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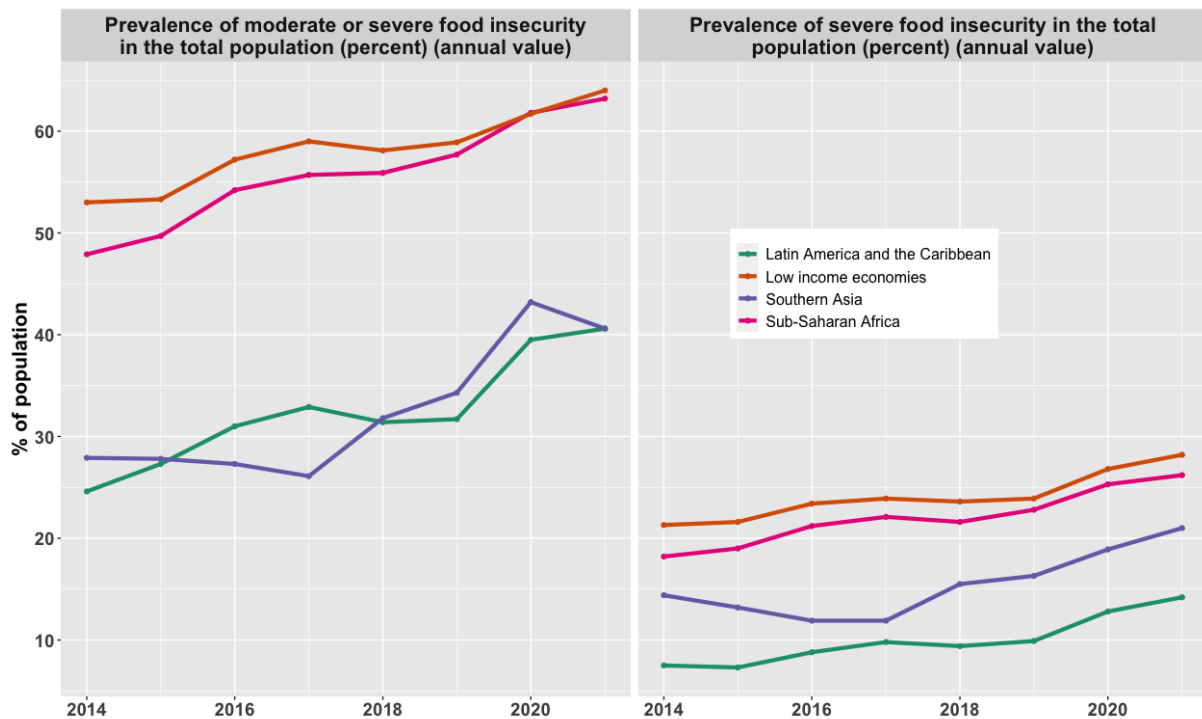
Jean-Michel Severino, President of Investisseurs & Partenaires, former Director General of the French Development Agency, former Vice President for Asia at the World Bank

I now turn to Pierre Jacquet, who, with the help of a presentation, will continue this survey of the global landscape.

Pierre Jacquet

Thank you, Jean-Michel. And thanks to Máximo for his general yet very precise introduction. It is a pleasure to see him on this panel. I agree with everything he said. I am going to approach things in a complementary and slightly different way.

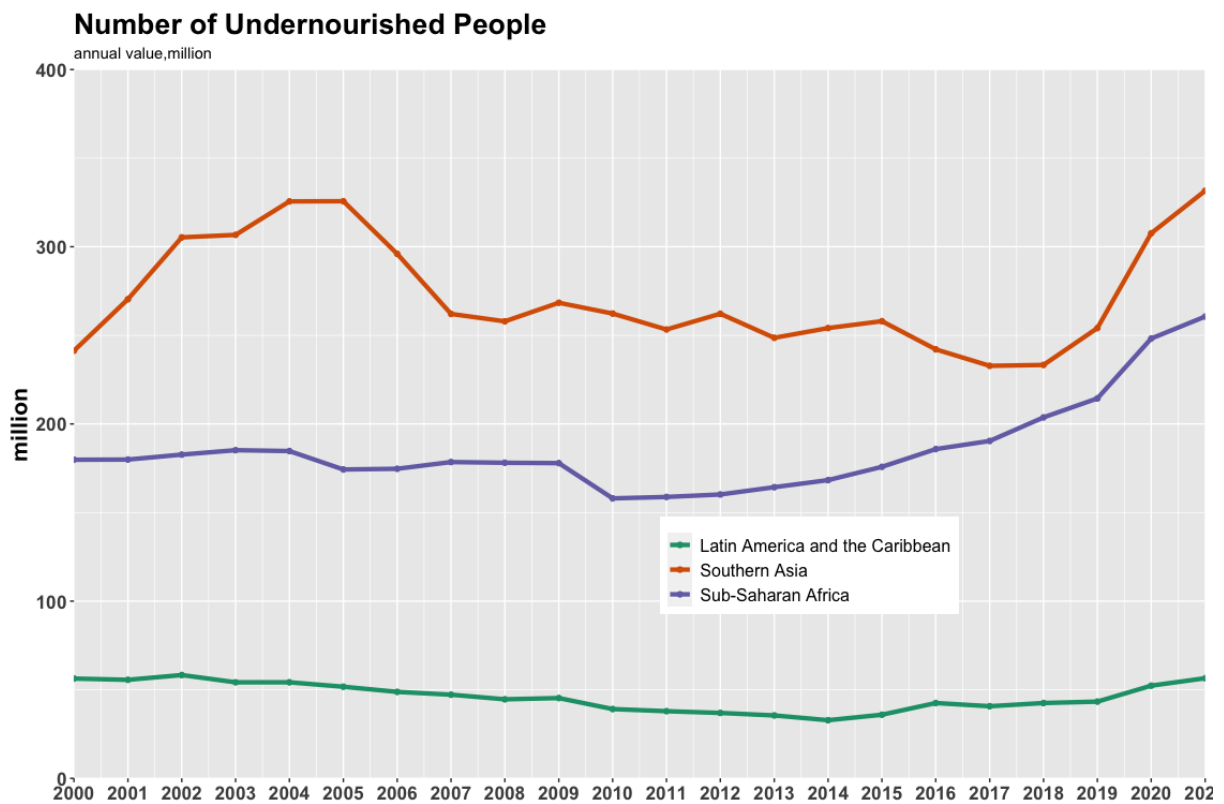
I want to begin by showing you two graphics on the food security situation in Africa. The one on the left shows what the FAO calls “moderate or severe” food insecurity and the one on the right severe food insecurity.



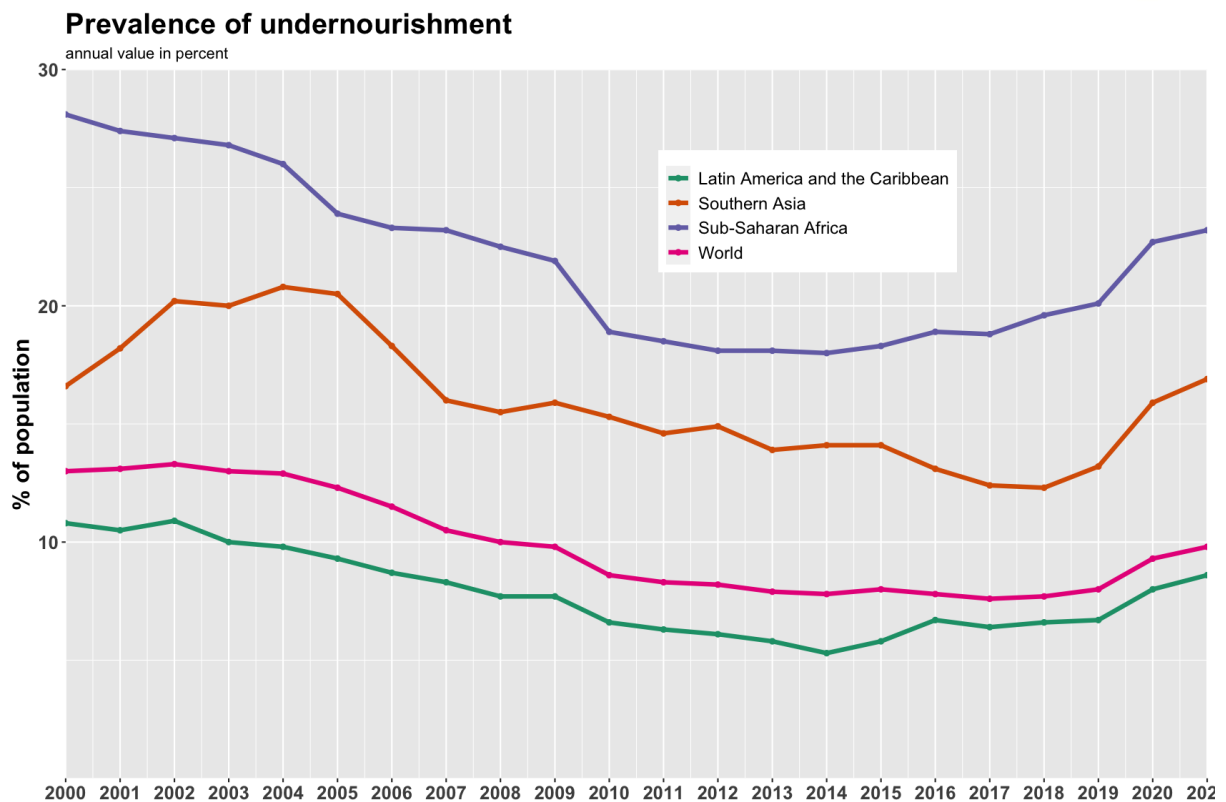
Source : FAO Suite of Food Security Indicators, November 2022

The graphics highlight the dire situation in sub-Saharan Africa, battered by extremely diverse and convergent crises, not just food security: terrorism, insecurity, coups, soaring energy prices, inflation in general, climate change, migration, Covid, the war in Ukraine, debt, which is a real concern, and poverty. This mix creates a situation where – and this is one of my presentation’s first messages – we cannot think about food security outside of a general context that includes all these dimensions. But we usually think in terms of silos, as though it were possible to solve problems technically, by looking at what is happening in each one. This is clearly undesirable.

The graphics focus on malnutrition. Asia has the most undernourished people because it is the world’s most populous continent, but Africa still leads in per-capita terms. And this shows the seriousness of the situation on the continent.



Source : FAO Suite of Food Security Indicators, November 2022



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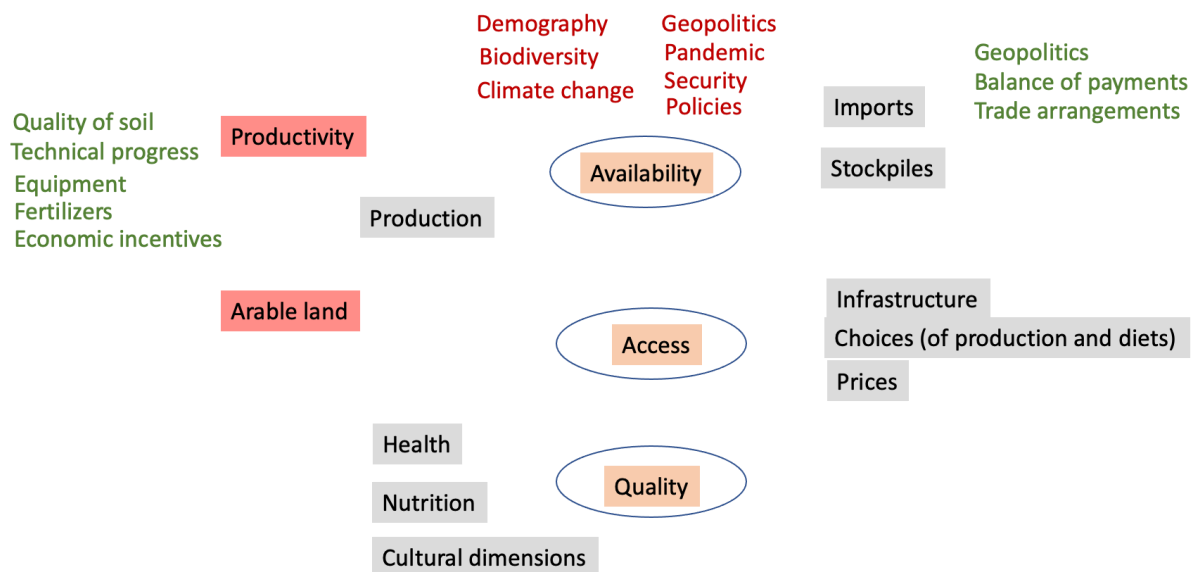
I would like to spend a moment on what is called “food security”, which includes three dimensions: availability, access and nutritional value.

Availability depends on production capacity and the capacity of having reserve stocks to cope with shortages and limit imports. I agree with what Máximo just said: imports, and trade in general, are an extremely important part of organizing food availability. This immediately brings us to the issue of food self-sufficiency. It is a false debate insofar as all the studies on how to meet Africa’s food needs lead to the conclusion that it is physically impossible, especially in a context where the expansion of arable lands is limited by the risk of too much deforestation.

So we need to think of trade as a way to increase food availability outside the realm of free-trade ideology. A mechanism must be found to make the amounts of food necessary for life available. I think this is the right way to think about it and that trade rules must be designed with this in mind.

The graphic I am showing you now, which I will not discuss in detail, illustrates the complexity and the interactions between different components of food security. Production itself depends on soil quality, technical progress, equipment, access to fertilizers and economic incentives, notably the pricing system and the public policies that affect it. All this shows that we are not in a predetermined situation where accurate forecasts about African countries can be made. However, we can say that they have a major productivity problem.

Determinants of food security



The other determinant of production is arable land. Climate evidently affects us, because climate catastrophes affect the availability of arable land and its expansion, which may seem like an obvious solution in Africa, but it leads to deforestation. This is a tension that must be overcome. And the resolution of that tension is political, not technical.

Access to food depends on three factors.

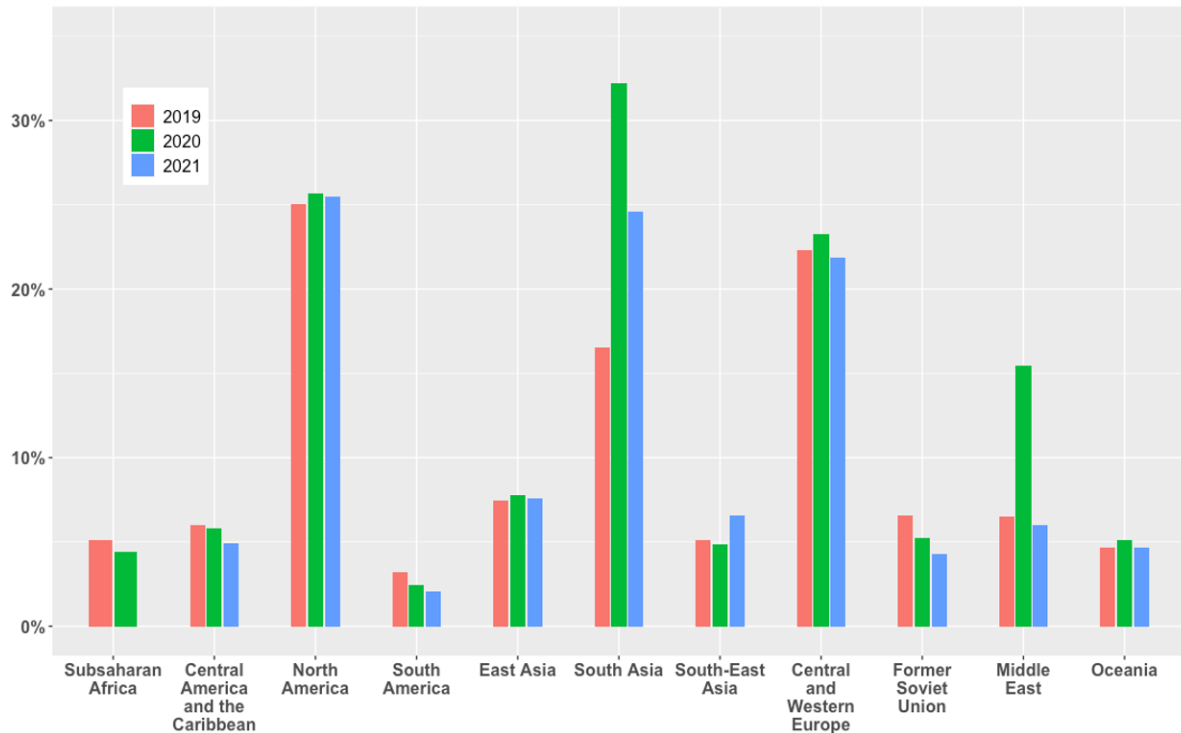
- Adequate infrastructure to reach markets.
- The pricing system, which must perform a difficult balancing act. On the one hand, prices must be high enough to give farmers an incentive to produce. On the other, they must be low enough to make food affordable for as many people as possible. This is an important factor and immediately brings us to agricultural policy, which, again, shows the non-deterministic aspect of food security.
- The choice of diets, which Máximo just talked about and whose trends are hard to predict. More “reasonable” diets could involve consuming more meat in Africa and much less in the developed countries. This is a cultural matter and diets will not change quickly.

Without commenting on the above factors, obviously the food security system has many components, with demography, the need to maintain biodiversity, climate change, geopolitics – which affects trade – pandemics both past and future, security and the role of public policy in the background. All that makes an extremely complex system.

I would like to stress the key role that public policy plays in the system. While the issue has been recognized for many years, with the Maputo Protocol in 2003 and the Malabo Declaration in 2014, by which the African countries pledged to develop agricultural policies, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa are where agricultural output is least protected.

Public Expenditures in Support of Agriculture and Alimentation

percents of value of agricultural production, 2020



source: Fondation FARM (France), Observatoire Mondial du Soutien à l'Agriculture, novembre 2022

There is a kind of paradox. Agriculture is protected in the rich countries and almost taxed in the poor ones. This shows the need to restore public policies that can boost agricultural production and access to food. That, I believe, is one of the goals of development in general and African development in particular.

I would like to say a few words about why this situation is worrisome. I mentioned the impact of geopolitics on food security. Food security issues also retroactively have a major geopolitical dimension.

First, food security in sub-Saharan Africa is an abject moral failure. It would be intolerable to let the situation get worse. As the graphics show, food insecurity predates Covid. Neither the pandemic nor the war in Ukraine are to blame, but our decades-long inability to solve the problem. The pandemic or the war must not be used as an alibi. Food security programs in developing countries, especially in Africa, were a major collective failure well before Covid.

Second, food insecurity fuels instability and crises. Africa's population is growing very fast. By mid-century, it will be about two billion. That will obviously breed insecurity and instability, with major political implications. First very unstable alliances within the continent and between continents, European and other countries, tensions, conflicts, migratory pressures and of course health-related issues.

Food security is a global, collective problem that primarily affects us, and not just for moral reasons.



I will wrap up with some thoughts on aid and how the North or the West can help. I would like to emphasize two dimensions.

The first is policy coherence. One reason for soaring food prices is our use of grain—like the United States and Europe, although to a lesser degree—to produce energy. That creates a connection between food and energy prices.

It is not a matter of being for or against, but of defining and finding the right balance. You cannot complain about rising prices while at the same time not wonder about policy coherence, choices between export and subsistence crops, between consumption and production.

The second point involves the orientation of development aid, which still seems influenced by the temptation to find solutions for countries. Well, no, it does not work that way. It is up to countries to find their own solutions: They must be given the means to implement them. When we talk about aid to formulate public policies, it is not to design them in the beneficiaries' place. That can be tempting to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, but it does not work. We must have the modesty, first, to recognize that we are facing great uncertainty and do not know the future and, second, that we learn from our mistakes.

The role of aid should be to help countries pull themselves up by their bootstraps. I strongly emphasize capacity-building and the role of home-grown research. Now I am preaching for my parish, the Global Development Network (GDN), whose goal is to build research capacity in developing countries. Otherwise, we do not facilitate ownership, in other words the capacity of countries to take control of their destinies. That seems urgent to me, including to tackle the problem of food security. Thank you.

Jean-Michel Severino

Pierre, thank you for putting production challenges into perspective and shedding light on the tension that may exist between producing biofuels to fight global warming and growing grains for food.

If there is one takeaway that will be useful in the next few minutes and later in the conversation, it is your message that inequality in production and consumption, and therefore food shortages, are one reason to consider using trade and the trade system to boost food security.

This is not something that is always perceived, and I think it is at the heart of our discussion. Whether a trade guarantee system actually works is the key to its durability and a sustainable response to the problem you mentioned.