

Food Security Education in MENA

The promises of the Arab Spring

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Thesis

- University education in food security in MENA is **inadequate**. I attribute this to the **complexity** of the concept of food security and to its significant **social, economic and political** dimensions. Addressing these aspects requires a **freedom of thought and of expression** that has been long repressed by the security states of the region. I look to the **promises of the Arab Spring** as a new departure for a radical change in the way we approach education in food security.

Outline

- Brief introduction
- What does food security mean in the MENA?
- How are we teaching it?
- How are others teaching it?
- Conclusion: Harvesting the Arab Spring.

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Cost of eating spikes for the Arab world

Article

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By Olivia Ward
Foreign Affairs Reporter

Let them eat bread.

That refrain, from the authoritarian regime of President Hosni Mubarak, kept impoverished Egyptians from violent rebellion for decades.

When food riots broke out in 2008, he contained them by promising to keep up the subsidies that were the barrier between malnutrition and starvation for one-third of the country's 80 million people.

The protests that brought down his regime were driven by hunger for democracy rather than bread. But as Egypt and other Arab countries remain volatile, there are fears that spiking grain prices could propel new discontent.

In the past week, wheat prices soared by 17 per cent, a worrying sign for those countries where it is a staple of the diet.

Who buys our wheat

Buyers of Canadian wheat in 2009-10 from the Middle East and North Africa.

	Tonnes per year
Iraq	1,124,000
Saudi Arabia	619,000
Algeria	484,000
Morocco	471,000
Sudan	367,000
UAE	341,000
Tunisia	123,000
Egypt	63,000

SOURCE: U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization

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Mideast Staggered by Cost of Wheat

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By LIAM PLEVEN And MATT BRADLEY

Wheat prices jumped on Wednesday, taking the week's gains to 17%, an ascent that threatens to put fresh pressure on fragile Middle East governments that import the grain to feed their people.



View Full Image

Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

Farmers in northern Tunisia harvested a wheat field in July.

Wet weather in the U.S. and dryness in Western Europe are driving the recent rise. Wheat futures jumped 53 cents, or 7%, to \$8.17 per bushel Wednesday, the biggest single-day dollar gain in more than seven months, and are now up 91% in less than a year.

Rising wheat prices jarred global markets last summer, amid a harsh Russian drought, and have stayed high for months. Some analysts worry the bad weather that pushed prices up this week could further curtail supplies and send prices even higher.

That could be a boon to farmers in major exporting countries, but a threat to consumers around the world, and especially in the Middle East. Wheat is the biggest dietary staple in much of the region, providing cheap nutrition in bread, pasta and couscous.

Waves of Grain

Wheat futures on the Chicago Board of Trade



Note: Front-month contract

Source: Thomson Reuters

Tunisians eat more wheat than anyone on the planet: 478 pounds per person a year, compared to 177 pounds in the U.S. Egyptians and Algerians also eat more than twice as much wheat as Americans, says the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

Unable to grow enough wheat at home, countries like Egypt and Tunisia buy half or more of what they need from other countries, and pass it along at deep discounts to their impoverished populations.

"It is a situation that a lot of countries in the region are concerned about," said Julian Lampietti, who led a 2009 World Bank study of Arab food security. "This system is not very sustainable."

The added pressure on Middle East governments from costlier wheat could increase the need for Western nations to provide financial aid, as they try to encourage nations to develop market-oriented democracies.

Egypt alone has told donor nations it will need about \$10 billion overall in aid in the next 13

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News Hub: Markets Buoyed on Greek Bailout Hopes 2:41

Stocks Up as Greek Nerves Ease 20:16

Berlin Weighs Shift on Greek Debt 6:02

Markets Real Time News

What's This?

ALL STOCKS BONDS COMMODITIES FOREX



MENA

- Moderate hunger
- Number of food insecure people increased according to GHI
- Most “food insecure” region in the world
- Largest food importers
- Chronically water deficient

Food Security: Complex and Dynamic

- IFPRI study on food security in the Arab World
- “Integrated, multidimensional, and cross-sector concept”.
- National level and household and individual levels
- “Improving food security is a multisector challenge.”

Complexity: IFPRI recommendations

Growth and Incomes

- Pro-poor growth and food security
- Investment priorities
- Poverty and nutrition
- Migration and remittances
- Institution building
- Political economy

Complexity: IFPRI recommendations

Trade

- Management of future food price shocks
- Opportunities from regional and global trade integration
- Food–energy price links
- Foreign direct investment in agriculture

Complexity: IFPRI recommendations

Agriculture, Water, and Natural Resources

- Water and land resources
- Adaptation and mitigation strategies to address climate change
- Emergencies
- Postconflict situations
- Innovation in energy and agriculture

Complexity: IFPRI recommendations

Public Health, Education, and Social Policies

- Population growth
- Maternal health
- Poverty and nutrition
- Social protection
- Food quality and safety

You thought that was complex?

- Fails to mention a number of political and economic realities
- Assumes food aplenty, problems with providing enough foreign exchange earnings to buy from a free undistorted market

BUT

- ① Food power (or food diplomacy) is an important tool for influencing the behavior of friendly and unfriendly states by superpowers
- ② The commodification of food and resulting market speculations can lead to food insecurity and deepen food crises.
- ③ The concept of food security used by IFPRI has been seriously challenged to include rights and freedom from want dimensions.

Food security: more than just calories

- Sen's "entitlements"
- Connections between hunger and "the individual, the household, the community, the nation and the international economy" are still often decontextualized by avoiding the political dimensions of land.
- Maxwell (1996) restructures the definition of food security to "remove the fear that there will not be enough to eat".

From passivity to agency

- Passivity: populations are studied at a distance; decisions made about their food are external.
- Agency prioritizes the right of people to determine their food and farming systems.
- Food sovereignty originated out of this need for agency, to give voice to agrarian movements that were excluded from food security definitions.
- Raj Patel: the right to have rights.
- The socio-political context of food security integrates power relations, land and community agency

What is the Arab World doing about Food Security?

- Renewed interest especially in Gulf states
- Qatar: : “Food security in the Arab World: Partnering for sustainable future”
- Qatar and USAID signed a Food security memorandum
- Mediterranean Partnership
- “Land grab” issue

How to build local capacity? The role of universities

- Need for transdisciplinarity
- Need for integrative research/education
- Focus on 10 highest ranking Arab universities according to webometrics (www.webometrics.info)

Highest Ranking Arab Universities

1. King Saud University
2. King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals
3. American University of Beirut
4. American University in Cairo
5. Birzeit University
6. King Abdulaziz University
7. Al Quds University the Arab University in Jerusalem
8. United Arab Emirates University
9. Higher Colleges of Technology UAE
10. Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth

How do we teach food security?

King Saud University KSA

- KSU's King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Chair for Food Security
- Agri-food industry oriented
- Will strive to contribute in the scientific advancement, development, stability and welfare of the Saudi nation in terms of food quality

King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals KSA

- No specific program in Food Security offered

American University of Beirut

- Agribusiness program
- Rural Social Change, Development & the Environment
- Economics of Water Resources
- Resource and Environmental Economics
- Microeconomics Theory of Food and Farming

American University of Cairo

- Food chemistry program includes “food security”
- Desert Development Center: multidisciplinary research “to improve the social and economic well-being of residents of desert communities by developing financially and ecologically sustainable rural livelihoods.”
- Sustainable Farm Management short course

Birzeit University

- No specific program, some research on access to food in the West Bank and Gaza

King Abdul Aziz University KSA

- No specific program
- Sustainable fish resources research project
- With Wageningen University

Al Quds University Jerusalem

- No program in Food Security. Program in “Sustainable Rural Development” but very little information available.

United Arab Emirates University – Al Ain, Abu Dhabi

- Program in Date Palm research
- Efforts by individual faculty

Higher Colleges of Technology – UAE

- 17 campuses
- Held Food Security Forum in 2011 -A one day event with Bob Geldof on general food security topics in the region.

Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth

- Erasmus Program Masters – that does emphasize “Malnutrition and Food Distribution”

University of Jordan

- Course: Agriculture and Food Security in the Arab world
- Designed to acquaint students with the present and future situation of agricultural production and food security in the AW .
Addresses cooperation and integration among the Arab countries.

How is it taught elsewhere?

Stanford

- Program on Food Security and the Environment
- Global issues of hunger, food security and environmental degradation from agriculture
- Interdisciplinary team of scholars from departments such as economics, political science, biology, civil and environmental engineering, earth sciences, and infectious disease
- Research, teaching, policy advising.

SOAS

- Food security and social protection module
- Contribution to long-term developmental goals
- Conceived and built as social and economic rights
- Exploiting synergies and inter-dependencies across various food security and social protection instruments

Why are we not teaching it as it should?

- Education in the Arab World is mired by a plethora of problems
- Teaching methods in the Arab world 'do not permit free dialogue and active, exploratory learning and consequently do not open the doors to freedom of thought and criticism' (Whitaker, 2009)
- 2009 Arab Human Development report: major regional limitation to sustainable development is 'the quality and type of education generally provided, which does not stress technical or vocational skills in demand'.

Harvesting the Arab Spring

- Symbolic that protests started with a university graduate vegetable vendor immolating himself in a rural town
Mohammad Bou Azizi, Sidi Bou Said
- Change in regimes
- Change in attitudes
- Dignity: the right to food

Food Democracy

- Food democracy: “people participation in shaping the food system, rather than remaining passive spectators on the sidelines....” (Levkoe 2006)
- “[It is about] citizens having power to determine agro-food policies and practices locally, regionally, nationally and globally (Hassanein 2003: 79)”.
- “The transition to a food democracy requires people to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to actively participate in society and to have an impact on different political levels.”

Key messages from the Arab Spring

- We wish to regain agency.
- Food and farming rights are key.
- Food security/sovereignty requires the development of local expertise.
- Employment of graduates will remain key to success of the new regimes: strengthens freedom and democracy

We are not bellies waiting to be fed, we are human being seeking freedom and dignity.