

Effects of global food price crisis on nutritional status of Nigerians: determinants, coping strategies, policy responses and implications

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Abstract:

Nigeria was already in a serious food insecure situation prior to increases in the basic food prices which started in 2006. The increases in food prices has been a major source of worry and concern especially by the poor and vulnerable compared to other price shocks like high electricity and transport prices in Nigeria. The soaring food price is undermining government efforts on poverty reduction, food and nutrition security. It poses threat to humanitarian crisis, socio-economic, environmental, developmental, political and security-related challenges of millions of people. This study therefore examines the severity of food price increases and articulates its immediate and remote causes on nutritional status of Nigerians. Two main approaches were used to generate information. The first approach was the use of primary data from 396 households in North Central Nigeria for empirical evidence. The second approach was the collection of secondary information from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, World Bank (WB), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping System (FIVIMS), Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSN), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) food security assessment. The results from the descriptive analysis show that, food price increases affect nearly every agricultural product in Nigeria without corresponding increase in disposable income of families and population groups (especially the vulnerable groups). Households in Nigeria spend between 70 to 80% of their income on food leaving about 60% people to food difficulty problem. Although government had intervened through distribution of 65,000 metric tons of assorted food from the Strategic Food Reserve, release of ₦80 billion for the importation of 500,000 metric tons of rice and 11,000 metric tons of grains to complement the local output, six months waiver on import duties on rice, much concentration on grain alone has not significantly improved the nutritional status of people. As coping strategies, majority of people are forced to reduce their nutritional intake, consume more carbohydrate food at the neglect of protein, pulling out of children from school for work and sale of key productive assets. The need for safety net programmes, provisions of critical community services are therefore essential to enhance households' nutritional status.

Keywords