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Partnership with African countries can solve India's food security needs

he world is vocal in unison today that there is a gradual shift of power from West to East; and India and China are the growth drivers in the eastern region.

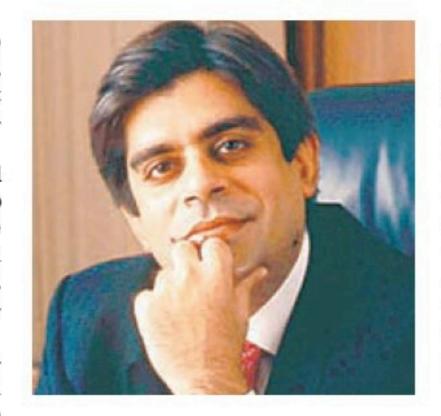
Whileenergy security is most widely discussed today, with this tectonic shift of power, the debate of food security is gaining grounds slowly and progressively. Asia is the home to the majority of world population. Most of its nations have young population with economies in single digit or early double digits growth rates. With population getting affluent, there is a spontaneous up-gradation into complete two meals - there on from coarse to fine grain. This brings about the continuous need for higher food grain productions and productivity. With a growing economy led by the services sector and industrialization also gathering momentum, the agriculturallandbankisshrinking.

Especially in India, since there is no scope of expansion of agricultural land, the time is ripetodiscuss and implement different models and processes to ensure foods ecurity in time to come.

One possible solution for India's food security in future could be partnership with the African countries where there is huge agricultural land bank which has not been cultivated yet. Moreover, Africa is strategically located to be reliedupon.

Africa, as a continent, is geographically best suited for India to engage in terms of our food security. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United Nations, Africa is estimated to have in excess of 800 million hectares of cultivatable land. Only 197 millionhectares are being farmed.

Moreover, the cultivable landhas access to freshwater and sea portwhich are the basic ingredients for a successful farming



and to carry out the processing operations.

Besides, this is an immensely beneficial proposition for African countries as well. Foodcrisis is already a huge problem to tackle with in the African countries.

According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), there are 265 million undernourished (calorie intake is Africa, as a continent, is geographically best suited for India to engage in terms of its food security. According to Food and Agriculture
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less than 2980) people in Africa and the number is increasing. India's alliance with Africa will be a win-win situation for both the nations since it will not only create employment opportunities in Africabutalsowill build a sound foundation for food security. However, here we have to design a model which economi-

cally as well as politically viable.

The idea is that the food companies can engage the African nations backed by the government of India and create a three away joint venture. This three way joint venture will create a win-winsituation for both India and Africa.

In this JV the African countries can contribute by leasing their land for Farming (The government of India is working with African nation to fix the leaseperiodfor99years).

Secondly, the government of India through its PSUs would engage in a token equity in the project enabling the project to get the backing of the government. Finally, the individual companies can bring the fallow land to production and process the crops.

To understand the benefit of this cooperation, let's look at the implementation process. Local population of Africa is not skilled to do farming. Hence, Government of India will ensure that labourers and farmers from India can work in these projects.

This will open new employment avenues for India labourers and farmers.

The expertise of production and funding will be taken care of by the individual companies.

The production plan is rather straightforward. Primary crops to be produced will be rice and pulses. Rice can be opted for partial sharing in real terms with the host country and pulses can 100% exported to India. Both these crops are essential to India. Rice is a staple both in India and Africa. Thus the project will ensure food security both for the host country and India in the long run. Needless to say, both India and the host nation would have to signoff on this vision and its careful and detailed implementation will be curved through the individual companies.