but more research is needed to evaluate their applicability and effectiveness in other regions with different climatic and environmental conditions. Similarly, while the impacts of farmer education on food security have been studied in Indonesia (Muflikhati, 2018), there is limited research on how similar educational initiatives could be adapted and implemented in other geographical contexts to achieve comparable outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS Conclusion

The influence of agricultural investment on food security and poverty levels in developing nations is profound and multifaceted. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that targeted investments in key areas such as subsidies, irrigation infrastructure, agricultural technology, rural development programs, microfinance, farmer education, and sustainable farming practices can significantly enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security, and reduce poverty. However, the effectiveness of these investments is often context-dependent, requiring tailored approaches that consider local socio-economic, cultural, and environmental conditions. While substantial progress has been made in countries like Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, Vietnam, Ghana, and Indonesia, there remain significant conceptual, contextual, and geographical gaps in the research. Addressing these gaps through comprehensive and context-sensitive strategies will be crucial for maximizing the impact of agricultural investments. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of policies and programs are essential to ensure that these investments lead to sustainable and inclusive

development, ultimately improving the livelihoods of millions in developing nations.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Future research should integrate insights from economics, sociology, environmental science, and technology to develop a comprehensive framework that explains how various types of agricultural investments interact to influence food security and poverty levels. This multidisciplinary approach can provide a more holistic understanding of the complex dynamics at play. Additionally, there is a need for longitudinal studies to understand the long-term impacts of agricultural investments.

Such studies can help identify sustained benefits and any potential drawbacks that may arise over time, offering valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners. Furthermore, developing context-specific models that account for local socio-economic and environmental conditions is essential. These models should help predict the outcomes of different types of investments in diverse settings, thus enhancing the precision and relevance of agricultural investment strategies.

Practice

Governments and development organizations should facilitate the adoption of modern agricultural technologies through training programs, subsidies, and partnerships with tech companies. Ensuring that smallholder farmers have access to these technologies can significantly boost productivity and food security. Promoting sustainable farming practices is equally important. Practices such as organic farming, agroforestry, and conservation agriculture should be scaled up through extension services and farmer education programs. These sustainable practices not only improve productivity but also maintain environmental health. Additionally, investing in critical infrastructure such as irrigation systems, roads, and storage facilities is crucial. These investments not only improve food production and reduce post-harvest losses but also enhance market access for farmers, leading to better incomes and reduced poverty.

Policy

Implementing policies that ensure the equitable distribution of agricultural subsidies is vital. These policies should target smallholder and marginalized farmers to maximize the impact on food security and poverty reduction. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are necessary to adapt these policies to changing conditions, ensuring their effectiveness over time. Expanding microfinance and other financial services tailored to the needs of smallholder farmers is another key policy recommendation. Policies should encourage the growth of microfinance institutions and incorporate financial literacy programs to help farmers manage their finances effectively. Lastly, designing and implementing rural development programs that involve community participation and consider local needs and conditions is essential. Policies should promote collaboration between government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to ensure comprehensive support for rural communities, thus driving sustainable and inclusive agricultural development.

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