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The Components of Food Security for Achieving Sustainable Development in Algeria

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Abstract:

This research paper titled "The Components of Food Security for Achieving Sustainable Development in Algeria" aims to highlight the strategy for achieving food security in Algeria due to its significant importance in social life, as well as the relationship between food security and sustainable development, particularly since this topic has gained global attention to avoid food crises and famine. Algeria is also experiencing a food security deficit as it has become increasingly reliant on imports, which has heightened its food dependency, posing a risk to the national economy. On the other hand, sustainable development is a cumulative process that extends over time and generations toward a secure future, based on interacting and integrated components: economic growth, social and economic justice, and environmental protection.

Keywords: food security, sustainable development, social justice, environment.

Introduction:

Humanity has recognized the issue of food security as a social phenomenon since ancient times, relying on it as an attempt to survive through the control of nature and its harshness and fluctuations. Food security is a complex issue characterized by its intricacy and multifaceted dimensions—socially, culturally, and environmentally. Today, challenges related to food security have become the primary concern for most countries and peoples amid the stakes of our contemporary world, forming a crucial part of the public economic policy pursued by the state. This policy is outlined and prepared within the agricultural sector, integrated with other policies aimed at achieving food sufficiency to meet demand. The issue of food security has dominated economic interests, particularly following the rise in food and agricultural product prices, especially in Algeria. Many countries, including Algeria, have embarked on sustainable development initiatives, making several reform attempts over the last decade aimed at improving the living standards of Algerian citizens, creating economic stability, and avoiding food crises and famine.

Sustainable development is a cumulative process that extends over time and generations toward a secure future, based on interacting and integrated components: economic growth, social and economic justice, and environmental protection. The term “food security” is a modern concept that emerged following the global food crisis in the first half of the 1970s, gaining prominence in countries that experienced production deficits and low food stock levels. Access to sufficient food is closely linked to human dignity and social justice, representing a human right enshrined in international human rights law and international or regional agreements, all of which emphasize the necessity of providing food in sufficient quantity and quality to meet individuals' needs sustainably¹.

The issue of food security has attracted significant attention at global, Arab, and national levels, driven not only by the fact that food is a right for every citizen and essential for human survival but also due to the failure of efforts to overcome the food problems faced by many countries, both theoretically and academically, as well as in practical aspects and measures². The deterioration of food security conditions impacts political decisions and enhances the effectiveness of using food as a weapon by exporting countries or those providing food aid, serving as a motivator for supporting certain political behaviors³.

Algeria is one of the international parties that has committed, through international documents, to achieving food security at the national level. To this end, it has enacted legislations and established specialized mechanisms in this field, namely the Ministry of Agriculture, and has prioritized the agricultural sector as a significant contributor to achieving food security⁴.

Food security is a crucial issue of great importance due to the increasing food imports needed to meet demands. The reliance on imported food has become a prominent feature of the Algerian economy, heightening its food dependency on external sources⁵. This dependency is becoming increasingly alarming as Algeria relies more on global markets for various food products, especially basic commodities. This poses a significant threat to the Algerian economy, necessitating the development of solutions and policies to address food dependency and achieve food security⁶.

¹- Mariam Alwan, Requirements for Achieving Food Security in Algeria: Reality and Prospects, Al-Naqid Journal for Political Studies, Volume 05, Issue 01, 2021, p. 228.

²- Rzeiga Ghrab, Issue of Sustainable Food Security in Algeria: Reality and Prospects, Journal of Economic Sciences, Management, and Commercial Sciences, Setif 1 University, Issue 13, 2015, p. 60.

³- Same reference, p. 60.

⁴- Nadia Omrani, Algeria's Policies in Achieving Food Security, Journal of Legal and Political Research and Studies, Issue 3, p. 110.

⁵- Rzeiga Ghrab, Previous Reference, p. 62.

⁶- Mariam Alwan, Same Reference, p. 227.

Food security is closely linked to the concept of food sovereignty, as a state experiencing insufficient food self-sufficiency faces threats to its sovereignty and hinders its developmental path. Thus, food, in addition to being an economic commodity, is regarded as a strategic commodity from the perspective of food security, governed by various considerations beyond supply and demand conditions. These products are essential, and the state budget bears the burden of price differences between economic and social prices, or it may resort to providing financial aid or tax exemptions for food producers⁷.

Food may carry a political price when a state cannot supply it through local production and relies heavily on imports, potentially leading to prices that significantly exceed their economic values.

In light of these challenges and the importance of the topic, as well as the legal issues it raises, this research paper poses the following questions:

- What is the relationship between food security and sustainable development?
- What are the components necessary to achieve food security in Algeria?

Section One: Basic Concepts of Food Security and Sustainable Development

In this section, we will define the concept of food security and discuss the theoretical framework of sustainable development.

1. Definition of Food Security:

Food security is a complex phenomenon that has garnered widespread attention at all levels and has become a focal point for stakeholders. It encompasses various dimensions and is one of the pressing issues facing Algerian agriculture, given its economic, political, environmental, and social implications. This concept has become more aligned with current economic transformations and the accompanying liberalization of international trade in food commodities, distinguishing it from the traditional notion of food security, which was primarily linked to self-sufficiency and the state's reliance on its own resources⁸ and capabilities to produce its food needs locally.

Linguistic Definition of Food Security:

The term “food security” consists of two interrelated concepts: security and food. The first refers to safety and the absence of fear, while food pertains to what sustains the body through nourishment, comprising the essential elements for bodily structure. It encompasses⁹ “the conditions and standards necessary during the processes of producing,

⁷- Nasser Murad, Policies for Achieving Food Security in Developing Countries: The Case of Algeria, *New Economy Journal*, Blida University, December 2010, p. 48.

⁸- Saida Bousada, Hakima Mokhtar Rahmani, The Role of Arab Food Integration in Achieving Food Security, *Annals of the University of Algiers 1*, Issue 29, p. 189.

⁹- Group of Authors, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Waseet*, 4th Edition, Al-Shorouk International Publishing, Egypt, 2004, p. 646.

processing, storing, distributing, and preparing food to ensure that it is safe, reliable, healthy, and suitable for human consumption.¹⁰”

Technical Definition:

There are numerous definitions of food security proposed by scholars and researchers, reflecting its complexity and connection to other economic, political, social, and cultural aspects. From various perspectives, it is viewed as a global issue that can be addressed by providing sufficient quantities of food to feed the world's population. Others regard it as a national problem, defined by individuals' access to food at all times for a healthy and active life¹¹. The common thread is the availability of food, ease of access, and how it is utilized whenever individuals desire it, primarily focusing on developing countries.

Dr. Mohamed Al-Sariti defines food security as “the community's ability to provide the essential food needs for its members and ensure a minimum of these needs consistently. Food needs can be met either through local production of food commodities or by generating sufficient export revenues to import what is necessary to cover deficits in local production.¹²” It is characterized by each citizen's access to necessary food requirements throughout the year without deprivation from local or imported production. He asserts that the concept of food security is linked to three key issues: abundance, meaning the availability of food commodities needed by individuals¹³; stability, ensuring that goods are consistently available in the market and providing strategic food¹⁴ reserves to address emergencies; and accessibility, where individuals have sufficient income to purchase food items¹⁵. Additionally, safety refers to the health and nutritional adequacy of food, ensuring the intended benefits without harming physical and mental health¹⁶.

Food security has undergone a significant transformation, aligning with changes in addressing food issues, shifting from an inward focus on achieving self-sufficiency in line with protectionist policies to reliance on external sources to cover deficits in national production.

Food security has been defined by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development as¹⁷ “providing food in the necessary quantity and quality for vital activity continuously

¹⁰- Mohamed El-Sayed Salam, Food Security in the Arab World, no edition, World of Knowledge, Kuwait, 1998, p. 11.

¹¹- Nadia Omrani, Previous Reference, p. 110.

¹²- Sobhi Al-Qasem, Challenges of Food Security in the Arab World, 1st Edition, Al-Fares Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 2009, p. 06.

¹³- Nadia Ahmed Omrani, The Legal System of Global Food Security Between Theory and Practice, no edition, Dar Al-Thaqafa Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2014, p. 38.

¹⁴- Same reference, p. 111.

¹⁵- Abdel Khalek Joudeh, Arab Food Security: The Duality of Food and Oil, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Qatar, 2015, p. 33.

¹⁶- Salat Mohamed Mustafa, Sustainable Agricultural Development and the Challenge of Food Security in Algeria, Doctoral Thesis, Mohamed Khider University, Biskra, Academic Year 2016-2017, p. 47.

¹⁷- Nadia Omrani, Previous Reference, p. 112.

for all individuals in the nation, relying on local production based on the comparative advantage of producing food commodities in each country, and making it available to all citizens at prices that align with their incomes and financial capabilities.”

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that “food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.¹⁸”

The Algerian legislator defines food security in Article 03 of Law 08/16¹⁹ as “the ability of every person to easily and regularly access safe and sufficient food that allows them to enjoy an active life.” The World Bank views food security as “the ability of all people at all times to access sufficient food necessary for their activity and health.” It asserts that food security for a country is achieved when its marketing and trade systems enable it to provide sufficient food to all citizens at all times, even during crises and periods of declining local production and international market conditions.

Since its inception, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development has undergone several transformations in its roles. Initially focused on merely warning about the risks of the food gap, it now prepares integrated programs to achieve food security, which it defines as providing food in the necessary quantities and qualities for health and activity continuously for each individual in the population, primarily relying on local production and the comparative advantage of producing food commodities in each country, and making these goods available to all at prices commensurate with their incomes and financial capabilities.

In 1992, the World Conference on Nutrition introduced a new concept in addition to availability, stability, and accessibility: the utilization of food, recognizing it as a complex phenomenon manifesting in various physical conditions arising from multiple causes. The World Food Summit in Rome in 1996²⁰ established four dimensions of food security: availability, access, stability, and utilization, which were agreed upon by the participating governments. This emphasizes that food security exists when all people have access to healthy food.

From the perspective of the FAO, food security means²¹ “providing food for all members of society in the necessary quantity and quality to meet their needs continuously for a healthy and active life.” The general global food security index published by the

¹⁸- Law No. 08/16, dated August 3, 2008, concerning agricultural guidance, Official Gazette No. 46, issued on August 10, 2008.

¹⁹- Salat Mohamed Mustafa, Previous Reference, p. 47.

²⁰- Ali Mkid Farida Ben Iyad, The Reality of Food Security in Algeria in Light of Global Food Security Indicators, University of Medea, p. 02.

²¹- Same reference, p. 02.

Economic Intelligence Unit adopts a definition of food security as “the capability of people at all times to access food physically and socially.”

According to the FAO, food security “exists when all people at all times have the physical, social, and economic opportunities to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences, ensuring they can live a healthy and active life.”

2. Conceptual Framework of Sustainable Development

The term “sustainable development” gained prominence after World War II, particularly following the emergence of newly independent countries. The phrase was first used in 1980 in the Global Strategy for Survival by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It was reiterated in 1991 in the United Nations Environment and Development Program, and in 1992, the necessity of adopting a national strategy for sustainable development was emphasized²². The term became specifically defined through the Brundtland Report prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. It has since been widely adopted across various fields such as transportation, water, housing, and tourism, garnering significant attention from many countries²³, including Algeria, where sustainable development has become a top priority in state strategy, leading to numerous economic, social, and environmental reforms.

Definition of Sustainable Development:

Opinions on sustainable development have varied since the concept emerged, with different definitions shaped by perspectives and ideological affiliations over time²⁴. The United Nations defined sustainable development in Principle 3 of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro as “the necessity of realizing the right to development,” ensuring balanced growth that meets the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. Principle 4 emphasized that “to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection must be an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered separately.²⁵”

Sustainable development is also defined as an economic development process that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to the Brundtland Report, sustainable development must consider social, environmental, and economic dimensions in decision-making.

²²- Rachida Zawia, Ismail Firdia, Sustainable Development in Algeria: Reality and Challenges, International Conference on Modern Trends in International Trade and Challenges of Sustainable Development Towards Promising Future Visions for Developing Countries, held on December 2-3, 2019, p. 02.

²³- Jamal Latresh, Suheila Haseeb, Sustainable Development in Algeria: Between Reality and Challenges, Journal of Economic and Trade Growth, Volume 02, April, p. 299.

²⁴- Rachida Zawia, Ismail Firdia, Previous Reference, p. 03.

²⁵- Same reference, p. 03.

The term “sustainable development” consists of two words: “development” and “sustainable.” Development, linguistically derived from the verb “to grow,” refers to flourishing and transitioning from an unsatisfactory state to one that meets individual and collective needs and aspirations²⁶. It signifies a planned scientific movement involving a series of social and economic processes aimed at achieving targeted change.

The term “sustainable” refers to the desire for continuity and permanence. Therefore, sustainable development is a long-term developmental approach that maximizes human welfare for present generations without compromising the well-being of future generations. It is a comprehensive developmental vision that aims to achieve a range of economic, social, institutional, technical, and environmental objectives. Economically, sustainable development involves maximizing net gains from economic development while preserving natural resources over time and striving to provide various health and educational services, transitioning to clean technologies, and using natural resources efficiently.

According to the Rio de Janeiro report and Agenda 21, sustainable development is defined as “development that must be achieved in a way that reconciles and balances the needs related to development and the environment for present and future generations.”

Thus, sustainable development is a comprehensive process aimed at improving human quality of life by addressing economic and social needs while ensuring the optimal use of natural resources to preserve the rights of future generations²⁷. Edward Barbier defined it as “that activity which leads to enhancing social welfare to the greatest extent while ensuring the available natural resources are utilized with minimal harm and damage to the environment.²⁸” He clarifies that sustainable development is more complex and intertwined than traditional development, encompassing economic, social, and environmental aspects.

Mohamed Mel Sharqawi defined sustainable development as “the process aimed at achieving the highest level of economic efficiency of human activity within the limits of available renewable resources and the capacity of natural ecosystems to absorb it, while considering the needs of future generations.” It emphasizes continuous, equitable, balanced, and integrated development that considers environmental dimensions in all its

²⁶- Ashraf Mohamed Ashour, Geography of Development and Poverty. Dar Al-Ma’aref Al-Jami’iya, Alexandria, 2013, p. 45.

²⁷- Jamal Latresh, Suheila Habib, Previous Reference, p. 300.

²⁸- Ghiyat Sharif, Ikhbar Ibtisam, The Algerian Experience in Sustainable Development: Between Reality and Challenges, Journal of Contemporary Economic and Commercial Studies, Volume 03, Issue 03, 2020, p. 136.

projects, ensuring that the current generation does not reap benefits at the expense of future generations²⁹.

Characteristics of Sustainable Development

The intellectual and research framework identifies several characteristics that define sustainable development, ensuring its efficiency and effectiveness in maintaining the well-being of the current generation while considering the future of upcoming generations. These characteristics emphasize the priority of environmental concerns:

- Focus on the Needs of the Poor: Sustainable development primarily aims to meet the needs of the poorest segments of society, striving to reduce global poverty.
- Interconnected Elements: The various elements of sustainable development are interdependent, illustrating the intricate interplay between quantitative and qualitative dimensions³⁰. Sustainable development represents a practical strategy for the rational exploitation and use of resources, improving the quality of life while safeguarding future generations' rights to natural resources³¹.

Section Two: Components of Food Security and Strategies for Achieving It

In this section, we will identify the elements that constitute the concept of food security and its levels, as well as the strategy for achieving food security in Algeria.

1. Elements of Food Security and Its Levels:

Food security is characterized by several key elements, including:³²

- Local Production Reliance: A significant portion of food should rely on local production rather than imports. This local production depends on the following components:
 - Availability of agricultural, land, water, human, and financial resources, along with the level of technology used in agriculture.
 - Agricultural and food policy directions.
 - Availability of agricultural infrastructure.
 - Investment policy trends and their capacity to create a conducive environment for food production investment.
 - Accessibility of sufficient food for everyone at any time.
 - Affordability of food for all population segments³³.

Several factors and indicators can help assess levels of food security:

²⁹- Medhat Abu Nasir, Yasmin Medhat Mohamed, Sustainable Development: Its Concept, Dimensions, and Indicators, 1st Edition, Arab Group for Training and Publishing, Egypt, 2017, p. 83.

³⁰- Rachida Zawia, Ismail Firdia, Previous Reference, p. 04.

³¹- Jamal Latresh, Suheila Haseeb, Previous Reference, p. 300.

³²- Bakdi Fatima, Previous Reference, p. 190.

³³- Nasser Murad, Previous Reference, p. 50.

- Level One: This is the minimum level, representing the state's ability to provide a basic food reserve sufficient to meet the minimum caloric intake for every individual in the community, based on international standards.
- Level Two: This intermediate level focuses on eliminating malnutrition, which refers to deficiencies in essential nutrients necessary for the body. Individuals can experience malnutrition without experiencing hunger or food shortages. This level aims to ensure adequate biological nutritional needs for all community members.
- Level Three: This level reflects the state's ability to elevate the food intake of individuals to a level that enables them to perform their productive work optimally. The potential food level results from the interaction of the production dimension (production capabilities) and the economic dimension (individual income level). As individual income increases, so does the potential food level, enabling individuals to perform their economic roles efficiently, thereby contributing to improved economic conditions and national output³⁴.

The 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security acknowledged the multifaceted nature of food security by linking it to:

- Eradicating poverty.
- Ensuring security stability.
- Sustainable use of natural resources.
- Fair trade and addressing human-made natural disasters³⁵.

2. Strategy for Achieving Sustainable Food Security in Algeria

With the increasing population and the mismanagement of natural resources, the food problem in Algeria has intensified, necessitating the achievement of sustainable agricultural development. This can be realized by pursuing the following objectives:

- Increase Agricultural Production: Both in quantity and quality, to meet the consumption demands for food products.
- Enhance Agricultural Sector Performance: Improve the effectiveness of the agricultural sector and increase production through optimal utilization of production resources and the introduction of various agricultural innovations and technologies to boost the competitiveness of Algerian agriculture.

Key Pillars of the Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy:

Analyzing the sustainable agricultural development strategy reveals several foundational pillars for achieving sustainable food security:

1. Comprehensive and Integrated Policies: Ensure that food security policies and programs are holistic and interconnected.

³⁴- Salat Mohamed Mustafa, Previous Reference, p. 50.

³⁵- Mariam Alwan, Previous Reference, p. 228.

2. Private Sector Role: Emphasize the role of the private sector in agricultural development and food security.
3. Support Agricultural Production: Provide support for the production of certain food products through price support or subsidies for production inputs.
4. Adequate Financing: Ensure sufficient funding is available under favorable conditions.
5. Human Resource Development: Establish research centers and programs for agricultural training and extension services.
6. Infrastructure Projects: Develop infrastructure and public facilities like markets, agricultural roads, dams, wells, and storage facilities.
7. Horizontal and Vertical Integration: Work towards achieving both horizontal and vertical integration within the agricultural sector.
8. Customs Exemptions: Exempt production inputs from customs duties and provide protection for certain national products that achieve specific self-sufficiency levels.
9. Consumer Protection: Support the prices of imported food products to protect consumers.

Sustainable food security is a strategic component of sustainable agricultural development included in the overarching economic and social development plan. It encompasses various policies, programs, and projects aimed at increasing the productivity of essential food commodities through the optimal use of available local resources, minimizing waste and spoilage of food products, rationalizing food consumption, and improving trade conditions in all forms³⁶.

Food security is achieved when everyone has the physical, social, and economic means to access safe and nutritious food in sufficient quantities to meet their needs, allowing them to lead active and healthy lives. This requires the establishment of all necessary conditions and standards during the processes of food production³⁷, processing, storage, and preparation to ensure that food is safe, healthy, and suitable for human consumption.

Four dimensions of food security can be identified:

- Food Availability: Ensuring sufficient food supply.
- Economic and Physical Accessibility: Making food affordable and reachable.
- Food Utilization: Ensuring food is used effectively.
- Stability Over Time: Maintaining food security consistently over time³⁸.

Conclusion:

³⁶- Rzeiga Ghrab, Previous Reference. p. 56.

³⁷- Bakdi Fatima, Previous Reference, p. 189.

³⁸- Ali Mkid, Farida Ben Iyad, Previous Reference, p. 02.

Countries facing food insecurity are threatened in their sovereignty, leading to increased unrest and hindering their developmental paths. The growing reliance on food imports exacerbates dependence on foreign sources, posing risks to the economy. Food security cannot be separated from social stability; individuals are fundamental to economic and social development, and access to food is a basic right that the state must ensure to enable individuals to fulfill their roles in the development process. Therefore, it is essential to develop solutions and policies to address the issue of food dependency and achieve food security.

Sustainable development differs from general development in that it is more complex and interconnected, particularly regarding its natural and social aspects. Development has a spiritual and cultural dimension related to the preservation of the cultural identity of societies, while sustainable development is based on the idea of justice among individuals, generations, and nations.

The elements of sustainable development cannot be separated or measured independently due to the intertwining of quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Achieving food security is a central issue; any strategy for achieving food security must be based on sustainable agricultural development, which necessitates understanding the underlying causes of food security challenges and seeking comprehensive, lasting solutions.

Food security is linked to the cultural, social, and environmental dimensions of nations, and it cannot be divorced from social stability, as it is the primary guarantee of resource abundance and food needs. Moreover, achieving and sustaining agricultural development is closely tied to political stability by providing the necessary conditions for its prosperity and preventing its depletion through wars and conflicts, which exacerbate issues of poverty and disease.

Recommendations:

1. Improve Agricultural Production: Enhance both the quantity and quality of agricultural production to meet food consumption needs.
2. Elevate Living Standards in Rural Areas: Establish a sustainable agricultural system while preserving agricultural resources and the local environment.
3. Incorporate Environmental Considerations: Ensure that environmental aspects are included in all economic and technical studies of agricultural projects.
4. Promote Environmental Awareness: Support the role of various cooperative organizations in raising environmental awareness.
5. Ensure Self-Sufficiency: Pursue self-sufficiency diligently and precisely identify its causes, rather than leaving it to external factors and changing conditions.
6. Achieve Rural Development: Implement well-planned strategies to reduce poverty.

7. Produce Safe Food: Ensure the production of sufficient, high-nutritional-value food free from agricultural chemical residues.
8. Focus on Agricultural Research: Increase and activate specialized research centers.
9. Rational Land Use: Develop strategies to optimize land use and halt urban sprawl onto agricultural lands.
10. Rationalize Food Imports: Limit imports to essential food items that are not sufficiently available in local markets.
11. Align with International Trends: Follow international approaches to food security by establishing a strategic global food reserve to ensure a regular supply in local and global markets during shortages or other disasters.

By implementing these recommendations, food security can be strengthened, and sustainable development can be achieved to ensure the well-being of current and future generations.

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