

RIISING FOOD PRICES AND UNDERNOURISHMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Increases in agricultural commodity prices have been a significant factor driving up the cost of food and have increased concern about problems of food insecurity and hunger, especially for developing countries. The global food prices have continued to soar substantially over the years and having debilitating impacts on nutritive abilities across many developing countries. A perusal of the existing literature reveals dearth of studies required to understand the impact of food prices on undernourishment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, this study examines the effects of rising food prices on undernourishment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The study applied pooled OLS estimator, fixed effects estimator and random effect estimator to panel data set on prevalence of undernourishment, food prices, per capita income and political score for Sub-Saharan African countries from 2001-2012.

The results showed that rising food prices exert significantly on prevalence of undernourishment, thereby undermining the achievement of Goal 1 (eradication of extreme poverty and hunger) of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the region. Government needs to initiate and facilitate massive investments in agriculture in the region while urgent nutritional support that involved nutrient-rich food items should be provided to young children, pregnant women and lactating mothers to mitigate undernourishment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Inflation; Food Insecurity; Nutrition; Fixed Effects; Random Effects; Africa.