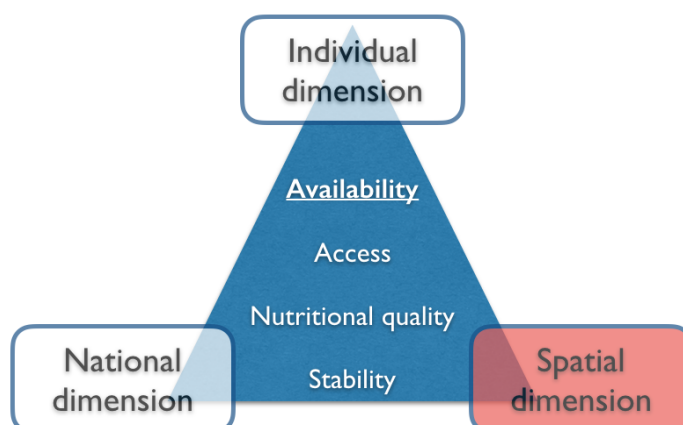


### To eliminate sustainably hunger: the territorial option

Vito Cistulli<sup>1</sup>

The concept of “[food security](#)” is multidimensional (availability, access, quality and stability) and these dimensions have a strong **spatial dimension**. However, emphasis is generally given to its individual and national dimensions and too often only on availability.

#### The forgotten spatial dimension of food security



While there appears to be an average decrease in food insecurity and hunger and a relatively strong economic growth in developing countries, one can also observe an increasing disparity of situations among territories! For example, prevalence of food insecurity in Ghana is only 5% of the total population, but it is above 25% in some provinces. The fact is that there is more and more geographical concentration of food insecurity and that national averages do not reflect the importance and depth of problems. One can also see that the relative share of Sub-Saharan Africa in world food insecurity is growing and the informal sector there is not decreasing, which indicates serious risks for employment in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Presented at the 4th SESAME International Seminar, “De la COP21 à la COP22, relever le triple défi: « sécurité alimentaire, atténuation et adaptation » en Méditerranée et en Afrique de l’Ouest”, held in Meknès, Morocco, on 27 April 2016. **Vito Cistulli** works as Senior Economist in the Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division (ESP) of FAO, Rome, Italy.

On the basis of this shared diagnosis, the [FAO](#)<sup>2</sup>, [OECD](#)<sup>3</sup> and [UNCDF](#)<sup>4</sup> consider that it is important to reduce spatial disparities and raise a number of questions: is the territorial approach a valid option to bring inclusive and sustainable solutions to the problem of food insecurity? Are countries ready for the *change of paradigm* that it requires (see table below) and what are the resulting political and institutional implications?

### Prevalent paradigm and territorial paradigm: a comparison

Element of the paradigm	Prevalent paradigm	Territorial paradigm
Theoretical framework	Urban economy	Institutional economics Endogenous growth theory
Development objective	Efficiency (economic growth)	Efficiency and equity
Target sectors	Agricultural production Value chain	Systemic (synergies among sectors and inclusion of territorial assets)
Social considerations	Employment	Employment, culture, history, social capital, etc.
Environmental considerations	Marginal	Fundamental
Investment	Urban centres	All regions have a potential, often untapped
Decision making system	Top down	Multi-level governance system

Our opinion is that the territorial approach should not replace what is already being done now, but rather to complement it. It however requires some relatively important in-depth changes.

The new paradigm implies in particular to switch from a prescriptive approach to a multi-level, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral governance. It also means to take more into consideration the environmental, social and cultural dimensions of development.

Decentralize or deconcentrate more will not be sufficient, but it will be necessary to involve all stakeholders and in particular all the small and medium sized farms that must be considered the main investors. Moreover, it must be recalled here that lack of investment is one of the causes of land grabbing which, it must be recalled here, is due at 30% by African urban dwellers and not just by large foreign groups. Small farmers must therefore be considered as the main target.

To succeed in implementing this inclusive and territorialised development will therefore need the reestablishment of the role of governments. There is a need for

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<sup>2</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.

<sup>3</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, France.

<sup>4</sup> UN Capital Development Fund, New York, USA

governments that are credible and capable of establishing a “conductive environment” to trigger a much stronger local development momentum.

But what can and must countries do to promote territorial approaches for food security? Well, quite a few things, including:

- Strengthen territorial information systems;
- Promote territorialised food and agricultural systems. It is indeed not sufficient to cater only for value chains, but it is also required to take into consideration the social, environmental and cultural context;
- Reinforce urban-rural partnerships;
- Consider, promote and upscale innovative and proven ideas emerging from local and community initiatives and that have a potential for expansion in order to adapt the governance system to the multidimensional nature of food security;
- Ensure the coordination of social, spatial and production policies. Cash transfers can be strong factors for reinforcing agricultural productivity. Advancement requires better access to credit and a adapted infrastructure (transport, storage, cold chains...);
- Use under-used opportunities in rural territories, diversify income and establish systems of payment for environmental services (PES). Migrations to cities originate from despair and this is what has to be fought.

This complexity may be frightening and appear as an argument against adopting this approach. Nevertheless, a systemic approach is what should be followed and there are today instruments available to move forward. This is confirmed by the new [Sustainable Development Goals](#) that were designed as a network within which objectives and targets are interconnected and that encourage integrated monitoring of targets. For example, [Objective 2](#), that aims at ending hunger and malnutrition proposes five targets, the first of which is the total elimination of hunger, but there are at least seven other objectives that are strongly linked to food security. Achieving these objectives will contribute to eliminate hunger in the world. Everything must be done as simple as possible, but not simpler than what is required.