

# ENABLING POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY

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## **Introduction**

The Rome Declaration of World Food Security (1996) reaffirms “the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger”. In consonance with this declaration, the World Food Summit Plan of Action was formulated to serve as a guide for all sovereign states, such as the Philippines, in pursuing the objective of attaining sustainable food security for all.

One of the seven major components under the said Plan of Action is to “ensure an enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and equal participation of men and women, which is most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all.”

This paper shall attempt to expound on the essential conditions for sustainable food security under Philippine setting, and how we can best promote a political, social and economic environment conducive to its attainment.

## **Sustainable Food Security Defined**

Sustainable food security is a condition in which all sectors of the population are assured of continuous access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food within the framework of a stable social, economic, and political environment which gives due respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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## **Essential Conditions for Sustainable Food Security**

### **1. Eradication/Reduction of Poverty**

Employment opportunities should be made available so that the family will be able to generate adequate income to insure the basic dietary needs of its members, thus significantly reducing hunger and malnutrition.

### **2. Efficient Management of Natural Resources**

Agricultural land, forests, minerals, and marine and freshwater resources must be efficiently managed in order to avoid resource and environmental abuse and degradation. Our genetic resources must also be safeguarded through the aggressive promotion of bio-diversity and promulgation of genetic protection laws and regulations.

### **3. Stable Political and Economic System**

A stable political system which allows maximum participation of people from all sectors of society will encourage people initiative in exploring ways and means to minimize the constraints to food security and thus assure equal access to government services and assistance.

The state should promote a balanced and progressive economic system that will generate employment and entrepreneurship, thus increasing the earning capacity of the population.

The government, in cooperation with non-government organizations, should provide mechanisms and strategies for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in order to minimize social unrest and insurgency. Crime and social unrest stifle economic initiative and the productivity of the labor force, thus inhibiting world food production and reducing income levels.

### **4. Functional and Harmonious Social Institutions**

Social institutions like the home, school, church, and state help provide not only the economic needs but also the physical, social and emotional security of the people. Sustainable food security can be attained best under a responsible and wholesome home environment. The school can provide basic education and vocational training in cooperation with the home and with support of the government in terms of subsidized public education and state scholarships.

Greater access to educational opportunities will lead to a more effective manpower training in support of priority social and economic development objectives and programs.

The church and other non-government organizations can be harnessed to promote a social and economic environment that is conducive to peace, progress, and food security.

## 5. Essential Infrastructure and Support Services

Sustainable food security cannot be attained merely by increasing food production. The food produced must reach the consumers from all sectors of the population at affordable costs by providing the following infrastructure and support services.

### a. Farm-to-market roads

Good farm-to-market roads and transport facilities are not only beneficial to the producers but also to the consumers because essential food items at affordable prices are made available on time to those who need them in different places.

### b. Marketing, processing and storage facilities

Market outlets with adequate storage and processing facilities provide the best incentives for accelerated food production and efficient consumption, thus improving the adequacy and quality of food supply.

### c. Credit

Farmers and other agricultural entrepreneurs need capital to finance their production activities. Likewise, consumers, especially those from the low-income groups, need credit assistance when prices of food products are high, thus assuring better access to food supply during lean months.

### d. Consumer education

Considering the limited supply of food consumption on human health, there is a need to provide continuing consumer education not only in schools but also in rural and urban communities.

The more affluent sectors of the population are consuming more than they actually need which could be saved to feed the hungry and malnourished sectors of the population, if people are taught to consume only what they need and to share excess food to those who are in want.

### **How Should we Respond to Attain Sustainable Food Security?**

Dorner (1974) stressed the need to provide institutional support for economic growth and sustainable development. Thus, the attainment of sustainable food security requires the common concern and concerted efforts of all sectors affected by or assisting in the war against poverty, hunger and malnutrition with the support of development-oriented institutions such as the government and non-government organizations.

#### **A. The Academe**

1. Offering curricular and manpower-training programs relevant to the problems and concerns of sustainable food security, such as:
  - a. Environmental science and education
  - b. Agricultural production and agribusiness
  - c. Food processing
  - d. Population education
  - e. Ecology and bio-diversity
  - f. Nutrition and food consumer education
2. Conducting research and extension programs relevant to aforementioned problem areas and concerns.
3. Promoting public awareness of sustainable food security through publications, seminars, conferences, and consultation-dialogues.

#### **B. The Government**

1. Infrastructure development in support of sustainable food security, such as: farm-to-market roads, irrigation systems, market centers, processing plants, storage facilities.
2. Relevant legislation and effective law enforcement for the protection, conservation, and wise utilization of the natural resources.

3. Livelihood and entrepreneurship enhancement programs to combat poverty and unemployment.
4. Government support and subsidies for essential support services, such as credit, agricultural extension and training, and food science and technology research.
5. Increasing budgetary allocations for agencies and programs directly involved in promoting sustainable food security.
6. Provision of legal and administrative mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
7. Establishment of efficient early-warning system against natural calamities, efficient distribution of relief goods in calamity-stricken areas, and subsequent rehabilitation of affected areas.

### C. The Private Sector

1. Organization of private cooperatives for the efficient production, processing, and marketing of food.
2. Organization of volunteer citizen groups for the protection of natural resources and environment from abuse and degradation.
3. Promotion of private entrepreneurship in the production, processing, distribution, and marketing of food products.
4. With the assistance of the school and the church, the home should lead in developing the right habits, values and attitudes relative to food consumption and protection and conservation of natural resources.
5. Promotion of private initiative and cooperation in responding to the needs of people in areas damaged by natural and man-made disasters.

Owen and Shaw (1972) emphasized the need to establish and reinforce essential institutions that will harness the initiative and enthusiasm of the rural poor in developing countries. In attaining sustainable food security, leadership functions at the lower level should be increased. Likewise, the linkages of the rural village with local and national agencies or institutions should be expanded and strengthened.

### Conclusion

Sustainable food security is a basic human need which should be a concern of everyone in order to improve the quality of life of our people. It can only be attained within a social, political and economic environment that is conducive to adequate food production and distribution, and greater access to food especially among the less privileged members of our society. We can achieve this

objective if the academe, the government, and the private sector will be fully aware of the urgency of this need and will cooperate in performing effectively their respective roles and responsibilities in promoting the essential conditions for sustainable food security for all.

## References

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