

THE ANALYSIS OF CURRENT MEASURES AND REFORMS IN ENSURING THE
FOUR DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY IN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Food Security is a complex and multifaceted concept that has evolved over the years. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations defines food security as a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This definition emphasizes four main dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability.

1. **Availability:** This dimension addresses the supply side of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade. An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Other factors, including robust infrastructure and efficient supply chains, are also critical in ensuring availability.

2. **Access:** This refers to the ability of individuals, households, and communities to acquire adequate food. Access is ensured when all households and all individuals within those households have sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Access depends on income available to the household, the distribution of income within the household, and the price of food.

3. **Utilization:** This dimension refers to the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, and diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body uses the various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the outcome of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, and diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food.

4. **Stability:** Stability addresses the regularity of access to food, taking into account the possibility of short-term shocks (e.g. economic or climatic crises) and cyclical events (e.g. seasonal food insecurity). Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are considered food insecure if you have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on the stability of food access.

Understanding these four dimensions of food security is essential for creating policies and interventions aimed at ensuring everyone has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Each dimension is interlinked, and issues in one area can create problems in another. Therefore, it is important to consider all four dimensions in food security strategies.

The state of food security in the People's Republic of China must be understood within a historical context, dating back to the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s and the subsequent famine. These events sparked significant policy changes and strategies designed to secure China's food supply.

Great Leap Forward and Famine (1958-1962): This period witnessed the loss of tens of millions of lives due to famine, following economic and social campaigns such as the "People's Communes" and efforts to rapidly increase China's industrial output. These policies led to widespread disruption of agriculture and food production, resulting in severe food shortages.

Agricultural Reform and Opening-Up Policy (late 1970s-1980s): Following the severe famine, China began to implement agricultural reforms. The "Household Responsibility System" was introduced, which allowed individual households to have their own agricultural plots and sell excess produce, while still meeting state quotas. This led to significant increases in agricultural productivity and rural incomes, improving food security considerably. The opening-up policy, started in 1978, brought new technologies, increased foreign investment, and access to global markets.

Food Security Concerns in the 1990s-2000s: China's rapid urbanization, industrialization, and pollution caused a decline in arable land and raised concerns about long-term food security. Additionally, the rise of the middle class and changes in dietary preferences towards higher meat and dairy consumption put pressure on grain supplies, used for animal feed.

Modern-Day Challenges (2010-present): Today, China continues to grapple with food security challenges. These include over-reliance on food imports, particularly soybeans and meat; land and water resource constraints; the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity; and ongoing issues with food safety.

In response to these challenges, the Chinese government has pursued various measures and reforms:

1. **Self-sufficiency:** China has pursued policies aimed at maintaining a high degree of self-sufficiency, particularly for staple grains like rice, wheat, and corn.
2. **Agricultural Modernization:** China has invested heavily in agricultural technology and infrastructure to increase productivity, including genetically modified crops, precision farming, and large-scale mechanized farms.
3. **'Sannong' Issues:** The government has focused on the issues of agriculture, rural areas, and farmers ('sannong'), which include land reform, rural revitalization, and policies to attract young people back to farming.
4. **Global Agricultural Investments and Cooperation:** To secure its food supply, China has made agricultural investments globally and sought to build international cooperation on food security.
5. **Green Development:** Recognizing the environmental constraints to its food security, China has promoted "green development" of agriculture, emphasizing sustainable practices.