

# ADB Strategy 2030: Responding to Food Security in Asia and the Pacific

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**Keywords:** Food security, agricultural development, COVID-19 pandemic, food crisis, Strategy 2030, nutrition

**Abstract:** Food security is an urgent issue of one country and all countries in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world. This article outlines the importance and situation of food security in the Asia-Pacific region. This is also one of the Sustainable Development Goals and a priority field of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Bank's role in the Asia-Pacific region has been increasingly enhanced since its establishment in 1966. ADB's 2030 Strategy emphasizes food security for member countries through their activities and projects. In particular, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic causing an urgent warning of a food crisis in the region, ADB has made timely responses and ensured the progress of the implementation of the Strategy 2030 on food security.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Food has always been a basic human need ensuring food for people is the most critical issue in every country. Entering the first decades of the 21st century, in the context of globalization, international economic integration, and global climate change, many countries face the problem of ensuring food security to stabilize social development- an essential content in national economic security. Food security is increasing "heating", attracting many countries in the region and globally. The most recent world food crisis took place in 2008; since then, world food prices have been upward.


Sharing the same fate as tourism, transportation, aviation, and agricultural industries worldwide are also struggling with measures to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic, such as entry bans, border closures, or implementation of social distancing. That makes millions of workers in this industry unable to go to the fields to harvest and grow crops, but the circulation of goods has also plummeted, the global food supply chain has been disrupted due to the paralysis of transport activities. The Asia-Pacific region has become one of the regions that are warned about the risk of regional insecurity. As a regional multilateral bank, since its establishment, ADB has always put

food security first. ADB's 2030 Strategy still has practical policies and actions in this regard. In particular, in the context of the current complicated COVID-19 epidemic, ADB is making efforts to support and supplement food for member countries, offering options to improve agricultural development through its projects.

## 2 METHODS

The information is collected from many different sources through search keywords such as COVID-19, Food security. The method of collecting information from many sources helps the author have an objective assessment of the food security situation in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, the author can consider the contributions of ADB in this area. The content analysis method was adopted in this study to analyze food crisis scenarios during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Asia-Pacific. In addition, the author used synthesis methods, commentary methods, and comparison methods to clarify the importance of food security and the impact of food crises on the region

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### 3 DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

#### 3.1 Food Security Situation in Asia-Pacific

Asia-Pacific is increasingly developing. Countries in the region have had appropriate institutional and policy reforms. Rates of hunger and poverty in the region have decreased significantly. Producers' incomes and wages are increased, food prices fall. Malnutrition rates decreased significantly, and calorie intake increased impressively.(FAO, 2019). However, nearly half a billion (479 million) people are still undernourished in Asia and the Pacific. (UNICEF,2019). The proportion of people who do not have enough diet to maintain a normal, healthy life is still very high. In most countries in the region, the diets of young children do not meet minimum standards, directly affecting future generations. Food security issues are becoming more complex in the Asia and Pacific region.

In Asia, "there were 336 million undernourished in South Asia in 2004-06 along with 136 million in East Asia, 85 million in Southeast Asia and 7 million in Central and Western Asia. The prevalence of underweight children as well as stunting and wasting is higher in South Asia than anywhere else in the world". (FAO, 2019).

Immediately after the food crisis of 2007-2008, rice stocks were the lowest in the recent 30 years. A 50% increase in rice prices also drives up prices of meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. (The Guardian, 2008). "Commonly referred to as the "global food crisis," the food price spike had triggered and social unrest and riots in more than thirty countries."(Qian Gong, Philippe Le Billon, 2014). Food protests broke out around the world: Mexico, West Bengal, Senegal, Mauritania, and many African countries. Some Asian countries such as China, India, Egypt, Vietnam, and Cambodia have imposed tariffs or banned exports. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the crisis caused 642 million people in Asia to go hungry in 2009, this figure accounts for 63% of the world total. In the same year, about 200 million children under five were stunted, and 130 million were underweight worldwide. (UNICEF, 2009). Poverty affects young generations' development because it is the cause of social evils, leading to illiteracy, lack of understanding, etc.

According to the report of FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, about 350.6 million people in Asia and Pacific region were undernourished in 2019, about 51% of the entire world. In addition, the report

estimates that around 31.5 million children are undernourished in the Asia and Pacific region. (FAO, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, 2020).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, and disruptions occurred in food supply chains in many countries. This has affected food production, lost incomes, and reduced remittances, creating serious stresses and food security risks in many countries. As a result, countries in the world in general and countries in Asia-Pacific, in particular, are concerned that there will be another food crisis.

COVID-19 has impacted the labor market; unemployment is abundant, families have less income, while food prices are constantly increasing; food transportation takes longer and is more expensive; exacerbate poverty in Asia and the Pacific. Before the impact of the pandemic, more than 10 million children under the age of 5 were underweight, 78 million children were stunted, and 17 million children were overweight. (UNICEF,2020).

Countries in this region are facing opportunities and challenges in the context of climate change and pandemics, requiring new policies to ensure food security.

Particular attention should be paid to the policies of previous countries: instead of producing food domestically, developing countries should devote their land and labor to the export of commodities such as coffee and sugar, and cotton; The second is trade liberalization. The removal of tariff barriers makes exports to developing countries cheaper, directly affecting a small part of farmers in business and food production.

To solve this problem, countries need to consider the following measures:

Firstly, to promote development and restructure food production in association with the market: Restructuring crop production towards total and large-scale production; associated with preservation, processing, and consumption along the value chain, meeting the market and adapting to climate change; To develop animal husbandry by industrial and semi-industrial methods, professional farms and livestock households; application of high technology, advanced production processes, biosafety, and environmental friendliness; Reduce coastal fishing, develop sustainable offshore fishing.

Second, invest in the development of infrastructure for food production: Continue investing in and upgrading the system of irrigation works and natural disaster prevention and control; ensure water security. Develop multi-purpose irrigation, prioritize investment in the construction of

irrigation works for aquaculture. (Ahmed, M., Mylene H. Lorica, 2002).

Third, strengthen research, application, and transfer of science and technology in food production, preservation, and processing; Focus on research, selection, breeding, and development of the plant, animal, and aquatic plant varieties productivity, high quality, disease resistance, and adaptation to climate change.

Fourth, training to improve the quality of human resources; improve resource use efficiency, protect the environment, improve the ability to adapt to climate change, and prevent natural disasters; Promote international cooperation in the field of food security.

### 3.2 ADB and Its Efforts to Strengthen Food Security in the Asia-Pacific

Established in 1966, ADB is committed to achieving prosperity, equity, resilience, and sustainability, while sustaining efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the Asia-Pacific region. In its nearly 60-year history, ADB has funds hundreds of agriculture and natural resources projects, starting in 1967 with the first technical assistance on food or production in Indonesia. The bank still operates on a project basis, especially in areas such as investment in infrastructure, agricultural development, and loan financing for primary industries in member countries.

Realizing that food security is critical, it is one factor to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially hunger eradication, poverty reduction, and health and welfare community improvement. Food security is also an essential key in determining economic growth trends and agricultural transition in some countries, creating conditions for countries to integrate into regional and international economic markets more effectively. However, in the Asia and Pacific region, 1.9 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet due to the soaring price of fruits, vegetables, and dairy products.

ADB has identified: Food security and poverty alleviations are a priority and cross-cutting goal. Through each stage, in response to the context of the Asia-Pacific region, ADB provides timely response policies, efforts to develop the region's poverty and food insecurity.

As mentioned above, in 2007-2008, the world witnessed a record increase in rice prices. This is because the main exporting countries such as Vietnam and India restrict exports, combined with the rush of large importing countries such as the Philippines to buy rice, pushing up rice prices rapidly.

Its consequences are pushing nearly 1 billion people around the world into poverty. ADB has acted aggressively to help its member countries respond to the crisis:

- Support is still in the long-term strategy from 2008-2020;

- Focusing its activities on key areas of job creation, stimulating domestic demand, promoting regional cooperation and integration, and boosting investor confidence in times of crisis;

- Enhance effective lending: ADB planned to increase its lending by more than \$10 billion in 2009–2010, especially for low-income countries; (ADB, 2016);

- ADB mobilized cofinancing with development partners for its projects during this period;

- Working closely with development partners in the region, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and regional organizations such as ASEAN and SAARC: *"ADB's assistance helped ASEAN implement its Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Plan of Action for Food Security in the wake of the food price crisis in 2007–2008"*. (Kim, Kijin; Kim, Sunae; Park, Cyn-Young, 2020).

In 2016, ADB announced that: *"ADB has committed \$2 billion annually to meet the rising demand for nutritious, safe, and affordable food in Asia and the Pacific"*. (ADB, 2009).

In 2018, ADB released Strategy 2030 to meet the changing needs of Asia and the Pacific. ADB support will focus on seven priority activities: (i) addressing persistent poverty and reducing inequality; (ii) promote progress in gender equality; (iii) tackle climate change, build resilience to climate and disasters, and enhance environmental sustainability; (iv) making cities more livable; (v) promoting rural development and food security; (vi) strengthening governance and institutional capacity; and (vii) promote regional cooperation and integration.

Strategy 2030's goals are aligned with critical global commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, Financing the Development Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Framework for Action Sendai on disaster risk reduction. ADB will continue to prioritize assistance to the region's poorest and most vulnerable countries. Promoting rural development and food security is one of the Bank's seven priority activities in Strategy 2030: *"ADB will support efforts to improve market connectivity and agricultural value chain linkages. It will help DMCs increase agricultural productivity and food security by boosting farm and nonfarm incomes, promoting the adoption of advanced*

*technologies and climate-smart agricultural practices, and supporting natural resource management standards. It will also help DMCs enhance food safety".* (ADB, 2018).

In addition, ADB understands that food security is closely related to water security, ecological environment protection, climate change adaptation, and sustainable development. With increasing and unpredictable impacts on many areas in the region, climate change has increased resource depletion and environmental degradation, increases vulnerability, slows down the socio-economic development process. Therefore, combating climate change is also a policy that ADB actively pursues to alleviate food shortages in the region. ADB has committed to providing an estimated \$80 billion in financing between 2019 and 2030 for climate; ADB ensures that at least 75% of ADB's committed activities will support climate change mitigation and adaptation by 2030. (ADB, 2018).

In 2019, the Bank was active in the economic development of the region through investments in agriculture, natural resources, and rural development (ANR) projects: *"In total, ADB has invested more than \$68 billion in the region with over \$7 billion (approximately 10%) allotted to the ANR sector".* (Bui, 2020).

In light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in the Asia and Pacific region is also the lesson to be learned: *"The Covid-19 pandemic also taught us that food, agriculture, environment, and climate are interwoven and need to be handled in an integrated way and balanced manner".* (Rasul, 2021).

ADB has quickly responded to financial, spending, and production systems, encourage credit for regional finance, and provides capital to households. (Felipe, J., Scott., F., 2020).

ADB has launched financial support packages for member countries, including \$ 6.5 billion, and then expanded its total package to about \$ 20 billion. (ADB, 2020).

- Immediate and short-term support for food security: ADB provides food security support for member countries, focusing on countries at risk of food insecurity, such as the Philippines, India, and the Kyrgyz Republic. (Kim, Kijin; Kim, Sunae; Park, Cyn-Young, 2020).

As the COVID-19 situation continues to threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in the Asia-Pacific region, there is growing concern about the long-term health of food systems in the Asia-Pacific region. This issue affects progress toward the ambitious goals of ADB's Strategy 2030 on food security and poverty alleviation in the region.

Therefore, ADB needs new policies, more investment in projects to promote rural development and food security in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, it is necessary to work closely with member countries to protect the food system, to accumulate food reserves to cope with unexpected situations.

Some proposed solutions to help ADB and its member countries consider and ensure food security in the region:

- Inflation tends to increase in the Asia-Pacific region, causing adverse impacts on the poor in each country and the whole region. Therefore, along with prioritizing resources for disaster reduction, ADB should promote investment in the agricultural sector, strengthen linkages through public-private partnerships to develop water resources, seeds, to support the development of the agricultural sector;

- ADB maintains a more harmonized lending level to help underdeveloped countries that are in dire need of ADB resources to develop their economies and close the gap;

- ADB should continue to coordinate with its member countries in Strategy 2030 actions to realize goals on food security, hunger eradication, poverty reduction, combating climate change, etc.;

- Calling on member countries to actively support and contribute more to ADB's funds to increase development resources and address regional challenges;

ADB needs to continue reforming governance and strengthen cooperation with the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and The Group of Eight countries to strengthen the power to deal with food security and other issues to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

It can be said that up to now, ADB has been making great efforts to ensure food security in the region. ADB's contributions have contributed to helping member countries overcome and develop more in food issues and climate, environment, gender equality, etc. However, it is predicted that food security will be challenging for the Asia-Pacific region after the COVID-19 period. This is also ADB's barrier in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals as well as its ambition to achieve the goal of food security in Strategy 2030. However, this will be a long battle for all, but ADB will also have to make great efforts in its activities, coordinate actions with member countries and other international organizations.

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