



From Food Storage to Crisis: The Transformation of Food Security in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe is a rice barn country in South Africa, but not long after that it turned into a very severe food crisis country. Zimbabwe, which is known as a major food producer in Africa, is now facing serious challenges due to several factors that have ended up in a prolonged food and economic crisis. This study identifies the important role of international cooperation and international organizations in efforts to improve food security. Through various means, it was found that food diplomacy is a strategic tool for Zimbabwe to attract aid and investment to improve the agricultural system and food distribution. Using qualitative analysis methods and secular data, this study found that this problem can be solved by international cooperation and investment with partner countries, although there are still several challenges that must be faced.

Keywords: *Zimbabwe, South Africa, Food Crisis, International Cooperation, International Organizations*

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country located on the African continent, more precisely in the southern part of the African continent. Zimbabwe is a country that does not have a sea area and is astronomically located between 15 ° -23 ° S and 25 ° -34 ° W. . While geographically it is bordered by Zambia to the north, bordered by South Africa to the south and also bordered by Mozambique to the east and bordered by Botswana to the west. The country of Zimbabwe has its capital in the city of Harare. The area of Zimbabwe is 390,757 km² with a population of 15,092,000 in 2021. The majority of the population is indigenous African (99.4%), especially the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups. Zimbabwe is a country that adheres to a Presidential Republic system of government where the head of state and head of government is the President who is directly elected in the Presidential election for a 5-year term (*Republic of Zimbabwe*, nd)

Zimbabwe was once known as the food barn of South Africa, with the ability to produce enough food to meet the needs of its population and even export to neighboring countries. This country has rich natural resources and good agricultural infrastructure, making Zimbabwe one of the main producers of corn, wheat, and soybeans on the African continent (National Geographic Indonesia, 2017) . However, this condition has changed drastically where Zimbabwe is facing a severe food crisis, and more than 5 million of its total population need food aid (BBC News, 2019) .



The transformation of food security in Zimbabwe represents a dramatic journey for a country that was once known as the breadbasket of South Africa and is now facing a serious food crisis. At its peak, Zimbabwe was able to produce more than enough food to meet the needs of its population and even export to neighboring countries. However, due to factors such as climate change, ineffective agricultural policies and the economic crisis, food production has declined significantly. Currently, more than 5 million Zimbabweans are in need of food assistance. The situation has been exacerbated by the arrival of drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon, which has resulted in harvests that are far from what Zimbabwean farmers had hoped for. The Zimbabwean government has declared a national emergency to address the crisis and has appealed for US\$2 billion in international aid to support Zimbabwe’s recovery efforts (“Zimbabwe Was Once a Breadbasket, Now One-Third of Its Population is Starving,” 2019) (food station, 2024) .

The food crisis in Zimbabwe is not just a local issue but also reflects a larger and broader global challenge related to food security. With the increasing frequency of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, countries around the world are facing the reality that food security is becoming increasingly fragile and difficult. Efforts to rebuild a sustainable and resilient food system in Zimbabwe are critical, not only for the well-being of its people but also as a model for other countries facing similar challenges.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research method, which means that the study is conducted objectively towards subjective reality. This subjectivity applies to the reality studied from the perspective of the individual being studied. In this qualitative study, the validity of the data is important rather than the accuracy and adequacy of the data; the correspondence between the events that occur in the research setting and the recorded data is the main priority. The study aims to increase our understanding of the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc., as a whole and in a way that cannot be described in words or language, but in a natural environment and through some natural methods (Adlini et al., 2022) .

The English word "re", meaning "again", and "search", meaning "to seek", are the etymology of research. This understanding shows that "research" is a synonym for "research". Webster's New International Dictionary says that research is a very clever investigation to establish something, careful and critical study to find facts and principles. However, in his book Introduction to According to Research, Hilway says that research is a way to study something carefully and thoroughly to find the right solution. The systematic process of collecting, processing, and summarizing data is called research. The purpose is to find a solution to a particular problem. Library research is more than just collecting research data; library searches are limited to information in library collections, without the need for fieldwork. (Preacher, 2011).



This study uses library research data, sourced from various literature sources, including personal documents, books, journals, and newspapers, and others. To provide a better understanding, the data sources used in this study are classified into primary sources and secondary sources. The primary data directly collected by researchers from the research object is known as a primary source. The primary data of the research is the journal discussed in this research. Other journals that discuss the concept of humanity are used as secondary sources to support the primary data. Library research can collect data through documentation, namely looking for information about variables such as notes, books, papers, articles, journals, and so on. They can also use a research material classification checklist, writing scheme or map, and research note format (Sari, 2020) .

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Era of Food Grounds and Land Reform Causes The Food Crisis

Food barns are food reserve institutions that function to overcome food insecurity in the community, especially in rural areas. In the context of Zimbabwe, the existence of food barns is very important to maintain the stability of food supply, especially amidst challenges such as climate change and economic crises. Food barns in Zimbabwe and other countries function as an important mechanism in maintaining food security. However, to remain relevant, there needs to be an adjustment to the modern challenges faced, including climate change and global market dynamics. The sustainability of national food barns will depend heavily on policy support that strengthens their role in the food security system (Rachmat et al., 2016).

In the 1980s under the rule of Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe was known as a food barn in Africa with abundant agricultural products (Rohimah, 2019). In the early days of independence, Zimbabwe, this country had abundant agricultural production. In the first 2 years after independence, the agricultural sector recorded impressive growth with an increase in agricultural output of 24% (Ryan Hermawan, 2017). The government led by Robert Mugabe sought to stabilize the economy and improve agricultural conditions. And one of the steps taken was to redistribute land previously owned by white owners to black farmers. This aims to correct the injustice that occurred during the colonial era. Although this program had not been fully implemented in 1980, initial steps to increase local farmers' access to land had been taken (SPI, 2019) (Ryan Hermawan, 2017).

In the early 2000s the situation changed drastically after the agrarian reform, a program to distribute land from white owners to black farmers, but its implementation was ineffective, resulting in political chaos and corruption. As a result of this policy, agricultural production declined significantly and Zimbabwe began to experience a severe food crisis in 2019, resulting in more than 5 million people from the total population experiencing a food crisis and requiring food aid. This crisis was exacerbated by drought, cyclones, and poor economic conditions (Yasinta, 2017) (BBC News, 2019) (“Zimbabwe Was Once a Food Granary, Now a Third of Its Population is Starving,” 2019) .



Factors Causing The Food Crisis and Its Impact

After its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe, which was initially successful as a food barn, is now experiencing a food crisis. There are several factors causing the food crisis, such as government policy factors and corruption. In the early 2000s, Zimbabwe created a policy called the “Fast Track Land Reform Program” (FTLRP), a policy aimed at distributing land previously controlled by white owners to black farmers. This policy emerged as a response to years of injustice, where the majority of the black population only had limited access to suburban land while white owners, who were only a minority, controlled most of the productive agricultural land (Shonhe, 2019).

Many farmers lack the experience or resources to manage the land they are given, resulting in a drastic decline in agricultural production. High inflation, poor economic policies and the desperate situation have made food prices soar and made it difficult for people to access. After allocation to individuals with no experience who are able and able to manage agriculture, the land distribution process is often marred by corrupt practices where government officials and members of the ruling party gain illegal access to land, while farmers who really need it are marginalized. This has led to a drastic decline in agricultural productivity, causing Zimbabwe, which used to be a food barn, to be hit by a food crisis (BBC News, 2019).

There were economic impacts that occurred in Zimbabwe after the FTLRP in 2000. Some of the impacts that we found were:

1. Changes in agrarian structure, where ownership and use of land change creates a new and more diverse agrarian structure , but there is not enough experience and resources to manage land effectively, thereby reducing agricultural production.
2. Economic food crisis, due to drastic decline in production. Because many people depend on and make a living in agriculture, a crisis occurs and causes poverty rates to increase. Some are caused by external factors such as international sanctions and climate change that cause drought and crop failure.
3. Changes in funding and investment, land reform also changed the way the agricultural sector is funded and invested. With reduced support from governments and international institutions, smallholder farmers are looking for alternatives to finance their businesses including through contract farming and local investment.
4. Social class changes, land reforms also trigger changes in social and class structures in rural areas. The emergence of a middle class of farmers who are able to produce agricultural commodities and involvement in the global market creates new inequalities (Shonhe, 2019) (Mkodzongi & Lawrence, 2019) .

Food Diplomacy And International Response

International Sanctions

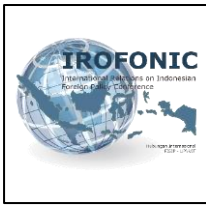
After the FTLRP, there was a severe economic crisis including hyperinflation, trade deficit and economic growth stagnation. Political instability and poor economic policies caused the loss of international investor confidence which further worsened the economic conditions (Fathiraini, 2019) (Rakhman, 2020). Western countries also stopped financial and technical support, so that Zimbabwe lost access to important resources for development and economic recovery. This also caused Zimbabwe to be cut off from international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. (News, 2016) . After that Zimbabwe turned to China as the main economic partner of the “Look East policy”. China provided significant aid and investment especially in the mining and infrastructure sectors and helped Zimbabwe overcome some of the impacts of economic isolation (Fathiraini, 2019) (Rakhman, 2020).

Food Diplomacy Efforts

Because the country of Zimbabwe is subject to many international sanctions, the Zimbabwean government is trying to conduct food diplomacy in various ways. Some of them are through multilateral cooperation and international cooperation, namely:

1. The appeal to end sanctions, where President Emmerson Mnangagwa actively asked the UN and the international community to end sanctions that are worsening the food situation in Zimbabwe. In his speech at the UN General Assembly, he emphasized that the sanctions violate international law and hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the eradication of hunger (Indonesia, 2020).
2. Cooperation with China, Zimbabwe has strengthened its diplomatic relations with China which has provided assistance and investment in the country's agriculture and infrastructure sectors. China has helped address some of the food challenges through the development of agricultural projects and the provision of agricultural technology.
3. Local initiatives, Zimbabwe is also trying to improve their food security through several local programs, including increasing agricultural production capacity through farmer training, the use of modern agricultural technology, and diversification to reduce dependence on one type of commodity.
4. Involvement of international organizations, Zimbabwe also seeks to cooperate with international organizations and aid agencies to gain support in dealing with the food crisis. These collaborative efforts include humanitarian aid programs aimed at distributing food to those most in need (Rakhman, 2020).

In addition to the diplomatic efforts above, there are several international collaborations carried out by Zimbabwe to overcome the food crisis that occurred. Zimbabwe tried to get involved with several international organizations such as the IMF, FAO. Zimbabwe tried to improve relations with the IMF (International Monetary Fund)



by paying off debt arrears, after paying off debt arrears, the IMF lifted sanctions, thus opening up opportunities for Zimbabwe to obtain the financial assistance needed for development programs and food security (Ariwibowo, 2016) . Zimbabwe also collaborates with international organizations such as the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) to obtain support in agricultural programs and food distribution. This collaboration includes access to agricultural technology and training for farmers to increase agricultural yields. Zimbabwe is also active in regional forums such as the SADC (Southern African Development Community) to share experiences and obtain support in facing food challenges (SPI, 2019).

Food Security Transformation

The food crisis that occurred resulted in food security undergoing many transformations and many challenges to be faced. Food transformation efforts consist of several explanations above, namely international cooperation, the “Look East” policy approach, agricultural policy reform, requests to end sanctions, and lifting sanctions by the IMF. International cooperation by establishing cooperation with various countries and international organizations to improve food security, and China as the main partner in terms of cooperation between countries. Zimbabwe has achieved close cooperation with China to overcome the prolonged food crisis through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), where the two countries are strengthening trade and investment relations, especially in the agricultural and industrial sectors (W. T. Rahayu, 2017). China provided unconditional aid to support Zimbabwe's economic development, including food donations and cash assistance (Al-Fadhat & Prasetyo, 2022). In addition, Zimbabwe also adopted a “Look East” policy to attract Chinese investment (Fathiraini, 2019). The “Look East” approach under Robert Mugabe and continued by Emmerson Mnangagwa, where the “Look East” policy was used to strengthen relations with Asian countries and attract investment from countries such as China, India, and Iran which is expected to help restore the agricultural sector and food security (Rakhman, 2020). President Mnangagwa also called on the UN and the international community to end sanctions which continue to worsen the food situation (Indonesia, 2020). After paying off the arrears, the IMF also lifted sanctions against Zimbabwe and opened up opportunities for state aid (Ariwibowo, 2016). To deal with this crisis, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the United Nations (UN) play an important role. SADC acts as a mediator in political conflicts and helps formulate agreements such as the Global Political Agreement (GAP) for political stability that supports economic recovery and food security. Meanwhile, the UN helps through its agencies such as FAO, by providing humanitarian assistance and developing programs to increase food security and improve the agricultural system in Zimbabwe (Rumbia et al., 2022) (T. Rahayu & Raharjo, 2019). This cooperation aims to ensure people's access to sufficient and quality food.

CONCLUSION

Security transformation has involved a combination of international cooperation, domestic policy reforms and efforts to address sanctions that have hampered the



country’s progress. While challenges remain, these steps demonstrate Zimbabwe’s commitment to improving food security and the living conditions of its people. The success of this transformation will depend largely on continued support from the international community and effective policy implementation at home.

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