

Review

Open Economics dp2010-22 first round

Title: "Politics, Globalization, and Food Crisis Discourse"

The author tackles a relevant topic in the political discussion about food security in developing countries. In my view the paper's main contribution is the discussion of the concept of food security, the concept's changes during the last decades, and potential reasons for these changes. It is definitely worth searching for political and economic reasons for these changes. Linking globalization with politics to food security seems being a logic consequence. I think that the paper can contribute to the understanding and discussion of the current concept of food security and its political framework.

However, in my view the paper is not to be published in a high-ranked economic journal. There are three reasons: first, the paper is not clear in its aim, its reasoning and its contribution. Second, the author does not distinguish sufficiently clearly between facts, statements, suspected relationships, and normative opinions and judgments. Third, several issues and statements are treated one-sided or are not clear. In the following there are some details for these issues:

- (1) Unclear aim: the paper's aim is "to shed light on the question of how food-secure nations ... can be ... brought about by globalization." This is far from a focused research question or manuscript objective. In particular, in the conclusions the aim seems to be shifted to the question "where exactly did things [in the field of food security] go wrong?" In my view the paper's conclusions have some value in their own right, however, they do not shed much light on the question raised in the introduction. Consequently, the paper's contributions are not clearly formulated or at least differ from the aim raised in the introduction. After having read the paper I think it is about the term "food security", its changing meanings, the political and economic reasons behind these changes, and why yesterday's and/or today's concept of food security is not successful in the sense of making countries food-secure. I think that these topics are worth being tackled in an academic analysis. But maybe an article for an economic journal is not the optimal medium to publish such an analysis because the problem is too complex for an article of e.g. fifteen journal pages.
- (2) Just some examples of normative judgments that are not well marked and that are not well reasoned (only from the conclusions section): "at the end, profits mattered more than the people". "the depoliticization backfired by displacing the people and starving rather than saving them from death". "Economic globalization[']s ... underlying antisocial tendencies". I do not say that these opinions and statements are wrong. I do not say that they are right, either. In my view, they are not appropriately presented in an academic paper and for an academic discussion of the issue. There is too much personal judgment without indicating this normative part of the discussion.

Another example from the section "The Globalized Food": "The globalization of the world economy –the perpetuation of the neoliberal ideology, the institutionalization of multilateralism, the coordination of the global economy as a singular entity and the

sidestepping of national sovereignties – did not exempt the food and agriculture sector from its fangs.” This reads nicely, but not in an academic economic article. This might be a political statement or a journalist’s view in a newspaper article but this is not appropriate for economic analyses.

- (3) Unclear or one-sided statements: what is “the social contract of the government to its people”?

The author does not discuss country examples that have improved their food security in the last decades. In this context of differentiating among countries, there are also two important determinants for a country being food-secure that are not discussed appropriately in my view: population growth and income. It is hard to become food-secure for a country with a fast growing population – more or less irrespective of the food security concept or the openness of the country’s food markets. On the other hand, increasing income allows for buying imported food.

In the paper is an inconsistency which can be often heard in discussions about food security: On one hand, obviously, food prices are too high for the people who hunger. On the other hand, you argue that e.g. peasant farmers cannot compete with farming industries from developed countries and, consequently, the peasant farmers reduce their production or even give up farming. But this implies that the local food prices are too low for the peasants. So, what is the problem at the local stage: too low food prices for the local producers or too high food prices for the poor consumers? If both is true, you have to explain how you want to ensure high prices for producers while prices are low for consumers because this does not work on a free market. I do not say that you are wrong, but as a reader I need some more explanation, please.

You do not refer to a country’s possibilities to reduce the impacts of the “Corporate Food Game” on the country. E.g. there are ‘emergency clauses’ in the WTO that allow for ‘decoupling’ the national market from the world market.

You do not refer to individual countries’ problems to ensure food security, e.g. I do not expect that a corrupt government puts very much emphasize on food security.