

Food Crisis in Pakistan and Sri Lanka: A Contextualisation to India's Food Crisis

Adhalia Chinnu Bino¹ & Syama U S²

¹Third Year Economics Student, Department of Economics, Marian College Kuttikkanam (Autonomous), Peerumedu P O, 685531

²Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Marian College Kuttikkanam (Autonomous), Peerumedu PO, 685531

Article Info

Received: 22 March 2023

Revised: 26 April 2023

Accepted: 04 May 2023

Online: 28 June 2023

To cite this paper:

Adhalia Chinnu Bino & Syama U S (2023). Food Crisis in Pakistan and Sri Lanka: A Contextualisation to India's Food Crisis. *Review of Economics and Econometrics Studies*. 2(1), 41-47.

Abstract: India's government reports show India's food crisis will be better in the current and upcoming fiscal year. However, the real-life situation is ambivalent to the matter. The rise in the price of commodities and the effects of natural calamities points out that the food crisis may intensify in the following year. Sri Lanka was a well-established country that used to stand at the top of the human development index. Pakistan is another country standing lower than India at the table. However, Sri Lanka is facing one of the world's worst crises going right to the bottom from the top. Despite the vigorous efforts of the government, Pakistan is facing a food crisis again. A study of these two countries will help India's chances to intensify the current food crisis despite the clean records. The research papers reviewed were on Sri Lanka's food crisis, Pakistan's food security challenge, and the present situation of India's food security. The study shows that India is sensitive and highly prone to food insecurity.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, food crisis, food security.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka was one of the best countries on the Asian continent and had a human development index of 78. Whereas, India was at 130 in 2018 which was expected to culminate in the future. After the civil war in 2009, Sri Lanka developed exceptionally in infrastructure, imports, and foreign investment and seemed like an entrenched nation. However, this was only on the outside. The current situation in Sri Lanka was not just because of some policies or decisions. It was the result of years of economic mismanagement which undermined the nation. This stays as a lesson for India, which used to stand in a much lower position than Sri Lanka.

Pakistan is a developing economy having food security as one of its major challenges since its independence. Even though Pakistan is one of the major exporters of wheat, the nation faces food insecurity due to a

growing population and other factors like natural calamities. These unpredicted disasters exacerbated the situation.

life of people is pathetic in both nations. If India faces such a situation, the whole world will be affected by it due to its relations with multiple countries. Sri Lanka's economic mismanagement is one of the main reasons for its downfall. India might also have such similarities which may be a threat to the stability of the nation. Pakistan's unpredicted climatic changes and natural calamities have a significant role in its poverty and economic instability. Since India experiences similar weather changes and natural disasters continuously in recent years along with the gainsay of market conditions and government reports, it is better to learn from others and avoid such situations and mitigate the problem if needed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

By the end of the civil war in 2009, Sri Lankan economy boomed as an immediate effect. The government focused on infrastructure development to attract tourists and foreign investments. However, the government showed great interest in large projects because they could convince the people about development through this and shadow their corruption under that image. Eventually, major funding organizations like IMF and World Bank turned their faces from Sri Lanka. The import-export gap started to widen and Sri Lankan expenditure exceeded their income. People started to demand more exports and luxury. At this point, experts warned the government about potential downfall and the need to focus on other sectors like agriculture and industry. But to maintain the people's support for the ruling party, they ignored that fact. Sri Lanka had a slow and steady growth in organic farming. With the arrival of the green revolution, the proportion of farmers in organic farming reduced. However, the increase in kidney disease made the farmers do organic farming. Realizing this interest, to cut down imports of chemical fertilizers and to decrease the import-export gap, the government banned chemicals as a measure to promote organic farming. However, it was advised by experts to reduce chemicals and promote organic farming rather than banning chemicals. That suggestion by experts was ignored. As a result, the policy failed. Globally, the fuel price increased which created an increase in the cost of production. Along with that, this ban was an overnight decision without a strategic plan. Hence, the government was not able to meet the demand. Also, farmers lose a season out of confusion. This decreased production which increased the price of goods and increased the cost of production due to expensive organic farming methods and fuel price hikes. This resulted in high inflation which made a food crisis in Sri Lanka (Mohamed, 2022).

Food insecurity in Pakistan is due to various reasons like climatic changes, being prone to calamities, and population growth. Pakistan is an exporter of staple food like wheat. However, the country is still struggling to feed its population. When the country experiences a combination of threats like low rainfall, increased food prices, drought, and livestock disease, covid, it was hard to survive and run the country properly. Unexpected floods and irregular climate patterns are draining the existing reserves which put the future in threat. Already Pakistan is being at its lowest due to these reasons. Other reasons which fuel the current food insecurity were the lack of technological innovation and primitive farming techniques, trade restrictions, and poor credit facilities. Food security was a hectic challenge from the beginning. It multiplied through the decades due to inadequate measures. (Khetran & Khan, 2022).

The current situation in Sri Lanka was not something that happened overnight. It is the result of years of economic mismanagement. Sri Lanka gradually fall short of foreign exchange reserves which made it difficult to import essential food items in need. food shortage along with other factors resulted in the inflation of food rising to 90 percent. The scarcity and high price of gas cylinders adversely affected the food crisis. People are not able to provide for their families and to survive they are using negative coping mechanisms. The current situation in Sri Lanka is the result of economic mismanagement for a long time. Sri Lanka's foreign exchange is scarce. Therefore, it was not able to import food necessities thus inflation rose to 90 percent for food. The price of staple food has risen over time. People are not able to eat or provide for their families. People are cutting down on meals to survive. The overnight ban on chemicals reduced production by 50 percent. The cultivation failure due to loss boosted food scarcity even more. Farmers do not know alternatives for chemical fertilizers due to poor strategic plans. (Udara , Somabandu, Jayakody, Amerasinghe ,Silva & Zoysa, 2022).

The reason for food insecurity in Pakistan is its broad development challenges. Pakistan is geographically sensitive. That means it is vulnerable to natural disasters. Another threat for Pakistan is the social insecurity of the country, Pakistan often has security problems in the country. Also, Pakistan is often known for its poor governing and management which adversely affected the agriculture and production of the whole country. Pakistan has been facing this challenge from the dawn. Even though the economy showed growth and become the largest producer of some staples, still some sections have food insecurity. This is because Pakistan is not able to meet the demand for people due to the high population growth. Along with these factors, the natural hazard will make the whole situation into a

humanitarian crisis. ongoing conflicts with other countries make the chances to overcome the challenges harder. They even faced inflation in the year where they produced the most due to this reason. Also, Pakistan faced 19 protests and riots on the matter of food instability over 10 years. This makes living even harder in a country with poor social security. Pakistan is a weaker country in terms of food insecurity which is very vulnerable to sudden shocks like natural calamities, and global inflation. (Newman, 2018).

Sri Lanka's present situation was the result of economic mishandling for years. The easter bomb attack along with Covid caused a fall in the tourism sector which was one of the main income sources for Sri Lanka. The war also affected the tourism sector since Sri Lanka's main visitors were Russians and Ukrainians. Its foreign debt raised and doubled recently. Hence, it is unable to meet the needs of the country. Sri Lanka's income has been exceeded by expenses for several years. Also, imports exceeded exports which result in a trade deficit. To meet the expenses, Sri Lanka started to print currency which worsened the situation by converting Sri Lankan currency as the worst-performing currency in the world thus the country's credit rate declined. Now it is unable to take loans from IMF or any other organization in the world for Sri Lanka. The currency value as well as foreign reserves diminished. As part of the election, Sri Lankans were promised a tax cut. When the party won, they kept their word which resulted in a reduction in the country's income. When the country's funds started to diminish, they banned pesticides to cut their import and save money and told the public that it was to promote organic farming and for better health but this worsened the overall situation by a fall in production and a price rise. Sri Lanka has to import food currently to meet its needs. (George, George & Baskar, 2022).

As per the report, India has become one of the top ten worst-affected countries by natural disasters since 2018. The study shows that the food and nutritional requirements of the affected people are getting addressed by government policies but everyone is not benefitting from the scheme. Around 25 percent of people are not getting assistance if affected by the disaster. Their food and nutritional needs are not met hence demand assistance was not addressed properly. However, this data varies based on different aspects of food assistance and emergency help given by disaster management (Guleria, Paithankar, Prakash Mohan & Arusha).

Sri Lankans have their life under extreme pressure, the people are exhausted and use negative coping strategies to survive in the adverse condition. The country's feeding program has been reduced tremendously leading to malnutrition among children. The country faces a shocking hike

in fuel and basic goods prices. The fiscal deficit of Sri Lanka stands as a hindrance to survival. Ban on chemical fertilizers reduced the productivity and production of the country tremendously. Due to the lack of availability of organic fertilizers, their high cost, the lack of training for farmers to introduce them to the new technique, the ban, and other factors, only 24 percent of the total land is cultivated in the recent season. Sri Lankans use negative coping mechanisms like borrowing money for meeting day-to-day expenses, withdrawing savings, and selling personal belongings for money. Farmers stated that their daily sales had gone down to 50 kg from 500kg. (Hamdy, 2022).

The three factors determining food security are the availability of food, access to food, and its utilization. Pakistan is lacking all these three aspects. Climate change affects Pakistan's food security and production to a great extent. Pakistan can improve its food security by making use of underutilized resources like storing rainwater by building dams, better credit facilities, etc. Another hindrance to Pakistan's goal to attain food security is poor credit facilities and lack of knowledge for farmers to handle the extreme climatic condition in agriculture. Also, fertilizers make it expensive for farmers to grow crops, So Pakistan needs to invest in the fertilizer industry along with all other factors to gain stability and food security. ("Climate Change and Food Security in Pakistan: A Time Series Analysis," 2016).

India was expected to face difficulties regarding food security due to covid 19. The pandemic made the informal workers vulnerable. Since production was reduced, the demand and supply of food were under threat. Food security in India got challenged by this situation. The harvesting was stopped. Hence, the supply of commodities declined. Disruption in agriculture activities worsened the situation. India was going to face a temporary food shortage and a rise in price due to it. Farmers suffer from low income and are unable to export produced goods. (Yadav & Agarwal, 2021).

CONCLUSION

India stands at 68th position in the food security index which elucidates how pathetic is India's food security level. It is clear from the study that India shares similar backgrounds in both countries to a great extent. India's production is 297.5, 310.74, and 315.72 million metric tons in 2020,2021,2022 respectively. But the growth rate of the Indian agriculture sector is 3% which is lower than the average growth rate of the past 6 years;4.6% in 2021-22. This will worsen the current food crisis because India's population is growing continuously and meeting the demand will be harder this time

due to low growth in the agriculture sector as happened in Pakistan. One-fourth of the total undernourished population of the world is in India, it is about 170 million people approximately. Currently, India stands at 107th position in the global hunger index from 101st position in the previous year. This implies an increase in the food crisis. India's inflation is around 6% currently and it is expected to increase this year which can intensify the food crisis. Pakistan and Sri Lanka show that a single threat can turn the situation upside down and can potentially change the food crisis that India may have now into a humanitarian crisis. An unpredicted natural calamity or another virus or war can engender a severe food crisis. One of the major reasons for Sri Lanka's food crisis is economic mismanagement. Their apathy in investment in the agriculture sector even after expert suggestions adversely affected them. India realized its food crisis and the need for investment long ago and had been actively investing over the years. However, it is not enough. Private investment in agriculture has increased to 9.3 percent in 2020-21 and public investment remained at 4.3 percent. The increase in production and investment proves that India is having a food crisis and it is crucial for India to overcome it as soon as possible. Because all other possible factors have the power to create a refractory humanitarian crisis in this situation and this preknowledge will help India to circumvent it. Another reason that fuels India and the global food crisis as a whole is the Russia-Ukraine war. The war increased the fuel price, hence the overall price level increased. Household income being the same, a sudden increase in price level worsened India's food crisis. This made India's food security more sensitive to potential sudden shocks proving that India is highly insecure in food.

References

- Khetrn, S. B., & Khan, M. (2022). Food Security challenges in Pakistan. *Asia Social Science Academy*, 2(3), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.51600/isr.2022.2.3.1>
- Mohamed, Fazly. (2022). *Report on Background, Development and Current Food Crisis in Sri Lanka - 2022 June* [Review of *Report on Background, Development and Current Food Crisis in Sri Lanka - 2022 June*].
- Udara I.W.A.S, Somabandu B.P.S, Jayakody J.A.B.U, Amerasinghe N.D.K, Silva, D. I. D., & Zoys, R. D. (n.d.). Problems Faced by the Agricultural Sector and Solutions for the Impending Food Crisis in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Research*, 5(12).
- Newman, E. (2018). *Food security and political unrest in Pakistan: Case study report* [Review of *Food security and political unrest in Pakistan: Case study report*].
- Gerorge, A. S. H., George, A. S., & T Baskar. (2022). Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis: A Brief Overview A.S. [Review of *Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis: A Brief Overview A.S.*]. *Partners Universal International Research Journal (PUIRJ)*, 1(2).

- Guleria, Dr. S., Paithankar, Ms. P., Prakash, Mr. A., Mohan, Ms. K., & Ms. Arusha. (2022). Mainstreaming Food Security and Nutrition in Emergency Preparedness and Response Mainstreaming food Security and Nutrition in Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacity and Needs Assessment Report [Review of Mainstreaming Food Security and Nutrition in Emergency Preparedness and Response Mainstreaming Food Security and Nutrition in Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacity and Needs Assessment Report].
- Hamdy, H. S. (2022). *HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOOD SECURITY CRISIS SRILANKA* [Review of *HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOOD SECURITY CRISIS SRILANKA*].
- Climate Change and Food Security in Pakistan: A Time Series Analysis. (2016). *Global Economics Review*, 1(1), 47–55. [https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2016\(i-i\).05](https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2016(i-i).05)
- YADHAV, P., & AGARWAL, P. K. (2021). Facing the Challenges of Food crisis and Livelihood Security in India under the Threat of COVID-19 [Review of *Facing the Challenges of Food crisis and Livelihood Security in India under the Threat of COVID-19*]. *Biological Forum – an International Journal*.
- India: food availability index by category 2021. (n.d.). Statista. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1239482/india-food-availability-index-by-category/>
- Global Food Security Index (GFSI). (2022). Foodsecurityindex.eiu.com. <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>
- India. (n.d.). Global Hunger Index (GHI) - Peer-Reviewed Annual Publication Designed to Comprehensively Measure and Track Hunger at the Global, Regional, and Country Levels. <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html#:~:text=In%20the%202022%20Global%20Hunger>
- India: production volume of food grains 2022. (n.d.). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1140261/india-production-volume-of-food-grains/>
- Bureau, T. H. (2023, January 31). Economic Survey 2022-23 | Growth dips, public investment stagnant in agriculture sector. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/business/agri-business/economic-survey-2022-23-growth-dips-public-investment-stagnant-in-agriculture-sector/article66455088.ece>
- World Food Programme. (2019, November 19). *India | World Food Programme*. Wfp.org. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/india>
- India Food Inflation - February 2023 Data - 2012-2022 Historical - March Forecast. (n.d.). Tradingeconomics.com. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://tradingeconomics.com/india/food-inflation#:~:text=Food%20Inflation%20in%20India%20is>
- Bureau, T. H. (2023, January 31). Economic Survey 2022-23 | Growth dips, public investment stagnant in agriculture sector. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/business/agri-business/economic-survey-2022-23-growth-dips-public-investment-stagnant-in-agriculture-sector/article66455088.ece>