

***“The Impact of Food Aid on the Food Security  
of the Hargeisa Area.”***

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## **Introduction:**

Historically the primary motive of food aid has been humanitarian, to reduce famine and suffering, but political motives have also been involved. After the Second World War, food aid became a regular feature of international development programmes. For instance, under the Marshall Plan, the US transferred huge amounts of resources, including food aid, to Europe in particular in order to rebuild the continent. Food aid was also used to promote major US trading partners, to open up new markets for American products and to reduce accumulated surplus food. While the US was the leading food aid donor in the 1960s, the European Union (EU) was the largest food aid donor in the 1990s (Ahmed I. Aden, 2016).

This research paper was undertaken with the aim of better understanding the role of food aid in Somaliland, particularly in Hargeisa district, which is the most populous district in Somaliland. The research gathered information from existing published empirical literature, and also used primary data from some experts in the sector. The research addresses the key questions of who makes use of 'food aid' and why; what types of 'food aid' are available and whether there are trends in their use; the impact of 'food aid' provision on its recipients and local communities; and some of the key benefits and drawbacks of different types of 'food aid' provision.

## **Description of the study areas:**

Hargeisa is the Centre of Maroodijeex region, and the capital city of Somaliland. The area was cultivating crops since the colonial period, when the British government ruled. Early in the 20th century, settlements were established along the dry rivers in the region and farmers began growing sorghum and maize as subsistence crops. Even today, sorghum and maize remain the

principal rain fed crops grown in this area with very limited inputs mainly in the form of labor and seed. Also horticulture crops are common to the region such as Aw-Barkhadle town which produces most of the cash crops used by the Hargeisa residents.

## **Literature review:**

### **The history of food aid**

Food aid became a national and international issue during recent history. The primary motivation has been humanitarian, i.e. to reduce famine and suffering, but political motives have also always been in the background. The modern type of food aid started after the First World War, when around 6.2 million tons of food was shipped from the US to Europe between 1919 and 1926. American food aid to Europe was primarily given to relieve distress, but a more political aim was also clearly spelled out: the use of food commodities as a weapon in the fight against Bolshevism. Later, this was to become one of the major influences upon the geographical distribution of food aid. Food aid was not only the provision of relief supplies in cases of disasters; it became also a tool of economic and political policy planning (Miller et al. 1981 and Clay 1985)

After the Second World War food aid became a regular feature of the international development program. For instance, under the Marshall Plan, the US transferred huge amounts of resources, including food aid, to Europe in particular in order to rebuild the continent. Food aid was also used to promote major US trading partners, to open up new markets for American products and to reduce accumulated surplus food. While the USA was the leading food aid

donor in the 1960s, the European Union (EU) was the largest food aid donor in the 1990s (PANE, 2006).

The provision of food aid has been a contentious issue for many years. The concept was developed in the 1950s as a way for developed economies to dispose of surplus food production. Over time it has become associated with issues such as food security and malnutrition. While these are important issues there are long standing concerns that some donor countries use food aid as a form of export assistance to provide indirect price support in domestic commodity markets (David Harris Aug 2007).

In 1954 the basis for American food aid was laid with the enactment of Public Law 480. The reason behind it was the huge grain surplus stocks which had accumulated in the USA. The declared aims of the new legislation were, apart from getting rid of surpluses, to open up new markets for American products, to decrease hunger and malnutrition and to use food aid as a lever to obtain important raw materials in short supply in the USA from developing countries. The leading role of the USA as food aid donor (around 90% of all food aid in the 1960s) has diminished with diminishing surpluses, and in the 1990s the EU has been the largest food aid donor.

During its history, food aid has been given to practically all the developing countries of the world, but a major part has always been concentrated on a rather small number of recipients. In the 1950s and 1960s, during the dominance of the Food for Peace Program, also known as "Public Law (PL) 480," the recipients mirrored rather faithfully the political interests of the USA. Since then, food aid has become more diversified and scarce. There is a significant geographical shift from Asia to Africa. The growing emphasis of development motives at the background of

food aid has resulted in increasing concentration of food aid on the least developed, the so-called low-income food-deficit countries.

**A brief explanation of the project:**

This research project gathered questionnaire responses from six people who have sector expertise. All of them have been working in the sector of food and food related subjects for many years. The questionnaire consisted of different parts including: Questions that concern the general perception of food aid by the societies; questions about the socio-economic relationship between farmer communities and the food aid; and questions concerning the domestic food market, to find out if there are any price fluctuations when food aid arrives at the food market.

The questionnaire was completed by representatives from different organizations with different gender groups and age categories. Included on the list was a woman from the local 'Barwaaqo farmer co-operative', who was selected because they are primary food producers to the local market of the study area; also a government officer from the ministry of Agriculture, who is the key institution on the subject of food production and the food security of the country; other personnel whom the questionnaire reached included: WFP, Ministry of National planning, Somaliland Agriculture Society, Food and Agriculture organization. As most of them were busy at their daily duties, the questionnaire was emailed enabling them to take some time to answer the questions, then filled and sent it back.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

This section of the paper will analyze and present the responses gathered.

### **Who receives and benefits from the food aid in Hargeisa district?**

The six respondents differed in their answer according to their experience of food aid. Four out of the six stated that food aid is received mainly by those living in the agro-pastoral areas of Hargeisa suburb. One respondent mentioned the particular group who receive the food aid are the farmer communities. While another one seemed to answer the question in more in depth by putting the exact individual receivers as the 'pregnant and lactating personnel'.

### **Where does food aid always comes from?**

In this question we tried to understand whether the type of food grain distributed as food aid comes from the local market or is imported from elsewhere. According to the six respondents who were familiar to the subject, the answer was that all the food aid they participate in was coming from overseas as imports; which means food aid is imported to Hargeisa from other nations' food market. They explained that the situation is that there is very limited local food production, which cannot supply the huge food demands from the food donation.

### **The conception and the role of food aid In Hargeisa**

This question was particularly about the conception the respondents had of the food aid in Hargeisa. The responses were different as usual. Two of them indicated that the food aid has a negative impact of Hargeisa farmers, being an 'undermining factor' in local food production

while on the other extreme two responses pointed the food aid as a beneficial to drought affected parts of the district by specially helping the IDPs and the other vulnerable groups like elders (aged groups) and children. Another remaining two out of the six respondents said their conception of food aid was to ensure general food safety and assist food insecure situations.

### **Benefits of food aid**

Here the respondents were asked to talk about the advantages and benefits they think food aid brings. The kind of benefits the six respondents suggested were in agreement and included that the food aid is good to address the food gap during the drought seasons by providing adequate food to those in need, particularly the vulnerable poor and also that it's an important contributor for the alleviation of the malnutrition of children and elder members of a family.

### **Limitations of food aid**

Some answered that food aid is an important part of creating dependency, while some others argued that food aid has a negative impact during the food production year, by disappointing the local farmers, because, as they put, it has a negative impact on the market price.

### **Effects of food aid on grain food production**

This question sought to understand the effects of food aid on grain production, and the responses differed in the degree of this effect. Two of them responded that it has a completely negative effect, while one other respondent responded that it has only a minimal effect. One other respondent only put the answer by saying 'it doesn't have' any effect. While another three respondents identified the effect as 'increasing dependency', by explaining that the food aid will make the farmer neglect his farming and just wait only for food aid to come.

### **Impact of food aid on the local market**

Answering about the impact of food aid on the local market four of the six respondents argued that it doesn't have any effect at this time. Their explanation was that food production is seasonal and that most of the time local production is not sufficient for local demands, and because of that food aid doesn't create any impact on the local food prices. One other respondent put the answer as 'Mild effect', and another remaining respondent put his argument that 'food aid has a negative impact on the market' by competing with the local grain at the market.

### **When food aid distribution happens in Hargeisa**

According to two out of the six respondents, food aid is not always a regular occurrence during all the months of the year, except for the food distributed to the maternal and child health centers known as "MCH" which are a feeding center for the needy community throughout the year. The other four respondents answered that it's occasional and available only in emergency situations, when the droughts hit the rural pastoralists and agro pastoralists.

### **Improvement of the current food aid programmes/policies**

Food aid policies and procedures are created by the government to meet local food demands. Currently there are food related policy and regulation documents, but it's needs to be reviewed and updated, as it was drafted long time ago. The updates should include the policy documents for some measures to encourage local food production while at the same time not undermining the food emergency programmes in the country. Five of the respondents argued for a new policy which will push the food aid organizations to buy the food surplus from the local farmers

during the seasons of plenty, and store it to distribute during the deficit seasons of the year. According to them that will not challenge the local foodstuffs, instead it will encourage the farmers to produce more, while at the same time the policy will not undermine the food emergency programs in the country. One respondent out of the six argued that it's not time to talk food aid policy, rather it's time to talk food production.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is limited capacity in the agricultural sector to produce more to satisfy the local market and also attract the food donors who would rely on it to buy food for local distribution through the emergency program.

Although sometimes food aid has a profound effect on local farm production, it is worth noting that the local people are well aware of their limited capacity and that they cannot satisfy the local market, therefore did not recommend stopping but rather controlling food aid.

There is a lack of updated policy documents about food aid, which could enhance and create a harmony between the food aid program operators and the local food producers. Such policy document would develop a mutual relationship between the two, and it would prevent any conflict of interest between them.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

- Provision of modern agricultural equipment, farmers training on modern production technologies, and providing technical support to small-holder farmers who are financially weak in order to encourage them to produce more yields which enable them to cover the local demands and market.
- Relief agencies to purchase food aid from the local farmers who produced surplus during the harvest season, and to distribute food aid during the dry seasons in an attempt to avoid a disturbance of market prices.
- Formulation of policies and regulations to control the importation of food products that are affecting the local farm production. If encouraged, food can be abundantly produced by the local farmers. Government should take appropriate actions regarding the imported food to promote local production and the government should give especial considerations when local farmers harvest their produce to control the entry of imports, so that local cereals would thrive in the market.

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