CHAPTER

14

Governance and food

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OUTLINE

Historically, governance in matters of food production, trade, and distribution—in fact all along the supply chain—was a general mix of national policies, private and commercial influences, nongovernmental organizations and similar institutional influences and legislation. Within this arena, guidance or stewardship was pretty much a collaboration of these collective interests. However, with the advent of globalization as a new orthodoxy, particularly in the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, big picture politics took over. The result, power, and influence in these matters gravitated toward the dominant powers—particularly at the global level. A dominant power in this sense often came about either through fear, as in the cold war USSR; economic, as in the United Kingdom, then the United States, and more recently China or through ideology as in the United Nations. This is a loose description and without getting drawn into political ideology for the moment, the point made here is that global power fluctuates. With this power, whether political,

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economic, or ideological, comes responsibility and in an ideal world a benevolent dominant power facilitates good governance. It is also a circular argument and yet despite this apparent definitive route it is not always easy to navigate. And so, it was with the politics of food. As more and more of the food supply chain became globalized, more and more of it also became politicized. The challenge here was that it was not always easy to discern the ideology or motives of policy and policymakers. In all of this though, especially with the inception of the League of Nations and its predecessor of the United Nations, international hegemony is increasingly being established through multilateralism. Multilateralism and multilateral agreements are an appropriate and cooperative means of achieving common goals to manage coordination and to resolve conflicts of interest.

There are many dimensions to food politics ranging from legislation to terms of trade to ideological paradigms—all of which collectively seek to shape the structure of the food industry. A few of these are discussed in the following sections.

Perhaps the first consideration of the political dimension of food is that of food security, ensuring people have adequate access to the food they need.

Freedom and Democracy

Some argue that you cannot separate good governance from democracy; indeed, some like Lord Acton strongly believed that

> Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. *Engel-Janosi (1941)*.

14.1 From human rights to food rights

The notion of human rights for all—a country's investment in its own people—has gained much traction over the last few decades. Indeed, under the banner of many guises including the "human development" concept, a country's "social capital" and "social justice" for all are all paradigms that aim to improve the "lot" of the common person. Since civilization first congregated, cogitated, and sought council, human rights, in its many incarnations (Table 14.1), focuses, in one way or another, on the collective betterment of individuals and nations.

With "human rights" came human progress, and while the idea of social capital or human development generally means different things to different people, central to all notions is a collection of social goals bound up in a "rights"-based ideology. This includes notions of social, mobility, justice, and the right to food among others which have all been preserved in some form or other—not only in the United Nations Declaration of Human rights of 1948 but also within many other similar multilateral instruments over the years. These ideas built on earlier social, economic, and cultural enlightenments, but specifically flourished during the last half of the 20th century when there was considerable progress in the socioeconomic development in the lives of numerous people throughout the world. One setback though was that despite the many socioeconomic advances afforded to many, there were many more who were, in fact, still lagging behind. Consequently, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, people began to take a closer look at the various aspects of development and what it in fact entailed. The first challenge that came to the fore was just how were the concepts of social development and social capital to be defined, let alone measured? Up to this point the idea of a country's development—its progress if you like—was solely and inextricably tied to its economic

TABLE 14.1 Selected instruments of human rights over the centuries.

1792–1750 BC	The code of hammurabi
559-530 BC	The Persian cyrus cylinder
697 AD	The Irish cáin adomnái
1215	The English magna carta
1216	Great Charter of Ireland
1222	The Hungarian golden bull
1525	Twelve articles
1689	The English bill of rights
1776	The Hindu gentoo codes
1776	The US declaration of independence and the Virginia declaration of rights
1789	The French declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen
1791	The US bill of rights
1856	Ottoman empire Hatt-ı Hümayun
1919	Basic rights and liberties in Finland
1948	United Nations universal declaration of human rights
1949	Fundamental rights and duties of citizens in People's Republic of China
1976	International bill of human rights
2000	United Nations millennium declaration

Source: Halhed (1776); Hurlbut (1847); UN (1948); UN (2000); Ishay (2008).

activity, as measured by its Gross National Product or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Much thought was given to the idea of defining and measuring alternative social progress and finally by the 1990s, the UN Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Report defined development in terms of individual's longevity, knowledge, and living standards among other social constructs. Once the methodology was ironed out, these concepts ultimately became the benchmark for indirect measures of social well-being. From such metrics, it was quickly observed that a country's economic growth did not always correspond to measures of social development as described above. That is to say, some countries seemed to achieve better social development with less economic progress. Not surprisingly, divergence of economic and social metrics gave rise to much debate over the concept of economic growth for betterment. This helped focus people's minds and aided in the rebalancing of perspectives—taking the development paradigm and placing human development (or capital) as the central goal of progress. Importantly too, this paradigm shift turned out to be a real eye-opener as human capital was now being seen not only as a goal to be achieved as in the likes of GDP but also as a major input "… previously unaccounted for in neo-classical economic models …" (Gibson, 2016). This new thinking implicitly tied economic productivity to the education, health, and well-being of the populace—its human "development" or

capital (Hasan, 2001; MacAuslan, 2009). Put another way, an "holistic" approach in which food was but one component part became the cornerstone of the concept of food security. Furthermore, it was quickly understood that by employing skilled or educated healthy workers, labor would, more likely, be more productive allowing businesses to capitalize on more efficient economic and social capital. While such laudable progress toward human rights can be seen throughout history, the concept of the human right to food has also been well observed in "moral, philosophical, and ideological terms over a similar period" (Gibson, 2016). Also, while great social strides have been made with the establishment of the inalienable right to food, in reality this "right" is not a new concept. The right to food is peppered throughout history, being invoked on numerous occasions (Mettrick, 1929; UN, 1948; FAO, 2006) from the slaves of ancient Babylonian times (Johns, 1904) to the words of English philosopher John Locke (1714), which are echoed by the Rt. Rev. Thomas Sherlock, Bishop of London when he opines that

> There is not, I presume, a stronger natural right, than the *right to food* and raiment; this is founded in the common necessity of nature; and 'tis not to be thought that God sent men into the world merely to starve, without giving them a right to use in common so much of it as their necessities require. ***Sherlock (1718)*, *pg 25*.**

Further expanding on this idea was Edmund Burke's comments on the role of government in his book reflecting on the *French Revolution* in 1790 when he penned:

> What is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or to medicine? The question [should focus] upon the method of procuring and administering them. In that deliberation I shall always advise to call in the aid of the farmer and the physician, rather than the professor of metaphysics. ***Burke (1790)*, *pg 88/9*.**

Of interest here is the separation, by Burke, of the philosophical or moral "right to food" with the practicalities of acquiring rightful nourishment. At the time, this viewpoint set precedence, marking an important departure from contemporary doctrine.

In another point of view, the influential 19th century secularist Charles Cockbill Cattell also promoted the notion food as a right by stating clearly that

> Every industrious community has the right to food, clothing, shelter, and such social arrangements as will enable it to enjoy an average share of life. ***Cattell (1874)*, *pg 10*.**

Lastly, food as a right was given further kudos through the writings of Boyd Orr. In advocating the merits of the "new" science of nutrition in 1939, Boyd Orr observed that

> It is the right of every citizen of our great British Empire to enjoy the benefits of this newer knowledge of nutrition so that the health of every one of His Majesty's subjects will be up to the level which we now know is possible. ***Orr (1939)* *pg 89*.**

And so, it was, in a moment of moral momentum, that the UN Human Rights Commission drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948; and the first time in history that rather than being implicit, the human right to food was made very explicit (albeit nonlegislatively). Legislation came in 1996 in the form of the World Food Summit (Food Summit, 1996). Such slow progress, according to several UN commentators, was the result of the politics of

procrastination and the notion that it is all well and good talking about a rights-based ideology but yet another itself to act upon it (FAO, 2006; SOFI, 2009). In fact, such was the hypocrite and distance between ideology and practical solutions led O'Neil back in 2002 to comment

> It is a cruel mockery to tell someone they have the right to food when there is nobody with the duty to provide them with food. That is the risk with the rights rhetoric. *O'Niel (2002)*.

It has further been suggested that, in spite of guidelines on how best to anchor a rights-based approach to food in such, (largely) politically-oriented instruments, a lack of real progress is still being made. This is especially difficult as such frameworks are more often than not based on voluntary rather than mandatory codes (Hartmannshenn, 2004; UN, 2004).

14.2 The food gap

Furthermore, if less meat and other resource-intensive foods were consumed, the food gap between the rich and the poor would narrow. The food gap, which sees 815 million or so food insecure, could also be further narrowed if the necessary agricultural growth develops in a way that provides more jobs and better incomes to supplement the 2 billion plus workers (many of whom are women) in the industry, besides addressing the food/poverty gap.

14.3 Land use and land ownership rights

With regard to food, land use and land ownership rights are of paramount importance. In the more developed countries, land rights are fairly well established and food supply is more stable as a result. Throughout the developing world, however, land is one of the most critical resources that the rural poor can access. Land tenure or the system of rights governs access to land and other resources. Such rights might exist as a rule of law; through customary use, marriage, inheritance, or power, they might also exist under freehold, leasehold, or by mutual agreement with no contractual basis. The difficulty in many of these countries is that many of these rights are not always backed by legislation, as such it is not protected or is its tradable collateral. Rights to land too can change relatively quickly affecting the security of those working it. Moreover, in some postcolonial areas, there still exists residual policies of pseudo-feudal systems with vast tracts of land owned by a privileged few whose rental or terms of lease has led to long-term tension and animosity (Maxwell and Wiebe, 1999). Added to this are the failed structural adjustment policies and a leave-it-be attitude to change in the face of mounting political pressures of land titling, particularly in Africa, that have collectively compounded to leave a legacy of land vulnerability in many parts of the world. Things are beginning to change, however, and in response to these challenges, the United Nations introduced its land policy model, which is predicated on five equitable constructs that aimed to set rigid guidelines in the hope of shaping future usage and management of land: these include land distribution, land utilization, land tenure security, land administration, and land adjudication (ECA/SDD, 2004). One of the major driving forces behind the promotion

of land rights and a keen area of debate is the commercialization of agriculture. On the one hand, privatizing land in the commercialization of agriculture (especially for export) sees a general reduction in subsistence food at the household level and a concomitant increase in cash income. However, it is also argued that this reliance of export earning actually increases market vulnerability. On the other hand, it is said that this very model of integration into the exchange or globalized economy is a prerequisite for future sustained growth and development. These two opposing arguments have fueled much literature and are beyond the remit of this book.

14.4 Food and global governance

The idea of governance in food matters is a complex one that has shoots going back centuries. This resulted from the many multifarious trains of thought and their indelible crisscrossing paths that culminated in many international agreements and instruments of peace and social rights. As such governance can be thought of as responsibility, guidance, and/or oversight bound up in a mix of social accountability, political ideology, and economic development paradigms, as well as increasing moral and ethical influences (FAO, 2009). In the arena of food, the notion of governance at the multilateral level properly evolved with the advent of the First World War. By this time food was being seen in many quarters as a part of a "whole package" of rights. This was further solidified with the inception of the League of Nations and then after the Second World War with the creation of the United Nations. During this period, three UN agencies—the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the then-called United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)—were established to tackle the growing problem of hunger and malnutrition. In terms of governance, it was initially difficult as sovereign nations seemed uncomfortable with the notion of any international organization beyond the control of national governments. However, in spite of these misgivings, the United Nations eventually received wide acceptance and has since then had more to do with the development of food in all its many guises than any other agency or government (FAO, 1946; Phillips, 1981; Williams, 2005; Shaw, 2007; FAO, 2010).

Thus, from the social and political detritus of two World War issues of food, in particular vis-à-vis hunger and malnutrition was firmly and finally fully politicized. Indeed,

> Democratic peace, cosmopolitanism, and global governance are among the most powerful conceptual frameworks in contemporary world politics. ***Aksu (2008)*, *pg* 368.**

Good stewardship facilitates progress and with the right balance of institutional governance extolling notions of human rights; health and international cooperation; development philosophies; greater public resources; improved physical infrastructure; and education, etc., more inroads can be made into many of the issues evolving around food.

As the decades passed, knowledge and research became invaluable tools in understanding the many facets of food and food-related issues, and in time new agencies and bodies such as the European Economic Community (later the EU), the UN's Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the UK-based Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and the

Overseas Development Institute (ODI), as well as numerous other institutions, charities, and civil organizations joined the long list of governance-type organizations.

However, governance especially in the face of competing political ideologies is a fragile overlord leading many to suggest that present global governance on food issues is fragmented at best. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that with so many stakeholders it becomes practically impossible to develop common coherent policy objectives that many food issues are unlikely to be adequately addressed (Marzeda-Mlynarska and Curie-Sklodowska, 2009; RTFN, 2009). In particular, when it comes to issues of food security, even the FAO acknowledges the lack of unified global governance when it offered

> We recognize that there is a lack of coherence and efficiency in the current governance of world food security. The system is poorly organized and each institution operates to a large extent separately despite important progress in coordination. Responding to the global food insecurity crisis in an effective and sustainable way requires not only strong leadership and relevant policies, strategies and programs, but also coordinated implementation and monitoring capacities. ***FAO (2009)***.

In another example, the United States, being the world's premier superpower and the largest donator of humanitarian aid, is uniquely positioned to set the right course in food governance providing best practice in international governance and multilateral cooperation. Yet in this role, the United States is sadly lacking. The trouble, according to some, is that while US hegemony is felt around the world, the majority of its actions are motivated by self-interest. Many reasons have been cited for this state of affairs from partisan politics to conflicts of domestic interests; however, the UN feels the biggest single reason still remains the simple lack of political will (UN News Center, 2010).

While this is a poor indictment of the current state of food issue governance, it is a tacit and welcome admission of the difficulties facing the various stakeholders. And indeed, only with this type of open and forthright self-awareness can progress be made in such varied issues such as food wastage and security of food, etc.

In a similar vein, an important but not so widely discussed area of food supply centers on the type of governance within a country.

14.5 Regulation and trade

In the field of politics and a country's food supply, there is the question of whether to access the globalized market and if so to what degree—for all a country's food needs, some, most? Once this question has been satisfied there is then the question of whether this access is to be on a level playing field via the free market, or indeed whether a country intends to safeguard its domestic agricultural sector and associated industries through regulation and quota systems—effectively protectionism. Furthermore, there are also issues of food safety and regulation and whether or not to look favorably on such things as the import and export of genetically modified foods, etc. These questions are not solely politically motivated either—take the case for organic food, food sovereignty (see later sections), slow food, food miles, and carbon dioxide among a plethora of other socially led movements. While some of these are now incorporated to some degree or other within legislation, many of these

started out as social movements; awareness campaigns that might have started small becoming politicized as social momentum achieved critical mass.

The following looks at the idea, in principal, of free trade and protectionism and explores whether or not the two can mutually coexist in the food supply chain ideology of a country.

14.5.1 Free trade versus protectionism

Globalization and the notion of free trade are both well established and are fairly well aligned—you often find the two working well together. To place food and free trade in perspective, we can see that globally traded food in 2010 stood at approximately 9.6% of total merchandise traded (WTO, 2010). However, there are some who feel that free trade is a misnomer or more judgmentally an oxymoron. The reason for such views lies in the fact that running parallel with the ideals of free trade, there commonly exist frequent barriers to the free movement of goods and services across international borders and trading blocks. Indeed, as a result of decades of such practices, some degree of national protectionism is seen as the norm throughout the world. To understand more of the debate, we need to understand something of comparative advantage as the fundamental ideologies of free trade and comparative advantage are two economic models often seen as complimentary. Comparative advantage is a simple notion, it exists in one country utilizing different skill sets and natural resources becomes more efficient and perhaps cheaper in certain industries than others.

Free trade then, pioneered by the likes of esteemed economists like Adam Smith, Robert Torrens, and David Ricardo, is predicated on the movement of goods and services without outside influence or impediments from governments or other bodies. Free trade also presupposes certain comparative advantages and given these conditions the idea supposes both sides mutually benefit from trade. In this freely functioning system, the supply and demand for food is theoretically in equilibrium and subsequently able to reflect the true needs of populations. On top of this there is also evidence to suggest that globally integrated trade further benefits countries in terms of increases in both economic terms and through better standards of living (IMF, 2010). Just as importantly though, global competition through a free trade also promotes competitive prices and equally the rational use of resources making such trade more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

The downside of free trade, however, lies firmly in its application. According to some, free trade does not or has it ever truly existed. The problem is one of protectionism through such instruments as the EUs Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)[1] or the US Farm Bill, for instance, continues to artificially distort a country's domestic agricultural advantage by providing generous subsidies, preferential agreements, or through import and export quotas. Such programs create unfair advantages which makes it difficult for developing countries specially to trade on a level playing field.

[1]Total subsidies paid to OECD countries in agricultural protectionism in 2007 was reported to be in the region of $365 billion per annum while an IMF report estimated the benefits of globally traded merchandise, were all barriers removed, to be in the region of $250 billion to $680 billion per year Harvey (2010). "An abbreviated UK/EU agricultural policy history." Retrieved 23rd Nov 2019, 2019, from http://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/david.harvey/AEF372/History.html., IMF (2010). "International Montetary Fund Website." Retrieved 4th Jan 2019, 2019, from http://www.imf.org/external/.

These potential difficulties were recognized early on and resulted in the UN initiated General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947. The treaty's purpose aimed to reduce global tariffs and other trade barriers as well as to eliminate trade preferences so everyone would benefit from equal opportunity. Over the years, the GATT held many rounds of talks which between them have tackled literally thousands of obstacles in the quest for true free trade. GATT was eventually taken over by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in respect of food it was only by the 1992/95 Uruguay round that agriculture was finally fully admitted into negotiations. While these talks have indeed reduced many such barriers, there still commonly exist numerous preferential trading agreements, import tariffs, quotas, and subsidies by or between countries and regions. Indeed, the hypocrite here is that during these rounds and through certain international financial lending instrument's conditions, developing countries are encouraged to liberalize their markets in favor of free trade. This was perhaps one of the major failings of the Uruguay round as before Uruguay (which disallowed the practice of protectionism) it had been hoped that the success of the EU CAP model in raising living standards and production within its borders could be mimicked by other less developed countries worldwide. Adding to this hypocrite is the fact that at the time the EU refused to unravel its own trade distorting policies (Warnock, 1997; SED, 2004; Barnes, 2006; Harvey, 2010; Murphy, 2010). For the sake of completeness though, such practices were not seen in isolation within the developed world; rather numerous countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, for instance, also operated and continued to do so protectionist policies that continue to marginalize their global participation in free trade (IMF, 2010).

It is this dichotomy of "do as I say and not as I do" politics that many see as one of the overriding barriers to real progress free trade and indeed unless the status quo is challenged many are skeptical of the ultimate benefits of so-called liberalization. Furthermore, hypocrite and protectionism suggest critics; it favors rich countries and large corporations and producers while continuing to subjugate impoverished countries. Moreover, on the subject of the natural resources, it has been said that free trade powered by privatization and fueled by profit is charged with reinforcing short termism and promoting a laissez-faire attitude toward environmentalism running contrary to the good stewardship needed to maintain sustainable production methods (Harvey, 2010).

Thus, cynically it could be argued that it is not so much perhaps, nation states' global political and economic hegemony that is the current driving force behind societal change, but rather the collective social and ideological values of billions of global consumers. In this picture, globalization is an economic and political force all of its own, and one which is firmly in the hands of the people; it could also be considered the dominant vehicle of global governance when it comes to issues of food.

14.6 Safety nets and food reserves

Food, being the staff of life, is not always available—at times it is subject to economic drivers; price volatility; to spoilage; and to loss via natural or man-made emergencies; and even political whimsy among other things. Indeed, in the words of Sophia Murphy, lands cannot be moved, harvests are unpredictable, and consumption is neither elastic nor optional

(Murphy, 2009). Consequently, the idea of food safety nets is as old as civilization and since ancient times people have stockpiled grain and other foods for anticipated leaner times ahead. Recently, however, partly as a backlash at the food mountain horrors amid world starvation the practice has dwindled somewhat. Instead the trend is toward a more pragmatic market-led system. This has been shown during times of peace to work relatively well with any emergency shortfalls quickly offset by international aid. That was until the financial crisis of 2008 which prompted a revival of the idea of food reserves and food safety nets at the G8 meeting in 2009 (EC/FAO, 2008).

Such programs would be of particular benefit to vulnerable groups such as those unable to work for one reason or another or perhaps those affected by recession or natural disasters. Food safety nets include those direct feeding programs such as soup kitchens, free school meals, food fortification, provisioning for expectant and nursing mothers as well as for the under-fives, etc. Alternatively, in lesser developed countries, food safety nets also manifest in certain food-for-work programs, which also have the added bonus of helping to support local community projects such as irrigation, roads, or buildings like schools and health centers. Yet other safety nets take the form of income-transfer programs such as cash or in-kind payments like food stamps, subsidized rations, and other targeted measures. Lastly, food safety nets also include things like agricultural input subsidies or crop insurance; all in all, there are many things responsible governance can do to ensure adequate food provisions to the most vulnerable of its citizenry (SOFI, 2008).

14.7 Globalization: hegemony, multilateral cooperation, and people power

The march toward globalization has been relentless. For two, arguably three, centuries, advances in media, travel, and technology, all facilitated by conducive politics, have resulted in the relative ease of movement of goods and services across the globe (Gibson, 2016). However, within this context, food is a relative newcomer. In fact regard to food, despite the overt political will that has been bandied about since the 1940s or so, it was only by the 1990s that the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) talks that food was finally admitted into the global free-trading arena. In theory, this effectively allowed countries to buy the food they needed at the best possible price on the international market, supposedly unimpeded by economic or political barriers (caveats aside). That said, globalization has brought about economic and cultural liberalization as never before— a new orthodoxy (Vaidya, 2006). Much of this, according to Kennedy et al. (2004), is being spurred on by urbanization and, as far as food is concerned, by effectively transforming the entire food supply chain from production, processing, retailing, and marketing through to consumers all around the world, making it more accessible and generally more affordable to most (Kennedy et al., 2004). In fact, what was once the preserve of governments and multinationals alone is now more open to small to medium enterprises (SMEs). In this way it seems, more and more countries are taking back control over their own FSCs than ever before. There are many other benefits of this new global market too. One such advantage has to do with livestock and quality control standards. In dealing on the international market, for instance, bound up within increased global food trade is a trend for better quality control standards, especially within the meat and livestock sector. Inherent in this upward trend, there also exists the possibility

of translating such coveted standards into better animal welfare values and by extension the potential of reducing disease and increasing food safety. There are also economic and social benefits of globalization too—as societies are becoming increasingly politically and culturally integrated, so the increased flow of commodities services, labor, and capital means more opportunities for many more individuals and countries. Consequently, greater international trade often raises domestic incomes and standards of living helping both the financially poor with improved food security (Parfitt et al., 2010).

Benefits aside, global trade in food and agriculture also brings with it, its own challenges. When it comes to animals for instance, the same strict quality controls that look to raise standards might also act as barriers. Also, when it comes to a finite food supply and with so many countries now looking to be fed from the same trough, the many global inequalities in terms of trade are potentially set to increase with certain established interests looking to benefit considerably more than others. Furthermore, on a political dimension, the FAO, Parfittet al (2010) also warn that with increased integration and a potential converging global agrarian policy, the rewards might come at a high price as reflected in the increased vulnerability of global production, the lack of development of individual internal markets, as well as subsequent price volatility (McMichael, 1994; FAO, 2003; Parfitt et al., 2010). Another cautionary note too, says Kennedy (2004), and one that counters the benefits of SMEs as suggested above, concerns the vast amounts of direct foreign investment by large multinational food companies as well as retailers. While no doubt this investment is resulting in cheaper food, greater availability, and more diversity. However, such "advances" are inducing fundamental changes in traditional production, procurement, and distribution systems often, suggests Kennedy, at the expense of smaller local agents and long-established food outlets. Moreover, as international trade tends to favor big business and centralized procurement systems, it further acts as an exclusionary hurdle to smallholders or small producers (FAO, 2005). Lastly, there also appears to be evidence that globalization is likewise bringing about a gradual shift—a convergence if you like—toward a more universal food culture (Kennedy et al., 2004; Dimitri et al., 2005; Scheuerman, 2008; Walker, 2008).

Another important driver of change within the food supply dynamic is increasing urbanization and a trend that is only going to continue.

14.8 Land grabbing

One growing trend faced by poorer economies is the trend of selling or leasing domestic agricultural land to foreign entities. While on the one hand such practices provide much needed income, on the other there are fears that it could lead to land conflict, water and other natural resource competition, evictions and increased land prices (RTFN, 2010). The trend is well-established; multinationals, governments, and investment funds have been buying up vast tracts of land to either ensure sufficient food supplies in their own countries or simply as tools of profit. This is perhaps not surprising when you consider some lands in the cheapest areas (especially in Africa) can be leased for as little as $1 a year. This trend is challenging in both moral and practical terms. Take Ethiopia for example, paradoxically the government, in the face of some of the worst food insecurity in the world, is offering up to 3 million hectares of its most fertile land to rich countries, and while some argue this is selling of the natural

resource base, others suggest it brings much needed foreign investment in place of domestic measures which have ultimately failed (Vidal, 2010). This practice is not confined to Africa either; in Romania for instance, about 1 million hectares of arable land (around 12% of its national stock) has been sold to foreign interests (The Diplomat, 2011). In Saudi Arabia too, water stresses are encouraging the government to reduce domestic cereal production by at least 12% a year, and in efforts to conserve its valuable water resources is offering vast subsidized loan agreements to companies interested in buying and cultivating land overseas.

It's not only food pressures that are driving force behind this practice. China, for instance, cultivates 2.8 m ha of land in the Democratic Republic of Congo to produce palm oil for its biofuel industry. In the European Union, biofuel companies too have acquired large swathes—about 3.9 m ha—in Africa for commercial purposes.

Indeed the practice of land grabbing is so widespread involving numerous countries and organizations with mind boggling amounts of land that it is still something of an unknown quantity (von Braun and Meinzen-Dick, 2009). In fact, so quick has been the phenomenon emerged and so large the scale,[2] that the practice is receiving more than a measure of criticism amid fears of disruption to local food security for one thing. Of course, however, as with everything else it is not always clear cut and there are benefits and disadvantages; on the plus side such acquisitions might be seen in the light of much needed agricultural and rural investment in terms of finance and technology. This suggests proponents, creates both on and off-farm jobs for local communities while also providing much needed yield increases and promoting better land management practices. Also, of benefit are the many trickle-down benefits such as the rural development projects like new schools or health clinics that sometimes accompany such deals. However, on the downside there is concern in some quarters concerning the terms of these contracts and whether or not they benefit the investors more than the recipients; and in turn whether or not the recipient's terms benefit local communities or their own self-interests. Further tied up in these concerns is the tangible fear that such practices will also have an adverse, rather than beneficial effect on the local environment as well as people's livelihoods (von Braun and Meinzen-Dick, 2009).

14.9 Food sovereignty

One alternative view to the current food supply paradigms is that of food sovereignty. However, it must be noted at the outset that food sovereignty is not the same as self-sufficiency, rather it is an alternative view of the food supply chain that bucks prevailing trends of globalization. Introduced in 1993 in Belgium by a group of farmers' representatives calling themselves "La Via Campesina" the idea of food sovereignty was globally launched at the World Food Summit in 1996. In response to the fact that more and more of agriculture nowadays is influenced, governed or legislated at the international level, the movement

[2]The full extent of land grabbing is not fully known however, the FAO have suggested that over the last few years, perhaps as much as 20 million hectares in Africa alone might have been acquired by foreign interests RTFN (2009). Who controls the governance of the world food system? Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. Germany, Brot für die Welt (Bread for the world). **2009**. RTFN (2010). Land grabbing and nutrition: Challenges for global governance. Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. Germany, Brot für die Welt (Bread for the world). **2010:** 90.

acts as a voice for the millions of small and medium-size farmers, landless people, peasants, indigenous people, and others from around the world, in actively engaging in decision-making processes that affect all their lives. Food sovereignty is in part a backlash against modern farming practices, but more importantly it seeks to take back control of trade, agriculture, and land policies and ultimately food supply away from multinational corporations and place responsibility back in the hands of national interests. It is fundamentally opposed to transnational companies and corporate-driven agriculture favoring instead national self-determined food policies.

At the heart of the movement are the welfare, equity, and governance of the millions of livelihoods supported by small-scale farming, peasantry, and herding livelihoods that its proponents see as being challenged by the trend of globalization. This is evidenced in one example by the Uruguay round of trade negotiations in which liberalizing sovereign agricultural policies in favor of freer more open international trade became prescriptive at the national level. Another example can be seen in many developing countries external debt positions which, as part of international loan conditions, see countries having to initiate World Bank and the IMF structural adjustment programs containing, in many instances, mandatory conditions in such areas as the opening of international markets for agricultural products, etc. However, perhaps more emotive is the strong negotiating position of many foreign multi-nationals many of which wield significant power beyond their political weight and which is brought to bear in influencing terms of trade and sometimes by default, domestic policies.

In retaliation to these challenges the Food Sovereignty framework promotes the devolution of the centralized decision-making process away the global and back to the national. Furthermore, in keeping with their ideals, the Food Sovereignty framework prioritizes local food production and consumption while ensuring that the balance of power resides with the people who produce the food rather than the corporate behemoths (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005; Clements, 2009; La Via Campesina, 2011).

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