

LINK BETWEEN TRADE AND FOOD SECURITY

(Case study; Bamenda, Cameroon)

Food security is a major concern, especially for developing countries where a large percentage of the population lives in rural areas and the agricultural sector represents a substantial weight in the economy.

During CECOSDA field work, we met Clarckson CHE, a student in the Bamenda Teachers Training College (ENS Bambili) who has been growing food crops like maize, cassava, sweet potatoes, plantains, Irish potatoes, and beans with her mother since 1980 as 6 years old boy. He sells the food stuff in the Nkwen local market to make a living, raise income for tuition fees in school and for household use. They depend entirely on their farming product as a source of income and food for home consumption.

Clarckson explains that they have experienced a huge increase in their sales between 2001 to present 2015 and most of their food crops are sold to middlemen who transport them to other neighbouring countries like Congo, Gabon, DR Congo, Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. This is because they sell at very high prices considering the fact that the food stuff are more expensive in these countries, as such the prices of food in the local market increases. Dried cassava starch (locally known as Garri) was sold at the cost of 12 cups for 200 frs CFA in 2002, but it is now sold at of 1 cup for 50 frs CFA making 4 cups for 200 frs and sometimes 3 cups for 200 frs CFA. Some of these businessmen and women do not just buy the farm products from farmers but they go as far as buying an entire farm which is almost ready for harvest at an agreed price with the farmer; at time leaving the farmers themselves to go hungry.

Considering the fact that about 80 percent of farmers in Cameroon and the North West and Northern Regions in particular prefer trading their farm product to exporters for money, most families now go hungry which was not the case many years back. An average home can barely afford enough food to feed a family due to trade and export at higher prices.

Thus owing to FAO definition of food security, and with specific to regions; it is clear that trade has increased and it is gradually increasing the level of food insecurity in Cameroon generally and these areas in particular.