

Roles of Government on Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems in Africa: Convivial Food System



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ABSTRACT

Despite huge global food production, global hunger and malnutrition are on the rise. Several attempts at improving food production geared towards combating food insecurity and malnutrition in Africa had been made, but with little success. Challenges abound in providing a healthy and sustainable food system. The United Nations (UN) has made some progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), though not much success has been registered because of the enormity of the damage already created by destructive capitalism modes of the food system. The neutralization of organic foods and the introduction of genetically modified (GM) seeds in supporting agricultural production in Africa promote unhealthy food. In line with SDGs 2, 3, 10, and 13, this paper explored the roles of governments on healthy and sustainable food systems: the convivial food system. Qualitative method through employing an explanatory sequential design was adopted. Data was collected using documentary analysis. Successful government-led food system reforms were reviewed. A convivial food system theory was employed in the study. The study found that countries of the world are still far away from achieving most of the SDGs concerning the provision of quality and quantity of food in a sustainable manner. The study recommends several roles of government on a healthy and sustainable food system, such as efforts towards reducing food insecurity among low-income earners, decolonizing the food system, encouraging entrepreneurs to engage in the provision of a healthy and sustainable convivial food system, a tax cut on convivial food production, and the pursuit of strategic training and development of human resources.

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INTRODUCTION

Food is essential to life and healthy living. Without good food, the performance of the human resources in any organization will fall short of expectations. The quality of food available for consumption in the form of nutritional value is also germane. The World has in the past faced many pandemics that threaten the existence of humans; the worst among them are hunger and malnutrition.¹ Food security has undergone various interrogations. Quality food is the essence of sustainable development because it is gender sensitive, which calls for food sovereignty and questions various international financial institutions that

¹ J. Cribb, *Food or War* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

promote inorganic food and the profit ambition of multinational corporations (MNCs) that deal with the food chain.²

Food matters are chaotic, let alone the healthy and sustainable food system.³ Though the world produces a lot of food, paradoxically, around hundreds of million people “suffer from hunger and 2 billion more from malnutrition.”⁴ However, it has been opined that Africa is being killed by the activities of MNCs operating on the soil of Africa, either in the form of farming or agri-business.⁵ These have grave impacts on the quality of food production to combat food insecurity and malnutrition on the continent. Introduction of large-scale farming that is associated with monocropping is a source of bringing many organic plants and animals into extinction.⁶

The United Nations, its agencies, and several non-governmental organizations have tried to ensure improvement in the food system that would guarantee human subsistence. Despite those several attempts, world hunger has not declined since 2015; rather, it has been on the increase.⁷ People suffering from hunger in the world are about 800 million.⁸ In the meantime, if the trend continues unabated, there is a possibility of challenges ahead for the world, which will not only threaten the existence of mankind but will also make humans less interactive as social beings. Given this and attempts to stem the growth of inorganic food production, which is unhealthy to mankind emotionally and health-wise, has given rise to the clamour for a food convivial system. This has been proffered as a viable solution to the seeming problem at hand, a problem that emanates from soulless capitalism of individualism caused by private property without a human face. For example, it has been suggested that attention should focus on backyard and vertical farming in the form of subsistence agriculture.⁹ Doing this will ensure organic, healthy and community bonds that enhance friendly relations and joy among people of Africa. This was the system that had been in place before cash crops and large-scale farming were imposed on colonies by the Western states.¹⁰

According to Ballantyne-Brodie, convivial is a Latin word meaning 'together with life'.¹¹ Furthermore, conviviality is “when a group of people comes together around a table of food to share a joyous occasion”.¹² Hence, conviviality “offers an analytical lens for understanding practices of living well amongst species difference”.¹³ The conviviality food system is to “creatively and autonomously live,

² Lere Amusan, “Multinational Corporations’ (MNCs) Engagement in Africa: Messiahs or Hypocrites?,” *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2018): 41–62; Lere Amusan and Marilyn Setlalentoa, “An Assessment of Socio-Cultural Aspect of Large Scale Food Production Policies and Politics in Africa,” *Transylvanian Review* 17, no. 25 (2017): 4347–56; Pedro Conceição et al., “Toward a Food Secure Future: Ensuring Food Security for Sustainable Human Development in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Food Policy* 60 (2016): 1–9.

³ Leonardo Figueroa-Helland, Cassidy Thomas, and Abigail Pérez Aguilera, “Decolonizing Food Systems: Food Sovereignty, Indigenous Revitalization, and Agroecology as Counter-Hegemonic Movements,” *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 17, no. 1–2 (February 13, 2018): 173–201, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341473>; Carmen G Gonzalez, “Climate Change, Food Security, and Agrobiodiversity: Toward a Just, Resilient, and Sustainable Food System,” *Fordham Environmental Law Review*, 2011, 493–522; P. McMichael, *Development and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2017).

⁴ Miguel A Altieri and Clara I Nicholls, “Agroecology Scaling up for Food Sovereignty and Resiliency,” in *Sustainable Agriculture Reviews: Volume 11* (Springer, 2012), 1–29; Figueroa-Helland, Thomas, and Aguilera, “Decolonizing Food Systems: Food Sovereignty, Indigenous Revitalization, and Agroecology as Counter-Hegemonic Movements.”

⁵ Lere Amusan and Kolawole Sunday Ajibola, “Human Resources and Food Insecurity in Africa: Adventure in Africa Solution for African Problems,” *Journal of Gender, Information & Development in Africa* 3 (2019): 63–82; P. H. Howard, *Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Robert L Paarlberg, *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2023); M. Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

⁶ Amusan, “Multinational Corporations’ (MNCs) Engagement in Africa: Messiahs or Hypocrites?”

⁷ IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO FAO, “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security.” (Rome, 2017); J. Vivero, “Transitions towards a Food Commons Regime,” in *Perspectives on Commoning*, ed. G. Ruivenkamp and A. Hilton (London: Zed, 2016).

⁸ Figueroa-Helland, Thomas, and Aguilera, “Decolonizing Food Systems: Food Sovereignty, Indigenous Revitalization, and Agroecology as Counter-Hegemonic Movements”; Food and Agricultural Organization., “State of Food Insecurity in the World,” 2015, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4671e%0A.pdf>; Vivero, “Transitions towards a Food Commons Regime.”

⁹ R. M. Hart, *Vertical Vegetable & Fruit* (North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2011).

¹⁰ Davide Fassi, “Growing Food in Universities,” in *Universities as Drivers of Social Innovation. Research for Development.*, ed. D. Fassi et al. (Cham: Springer, 2020), 69–79, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-31117-9_5.

¹¹ Emily Ballantyne-Brodie, “Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life,” *ServDes2018-Service Design Proof of Concept*, 2018.

¹² Ballantyne-Brodie, “Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life.”

¹³ Kelly Donati, “‘Herding Is His Favourite Thing in the World’: Convivial World-Making on a Multispecies Farm,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 66 (2019): 119–29.

work and relate to each other in everyday life”, and how to live together well.¹⁴ Conviviality food makes “a better food world more thinkable”.¹⁵ Using social interaction theory, the entrepreneurial side of the convivial food system has been brought to the fore as an important dimension of the healthy and sustainable food system.¹⁶ With the importance and promises of conviviality, this paper evaluates the likely roles of government on healthy and sustainable food systems through a convivial food system. The need for this is to ensure the very foundation of neo-liberalism, where it is said that for the system to have a smooth ride, there is a need to ensure, this time, constructive government intervention in tune with the Keynesian model of capitalism.¹⁷ In trying to unravel this, there is a need to conceptualize convivial theory and interrogate its applicability for the food system in Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAME

Convivial Food System

Convivial food system theory (CFST) was propounded by Illich.¹⁸ The theory, though not against technology, was wary of the existing industrial society that found joy in the commoditization of the food system and the technical withdrawal of control of food systems from the commoners by the elites with the use of computers, chain distribution systems, healthcare and food.¹⁹ The theory has been seen to expose the insincerity of the technologically driven world in disconnecting the head from the heart, biology from emotions, and life.²⁰ It could be traced back to the 19th-century *Convivialit* a French word that implies “cohabitation in immigrant societies”. It is mooted by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin’s book, *Physiologie du goût* published in 1825, as a situation common at the table, when different people come together over a good, long meal, and time passes swiftly in excited conversation”²¹ The approach calls for a new philosophy of peaceful co-existence that is sustainable.²² The school is critical of the forces of demand and supply as pushed forward by the liberalists and neo-liberalist theorists.²³ It has some attributes of critical theory that call for communalism as against privatization.²⁴ In line with the Western, unsustainable capitalist theorists, where the commons hardly have a place, CFST is in tandem with Karl Marx and Fredrik Engels’ necessary condition for a socialist system that protects the rights and economic development of the poor. It is against money, titles, degrees, and looks, but it is more about generosity, integrity, humility, and kindness. It is more of human cohesion, cooperation, and relies more on the principle of *ubuntu* (humanity) and *Batho Pele*.²⁵ In tune with Illich's position, there is a need to limit the growth of destructive tools such as technology and institutions. He thinks that if there are no breakthrough tools and technology, it may lead to development in reverse.²⁶ Technology in reverse may be attributed to the crisis of biotechnology and its negative impacts on the quality of food that is compromising basic

¹⁴ Emily Ballantyne-Brodie and Ida Telalbasic, “Designing Local Food Systems in Everyday Life through Service Design Strategies,” *The Design Journal* 20, no. sup1 (2017): S3079–95; Donati, “‘Herding Is His Favourite Thing in the World’: Convivial World-Making on a Multispecies Farm.”

¹⁵ H. Campbell, “Spurlock’s Vomit and Visible Food Utopias,” in *Food Utopias: Reimagining Citizenship, Ethics and Community*, ed. P. V. Stock, M. Carolan, and C. Rosin (New York, 2015), 195–217.

¹⁶ Marianne J Dagevos and Esther J Veen, “Sharing a Meal: A Diversity of Performances Engendered by a Social Innovation,” in *Exploring Food and Urbanism* (Routledge, 2021), 116–32; Donati, “‘Herding Is His Favourite Thing in the World’: Convivial World-Making on a Multispecies Farm.”

¹⁷ F. Zakaria, “The Future of American Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (2008): 18–43; F. Zakaria, *The Post-American World and the Rise of the Rest* (London: Penguin Books, 2009).

¹⁸ I. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

¹⁹ Ballantyne-Brodie, “Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life.”

²⁰ A. Weber, “Objectivity,” in *Biopoetics* (Springer Netherlands, 2016), 100–116.

²¹ Frank Adloff, “Practices of Conviviality and the Social and Political Theory of Convivialism,” *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* 38, no. 1 (2019): 35–47.

²² Adloff, “Practices of Conviviality and the Social and Political Theory of Convivialism.”

²³ H. L. Bhatia, *History of Economic Thought* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978); S. L. Brue and R. R. Grant, *The History of Economic Thought* (Mason, OH: Thomson Higher Education, 2007).

²⁴ K. M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015); S. C. Roach, “Critical Theory,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smithpp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 145–60.

²⁵ Lere Amusan and Siphwe Mchunu, “An Assessment of Xenophobic/Afrophobic Attacks in South Africa (2008–2015): Whither Batho Pele and Ubuntu Principles?,” *South African Review of Sociology* 48, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2017.1411744>.

²⁶ Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*.

nutrients taken away from seeds and animals because of a need to maximize multinational agribusinesses profits with less consideration of consumers' welfare.²⁷

This theory calls for retooling of economic development, which Serge Latouche terms as a de-growth of simple prosperity in any society. He also called for anti-economic quantification, where unlimited needs lead to unfair competition and wealth amassed by a few, a wealth that they hardly need in any form.²⁸ The theory debunks the notion of monetary prosperity,²⁹ happiness and satisfaction.³⁰ In doing this, the theory calls for a joint effort by the government and community (citizens) for sustainable and inclusive development.

The theory also examines what is termed a paradigm of a gift. A situation wherein any community, a gift is paramount, even in a liberal society, for peaceful co-existence. The issue of transfer of appropriate technology that is environmentally conducive for developing states comes to mind here as well, captured by Nir Kshetri.³¹ This theory is equally in line with the attributes of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that are common among MNCs, and the activities of various foundations for the development of the less privileged.³² This is against *homo oeconomicus* (economic animals) concretized through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (the Fund), promoted by the western-inspired foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BBGF), the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).³³ The theory is of the view that every form of government activity takes its root from communalism, where people live together in harmony. A system that needs to be revisited, where the government, based on social contract theory, has to follow in exchange for human security in the 21st century. Such human security is conscious of healthy people due to the consumption of healthy food that is produced by people without destructive technology (biotechnology) that breeds inorganic food imposed on the citizens through *homo oeconomicus* that benefits a few to the detriment of the majority.

Problems of the Inorganic Food System

Inorganic food system's problems are rooted in the quest for profit, which is the basis for the capitalist economic system, exacerbated by the way "in which food is produced, distributed, consumed and represented".³⁴ Scholars have identified several problems of inorganic/industrial foods on the environment, human, and culture which are:

- the exploitation of employees (working in factories, supermarkets, advertising and in the offices with minimum wages in a developed economy and far less in developing economy);
- land grabbing and controlling, and genetically modified seeds (GMS).³⁵
- food fraud through food knowledge hoarding and hiding from people who consumed the food.³⁶
- the subjugation of small-scale farmers by larger-scale, higher-level producing farms.³⁷

²⁷ Howard, *Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat*; M. Mawere and A. Nhemachena, *GMOs, Consumerism, and the Global Politics of Biotechnology: Rethinking Food, Bodies, and Identities in Africa's 21st Century* (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG., 2017); R. Walters, *Eco Crime and Genetically Modified Food* (New York & London: Routledge, 2011).

²⁸ S. Latouche, *Farewell to Growth* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

²⁹ New world order is not of the hard power of realist school, but a world that will consider of every continent with special focus on the relegated "Heart of Darkness" into consideration when it comes to issues of technology transfer, food system, and general human security (Kshetri, 2023).

³⁰ Adloff, "Practices of Conviviality and the Social and Political Theory of Convivialism."

³¹ Nir Kshetri, *Fourth Revolution and the Bottom Four Billion: Making Technologies Work for the Poor* (University of Michigan Press, 2023).

³² Lere Amusan, "Imposed Socially Responsible Pricing on HIV/AIDS Drugs in Developing Areas," *Indian Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 1 (2015): 67–79.

³³ M. Moran, *Private Foundations and Development Partnerships: American Philanthropy and Global Development Agendas* (New York & London: Routledge., 2014); D. Williams, "Constructing the Economic Space: The World Bank and the Making of Home Economicus," in *The World Bank: Development, Poverty, Hegemony*, ed. David Moore (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), 95–120.

³⁴ M. Naser, "Seeds of Hope/Destruction," in *Food Democracy: Critical Lessons in Food, Communication, Design, and Art.*, ed. O. Vodeb (Bristol, UK & Chicago, USA: Intellect Books, 2017), 426–28.

³⁵ Naser, "Seeds of Hope/Destruction"; Brian Pearce, "The Inter Faith Network and the Development of Inter Faith Relations in Britain," in *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (Routledge, 2012), 6.

³⁶ M. Nestle, *Safe Food: The Politics of Food Safety* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2010).

³⁷ Amusan and Setlaleto, "An Assessment of Socio-Cultural Aspect of Large Scale Food Production Policies and Politics in Africa."

- inhumane animal rearing and slaughtering in farms as if they are not sentient.³⁸
- effects of pesticides on ecosystems and biodiversity, the grave impact of methane gas emission from factories on climate change are some of the problems identified by scholars.³⁹

Based on the identified issues listed above, one may safely be of the view that the politics of the food chain will remain gloomy for the foreseeable future due to the supremacy of capitalism through the "end of history" as captured by Francis Fukuyama (1992). "Eco Crime",⁴⁰ which emanated from biotechnology, is not only affecting the environment, but it is also a source of *foreign diseases* that were unknown in Africa, only to satisfy business executives and shareholders against the interests of stakeholders. Destructive technology is in no small part an agent of anti-conviviality, as discussed below.

Sustainable Development Goals and Convivial Food System

From the 17 SDGs of the United Nations (UN), 4 of them are in line with the focus of this paper. They are SDG numbers 2, 3, 10, and 13. According to the UN, the second goal is on ways to "end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. To achieve this goal faster, various governments need to play their expected roles in healthy and sustainable convivial food systems. SDG 3, which is to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages", needs inputs of Goal 2, which can be easily achieved with a convivial food system where governments are expected to play their roles.

Similarly, SDG 10 aims to "reduce inequality within and among countries".⁴¹ To make a considerable move on this goal, the colonial mentality and philosophy must be abolished, and reparations must be made to all the concerned countries that suffered at the hands of their colonial masters. This is a herculean task because the Western world is not ready to come to terms with how development should be addressed without impacting the existing *status quo*. While Africa in particular and other latecomers to the international system are calling for a new world order that will benefit all and sundry, the West is not ready to let go of the Eurocentric international economic relations that violate every fair trade and goods and services production.⁴² Africa is being reduced to the producer of inputs (human resources inclusive) for developed states. To perpetuate this, political instability is imposed, insurgencies are supported, and gun running is on the increase in Africa. Failed and failing states hardly have time for good governance; rather, they focus on how to have access to ammunition in prosecuting civil wars, as the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, and South Sudan for effective control of the states' natural resources (Badmus & Jenkins, 2020). As part of our proposition, we submit that SDG 10 is germane in achieving a healthy and sustainable convivial system if the various governments of the world decide to work together to address past injustices and modern-day slavery manifesting in various forms.

Lastly, SDG 13 states that there is a need to "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts".⁴³ Climate change is witnessing faster changes because of the high rate of emissions from greenhouse gases. The problem of climate change is exacerbated by the activities of the inorganic food system, which promises to minimize and eventually reduce drastically if various governments play their roles in the provision of healthy and sustainable food systems. As hinted earlier, the problem of climate change is critical in the discourse on healthy food sustainability.⁴⁴ Emissions through mechanical farming:

³⁸ G. Comstock, "Concerning Cattle: Behavioral and Neuroscientific Evidence for Pain, Desire, and Self-Consciousness," in *The Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, ed. A. Barnhill, M. Budolfson, and T. Doggett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 139–69.

³⁹ Amusan, "Multinational Corporations'(MNCs) Engagement in Africa: Messiahs or Hypocrites?"; Amusan and Ajibola, "Human Resources and Food Insecurity in Africa: Adventure in Africa Solution for African Problems"; Amusan and Setlalentoa, "An Assessment of Socio-Cultural Aspect of Large Scale Food Production Policies and Politics in Africa"; Ballantyne-Brodie, "Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life."

⁴⁰ Walters, *Eco Crime and Genetically Modified Food*.

⁴¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council, "Secretary-General's Report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals," 2019.

⁴² S. D. Ehrlich, *The Politics of Fair Trade: Moving Beyond Free Trade & Protection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴³ United Nations Economic and Social Council, "Secretary-General's Report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals."

⁴⁴ Amusan, "Multinational Corporations'(MNCs) Engagement in Africa: Messiahs or Hypocrites?"; Amusan and Ajibola, "Human Resources and Food Insecurity in Africa: Adventure in Africa Solution for African Problems"; Amusan and Setlalentoa, "An

the use of tractors, the application of inorganic fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and other unsustainable farming systems that are environmentally detrimental to the ecosystem and biodiversity are some of the challenges in Africa.⁴⁵ This is mostly promoted through land grabbing and large-scale farming as promoted by agribusiness MNCs and questionable foundations, as discussed above. For this to have a sustainable solution, there is a need for the government to intervene in the food chain system as opposed to the Washington Consensus of soulless capitalism that calls for a one-size-fits-all approach to human security.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative method by employing an explanatory sequential design to identify patterns and correlations in government interventions and food system outcomes. Data was collected using document analysis of government policies, programs, and national reports on food and agriculture. Existing write-ups from FAO and WHO were considered. The study also analyses successful government-led food system reforms across continents.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

From the documentary analysis, it was noted that there had been successful government-led food system reforms. In Brazil, South America, the country launched the Zero Hunger Program, nicknamed Fome Zero, in 2003 under the President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The program's target was to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty by using the instrumentality of food security and income redistribution.⁴⁶ It was reported that the reform was successful because under the programme, undernourishment fell to 1.7% from 10.2% ten years after its implementation.⁴⁷ Rocha surmised that the reform strengthened local agriculture through support from smallholder farmers.⁴⁸

The Crop Intensification Program was launched in 2007 in Rwanda in East Africa. The initiative aimed at improving food security through production and reducing poverty via modernised agriculture.⁴⁹ The reform was regarded as successful due to its impact on the increase in maize production that improved fivefold between 2007 and 2013.⁵⁰ Likewise, in South Korea, the government successfully implemented a reform that modernised agriculture and attained food self-sufficiency in the post 1960s. The reform helped the nation to achieve near self-sufficiency in rice. The reform led the government to have major infrastructure investment, which led to rural development and poverty reduction.⁵¹

In 2011, Denmark's Organic Action Plan was launched, which was claimed to be one of the most comprehensive frameworks for promoting organic food systems. IFOAM (2020) surmise that Denmark has the highest organic food market share globally at over 12%, which attests to the impact of the government's intervention in agriculture. Also, the reform led the Danish Government procurement to shift 60% of public meals to organic.⁵²

The USA's Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which was championed by the First Lady Michelle Obama, succeeded at reforming school meals to improve child nutrition. Cohen et al. submit that the effect of the Act was prominent because it increased the consumption of fruits and vegetables in schools.⁵³ It also helped reduce obesity rates among low-income children in some states.

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⁴⁵ Altieri and Nicholls, "Agroecology Scaling up for Food Sovereignty and Resiliency."

⁴⁶ FAO, "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2014; Cecilia Rocha, "Developments in National Policies for Food and Nutrition Security in Brazil," *Development Policy Review* 27, no. 1 (2009): 51–66.

⁴⁷ FAO, "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014."

⁴⁸ Rocha, "Developments in National Policies for Food and Nutrition Security in Brazil."

⁴⁹ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2019).

⁵⁰ Rwanda). MINAGRI (Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, *Annual Report on Crop Intensification Program* (Kigali: Government of Rwanda, 2014).

⁵¹ FAO, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World," *Food and Agriculture Organization*, 2018.

⁵² Danish Agriculture & Food Council, "Organic Denmark: Facts and Figures," 2018, <https://www.agricultureandfood.dk>.

⁵³ Juliana F.W. Cohen et al., "Impact of the New U.S. Department of Agriculture School Meal Standards on Food Selection, Consumption, and Waste," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 46, no. 4 (April 2014): 388–94, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2013.11.013>.

Australia's National Food Plan of 2013 was a government reform that focused on ensuring a sustainable, competitive, and safe food system. The reform also helped the Australian Government to promote sustainable farming and food waste reduction,⁵⁴ and integrate indigenous food systems and address nutrition education.⁵⁵

Likely Roles of Government on a Healthy and Sustainable Food System

In a bid to provide healthy and sustainable food systems, several roles have been identified in which the government should act to achieve the goals of a healthy and sustainable food system. Empirical studies suggest that the SDGs design implies conviviality.⁵⁶ Apart from food consumption design, other roles are expected of the government as a confirmation of the social contract between the state and its citizens to ensure a healthy and sustainable convivial food system is in place.

The bedrock of any civil society is good governance hinged on good and humane policies. To succeed in a healthy and sustainable food system using a convivial food system approach, the government has to have good and supportive policies on the convivial food system in place. Continents such as Africa need to brace up in this regard because it has been averred that the continent is "struggling amidst many other issues with the challenges of human resources and government's poor implementation of policies due to the undue politics of winner-takes-it-all syndrome that beclouds the continent".⁵⁷

Considering the influence of the government on its citizens, it is the goal of the government to democratize the food system. According to some scholars, "food democracy is therefore about 'citizen power' and seeking to organize the food system' in a way that people can 'directly engage with the decisions made in their own food system.'"⁵⁸ To protect the citizens from food-related diseases and to show that the government is alive and responsible for good governance, the issue of making citizens participate actively in organic food production and sharing of food communally must be encouraged by the government. This is the position of the edited book by Amusan, where food sovereignty was pushed for in achieving healthy food based on one's culture.⁵⁹ The government should put in place a mechanism to ensure that the production, process, and distribution are involving and participative. Africa is being captured by the biotechnology industries and questionable foundations, as discussed variously, where organic plants and animals are going into extinction.⁶⁰

It is the role of the government to see to the food poverty reduction among the low-income population. This can be done by monitoring the life cycle of food waste reduction and making relevant policies in empowering small-scale farmers, who are the agents of organic food production that are nutritiously advantageous, to arrest hidden hunger. As noted in another climate, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations pointed out that 2,900,000,000 pounds of food end up in waste bins yearly, which is enough for the globe to feed its population more than twice.⁶¹ This is sufficient to feed all humans in the world. Stuart in Ballantyne-Brodie concluded that "if food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, after China and the United States of America".⁶² From production to consumption, due to challenges of storage facilities caused mainly by a lack of basic infrastructural amenities like an uninterrupted supply of electricity, good motorable roads, and transportation, a larger fraction of food gets wasted.

⁵⁴ Australian Government, "National Food Plan: Our Food Future," 2013, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au>.

⁵⁵ C. Hawkes et al., "Linking Agriculture and Health: Toward a New Research Agenda for Addressing Food Insecurity and Chronic Disease," *Food Policy* 22 (2015): 142–53.

⁵⁶ Abeer Elshater, "Food Consumption in the Everyday Life of Liveable Cities: Design Implications for Conviviality," in *Exploring Food and Urbanism* (Routledge, 2021), 68–96.

⁵⁷ Amusan and Ajibola, "Human Resources and Food Insecurity in Africa: Adventure in Africa Solution for African Problems."

⁵⁸ Merisa S. Thompson, Alasdair Cochrane, and Justa Hopma, "Democratising Food: The Case for a Deliberative Approach," *Review of International Studies* 46, no. 4 (October 13, 2020): 435–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210520000017>.

⁵⁹ L. Amusan, *Food Security and Food Sovereignty Challenges in Africa* (London: Ethics Press, 2023).

⁶⁰ Paarlberg, *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*; Walters, *Eco Crime and Genetically Modified Food*.

⁶¹ Ballantyne-Brodie, "Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life."

⁶² Ballantyne-Brodie, "Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life."

DISCUSSION

Although some progress is being made in reducing food poverty among the low-income population in the world, the rate of reduction is slow.⁶³ This implies that the achievement of SDGs 1 and 2 is still far from reality. This is buttressed by the submission of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, who said that the "world is not on track to achieve the target of less than 3 percent of the world living in extreme poverty by 2030".⁶⁴ The lockdown across many countries of the world occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic has even pushed the date of achieving SDGs 1 and 2 farther. In view of the disconnection of where food comes from and where it ends, explain the mystery of food insufficiency in the abundance of food waste in the landfill. This pressed for the conclusion that "in the convivial food system, the whole lifecycle of our food is apparent."⁶⁵

Another role of the government in a healthy and sustainable convivial food system is that of ensuring food education for the citizenry. It is important that citizens be educated to know about the composition of what they are being fed with and be in the know what is good for them and the implications of feeding on junk and inorganic food produced from GMOs. This position is well captured in the works of various scholars.⁶⁶ These scholars are of the view that what you eat is what you are. They also aver that the causes of "foreign" diseases are due to factory farming that focuses more on quantity than quality food, as captured by Tony Hiss.⁶⁷ There is a need for state intervention in Africa to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to MNCs' activities on the continent. The right to know what to consume is needed to avoid the illicit activities of biotechnology industries. MNCs, GMO producers and the politics of labelling of farm produce that may distinguish food meant for feeding, food or industrial input" has been swept under the carpet in the pretext of imposing the cost on the final consumers.⁶⁸

Governments in Africa should make frantic efforts to decolonize the current food system. The introduction and subtle colonization of the food systems need to be addressed by the government. As reported by some scholars, in North America and Europe, the effort to popularise local food initiatives "has succeeded in developing a collective identity among consumers".⁶⁹ A study found that "in the local food realm, participants idealize pleasurable, convivial and pragmatic engagement" which results in "a particular form of everyday action."⁷⁰

Figueroa-Helland, et.al. surmise that "for over five centuries of colonialism, imperialism, 'modernization,' and globalization, this increasingly dominant food system has destroyed and displaced small-scale producers".⁷¹ The impact of colonialism on the food system, which has been helped by its twin brother, capitalism, should not be allowed to continue if the government ever desires a healthy and sustainable food system. Decolonizing the food system should be taken as one of the roles of the government because of the unbalanced system that the capitalist had enshrined in Africa. Vivero avers that "most of the hungry and malnourished reside in developing countries that are net food exporters".⁷²

⁶³ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, Not Walls* (UNESCO, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.54676/XDZD4287>.

⁶⁴ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, Not Walls*.

⁶⁵ Ballantyne-Brodie, "Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life."

⁶⁶ R. A. Goldberg, *Food Citizenship: Food System Advocates in an Era of Distrust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); T. Hiss, "How Now, Drugged Cow?," in *Khow That What You Eat You Are*, ed. E. Rosenbush and G. Melucci (New York: Franklin Square Press, 2017), 83–98.

⁶⁷ Hiss, "How Now, Drugged Cow?."

⁶⁸ Amusan, "Imposed Socially Responsible Pricing on HIV/AIDS Drugs in Developing Areas"; Amusan, "Multinational Corporations' (MNCs) Engagement in Africa: Messiahs or Hypocrites?"; P. Carmody, *The New Scramble for Africa* (London: Polity Press, 2011); E. Glough, "The Politics of Food Labelling and Certification," in *The Oxford Handbook of Food, Politics, and Society*, ed. R. J. Herring (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 615–43.

⁶⁹ Emily Huddart Kennedy, José Johnstone, and John R. Parkins, "Small-p Politics: How Pleasurable, Convivial and Pragmatic Political Ideals Influence Engagement in Eat-local Initiatives," *The British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (September 30, 2018): 670–90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12298>.

⁷⁰ Kennedy, Johnstone, and Parkins, "Small-p Politics: How Pleasurable, Convivial and Pragmatic Political Ideals Influence Engagement in Eat-local Initiatives."

⁷¹ Figueroa-Helland, Thomas, and Aguilera, "Decolonizing Food Systems: Food Sovereignty, Indigenous Revitalization, and Agroecology as Counter-Hegemonic Movements."

⁷² Vivero, "Transitions towards a Food Commons Regime."

For example, the record has it that out of 2 million people who are suffering from malnutrition,⁷³ 8 out of 10 undernourished reside in developing countries that produce over 70 percent of the global food supply.

The developing countries have been made to believe that developed states' products are superior to theirs and have been made to produce what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce. That accounts for the reason why surplus in global food production ends up in trash bins in the Western world, while producers die of hunger. Figueroa-Helland, et.al., rightly observe that "hunger and malnutrition do not result from global food shortages: we already produce 4600 kcal per person of edible food harvest, enough to feed 12-14 billion".⁷⁴ There is then a need to replace the current food system with a convivial food system that has more to offer on healthy food, sustainable food production, and equitable food distribution, other than the capitalist wastage food system, degraded land, and encourages land grabbing.

Due to the type of education imposed on universities, many lecturers trained in the Western world unconsciously impact the capitalistic system of education on their students. This starts from the politics of accredited journals and books published in the North that only focus on globalized approaches to education. This not only neutralizes the decolonization of education, but also affects what to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce when it comes to the food system. Universities, being the ivory tower, should be mandated to increase research on convivial food and come up with specific solutions to specific environments in the form of food sovereignty. As part of a government community effort to have a positive impact on society, universities should be tailored towards convivial food research. This can be achieved by encouraging them to imbibe this into their students and indoctrinate them on the way to carry on with the research even after their education.

Another role of government is that of encouraging convivial entrepreneurs to explore opportunities in the convivial food system. This can be realized by encouraging both rural and urban dwellers to produce organic food. In the urban areas, vertical and backyard farming are apropos, at least to produce what they eat and know what they consume.⁷⁵

There is a need to create an enabling environment for farmers who are promoting a healthy and sustainable convivial food system by reducing taxes on all convivial food processes. This will both serve as encouragement and motivation to extend the frontiers of the convivial food system. By it, the food available to the citizens will be healthy and sustainable. Government banking and insurance policies should be farmer-friendly. Single-digit loan or interest-free loan to convivial food system processes is long overdue. Not too far from this is a need for the government to engage scholars and technocrats to design a convivial food system. By design, the healthy and sustainable convivial food system will be able to benefit the populace. To achieve this, the government has to support a convivial food system with relevant legislation at all levels.

Without capacity building on the convivial food system, the state may embark on chasing a mirage, to this, the government has roles in strategic training and development of human resources in-charge of convivial food processes, giving due compensation to those engaged in the convivial food system; to encourage those involved in convivial food processes, de-radicalization of ethnicity and racism in convivial food processes, and re-engineering population on the food system are necessary.

CONCLUSION

In the age of globalization of soulless capitalism, MNCs are more into satisfying their executives and shareholders, as opposed to the stakeholders who are mostly affected by the food chain system. With the employment of convivial theory, there is a need to go back to the *status quo ante*, where communalism was the rage of the moment. Through community efforts in the form of citizens' participation in food production, the rural dwellers who are known to have been the food basket of the continent will be able to function to the maximum in the form of production of organic food that is healthy, which will address

⁷³ FAO, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security."; Benjamin Schneider et al., "The Role of Employee Trust in Understanding Employee Engagement," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010); Vivero, "Transitions towards a Food Commons Regime."

⁷⁴ Figueroa-Helland, Thomas, and Aguilera, "Decolonizing Food Systems: Food Sovereignty, Indigenous Revitalization, and Agroecology as Counter-Hegemonic Movements."

⁷⁵ C. McLaughlin, *Vertical Vegetable Gardening* (New York: Alpha Books, 2013).

the issue of malnutrition and obesity; the main challenges of what African are facing in the turn of the 21st century. Junk food that is not only foreign to the continent but also a source of neo-colonialism that is milking the wealth of the continent daily; it is also a source of previously unknown diseases in Africa caused by inorganic food consumption as discussed above.

In realizing these objectives, there is a need for the government to create an enabling environment against the Fund and the Bank-imposed prescriptions that are not environmentally sensitive to Africa. The imposition of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of one-size-fits-all did not only perpetuate cash cropping in the continent, but also a system that was introduced before, during and after colonialism, which made Africans focus on producing what they do not eat and eat what they do not produce. This eventually leads to debt peonage and politics of aid that the continent is perpetually relegating to the "wretched of the earth". Homegrown capacity building is needed through government support. Such capacity building should not be from questionable foreign foundations and governments from the West, as discussed above. Doing this will ensure sustainable development in Africa and promote convivial food systems.

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