

Referee Report

“Politics, Globalization, and Food Crisis Discourse”

The paper attempts to provide an interdisciplinary perspective on food security that captures the relationship between economic and political factors underlying this important problem. While it is clear that the political economy of food security represents an area that requires further research, the article does not meet the substantive, methodological, and editorial standards of a scholarly publication. Consequently, I do not think that the paper should be published. In particular:

The article does not add new theoretical or empirical insights to the field. The fact that the politics of globalization, particularly the neo-liberal orthodoxy of the 1980s and 1990s have had implications for food security at the individual and national levels is obvious. However, the paper neither provides a review of the large literature on this topic across economic and political sciences, nor offers a systematic analysis of the problem. For example, following the introduction, there is a short discussion of the issue in the case of the Philippines, but little historical context or data to characterize the evolution and extent of the impact that the politics of globalization have had on food security. In short, while the aim of the author is laudable, the article does not make a new theoretical or empirical contribution to the field.

The article focuses only on the negative consequences of international integration and specialization for food security. Although openness to the global market and pressures to specialize can have substantive costs in terms of social and economic dislocation of some local producers, it also often has a positive impact in terms of prices, quantities, and variety of food in local markets. This one sided view of the problem is further documented in the evocative language and jargon used in the article to discuss various aspects of the problem.

The article also confuses national self-sufficiency and food security at the level of individuals: national self-sufficiency does not guarantee access to food by every individual. High prices due to tariffs on imports or local oligopolies will leave the poor hungry. Local fluctuations in supply or diversity due to climate change, combined with a lack of foreign exchange reserves due to poor export performance, can have devastating implications for vulnerable populations. The author seems to emphasize agriculture as a way out of poverty, but this contradicts the empirical evidence on structural change around the globe: historical and current data show that rural communities tend to be the poorest. The author also suggests that a trade-off exists between food security and industrialization, which is flawed. Empirical evidence from around the world shows that industrialization contributes to increases in income and as long as there is investment in agriculture and agricultural productivity increases, farmers' income also increases, employment in agriculture declines while food supplies remain stable or grow. The percentage of the population employed in agriculture is not a good indicator of the potential for food self-sufficiency. At the same time, the author does not address the issue of agricultural productivity in developing countries.