FOOD SECURITY:


Introduction

Food is an essential part of life. A safe and nutritious food supply is fundamental to health and well-being. Additionally, food is an important part of society and culture—families, friends and communities frequently meet to share and celebrate over food. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs for an active, healthy life. Food security involves more than food production and is generally based on three conditions. The first is the availability of food—having enough food on a daily basis. The second is access to food—having adequate resources to obtain nutritious foods. The third condition involves the use of food—having appropriate knowledge of basic nutrition and ensuring adequate water and sanitation. Barriers to food security can be physical, economic, social or cultural.

Understanding the Discussion:

Agribusiness: Refers to companies or suppliers engaged in the industrial production, processing, storing and distribution of food products, as well as the manufacture and sale of agricultural equipment and supplies required to produce agricultural products.

Food security: A condition in which people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

National Food Plan (NFP): The Australian Government's long-term vision and objectives for the national food system based on its analysis of likely developments over the coming decades.

History

The early twenty-first century heralded a troubled future for global food security with the world witnessing two major spikes in food prices—one in 2007-8 and another in 2011. The food price spike of 2008 was caused by extreme weather events and opportunistic speculation in commodity futures markets. Increased prices led
to food riots and political change in several countries. Major food importing countries such as China and Saudi Arabia reacted by buying up land and water resources in other countries to grow food for themselves, effectively bypassing the world trade regime. In 2010, excessive heat and drought in Russia resulted in wildfires and a grain embargo. In October 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported a staggering 250 per cent increase in the cereal price index from 2002-4 baselines.

Overall, Australia is fortunate when it comes to food security. The country's diverse geography and climate enables production of a great variety of food. Every day Australian farmers, fishermen and food makers supply over 90 per cent of the food on Australian tables, as well the tables of hundreds of millions of people around the world. Australia exports 55 per cent of its total food production, and these exports contribute to the country's economic prosperity, employment and community well-being.

In 2011, the Australian Government released the National Food Plan (NFP). Officials hailed the plan as a further step toward the government's goal of creating "a sustainable, globally competitive, resilient food supply, supporting access to nutritious and affordable food." The NFP includes money to help farmers and exporters improve access to growing Asian markets, efforts to improve branding and marketing of Australian produce, and a productivity commission review to identify areas in need of reform.

**Food Security Today**

In terms of food security, most Australians can afford to buy the food they need and have access to safe and nutritious food. The wide range of growing conditions allows for a variety of food to be grown in the country. Moreover, Australia is wealthy enough to import food when required.

It estimated that the world's population will approach nine billion people by 2050. Population increases, combined with higher incomes in hitherto poor countries, will lead to increased global food demand, which means significant challenges to sustainable agricultural production. By 2050, world food consumption is expected to be 75 per cent higher than it was in 2007. Almost half of this increased demand will come from China alone. In addition to China, the rise of Asia is transforming the world. In the twenty-first century, Asia's rise will have profound effects on Australia's food system. An expanding Asian middle class offers an important opportunity for Australia's food industry. While Australia is a reliable and trusted
supplier of quality food throughout Asia, the region's middle class represents an opportunity to supply growing markets with high-value food products that meet preferences for safe, premium goods. The NFP proposes ways in which Australia can benefit from emerging Asian markets through increasing exports. Creating a more integrated and efficient food industry in Australia is necessary to ensure future food security both domestically and in foreign markets.

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