



Food Systems Assessment

WORKING TOWARDS THE SDGs

BURKINA FASO EARLY INSIGHT

Burkina Faso has been grappling with rising insecurity in the northern region, particularly in the Sahel, which has prompted migration and displacement of people towards other regions and disrupted an already fragile balance in the food system. A key challenge to address is the long-term viability of small-scale family farming, the country's main source of agricultural production, with yields currently leveling and infrastructure and services inadequate.

A related challenge is the lack of diversification with a staple diet based mainly on cereals, which in turn is having serious effects on the health of the Burkinabe people, particularly for children under the age of five.

Transforming the food system will need to focus on diversifying crops away from staple grain to ensure food security, nutrition and health; increase productivity of local production to match demand, while preserving and rehabilitating an already damaged environment.

Key challenges

Lack of food diversification

Lack of food diversification translates into poor nutrition and stunting. The staple diet is based mainly on cereals (sorghum, corn and millet) which account for two thirds of calory intake. Consumption of animal proteins and fruit and vegetable is not sufficient to guarantee a healthy diet and adequate nutritional content. As a result, under-nourishment and stunting in children are on the rise again with respective rates of 19 and 25 percent in 2018.

With most of the food production system based on family farms and unsustainable methods of farming, agricultural productivity is a challenge. Local grain production (of which sorghum represents circa 40 percent) has increased in line with population growth, however yields are flat. Similarly, fruit and vegetable production has remained stagnant and well below rising demand, resulting in lack of diet diversification as local production has not been replaced by imports. On the other hand, imports of cereals have tripled,

and those of sugar, dairy and fishery products have steadily increased since 2000.

Low productivity, a worsening security situation and a rise in food insecurity

Low yields are partly due to limited irrigation infrastructure, poor maintenance of existing facilities and low access to support services. Conflicts due to migration and land tenure disputes are further aggravating food insecurity, as is poor access to health care and limited education on nutrition. Over the past decade, food security indicators have worsened again, particularly in the Centre-North and Sahel, where after long-run improvements, undernourishment as well as stunting is on the rise again.

A less attractive source of employment

The food system is a key provider of employment in Burkina Faso, accounting for 56 percent of jobs, of which more than half are in agricultural production. However, the agricultural sector is losing workforce, youth in particular, in favor of gold panning and urban



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and international migration. Precious metals, which account for about three quarters of the country's exports, represent an important source of revenues. A key challenge will be to attract younger people into farming activities and food production, as other sectors, apart from mines, offer little opportunities.

Unsustainable farming methods which need modernizing

Farming methods as currently practiced have resulted in soil depletion and expansion of arable land to the detriment of natural habitats and biodiversity. Excessive use of chemical input in cotton production, overgrazing, and lack of manure and land rotation have contributed to soil depletion.

A key challenge will be to slow down land degradation and increase the resilience of food production systems through more sustainable practices, better integration between agriculture and livestock, better management of water resources and agro-ecological practices to compensate for erratic rainfall.

In urban and peri-urban areas the main challenge is water pollution due to excessive use of pesticides in fruit and vegetable production, domestic waste and agro-food industry contamination.

Reducing territorial imbalances

Disparities in terms of infrastructure and public services have widened between the different zones, which translate into inequalities in terms of human development, in particular in the sector of

education, health and nutrition. Such imbalances are a trigger for rising insecurity, poverty and migration. Land conflicts between farmers and herders are on the rise, as are conflicts due to mine exploitation and migration from insecure zones in the North and the Sahel.

Way forward

Considering the great disparities between territories and zones, some key levers can be identified through a territorial lens.

Grand Nord (North, Sahel and North-East)

This is mainly a pastoral zone, where a key lever will be to secure land tenure for herders, develop a value-chain for dairy products, and strengthen agro-pastoral infrastructures, while promoting vegetable production to help diversify diet.

Grand Centre (Central Plateau and Centre-North)

In this grain producing area, a key lever will be to transform production systems and diversify crops to ensure a more nutritional diet, based on local produce. Improving storage, conservation and supply to other regions would help reduce losses.

Grand East (South-East, East and Centre South)

In this dynamic zone, where farmers and herders co-exist with mining activities, a key lever will be to promote environmentally sustainable activities and reforestation as well as education to favour diet diversification and improve nutrition.

Grand West (Boucle du Mouhoun, Hauts-Bassins, Cascades and South-West)

This is mainly a cotton growing zone for export, however, it is also where more than 60 percent of the country's fruit and grains are produced. A key lever is the promotion of agro-ecological family farming, the improvement of storage facilities as well as a better use of water resources and a better organisation of value-chain actors.

Urban centres (Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso and Koudougou)

In these high growth centres, a key lever is to educate consumers and commercial gardeners about air and water pollution as well as improved sanitary conditions in the food system.

With agropastoral family farming at the heart of the food system, a key entry point will be to strengthen the productive environment for these farms through agro-ecological approaches, including increased investment in water infrastructure and improved management of natural resources.

Beyond territorial specificities, cross cutting levers could be decisive for the food system's sustainability. They include fighting against insecurity, managing the demographic transition to better balance supply and demand while preserving natural resources, support decentralization to adapt to regional contexts and improve the investment spread across zones, and finally develop the road infrastructure and social services to promote domestic trade and fight chronic food insecurity.

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