



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

SLUkurs

Syllabus

PNS0024 Food Security: Issues and Challenges, 4.5 credits

Syllabus approved

2006-01-11

Subjects

Other Social Science

Education cycle

Third cycle

Grading scale

Pass / Failed

The requirements for attaining different grades are described in the course assessment criteria which are contained in a supplement to the course syllabus. Current information on assessment criteria shall be made available at the start of the course.

Language

English

Prior knowledge

120 credits in biology, social sciences or agriculture, or equivalent background.

Objective, including learning outcomes

The overall aim of the course will be to address issues and challenges related to food security and aspects affecting all of its dimensions - availability, stability, access, and utilization. In addition the course will emphasize the role of HIV/AIDS and

food security in the sense that HIV/AIDS is both a determining factor, as well as a consequence of, food insecurity.

At the end of the course students will be able to:

- Define food security and its contextual meanings
- Describe the pervasive nature of food insecurity in a global context
- Discuss and differentiate the meanings and contexts of food sovereignty viz a vis food security
- Identify factors that have a causal impact or are a consequence of food security issues
- Write a discussion paper on issues and challenges pertaining to food security in relation to their subject matter.

Content

The course will consist of three parts: One week of designated self-reading in the beginning, eight days of scheduled lectures and exercises and one week of essay writing, in total 15 days or three full-time weeks.

Part 1

Structured literature reading: Reading material will be provided to the course participants one week prior to the commencement of the course.

Part 2

Lectures, group work and discussions.

Part 3

Written discussion essay.

Topic 1: The food security framework

This theme comprises the historical and conceptual developments as regards food security. When did food insecurity and hunger emerge in modern times and how has the food security concept changed over time? Analysis and discussion of the discourse regarding food security.

Topic 2: Provision and Access

This theme will address issues related to production and supply of food which in important ways are interlinked with the development of new technologies and their availability to producers and trade. The role of the state to ensure the provision of infrastructure such as roads and irrigation facilities, proper extension to farmers, credit to access inputs and relevant institutions and markets will be

covered. Extensive and intensive production systems will be discussed as well the implication for environmental sustainability. With the advent of HIV/AIDS the issue of labour supply for food production has become critical in food security discourse. The African food crisis is critically appraised using lessons of the Asian Green Revolution and globalization and its contents.

Topic 3: Adequacy and Utilisation

Adequacy related to nutrition and utilisation both at household and individual levels connected with the issue of care and well being are central themes in understanding food security. Food safety and food hygiene concepts are addressed in the context of increased role of urban agriculture, poultry and livestock rearing in towns, problems of sanitation and waste disposal and quality control related to food in many transitional economies. HIV/AIDS in multiplex ways has implications for nutritional and care aspects due to its impact on labour supply which affect the choice of crops to be grown, the nutritional needs of affected persons etc, and the increasing need for their care. Cultural acceptance of food also relate to the aspect of adequacy and likewise the discussion of GMO produced food and its relationships to food preferences with regards to marketed food and food aid. Adequacy of food issue will also tackle gender aspects considering that in many developing settings women are the main food producers and processors of food, notwithstanding women also have the least access to food.

Topic 4: Access

Food security and access relate to the fact that history and the contemporary situation have shown that sufficient production of food globally does not necessarily ensure global food availability and stability. The reasons are global and local geo-political-economic conditions and relations that leave many people without sufficient means and assets to produce their own food or to buy food or to get access to it through their local networks. Access to food thus requires incomes or assets of various types, a term which Amartya Sen in the 1980s coined entitlements to food. Enhanced food security thus also implies the need to expand and diversify non-agricultural rural incomes in order for people without access to or control over or user rights to land to generate incomes in order to access food. This as well underlines the need for broader processes of rural and national development to resolve food insecurity. In marginal areas without easy market access, the role of traditional transfer mechanisms will be examined. The right to food as a human right has been intensively discussed in international forums during the last years since the actual number of undernourished people in developing countries is no longer falling – rather, it is climbing. The discussions, covenants and agreements on human rights to food will also be discussed as part of the access aspect

Topic 5: Interrelating the aspects and reflecting on future pathways to address challenges regarding food security

Inter-connecting the central aspects of food security will be the focus of the last part of the course. Participants will be divided into smaller groups for more detailed discussion of various topics of their interest, including how such topics relate to the framework that has been discussed in the lectures and previous discussions. Issues and challenges that may come up in the discussion relating to the interrelation of aspects related to food security may include;

1. How, is food security related to production systems?
2. If large scale food production systems expand, what will happen to small scale producers and how would their access to food be affected?
3. Is the critical question of food security more about a national state having “food sovereignty”, implying the control of smallholders also to choose their technology and market, rather than “food security”?
4. Does the spread of bio-technology on smallholder production system provide stability for small-scale farmers?
5. Will increased market integration also imply improved labour productivity in agriculture and increased economic surplus and welfare or will increased vulnerability on the part of smallholders emerge?
6. What will be the implications for women’s access to means of production, inputs and credits when economic liberalisation deepens?
7. Will women if given better opportunity to resources, plan and produce on their own land reap the full benefits of their own contribution to food production?
8. What will happen if protection of agricultural production in the north is reduced or taken away all together? Who will be the winners and losers? What will be the implications for food security among the poor in the south?
9. How can the world together with the African farmers and other Africans resolve the African food crisis.

Requirements for examination

To successfully complete the course, active participation in group work and lectures tutorials is mandatory. The submission of a written essay according to the stipulated guidelines, oral presentation in seminar format is also required.

Additional information

The course will be offered first time in the period October 16 - November 2, 2006

Responsible department:

Department of urban and rural development, Unit for rural development

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