

## Food Security

The 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. While energy 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 industrialisation also gathering momentum, the agricultural land bank is shrinking. Especially in India, since there is no scope of expansion of agricultural land, the time is ripe to discuss and implement different models and processes to ensure food security in time to come.

### Green Pastures in Africa

One possible solution for India's food security for the future could be a partnership with African countries, where there is large amount of agricultural land which has yet to be cultivated. Moreover, Africa is strategically located to be relied upon, as it is geographically best suited for India to engage in terms of food security. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United

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Nations, Africa is estimated to have in excess of 800 million hectares of cultivatable land yet only 197 million hectares are currently being farmed. Moreover, the cultivable land has access to fresh water and sea ports which are the basic ingredients for successful farming and to carry out the processing operations.

This partnership will also be an immensely beneficial proposition for African countries as well. As food crisis is already a major problem to tackle within the African continent. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), there are 265 million undernourished (calorie intake is less than 2,000 per day) people in Africa and the number is increasing. India's alliance with Africa will be a win-win situation for both the nations as it will not only create employment opportunities in Africa, but will also build a sound foundation for food security. However, a model that is both economically and politically viable must be designed to function this process.

### Creating a Viable Model

The idea is that food companies – backed by the Government of India – can engage the African nations and create a three-way joint venture. This three way joint venture will create a win-win situation 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 lease period for 99 years).

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, individual companies can bring the fallow land to production and process the crops.

To better understand the benefit of this cooperation, let's look at the implementation process. The local population of Africa is not skilled to do farming. Hence, the Government of India must ensure that labourers and farmers from India can work in these projects. This will open new employment avenues for Indian labourers and farmers. The expertise of production and funding will be taken care of by the individual companies providing the labour.

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 be 100% exported to India. Both these crops are essential to India. Rice is a staple food item 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 sign off on this vision, but its careful and detailed implementation will be curved through the individual companies. ■



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