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A Critical Assessment of the G-20 Food Security Agenda

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ABSTRACT

As part of the Global Economic Governance project undertaken by the South African Institute of International Affairs in collaboration with the International Development Law Unit at the University of Pretoria, a critical assessment was recently undertaken to evaluate how effectively Africa's interests and concerns are directly and indirectly addressed in the Group of Twenty (G-20) processes. One of the focus areas of the first year of assessment was the G-20 food security agenda. Building on increased global concern over food security, the G-20 first addressed global food security at its Pittsburgh summit in 2009. Recognising the need for improved global governance of food security, the G-20 has since prioritised food security through a growing number of commitments to improve global food security and reduce commodity-price volatility. The growing emphasis on food security within the G-20 raises the question of the extent to which the food security commitments of the G-20 align with the interests of the African continent, where the majority of food insecure people reside. The paper presents the outcomes of the analysis, which finds that not only has there been a growing emphasis on food security within the G-20 but so too has the discourse in relation to African interests increased. The results of the analysis confirm that the G-20 food security agenda broadly aligns with African policy processes and food security interests. It finds, however, that the G-20 food security agenda could be developed into a more effective mechanism for addressing African food security concerns. Preliminary recommendations for increasing the relevance and impact of the G-20 food security agenda for Africa include that G-20 countries advance regulatory reforms called for in the G-20 processes and back calls for greater investment in African agriculture with a real commitment of funds; that recommendations on issues such as biofuels policies reforms be implemented; and that restrictive agricultural trade practices be addressed.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMIS	Agricultural Market Information System
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAAP	Framework for African Agricultural Productivity
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G-20	Group of Twenty
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GDP	gross domestic product
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IRIWI	International Research Initiative for Wheat Improvement
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

Although universal recognition of the human right to food has become entrenched in international law since the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the first signs of a global food security agenda only started emerging in 1996. This year witnessed two important international events that resulted in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit. These documents recognised that food security is achieved when 'all people at all times, have physical and economic access to *sufficient, safe and nutritious* food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (emphasis added).¹

In 2000, signatories of the UN Millennium Declaration committed to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. However, by 2008 rising food prices led to a global crisis that drove nearly a billion people into hunger. The ensuing political and social unrest drew renewed attention to the underlying food security crisis and reaffirmed global hunger as an international concern. Building on recognition of the need for global governance of food security, the G-20 first addressed global food security at its Pittsburgh summit in 2009. It has since prioritised food security within the G-20 agenda and has made significant commitments towards improving global food security and reducing commodity-price volatility, including measures to be taken relating to risk management, increased agricultural production, research, investment and sustainability.

With food security a major concern in Africa, where the majority of the food insecure reside, it is important to establish the extent to which the food security commitments of the G-20 align with the interests of the African continent. The food security dimensions to which the G-20 has committed are, for example, not all of equal importance in an African context. The question of whether, or to what extent, the G-20 considers African interests in the development of its food security agenda seems all the more important given South Africa's membership of the organisation and the opportunity this provides for giving Africa a voice in the G-20 processes.

In order to evaluate how effectively Africa's interests and concerns are directly and indirectly addressed in the G-20 processes, the South African Institute of International Affairs, in collaboration with the International Development Law Unit at the University of Pretoria, recently launched a critical assessment of the G-20 food security agenda, as part of the Global Economic Governance Africa project.² The objective of the assessment is to track the development of the G-20 food security agenda on a year-by-year basis, so that over time it will be possible to conclude whether Africa's interests are more or less effectively addressed within the G-20 processes. This paper presents the findings of the first year of the assessment. Part two makes an attempt at prioritising Africa's main food security concerns. Part three traces the contours of the G-20 food security agenda, including its historical development, institutional architecture and, most importantly, the commitments made by G-20 members towards reducing global food insecurity. Part four focuses on the critical assessment. It outlines the proposed methodological framework, followed by an exploratory application of the methodology to three focal areas, namely food-price volatility; increasing agricultural production and productivity; and upscaling food safety and nutrition.

Part five of the paper concludes with critical observations on the extent to which the G-20's food security agenda aligns with African interests, and provides recommendations on how the G-20 can strengthen its impact on African food security.

FOOD SECURITY AS AN AFRICAN CONCERN

This section begins with an overview of the state of food insecurity on the continent and the main features of food insecurity in an African context. It then highlights the institutional structures and some of the initiatives that have emerged as part of policymaking processes dealing with food insecurity on the continent.

Characterising food insecurity in Africa

Although food insecurity is an issue that affects both developed and developing nations, its impact is generally more severe, and a larger portion of the population is affected, in developing countries. Despite hunger and malnutrition having been prioritised on the international development agenda, little advance has been made in reducing food insecurity in Africa. As a continent, Africa has the highest proportion (one-third) of the world's chronically hungry. The latest figures indicate that 22.9% of the African population is undernourished, and that this figure rises in sub-Saharan Africa to 26.8%. Notably, statistics vary significantly across countries within the sub-Saharan region, with 5% of the South African population being undernourished compared with 47.4% of the Zambian population.³ North African countries are least affected by food insecurity.

Poverty as both an inducer and indicator of food insecurity also remains prevalent on the African continent, with 298 million people, or 40% of all Africans, living on less than \$1 a day. Food insecurity is also to a large extent a rural phenomenon and is predicted to remain so for the next three decades.⁴ With 70% of the African population still living in rural areas, a large portion of Africans are still directly and indirectly dependent on agriculture both as consumers and, in many instances, also as producers. Ironically, the group most affected by food insecurity is small-scale producers. Although these producers produce nearly 90% of the continent's food, around 50% of them are food insecure.⁵ These figures emphasise that food insecurity in Africa cannot be reduced significantly without focusing on improving the conditions of the rural poor who depend on agriculture for a living. The need to stimulate agriculture and rural development has therefore emerged as a priority concern at the forefront of African agendas.

As reflected in the definition of food security accepted at the 1996 World Food Summit, food security is determined by a number of complex and often interrelated factors. This definition highlights the three dimensions of food security, namely *availability*, *access* and *adequacy*. The first challenge to African food security is an underdeveloped agricultural sector, which has an impact on the *availability* of food. Agriculture in Africa is characterised by a reliance on rain; a lack of input use and/or inappropriate use of inputs (such as fertiliser, seed, technology); degrading environmental factors such as a loss in the quality of soils; the near absence of value addition; a lack of access to credit; and inadequate infrastructure, such as storage facilities, which increases price volatility on commodity markets and leads to significant post-harvest losses and barriers to market access. Furthermore, a lack of appropriate agricultural research has been recognised as a barrier to increased agricultural production. These factors all exacerbate household vulnerability, given their potential impact on the availability of food.

Although traditionally the focus of food security efforts has been on improving food availability, the biggest challenge in Africa is linked to people's inability to *access* food

owing to poverty. As Amartya Sen famously pointed out in his work on famine, hunger is not so much the result of a shortfall in production as it is related to the concept of entitlement. This is linked to household income but importantly also to issues such as gender equity, a factor that determines entitlement within a household context. Poverty reduction efforts aimed at improving access to food continue to be an important focus in Africa. Ironically, smallholders are the most vulnerable in terms of a lack of access to food. An important contributor to this is a lack of market access, which threatens these farmers' livelihoods. Factors that impede producers' ability to access markets include a lack of physical infrastructure such as roads and appropriate transport facilities; a lack of market information including knowledge on evolving consumer preferences, which deepens the lack of differentiation; and an increasingly onerous trade environment in relation to standards, particularly in export markets. The fight against HIV/AIDS is seen as an important strategy for reducing poverty and improving access to food. More than two-thirds of the African population affected by the disease reside in rural areas.⁶ This not only affects the ability of these people to access food owing to their lack of income earning potential, but also directly affects agricultural production and thus the availability of food more broadly.

Regarding the *adequacy* of food, there is growing recognition in Africa of the need to improve nutrition. It is estimated that around 42% of children in sub-Saharan Africa suffer from stunted growth due to chronic malnutrition.⁷ This affects not only children's ability to perform at school but also their productivity levels later in life. A growing number of African governments are introducing or strengthening food fortification and school feeding programmes. Efforts are under way to increase the micronutrient content of staple foods. There is also a growing emphasis on the diversification of food and the role of local biodiversity.⁸ An aspect that has received relatively less attention, but is of grave concern in Africa, is the safety of food intended for human consumption. Malaria, waterborne diseases and other infections are also of concern. Improving the quality of water (50% of the water consumed in Africa is untreated)⁹ and educating people on better hygiene practices will reduce the incidence of illness and its aggravating impact on malnutrition. Improved healthcare and education is thus viewed as crucial for reducing food insecurity on the continent.

An overview of the institutional environment for addressing food insecurity in Africa

When African countries failed to attain the anticipated levels of growth following independence in the mid-20th century, the Lagos Plan of Action and the Regional Food Plan for Africa were adopted. The central tenet of these programmes revolved around the understanding that the limited size of the private sector in Africa necessitated state-driven development. This approach was revised in the 1980s through the structural adjustment programmes initiated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These initiatives introduced a greater emphasis on private investment in particular. Food and nutrition concerns were not addressed directly; instead these programmes focused on achieving higher growth rates that would benefit food security on the continent indirectly. These programmes were eventually replaced by the more balanced Comprehensive Development Framework and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, both of which emphasised the need to integrate broader socio-economic, cultural, and political

considerations into strategies for development. Agriculture was considered central to these programmes.

Following on from these processes, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was launched at the turn of the 21st century. The NEPAD initiative introduced a new approach to African development at a *continental level*. As a programme of the African Union (AU), NEPAD proposes African-led development and country ownership of development processes. The NEPAD Agriculture and Food Security Programme seeks to strengthen economic growth through agriculture-led development that eliminates hunger and reduces poverty and food insecurity. The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) provides the framework for agriculture-led development under NEPAD in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 – reducing hunger and poverty in Africa by halving the prevalence of hunger and poverty in Africa by 2015. The CAADP is a continent-wide initiative that seeks to revive agriculture, food security and poverty reduction on the continent through a framework consisting of four pillars.

- Pillar I Extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems.
- Pillar II Improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access.
- Pillar III Increasing food supply, reducing hunger and improving responses to food emergency crises.
- Pillar IV Improving agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption.

These four pillars are considered to represent the main challenges to food security in Africa. A number of programmes that complement the CAADP strategy have been implemented at continental level, including the following.¹⁰

- TerrAfrica Programme, which aims to strengthen sustainable land management in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Fertilizer Support Programme, which facilitates the production, distribution, procurement and use of fertiliser in Africa.
- Partnership for African Fisheries, which seeks to improve sustainability of African fisheries.
- African Biosciences Initiative, which works towards the use of biotechnology for improving agricultural productivity.
- Pan-Africa Cassava Initiative, which links national and regional research on cassava.
- Pan-African Risk Capacity Project, which is an AU and World Food Programme initiative that aims to improve resilience under extreme weather conditions.

By May 2011, 26 African heads of states had endorsed the CAADP framework. In response to commitments under the CAADP that are based on country or regional investment plans, *country-level efforts* to improve food security have also been strengthened through the introduction of, for example, national food security stocks or strategic grain reserves; food, cash or employment-based safety nets; and early warning systems.

A number of *regional initiatives* have also emerged. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has developed a pilot project for a regional

emergency humanitarian food reserve system to complement existing national food reserves.

FOOD SECURITY AND THE G-20

This section explores the contours of the G-20 food security agenda, including its historical development, institutional architecture, and the commitments made by G-20 members towards reducing global food insecurity. The objective is to provide an overview of the development of the G-20 food security agenda and to document the diverse issues to which the G-20 has committed in prioritising food security.

Development of the G-20 food security agenda

As discussed, the G-20 first addressed global food security at its Pittsburgh summit in 2009. During this summit, the G-20 group of countries endorsed the LAquila Agricultural Food Security Initiative and created the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP). The G-20 focus on food security intensified during 2010 as a direct result of renewed commodity-price volatility. At the 2010 Seoul summit, food security was identified as one of nine pillars of sustainable development in the Multi-Year Action Plan on Development. During the French presidency of 2011, the food security pillar of the Seoul Development Consensus was prioritised and an ambitious Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture was presented by the G-20 agriculture ministers. The action plan, which included specific measures relating to research, information, risk management, investment, sustainability and training, was adopted at the Cannes summit in November 2011. In 2012 the Mexican presidency prioritised food security and commodity-price volatility for both the presidency and the Development Working Group. To date work on food security under the Mexican presidency has focused on ensuring compliance with the commitments set out in the Cannes Declaration (2011), the Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture (2011) and the Seoul Multi-Year Action Plan (2010). The Mexican presidency has also focused on generating consensus on specific initiatives that can help increase world agricultural productivity, with a particular emphasis on smallholders.

The institutional architecture of the G-20 food security agenda

Institutionally, the work of the G-20 is divided across two work streams known as the Finance and Sherpas tracks. Food security is addressed mainly within the Sherpas track, both as a dedicated focus area but also within the framework of the Multi-Year Action Plan dealt with under the Development Working Group's activities. The Development Working Group considers the impact of and solutions for the issues dealt with in the G-20 for developing countries. Within the Finance track, the Energy and Commodity Markets Group and the Commodity Market Subgroup in particular deal with G-20 activities related to commodity markets, such as commodity-price volatility.

Food security cluster commitments

Through the processes outlined above, the G-20 members have been making a growing commitment to the global food security agenda. This commitment is found across the range of G-20 communiqués and official documentation, including the ministerial declarations. The commitments are broad in scope and reflect the three-dimensional understanding of food security as including the availability, access and adequacy of food. In addition to undertaking to support the five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security presented at the World Summit on Food Security in November 2009 and to fully implement the L'Aquila Initiative and the application of its principles, the main thrusts of the G-20 commitments on food security can be summarised as follows.

Addressing food-price volatility

The G-20 views food-price volatility as one of the leading factors contributing to an increase in global poverty. The emphasis in terms of this commitment has been on better regulating markets; improving market information and transparency; preventing and managing the effects of price instability (through, for example, inventories and insurance); and developing appropriate risk-management instruments for governments, firms and farmers to build capacity to manage and mitigate the risks associated with food-price volatility. Particular emphasis has been on recognising the need to regulate agricultural financial markets appropriately, an aspect that is considered key for both well-functioning physical markets and risk management.

Increasing agricultural productivity and food availability

This is both a short- and long-term goal to deal with the growing demand for agricultural commodities. The G-20 member countries have committed to promoting responsible agricultural investment, fostering smallholder agriculture; advancing trade liberalisation; and investing in and co-ordinating research on agricultural productivity and innovation in order to increase agricultural output. Public-private investment in agriculture is encouraged, as is the provision of an enabling regulatory framework. The importance of dealing with the challenge of climate change and growing concerns over access to farmland has also been prioritised in the G-20 as an important dimension of increased productivity.

Developing humanitarian emergency tools

Driven by the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, this commitment relates to the creation of a targeted emergency humanitarian food reserves system to supplement current regional and national food reserves.

Removing food export restrictions

The G-20 has committed to removing food export restrictions or extraordinary taxes for food purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme, and has agreed not to impose them in future. A World Trade Organization (WTO) declaration to this effect has been encouraged.

Improving international policy co-ordination

A commitment has been made to improving international policy co-ordination to increase confidence in international markets and to develop common responses in times of market crisis. Important work in this respect has included the launch of the Agricultural Market Information System and the Rapid Response Forum.

Strengthening agricultural research and innovation

The G-20 has committed to strengthening research and innovation in agriculture. The G-20 recognises that research should align with the needs of farmers and that there is a need to encourage the transfer of research results and technologies, knowledge sharing and building of farmers' capacity. Recognition is also given to the fact that this should take place through North–South, South–South and triangular co-operation. Increased agricultural productivity has been identified as a priority area for research, in particular on crops adapted to developing countries' climates and challenges. The importance of research on wheat and rice as staples widely consumed in the developing world has been emphasised. The initiative by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and some of the G-20 members to develop a capacity-building platform in tropical agriculture in developing countries has been endorsed by the G-20. A commitment has further been made to encourage innovation in plant breeding through improved regulatory frameworks in particular. With private-sector investment increasingly viewed as key to improved agricultural productivity, the G-20 members have also undertaken to explore innovative, results-based mechanisms to harness the private sector for agricultural innovation.

Scaling up food safety and nutrition

In line with greater recognition of the role of food quality in development, the G-20 has committed to improving nutrition both through direct interventions and improved nutrition policies.

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE G-20 FOOD SECURITY AGENDA

This section presents the proposed methodological framework for assessing the extent to which the G-20 processes align or relate to African concerns. This is followed by the first experimental application of the methodology. The rationale for presenting both the proposed methodology and its actual application is to draw lessons on how the methodology can be adapted to improve the critical assessment in future years.

A proposed methodology to critically assess the G-20 food security agenda

The proposed methodology for conducting an assessment of this kind is based on an approach developed by the University of Toronto. The proposed methodological steps are outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: The proposed methodology for critically assessing the G-20 food security agenda

Step 1: Perform a desktop study to gather all relevant G-20 documentation. As per the parameters set for the broader project, the scope of the assessment will be limited to 'G-20 documents', which is understood to include all communiqués; official background studies; and semi-official documents commissioned by the G-20.

Step 2: Identify the commitments of the food security cluster, as per the relevant G-20 documents.

Step 3: Identify experts/institutions who/that can provide information on the G-20 process in a specific workstream (timeline, participants, stakeholders, driving forces).

Step 4: Determine the relevance of the food security cluster's commitments for Africa by means of the following.

- An informed qualitative judgement by the lead researcher supported by sector experts to determine the substantive relevance of the specific commitment to Africa (for example, food security is relevant but within this cluster, commodity trading may be less of an issue than food availability).
- A quantitative assessment of the number of times Africa is mentioned either explicitly (directly) or by implication (referring, for example, to developing/vulnerable countries).

Step 5: Determine the responsiveness/alignment of the food security cluster's commitments to African interests by means of the following.

- Analysis of the extent to which the G-20 documents or processes refer to African institutions, policy processes and position papers.
- Analysis of the extent to which African institutions, experts and policymakers have participated in the G-20 processes around the identified commitments.
- Desktop study supported by input from sector experts to identify African policy documents (for example, the AU and NEPAD, government documents) relating to the specific workstream.

Step 6: Assess the extent to which G-20 commitments on food security are implemented, both generally and in relation to Africa in particular, by means of the following.

- Analysis of G-20 documents including the so-called 'Commitments and compliance' reports.
- Interviews with stakeholders in Africa.

Step 7: Critically assess the actual/potential impact of specific G-20 commitments and their implementation in Africa by means of the following:

- consultation with experts from different countries and institutional backgrounds to derive a fair assessment of the possible impacts in different circumstances;
- desktop research for studies on the actual/potential impact of specific policy decisions; and
- compilation of different hypotheses on the impact of specific G-20 decisions, which will be circulated for input from the expert network.

An initial application of the methodology

As this was the first time such an analysis was attempted, the actual application of the methodology encountered a number of challenges and in the end departed from the framework presented in Box 1. These challenges are highlighted in the conclusion, where proposals for improving the methodology for future assessments are made.

Quantitative analysis

The first phase of the research sought to analyse the number of times and manner in which the G-20 documentation makes reference, in the context of food security, to categories of peoples and countries which could be construed as a reference to Africa and its population. This was approached by first building a database of all relevant G-20 documentation. These documents were then searched for all references to Africa in the context of food security. This included explicit references but also more indirect references that by implication refer to Africa (by reference, for example, to developing countries). Keywords selected based on this wide interpretation of 'Africa' include: small producers/holders/small-scale farming; poorer countries/poorest countries; most vulnerable/most vulnerable members of society; most vulnerable countries/vulnerable countries; low/lower-income countries; developing countries; least-developed countries; and Africa/African countries/African organisations. Where the same keyword appeared more than once in a paragraph, only one count was made. The appearance of two different keywords in the same paragraph was counted as two references.

The analysis shows that the G-20's focus on food security has increased significantly since the inception of its food security agenda at the Pittsburgh summit. In 2009 there were four references to food security under the keywords selected for the search; this increased in 2010 to 12 and in 2011 to 83. By September 2012 there were 56 references to food security in relation to the search terms. Notably, G-20 documents for the years 2009 and 2010 make no reference to Africa *in nomine*. This changed under the French presidency, with 12 direct references to Africa, African countries and/or African organisations in G-20 documents dating from 2011. Up to December 2012, 12 direct references to Africa, African countries and/or African organisations can be found in G-20 documents published under the Mexican presidency. It is thus evident that the G-20's focus on food security has not only increased significantly since its inception at the Pittsburgh summit, but so has its discourse in relation to African interests, albeit not through direct reference to Africa. The results of this analysis are captured in Annexure A.

Qualitative analysis

During an expert workshop held in May 2012, participants raised the point that attempting an analysis of the G-20 food security agenda is extremely ambitious and that its feasibility would depend largely on circumscribing its scope. Although it is apparent from the discussion above that the G-20 has committed to a diverse range of factors aimed at strengthening food security, a decision was taken to limit the exploratory application of the methodology in the first year of the critical assessment to three focal areas addressed within the G-20 processes. The choice of focal areas was based on their *ex ante* importance in the African context, namely food-price volatility; increased agricultural production and productivity; and scaling up food safety and nutrition. The qualitative analysis presented

below proceeds by firstly outlining the African perspective before analysing the G-20's response to the issue and the extent to which it aligns with African interests.

FOCAL AREA 1: FOOD-PRICE VOLATILITY

An African perspective

As mentioned, the period following 2007 was characterised by significant food-price volatility, which saw a rapid increase in the price of major agricultural commodities. The FAO's international food-price index increased by 55.3% between September 2007 and September 2011.¹¹ The recent rise in food prices took place in two waves. During 2007–2008, the price of rice rose by 224%, maize by 77% and sugar by 37.5%.¹² After receding slightly, a second sharp rise in the price of food took place towards the end of 2010.

Although food-price volatility is a common feature of food markets, the volatility witnessed over the 2007–2011 period was significant both in terms of the degree of volatility but also due to the large number of countries affected by it. A number of studies have explored the drivers of the volatility witnessed during this period.¹³ The findings of these studies indicate that price formation is increasingly complex and that it is influenced by different factors over the short, medium and long term and at international versus domestic level. In short, the major causes of food-price volatility relate to increased demand due to a rise in purchasing power in emerging economies and biofuel production; fluctuations in supply related to extreme weather conditions; and market factors in the form of speculation in commodity futures.¹⁴ The role of speculation in food-price volatility has been debated widely, most recently during an FAO high-level debate in which it was stated that commodity speculation is 'having a tremendous human impact'.¹⁵ Some studies have gone as far as finding that speculation is, at least in the short term, the largest contributing factor to food-price spikes.¹⁶ It is recognised that high levels of commodity-price volatility – particularly of agricultural and energy commodity prices – have an adverse impact on world growth and threaten global food security. Although rising food prices benefit producers, studies indicate that their adverse impact on consumers outweighs producer benefits so that a loss of household welfare and an increase in poverty is observed.¹⁷ It has also been shown that commodity-price volatility disproportionately affects the world's poor.¹⁸ In the sub-Saharan context, Wodon and Zaman¹⁹ find that rising food prices increase poverty in the region, as the consumer loss outweighs the producer benefit. That numerous and diverse African countries, including Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique and Senegal, witnessed riots following the food-price spike of 2007–2008 is indicative of the impact of food-price volatility on African societies. With a large percentage of Africans spending the bulk of their income on basic commodities, and with the price of staples in particular having been affected by the food-price crisis, the impact has been significant. This is in line with findings that the poorest households are the most severely affected by food-price increases,²⁰ and that rural populations are more vulnerable than those in urban areas.²¹ Households in rural Ethiopia, for example, show a greater loss in calorie intake following the 2008 price spike, due in part at least to differences in responsiveness to income and price adjustments.²²

The liberalisation of African markets over the past few decades has made it increasingly difficult to isolate African society from international price formation, and has left African countries more vulnerable to international food-price volatility. A large number of African countries, particularly in Northern Africa, are furthermore reliant on staple imports. Some of these countries import up to 50% of cereal demand, for example. This significantly increases their vulnerability to international food-price volatility.²³

African governments have responded to food-price volatility with different policy approaches. Short-term policy responses include ensuring the availability of buffer stocks and emergency food reserves, such as the ECOWAS initiative mentioned earlier in the paper, in terms of which West African States have created emergency reserves at regional level. The importance of strategic reserves is evident from the lower impact the 2010 price spike had on Africa owing to a good crop and sufficient stock levels.²⁴ This in turn underscores the importance of investing in agriculture in order to increase agricultural production. This is explored in more detail below but it should be mentioned here that a number of interventions aimed at boosting agricultural production have been implemented as a medium-term policy response to food-price volatility. These measures include input subsidies, fertiliser and seed programmes, and market interventions. South Africa's sophisticated commodity exchange provides an instrument for hedging against the risk of food-price volatility. Commodity exchanges in the rest of Africa are still underdeveloped, even though efforts are under way to provide such a mechanism in a number of African countries, albeit with varying degrees of success.

The provision of social safety nets also plays a role in protecting the most vulnerable from the adverse impact of food-price volatility. The majority of African countries have, for example, rolled out school feeding programmes. In many countries on the continent, basic grants are made available for the young, elderly and disabled. Although studies have found that these cash transfers are effective in reducing household poverty,²⁵ in-kind contributions such as food transfers are arguably more effective in a volatile price context. One of the largest country-specific social protection programmes is the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia, which includes a public works component and direct transfers of cash and/or food. In South Africa cash transfer programmes amount to around 3.5% of gross domestic product (GDP).²⁶ North African countries generally rely on food subsidies rather than direct payments.²⁷ The AU adopted a Social Policy Framework for Africa in 2008. This programme calls for an increase in social protection across the continent, which includes essential healthcare; child, aged and disability benefits; and unemployment protection.²⁸

The G-20 response to food-price volatility

At the Seoul summit of 2010, the G-20 called for 'proposals to better manage and mitigate the risk of food-price volatility without distorting market behaviour',²⁹ ultimately to protect the most vulnerable. This led to a commissioned policy report entitled *Price Volatility in Food and Agriculture Markets: Policy Responses* jointly prepared by a group of international organisations. During 2011 two important documents resulting from the G-20 processes and dealing with food-price volatility were released. The first was the Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture, presented at the G-20 agriculture ministers' meeting in June 2011 and later accepted at G-20 ministerial level at the Cannes

summit in November 2011. This document recognises that ‘excessive volatility [...] has negative impacts on access to food for the poorest’³⁰ and lists priority actions for dealing with food-price volatility, including reducing the competition between food and fuel; promoting free and open trade to stabilise food markets; and supporting regional humanitarian food reserves to address food emergencies.

In the second document, the Cannes Final Declaration, the G-20 commits to ‘improve market information and transparency in order to make international markets for agricultural commodities more effective’.³¹ This is considered crucial to reducing food-price volatility. Progress on the G-20’s commitment to reduce food-price volatility through improved market information and transparency includes the creation of the Excessive Food Price Variability Early Warning system (developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute or IFPRI), the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and the Rapid Response Forum. The information obtained through the use of these systems serves to alert policymakers to excessive food-price fluctuations so that appropriate country-level food security responses can be developed. This is particularly useful for policymakers in developing countries, including much of Africa, as it will mitigate the impact of food-price volatility on the poorest of the poor. AMIS focuses on four crops, namely wheat, maize, rice and soybeans. In addition to the G-20 countries, AMIS involves Egypt, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, the Philippines, Thailand, Ukraine and Vietnam. Improvement in and co-ordination of global agricultural monitoring and the accuracy of crop forecasts in different regions of the world are also being pursued under the Global Agricultural Geo-Monitoring Initiative. This initiative aims to co-ordinate systems for satellite monitoring from different regions in the world to strengthen crop and weather forecasts.

Although the G-20 has committed to regulating financial markets for improved market functioning and transparency, this has not been advanced significantly. Activities in this respect include work by the finance ministers, central bank governors, and securities and derivatives regulators on the regulation and supervision of commodities’ derivatives markets, including agricultural commodities’ derivatives markets. More detail on this is provided under the finance cluster’s work.

The G-20 recognises the need to ‘improve and develop risk management tools for governments, firms and farmers in order to build capacity to manage and mitigate the risks associated with food-price volatility, in *particular in the poorest countries*’ (emphasis added).³² The G-20 has committed to ‘mitigate the adverse effects of excessive price volatility *for the most vulnerable* through the development of appropriate risk-management instruments’(emphasis added).³³ In support of this, the G-20 encourages the development and use of risk management tools, such as weather index insurances, commodity hedging instruments and contingent financing tools. The G-20 has appealed to international organisations to assist low-income countries to develop risk management tools. Progress has been made on the implementation of the commitment to develop risk management tools. The World Bank has, for example, developed the Agricultural Price Risk Management product, which has to date been implemented by the International Finance Corporation in Latin America, the Mediterranean region and sub-Saharan Africa. The Platform on Agricultural Risk Management has also been launched as part of an Agricultural and Food Security Risk Management Toolbox. The G-20 recognises the importance of these instruments for developing countries in particular.³⁴ In relation to Africa, the G-20 has welcomed the integration of risk management into national

agricultural investment plans developed under the CAADP.³⁵ The G-20 has also endorsed the ECOWAS strategic reserves initiative as a policy response to risk.³⁶

In summary, the G-20 appears until now to have focused more on how to manage and mitigate the impact of food-price volatility through better market information and risk management tools, rather than addressing the causes of food-price volatility, for example, through reforms of financial markets. This point is further explored in the conclusion, where the G-20 food security agenda is critiqued.

FOCAL AREA 2: INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY

An African perspective

Boosting agricultural growth is the ‘primary source of poverty reduction’ in most agrarian economies.³⁷ The World Bank has found that a rise in GDP linked to agriculture is around four times more successful in reducing poverty than GDP growth in other sectors of the economy.³⁸ However, agricultural production and productivity remain low throughout most of Africa, to such an extent that inadequate food supply remains an important dimension to African food insecurity.³⁹ Low existing productivity levels, together with the world’s highest population growth rate, have led to Africa being the only region in the world where per capita food production has decreased over the past four decades. Yields for cereal crops have remained unchanged, at less than one tonne per hectare. Agricultural output per worker has also stagnated and is the recorded lowest for all regions of the world. These low levels of productivity result in low household incomes, a lack of purchasing power and, in turn, a lack of incentive to invest in measures that could increase productivity levels. However, there is significant potential for increasing agricultural productivity and output throughout most of Africa.

Studies show that in recent years policy changes have led to an increase in total factor productivity in African countries like Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali and Sierra Leone.⁴⁰ Other studies indicate that any growth in agricultural output has been due mostly to an expansion in surface area under production rather than improved land productivity.⁴¹ In a context where sustainability has become a concern, increasing the land surface under production is not seen as a solution to increased agricultural output. Instead there is growing recognition within Africa of the need to increase land productivity, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, which is lagging behind progress in other African countries.⁴²

The AU’s 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security recognises the need to increase agricultural production in Africa to improve food security. This is reiterated in the CAADP, which identifies inadequate food supply as a major concern for food security in Africa.⁴³ Increasing agricultural productivity to reach a 6% annual agricultural growth rate has been set as a key objective under the CAADP. Agricultural productivity is a concern for Africa both from a consumer and producer perspective. For consumers it can improve availability and access to food and for producers it can improve household incomes. With the majority of African people still dependent on the land for

a living, they are affected as both consumers and producers. Although all four CAADP pillars speak to raised agricultural productivity, Pillar III of the CAADP framework emphasises the need to increase food supply and reduce hunger across the region by raising, in particular, smallholder productivity. The emphasis on smallholders is driven by the key role they play in African agriculture. As discussed, smallholders are responsible for nearly 50% of food production in Africa, and in some regions such as East Africa their contribution can be as high as 75%. Smallholders are also generally characterised by low productivity levels due to factors such as a lack of access to credit and markets, insufficient infrastructure, and low and/or ineffective input use. In order to address the issue of low input use, input subsidies have been implemented in a number of African countries. The use of these subsidies remains controversial but has led to some success in increasing agricultural production in countries such as Malawi.

The *role of research* in increasing agricultural production and productivity is recognised in a number of African policy processes. Spending on agricultural research in Africa represents on average 0.75% of agricultural GDP, nearly one-third less than what is spent on agricultural research in developed countries.⁴⁴ The AU has, for example, recognised the need to strengthen agricultural research on the continent in its Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security of 2003. The issue is afforded recognition as a distinct pillar within the CAADP framework, with Pillar IV prioritising improved agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption. Pillar IV falls under leadership of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, which developed the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP). This tool was endorsed by African heads of state at the AU summit in Banjul in 2006 with the aim of achieving ‘[s]trengthened agricultural knowledge systems to deliver profitable and sustainable technologies that are widely adopted by farmers resulting in sustained agricultural growth’.⁴⁵

FAAP advocates for a context-specific, country-level and farmer-led participatory approach to raising agricultural productivity through appropriate research, dissemination and adoption. The role of extension and the need to reform extension services in Africa to deliver more appropriate knowledge dissemination is emphasised. It also recognises that indigenous knowledge has a role to play in advancing agricultural research.

A *lack of investment* in African agriculture has been a major factor contributing to low productivity levels. Public investment in African agriculture currently averages at less than 7%. The impact of this is compounded by development aid to agriculture falling below 3.8% and limited commercial bank lending to agriculture. Under the CAADP framework, governments have committed to increasing public-sector investment in agriculture to 10% of national budgets. By 2011 only six African countries had met the 10% target. Commercial bank lending to agriculture in developing countries is also small, and less than 10% in sub-Saharan Africa. Private investment funds have in recent years become more prominent on the African agricultural landscape but their contribution is still small.

The G-20 response to the need to increase agricultural production and productivity

One way of dealing with rising agricultural prices is to boost agricultural output. Raising agricultural productivity emerged as a G-20 policy response to the need to deal with food-price volatility. The G-20 Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture recognises that in order to be able to feed nine billion people in 2050, world agricultural production

would have to increase by 70% ‘and more specifically by almost 100% in developing countries’.⁴⁶ This is reiterated in the Los Cabos G-20 Leaders’ Declaration, which states that ‘increasing production and productivity on a sustainable basis while considering the diversity of agricultural conditions is one of the most important challenges that the world faces today’.⁴⁷

The Cannes Final Declaration recognises that ‘[i]ncreasing agricultural production and productivity is essential to promote food security and foster sustainable economic growth’⁴⁸ and that ‘[a] more stable, predictable, distortion free, open and transparent trading system allows more investment in agriculture and has a critical role to play in this regard’.⁴⁹ The Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture states that:

Greater and sustainable productivity, better market information that improves transmission of market signals, more open trade, comprehensive rural development and agricultural policies, and sustained investments would enable agricultural producers to increase production, enhance their income and improve global supply of food and food security.

The Multi-Year Action Plan on Development states that in order to increase agricultural production, a balanced approach is required that includes measures aimed at increasing resilience, production, productivity and resource efficiency. In recognition of the need to sustainably increase agricultural production and productivity, the G-20 agriculture vice-ministers have agreed to analyse existing national approaches and to identify best practices.

Raising agricultural productivity has been a major focus of the Mexican presidency, which has placed particular emphasis on the role of smallholders. It has in this respect commissioned a report jointly prepared by a group of international organisations entitled *Sustainable Agricultural Productivity Growth and Bridging the Gap for Small-Family Farms*. The report, which is meant to be used as an input in G-20 processes relating to food security, emphasises the need to increase agricultural output on a sustainable basis and makes recommendations where countries could improve co-operation, including in the areas of investment in agriculture; facilitating responsible private investment; research and development, and innovation; technology transfer, extension services and training; trade; and risk management. It recognises the role of developing countries, and Africa in particular, in increasing global food production. The emphasis placed in this report on the role of the smallholder in increasing agricultural productivity is strongly aligned with African positions under the CAADP framework Pillar III, but also more broadly with NEPAD’s emphasis on improving the position of smallholders. Repeated reference to the African continent throughout the report signals recognition of the challenges and constraints to raised productivity in African agriculture.

Recognition of the fact that increased agricultural productivity is particularly important for developing countries is also reflected in other G-20 documents. The Multi-Year Action Plan recognises that measures for increasing agricultural production would be important in particular in least-developed countries and in the context of small-scale farming. The Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture mentions that in order to increase agricultural production and productivity, measures need to be adapted to the specific context of ‘developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable’. Specific reference is made to the needs of ‘women and young farmers, particularly in developing countries’.⁵⁰

It also emphasises the importance of small-scale producers in ensuring food security by stating that:⁵¹

Small-scale agricultural producers represent the majority of the food insecure in developing countries and the bulk of production in many countries: increasing their production and income would directly improve access to food among the most vulnerable and improve supply for local and domestic markets.

In advancing its commitment to increased agricultural production, the G-20 arranged a Seminar on Agricultural Productivity, which was held in Brussels on 13 October 2011. It also organised the first G-20 Conference on Agricultural Research for Development in Montpellier on 12–13 September 2011. The aim of these activities was to ‘foster innovation-sharing with and among developing countries’.⁵²

Increasing investment in agriculture is viewed as critical to increased production and productivity. In the Multi-Year Action Plan on Development the G-20 ‘emphasize the need for increased investment and financial support for agricultural development and welcome commitments made through the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)’.⁵³ The G-20 has committed to advancing both public and private investment in agriculture, in particular through the formation of public–private partnerships in the provision of educational, extension and financial services and for the provision of infrastructure.⁵⁴ The G-20 has also called for the creation of enabling laws and regulations that would attract investment.⁵⁵ In calling for greater investment in agriculture, the G-20 has emphasised in particular the need for investment in developing countries, and in:⁵⁶

activities strongly linked to agricultural productivity growth, food security and generation of income in rural areas, such as agricultural institutions, extension services, cooperatives, research, roads, ports, cold chain, power, storage, irrigation systems, information and communication technology, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Investment in procuring from smallholders is also encouraged and reiterated by the G-20 agriculture vice-ministers, who have agreed to:⁵⁷

enhance investment in productivity growth in each country’s agricultural sector, paying attention to the specific infrastructure and market integration requirements of smallholder farmers *in those countries where this is a key factor in agricultural productivity*. [emphasis added]

As mentioned, this very much relates to the African context, where smallholder farmers play a key role in agricultural production and are generally characterised by low productivity levels.

The Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture recognises the role of multilateral and regional development banks and has welcomed their commitments to increase investment in agriculture.⁵⁸ Notably, the action plan also refers to the Rome Principles and states that investments in developing country agriculture should align with ‘country-owned investment plans’.⁵⁹ The action plan also welcomes the role of the GAFSP and the African Agriculture Fund.⁶⁰ The G-20 has furthermore committed to upholding the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment⁶¹ and has called on investors to

take into account the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests.⁶² The willingness of the private sector to engage with the G-20 processes for enhanced agricultural investment is reflected in the involvement of the B20 Task Force on Food Security.

The need to strengthen research in order to increase agricultural productivity is emphasised throughout G-20 documentation. Increasing wheat production to reduce hunger and food-price volatility was identified as a priority and led to the adoption of the International Research Initiative for Wheat Improvement (IRIWI) by the G-20 agriculture ministers in 2011. The objective of IRIWI is to better co-ordinate wheat research at national and international levels and between the public and private sectors; to develop public databases on the outcomes of wheat research; and to identify priorities for future wheat research. The Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture also recognises the important role of rice in ensuring food security, given that it is the staple food in Asia and increasingly also in Africa. It stresses the need to improve rice-related research and to disseminate the research findings in order to support increased rice production in Asia and Africa. The role of the CGIAR (previously known as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research), the International Rice Research Institute, the Global Rice Science Partnership and the Coalition for African Rice Development is recognised in this respect. A platform has also been launched to enhance research and capacity building on tropical agriculture in support of increased agricultural production and productivity.

The G-20 agriculture vice-ministers have emphasised the need to improve the efficiency of agricultural input use and the functioning of agricultural input markets in order to increase agricultural production, and that this is particularly important for strengthening smallholder productivity. The need for gender-sensitive subsidy programmes and capacity building around input use has been noted. The vice-ministers have also appealed to international and regional organisations to enhance competition in the fertiliser industry in particular.

In addition to these dimensions, the G-20 has recognised throughout its documents that increased agricultural production and productivity requires better land and water management, improved technologies, well-functioning markets and risk-management instruments to deal with commodity-price fluctuations. The importance of dealing with the challenge of climate change and growing concerns over access to farmland has also been prioritised in the G-20 as an important dimension of increased productivity. The commitment is worded as ‘finding an appropriate response(s)’ to these issues. These factors are all of primary importance in an African context, and it can be concluded that the G-20’s activities relating to increased agricultural production indeed align with the African interest.

FOCAL AREA 3: SCALING UP FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION

An African perspective

Malnutrition has increased significantly on the African continent in recent decades. The issue of nutrition underscores the complexity of food security, which goes beyond the

mere availability of food (sufficient agricultural production) to include concerns related to access and utilisation. Although nutrition has traditionally received less attention in food security efforts, this is changing and a growing awareness is emerging of the importance of the quality of food both from a safety and nutrition perspective. Taking a food systems view on the issue, Pinstrup-Anderson⁶³ makes the point that the quality of food is linked to broader concerns relating to, among others, water sanitation and the prevalence of infectious diseases. This goes hand in hand with the growing understanding that malnutrition does not only relate to undernourishment (a lack of calories) but also to micro-nutrient deficiency due to a combination of a lack of access to food, bad hygiene, and water contamination. Although attempts to address these factors on the continent are not new, there is a notable increase in the importance attached to improved food safety and nutrition in African policy processes. The fact that under nutrition, micronutrient deficiency, and over nutrition – the three components of malnutrition – are all poverty driven, means that malnutrition is logically important to Africa, where poverty levels remain the highest in the world. As discussed, child nutrition is of particular concern, with as many as 42% of children in sub-Saharan Africa suffering from stunted growth due to malnutrition. With more than 200 million people aged 15–24 years on the continent, this is clearly an issue of primary concern to the continent.

In response to this concern and in recognition of the fact that hunger is a complex issue which requires that agriculture, food quality and health be comprehensively addressed, the African Day for Food and Nutrition Security was established to provide a platform for exchange between a broad range of stakeholders and to work towards developing an African vision for food security and nutrition. It is envisaged that this platform will advance the achievement of the MDG1 in Africa and that it will continue to consider international developments in a number of forums, including the G-20.

Under the CAADP framework, African countries have recognised the need for integrating nutrition into the national agriculture and food security investment plans. Pillar III of the CAADP framework includes the issues of hunger and malnutrition as policy objectives, including the gender dimension thereof and the fact that smallholders are particularly vulnerable. It recognises that addressing these issues may require more than conventional agricultural interventions. In this, Pillar III advocates the sharing of experiences in dealing with malnutrition in order to identify new strategies. A number of CAADP regional nutrition workshops have followed to assist countries to develop action plans for achieving the nutrition objectives included in the country-level investment plans. During these engagements, the main constraints to dealing with malnutrition were identified as a lack of political will; not recognising the link between agriculture and nutrition; and the lack of attention within food security programmes to improving nutrition.⁶⁴ Recommendations for advancing nutrition within food security agendas included:⁶⁵

strengthening capacities of institutional structures dealing with agriculture issues, promoting advocacy activities to decision makers to ensure better visibility of nutritional aspects in projects and programmes under implementation, ensuring adequate financial resources for food and nutrition activities, further consideration of nutrition in a cross-sectoral manner and use of all opportunities and potentialities to mainstream nutrition in the development agenda.

Other African policies reflecting the growing commitment on the African continent to improve nutrition include the Pan African Nutrition Initiative, with its focus on greater policy co-ordination; the African Regional Nutrition Strategy, endorsed by the AU Ministers of Health; and the African Ten Year strategy, which focuses on a reduction in micronutrient deficiency. These initiatives illustrate an increased emphasis within African development processes on mainstreaming nutrition in the continent's food security and broader development agenda.

The G-20 response to scaling up food safety and nutrition

The G-20 has committed in its Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture to 'scaling-up nutrition through a combination of direct nutrition interventions and the incorporation of nutrition in all relevant policies'.⁶⁶ The Cannes Final Declaration states that increasing agricultural production and reducing commodity-price volatility are 'necessary conditions for stable access to sufficient, *safe* and *nutritious* food for everyone' (emphasis added).⁶⁷ The Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture reaffirms:⁶⁸

the right of everyone to have access to *safe*, sufficient and *nutritious* food, consistent with the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. To strengthen global food security, steps must be taken to improve access and availability of *safe* and *nutritious* food for the most vulnerable, *particularly women and children in developing countries*. [emphasis added]

Recognition that food security entails not only the availability of food but also relates to its quality is reinforced by stating that:⁶⁹

Specific attention should also be given to improving the *quality* and *diversity* of agricultural production and to developing a *nutrition sensitive* agricultural policy in all parts of the world in order to ensure access to *nutritious* food. [emphasis added]

The Action Plan on Food Price Volatility also emphasises the important role of private-sector investment in improving nutrition in developing countries.⁷⁰ The action plan further makes reference to the need to reduce pre- and post-harvest losses and food wastage along the value chain,⁷¹ factors which relate to the quality of food.

The Los Cabos G-20 Ministers' Declaration recognises that 'chronic malnutrition is an enormous drain on a country's human resources, and we therefore support the Scaling Up Nutrition movement and encourage wider involvement of G-20 members'.⁷² The Ministerial Declaration also refers to the 'Agresults' Initiative and states that:⁷³

We look forward to the launch of the pilot projects focused on innovations in nutrient-fortified crops, post-harvest waste-reducing storage solutions and crop quality technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa. We commend those who have already committed or signalled their intention to commit funding to this initiative and encourage broader participation.

Regarding food safety, the Los Cabos Agricultural Vice-Ministers' Report recognises, albeit in a context of improving competitiveness, the need to enhance the quality of food, through a reduction in post-harvest losses and the sharing of best practices.⁷⁴

The growing emphasis in G-20 documents on food quality thus aligns with the emerging focus on the African continent on improving both the safety and nutritional component of food as part of the broader effort to address food insecurity on the continent.

CONCLUSION

With food security an increasing global concern, international forums such as the G-20 are making a growing number of commitments for reducing food insecurity. However, as the success of international policies and actions ultimately depends on their alignment with national initiatives, it is imperative to ask to what extent the G-20 food security agenda speaks to African interests.

This paper presents a critical analysis of the G-20 food security agenda to determine how effectively it is aligned with Africa's food security concerns. The review confirms that food security is a key concern in Africa. The G-20 recognises that 'food security will remain a critical issue for the international community' and that 'the situation is still worrying, especially in developing countries [...] which currently face the greatest level of food insecurity'.⁷⁵ If not *in nomine*, the G-20 thus at least indirectly recognises the importance of food security for Africa. The analysis of three focal areas within the G-20 food security agenda – namely food-price volatility; increased agricultural production and food availability; and scaling up food safety and nutrition – further confirms the relevance of the G-20 food security agenda to African interests and that, at least in respect to these three focal areas, the G-20 food security agenda appears to be broadly aligned with African policy processes.

However, despite G-20 rhetoric affirming the importance of food security as a developing country concern and the relevance of its chosen commitments, the preliminary analysis raises concerns about whether the G-20 food security agenda could be developed into a more effective mechanism for addressing African food security concerns. The G-20 has emerged as the global food security agenda setter. It has been slow, however, to implement the regulatory reforms called for in the G-20 processes; and G-20 countries have yet to commit significant funds to the much-needed investment in African agriculture. Most concerning though is the G-20's apparent unwillingness to address certain policy recommendations by international organisations. These recommendations are supported by evidence and are of major concern to the developing world, and Africa in particular. The G-20 has, for example, been reluctant to call for reform in market distorting biofuel policies despite international research highlighting the impact of these policies on food security in the developing world. Instead, the G-20 has limited its commitment on the biofuel issue to a call for more research on its impact. Furthermore, although referred to in G-20 processes, no significant progress has been made within G-20 member states to regulate financial markets as a means for combating food-price volatility. The lack of regulation in speculation on commodity markets remains a particular concern. Although this issue is explored in more detail under the finance cluster analysis, the lack

of regulatory reforms in G-20 countries needs to be highlighted as a concern relating to the G-20's food security agenda.

Despite nearly two decades of a trade liberalisation discourse under the WTO, agricultural commodities still face significant barriers to trade. Not only do trade restrictive practices disadvantage the world's poorest countries, but trade restrictions also lead to a lack of depth on international markets, a contributing factor in observed food-price volatility. Agricultural protectionism also contributes to disconnecting domestic prices from international markets and thus has an impact on price formation. As protectionism increases when world prices are low and decreases when world prices are high, trade restrictions in developed countries contribute to price volatility. This is exacerbated by the fact that WTO reforms have led to relatively more open markets in developing countries, while subsidies and import restrictions continue to protect industrialised markets.⁷⁶ The importation of subsidised food products threaten the continued existence and/or have destroyed many agro-food markets in developing countries. Smallholders in particular are negatively affected by this. Although G-20 members have committed to 'refrain from introducing, and oppose protectionist trade actions, in all forms and recognise the prompt conclusion of the Doha development round',⁷⁷ trade restrictive practices remain prevalent in many of the G-20 members and little progress has been made towards advancing the conclusion of the Doha Round of negotiations under the WTO.

Notably, the issues of biofuel policies, commodity speculation and restrictive agricultural trade practices predominantly relate to activities within the G-20 member countries, and so it appears the G-20 is setting the international food security agenda in a way which overlooks issues that would require major reform in G-20 members, even though these issues are likely to have the biggest impact on reducing food insecurity in the developing world and Africa in particular. It is disappointing to note that even under the leadership of Mexico, an agricultural-based economy with food security concerns that mirror those of many African countries, little progress has been made to address these issues within G-20 member states.

Further, in relation to existing G-20 commitments, in those instances where concrete action is called for, this seldom requires any direct investment or measures by G-20 countries. AMIS, for example, is one of the few concrete outcomes of the G-20 food security discourse. Still, responsibility for administering the system has been placed on the FAO and minimal funds have been committed to its operation. Again, it appears that the G-20 has opted for encouraging measures that improve the flow of market information, while arguably more concrete measures for actually regulating markets would, for example, have been more effective at dealing with commodity-price volatility.

Turning to the critical assessment, it should be emphasised that this paper is an initial analysis based on the very tentative application of a draft methodology for assessment. Already in May 2012 at the expert workshop, concern was raised on the feasibility of such an assessment. The fact that attempts to conduct such an analysis may be too ambitious to deliver meaningful results has already been mentioned. Another concern raised at the expert meeting relates to how meaningfully the 'African interest' can be defined. Viewing Africa as a homogenous unit has historically proven perilous and of little value. Given the diversity of the continent both in terms of demographics (including income levels and other development indicators) and in terms of historical vulnerability, landscape factors and resource endowments, reaching a common African agenda seems unrealistic.

The needs of North African countries differ significantly from sub-Saharan territories. Even within Southern Africa, the food security concerns of South Africa differ in many respects from those of Malawi and other less-developed economies. African countries have also differently prioritised the diversity of issues affecting food security across the continent. The analysis presented in this paper is therefore by necessity based on a degree of homogenisation and generalisation. It is recommended that future assessments be conducted either at country level or even on a region-specific basis. Alternatively, more concrete engagement with country representatives and sector experts from diverse African countries would need to be built into the methodology to ensure the relevance and diversity of the African continent is effectively captured. It should be mentioned in this respect that although it was initially envisaged that an expert network be established and communicated with on a regular basis, this proved very difficult to implement and remains a major shortcoming of the current analysis. Those instances where the experts were engaged took place on an ad-hoc basis and cannot be considered as contributing to rigorous analysis.

Although the analysis reflects the relevance and, to an extent, the substantive alignment of the G-20 commitments on food security to the African interest, it is less clear to which extent African countries have an input in shaping the G-20 food security agenda, and conversely to which extent the G-20 positions influence African policy processes. The available literature shows that input in G-20 processes on these issues are made mainly through commissioned reports conducted by international organisations. Even for South Africa as a member, it is not clear from the official G-20 documents to what extent the South African government is giving voice to African food security concerns within the various G-20 processes. Apart from the AU and CAADP processes, there is a general lack of insight into African policy processes, particularly at country level. This challenge could in future analyses be solved by strengthening the expert network to provide a forum through which to monitor African policy processes on an ongoing basis.

ANNEXURE 1: OUTCOME OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

	Reference to small producers/holders/small-scale farming	Reference to poorer countries/poorest countries	Reference to most vulnerable/vulnerable members of society	Reference to most vulnerable/countries/vulnerable countries	Reference to low/lower-income countries	Reference to developing countries	Reference to least-developed countries	Reference to Africa/African countries/African organisations	Reference to emerging and developing economies	Total
2012 Mexico										
Ministerial Declaration Los Cabos Summit	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	6
Los Cabos Growth and Jobs Action Plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2012 Progress Report of the Development Working Group	1	2	2	0	2	4	2	4	0	17
Labour and Employment Ministers' Conclusions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agricultural Vice Ministers' Report (18 May 2012)	14	0	1	0	2	9	0	6	0	32
Final Communiqué: Meeting of G-20 finance ministers and central bank governors (April 2012)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communiqué: Meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors (February 2012)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

ENDNOTES

- 1 FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), World Food Summit, 1996.
- 2 See GEGAfrica (Global Economic Governance Africa), <http://www.gegafrika.org>.
- 3 FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World Report*. Rome: FAO Publications, 2012a. The percentage of the undernourished population in Asia is 13.9%, and 7.7% in Latin America.
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- 6 Rosegrant MW *et al.*, *Looking Ahead: Long Term Prospects for Africa's Development and Food Security*, Discussion Paper, 41. Washington, DC: IFPRI, 2005.
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- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 10 Taken from the NEPAD website, <http://www.nepad.org/foodsecurity>.
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