

THE ROLE OF RURAL AREAS IN ENSURING FOOD SECURITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

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The article examines the concept of food security, its importance, as well as the role of rural communities in food production and ensuring national food stability. The main causes of food insecurity in rural Ghana have been identified, such as poor infrastructure, post-harvest crop losses, climate change, and limited availability of credit. The justification for the need to expand access to finance in rural areas, promote innovation and education, as well as strengthen agricultural infrastructure has been carried out. This will ensure Ghana's long-term food security.

Keywords: *food security; Ghana; rural areas; climate change; food production; post-harvest losses.*

In Ghana, where agriculture is the main industry and source of income, rural areas are essential to maintaining food security. Despite the implementation of initiatives such as Planting for Food and Jobs, the government still faces difficulties in guaranteeing equitable and sustainable food systems.

The FAO defines food security as when everyone, everywhere, has access to enough wholesome food to meet their nutritional needs for an active and healthy life, food security has been achieved [1]. Stability, availability, access, and utilization are its four primary foundations. Food security is a top national development goal in Ghana. Most workers, over 33%, are employed in agriculture, which accounts for over 19% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [2]. To establish policies, reduce poverty, and promote national progress, it is essential to comprehend how rural communities maintain food security.

Food security is crucial to the stability of the economy and society. It improves national development, reduces poverty, and enhances human health. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2: Zero Hunger, can be obtained in Ghana by increasing food security.

Table 1 demonstrates how concerns such as health, economic stability, social peace, and national resilience are all included in food security, which is beyond the

mere quantity of food. Regular access to adequate and nutritious food reduces the risk of diet-related diseases, increases productivity, and decreases hunger and malnutrition [1]. By increasing rural wages, encouraging agricultural production, and guaranteeing balanced growth between urban and rural areas, this stability in the food supply also benefits the wider economy. As noted by the World Bank (2022), food security is a major problem for both national and international development programs because, in essence, it is the cornerstone of a stable and healthy society [3].

Ghana's Rural Areas' Contribution to Food Security.

Table 1. – Importance of Food Security

Key Area	Importance of Food Security
Health and Nutrition	Reduces hunger, malnutrition, and diet-related diseases
Economic Stability	Increases rural incomes and agricultural productivity
Social Cohesion	Reduces disparity between urban and rural communities
National Development	Strengthens the resilience of global food supply issues

Source: based on data [1,2].

Most of the Ghana's food is produced in rural areas. More than 70% of the world's food production comes from staple crops such as rice, yam, cassava, and maize [4]. The primary contributions that rural communities make to maintaining national food security are listed in the following table 2.

Table 2. – Role of Rural Areas in Food Security

Role of Rural Areas	Description	Impact on Food Security
Agricultural Production	Rural farmers cultivate staple crops, vegetables, and cash crops	Increases the availability of food and promotes self-sufficiency
Employment Generation	Rural farming provides jobs for most of the population	Increases household income and access to food
Supply to Urban Markets	Rural areas provide major cities with food supplies	Ensures steady flow of food and price stability
Cultural and Indigenous Knowledge	Traditional agricultural and preservation methods enhance local sustainability	Promotes crop diversity and resilience to shocks
Contribution to Exports	Cocoa and other cash crops are mainly grown in rural areas	Generates revenue that supports food imports and reserves

Source: based on data [4].

In table 2, most staple crops, such as rice, yam, cassava, and maize, are produced in rural areas, which are the main source of agricultural output [4]. A significant portion of the population is employed by them, enabling families to generate revenue that promotes household welfare and food access [2]. Not only do rural areas produce food for local consumption, but they also provide urban markets, which help to stabilize prices and ensure that food flows evenly across regions. Through traditional farming methods and indigenous knowledge systems, they contribute significantly, protecting biodiversity and enhancing resistance to environmental shocks [5]. Additionally, the cultivation of cocoa, which creates foreign exchange and indirectly sustains the country's food reserves, makes rural areas essential to Ghana's export economy. Rural areas are crucial to preserving food supply, economic stability, and cultural sustainability due to their combined roles.

Ghana's rural areas' food security is influenced by institutional, economic, and environmental variables. The table below identifies the main challenges that prevent rural Ghana from achieving full food security.

Table 3. – Factors Affecting Food Security in Rural Ghana

Factor	Explanation	Effect on Food Security
Climate Change	Irregular rainfall and droughts reduce crop yields, especially in northern Ghana	Decreases agricultural productivity and food availability
Limited Access to Credit	Many farmers cannot afford inputs such as fertilizers and irrigation systems	Limits yield and income diversification
Poor Infrastructure	Weak road networks and storage facilities lead to high post-harvest losses	Reduces market access and causes food waste
Land Tenure Systems	Customary land ownership often restricts women and youth from accessing land	Limits participation in agricultural production
Inadequate Extension Services	Lack of technical guidance on improved farming practices	Reduces efficiency and adaptation to climate change

Source: based on data [4,5,6].

In table 3, northern regions, agricultural productivity is at risk due to environmental changes, particularly droughts and unpredictable rainfall [6]. Economic obstacles, such as restricted loan availability, prevent farmers from investing in better irrigation, fertilizer, and seeds, which reduces yields and revenue. Due to the poor infrastructure and inadequate roads and storage facilities, large amounts of food cannot reach customers due to massive post-harvest losses caused by poor infrastructure, including inadequate roads and storage facilities [4]. Additionally, many communities'

land tenure policies prevent women and young people from purchasing or renting land, which restricts their ability to engage in farming [5]. Farmers' ability to embrace contemporary methods or adjust to climate issues is further diminished by the lack of efficient agricultural extension services. These elements highlight the institutional and structural weaknesses that prevent rural communities from contributing to the nation's food security.

Government Initiatives and Rural Development. To increase agricultural productivity in rural areas, the Ghanaian government has implemented:

- «Planting for Food and Jobs» (PFJ) - provides subsidized seeds and fertilizers to smallholder farmers [7];
- «One District, One Factory» (1D1F) - promotes the development of agro-processing businesses in rural areas;
- Irrigation Development Programs - reduce reliance on rainfall and encourage dry-season cultivation;
- School Feeding Programme - helps to establish steady markets for local produce.

Although some sectors of production have increased because of these programs, market restrictions, uneven funding, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms make sustainability a challenge [3].

Despite the measures taken by the government, a number of rural development issues remain that limit food security in the Republic of Ghana. Among the most significant are the following:

- post-harvest losses - up to 30–40% of crops are lost due to poor storage and transportation [4];
- climate instability - floods and droughts disrupt farming practices year on year;
- limited technology use - most farmers rely on traditional tools and methods;
- youth migration - many young people migrate to cities, leaving behind aging farmers;
- women, who are nearly half of the agricultural workforce, often face obstacles to land and finance [5].

References

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РОЛЬ СЕЛЬСКИХ РАЙОНОВ В ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИИ ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВЕННОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ ГАНА

В статье рассматривается понятие продовольственной безопасности, её значение, а также роль сельских сообществ в производстве продовольствия и обеспечении национальной продовольственной стабильности. Выявлены основные причины отсутствия продовольственной безопасности в сельских районах Ганы, такие как неразвитая инфраструктура, потери урожая после сбора урожая, изменение климата и ограниченная доступность кредитов. Выполнено обоснование необходимости расширения доступа к финансированию в сельской местности, содействия инновациям и образованию, а также укрепления сельскохозяйственной инфраструктуры. Это позволит обеспечить долгосрочную продовольственную безопасность Ганы.