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“中国食品安全问题”:

中西国家情况的对比

“FOOD SECURITY IN CHINA!”:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH THE WEST

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## **List of abbreviations**

FS – Food Security

FI – Food Insecurity

EU – European Union

FAO – Food And Agriculture Organisation Of The United Nations

USFDA – United States Food and Drug Administration

EFSA – European Food Safety Authority

CFSA – the China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment

USDA –United States Department of Agriculture

EMA – Economically motivated adulteration

WHO – World Health Organisation

WTO – World Trade Organisation

AQSIQ –General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and  
Quarantine

SFDA – State Food and Drug Administration of People's Republic of China.

OFDC – The Organic Food Development Centre of China

SEPA – the State Environmental Protection Administration

IFOAM – International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

CAC – The Codex Alimentarius Commission<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A joint intergovernmental body of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO that worked on establishing international standards for Food Security.

## 摘要

本文分析中国的食品安全问题，对比欧洲与中国的食品安全情况，探讨食品安全问题对国际关系带来的影响。本文将饮食文化纳入研究范畴，分析中欧之间在饮食文化，食品安全观念，食品安全管理等方面的差异，揭示中国在食品安全方面存在的问题，以及中国食品安全问题对国际关系的影响。

**关键词：**食品安全（粮食安全），饮食文化，中国，欧洲。

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze Food Security situation in China, to draw the comparison between China and the West and to interpret its influence on the international relations between them. The focus of this paper is especially on the aspect of the quality, but not the quantity of food supply in the food security situation of China. Additionally, the notion of “Food culture” has been studied in this paper. A comparison between China and Europe reveals that China is much behind in ensuring food security, especially quality food, as compared to European countries. The comparison of these two samples has helped in revealing interesting reasons why and in which area China lacks in food security and what cultural aspects are playing role in this situation. Eventually, the study also points out how the food security situation influences China’s relationship with other countries.

**Keywords:** *food security; food insecurity; food culture; China, Europe;*

## Preface

The world population is on the increase but the output of agriculture is becoming limited. This situation has led to the scarcity of food in many countries. The global food crises that occurred in 2006-2008 had raised the awareness on food security as a major security concern for the years ahead.

The world today is faced by a challenge whereby the huge surplus and the obesity rates in the developed and emerging economies is in direct contrast with the reality in the developing countries. The developing nations are faced with high levels of food shortage with associated incidence of famine.

Food Security in China attracted my attention because there is a big difference in comparison with Europe and specifically Russia where I come from. I think Food Security problems in China is not only a concern of Chinese society, but also a concern for the international community as well. Most of food exports are from China, and also most of food products readily available in the market, are of the Chinese origin. Therefore, the problem of Food Security in China has to be solved on the international level.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the world's most significant problems is to provide the growing population with an adequate supply of safe, nutritious, and relatively cheaper but quality food. The provision of food should also factor in less land use, lower additives as well as other issues relating to climate change which could lead to environmental insecurity.

When we talk about food security, it means that there is sufficient supply of food to the public and the food should be of good quality. It is not only about whether the public has sufficient food, but the quality of the food supplied to the public. Ensuring both the quantity and quality are important, but this paper focuses on the quality of the food. The reason to concentrate the attention on the quality of the food is that China has already eliminated the problem of food availability. However, the country has faced several food scandals over the last few decades. Due to the massive population, the country faces challenges in regularizing the quality of the food.

This initiation of the topic was motivated by various news sources pointing out food quality scandals in China and author's own experience in China. As in every situation where we need to compare one thing with another, we need to identify a standard. This study uses Europe as a benchmark since the European countries are well-ranked in various food security indexes and rarely experience food scandals (Global Food Index, Oxfam).

The paper also focuses on the culture of China while doing this comparative analysis since cultural factors may create a bias in the studies. Chinese culture is a unique oldest civilization. It is possible that in Chinese cuisines, maintaining the quality of food could be harder as compared to more straight-forward western cuisine

and the staple foods in both these samples are different. Knowing the cultural differences could eliminate possible biases. Therefore, the study considers them and fully incorporates them.

The study will compare the food security situation, policies enacted to ensure food quality, scandals, international food security index of China and European countries to know where China stands in food security, which areas does it needs to focus and how these countries can learn from each other in improving their situation. In addition, the study will create a link on how the Food Security issues could influence political, economic and social relations between China and the Europe.

The objectives of maintaining Food Security should include the improvement of the availability, access and public knowledge of healthy and nutritious food; environmentally friendly energy production and organic food; well-developed alert-system.

In addressing the problems, multiple actors should be employed; and the measures should be implemented according to the region.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

The research questions that will adequately help in developing this research paper are:

- 1) Why do we have to deal with Food Security in China?
- 2) What is the Food Security situation in China? The reasons and measures to prevent Food Security problems?
- 3) How Food Security situation in China is different from the West? How the two countries can learn from each other in dealing with Food Security problem?

4) What is the influence of Food Security problems on the political, economic relations between China and the West?

### **1.2 Methodology**

There are research techniques that will be employed to develop the research and help adequately to answer the research questions. In this endeavor, a library based research will be employed. More so, electronic sources and databases are carefully considered and relevant information used for adequate research. The methods included in the research are the method of comparative analysis, literature search, and the method of qualitative and quantitative research. Papers published both in English and Chinese languages are included in this review.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Due to weak implementation of the Food Security regulations, the country is facing food quality scandals, much of which is not reported. As per news reports, China does not impose strict control on food items as compared to developed nations. Keeping in view the intensity of the problems, this research could provide insights into the reasons for this problem. The first step in solving any problem is to identify the problem. This paper identifies the reasons of food quality problem in China and also provides with possible suggestions as to how it could be improved.

Moreover, the present research is also different from the previous studies in that it includes Food Culture as the main variable in Food Security.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 The evolution of the definition of “Food Security”

Scientists still cannot agree on the definition of Food Security. Debates and researches have been going on already for the past 50 years without a definite conclusion. By 1990, there were reported number of 194 different studies on the concept of Food Security with over 200 definitions (Hoddinot, 1999; Maxwell, 1996; Smith, 1992), and 172 studies on its indicators by Maxwell and Frankenbeiger (1992).

The evolution of definitions on Food Security is a complex process, during which the process of broadening of the definition took place. Initially, it was introduced in 1943 at the historic Hot Spring Conference of Food and Agriculture. The concept of FS was accepted internationally as a “secure, adequate, and suitable supply of food for everyone”. The stress was made mainly on food supply.

After the world food crisis of 1972-1974 (FAO,2000),<sup>2</sup> and Green Revolution in the 1980s,<sup>3</sup>the World Food Summit (1974) issued a new definition on FS as:

Availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices. (p. 43).

The modern views on the concept of Food Security were developed by the World Food Conference of 1974 and the World Food Summit of 1996. The United Nations (1975) states the definition in terms of economic perspective as:

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<sup>2</sup>Food items suddenly appeared to be in short supply on world markets, cereal prices rose sharply, and food aid from donor countries fell.

<sup>3</sup>The Green revolution was aimed to increase food production and prevent food crisis by improving agricultural sector.

Food Security (*is the*) availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices.

In 1983 the attention was put into the balance between the demand and supply as, "ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need" (FAO, 1983). This definition raised the awareness on ensuring balanced supply of food to all irrespective of neither financial background nor social status. This led to initial measures by world bodies to ensure the accessibility of food.

Consequent deliberations and interventions led to further expansion of the concept to indicate that, "Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life" (the USDA, 1986). This definition however, is also limited as it mainly focuses on the individual aspect of FS.

In 1984 it was promoted that human security includes a number of aspects together with food security. This advocacy tends to not isolate the meaning FS as a separate single notion, but one of the components of HS. However, the concept of food security is gaining an increased attention rather than human security.

FAO (1996) states the food security as:

Food security exists 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.

For the first time, there has been stress on safe and nutritious food that characterizes the quality of food. More on, it mentions food preferences, which is a characteristic of food culture.

The definition of 2001 points to the aspect of Food Insecurity:

Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (FAO, 2002).

However, nowadays the problem of hunger and scarcity is no more urgent. This is realized from the fact that, there are more overweight people than those that are undernourished. It is estimated that, there are more than one billion people who are considered to be overweight as compared to 800 million who are undernourished. Therefore, the world switched from the problem of a lack of food to its excess. That is why we have to deal with a problem of food quality now.

The definition of FS used in the present research is mainly focused on the qualitative aspect of food:

“FOOD SECURITY – food quality and the conditions in which it is prepared (sanitation) followed by the food choice and preferences of the people belonging to one country”.

## **2.2 Food Security characteristics**

Food Security is characterized by the following dimensions:

### *a) Food availability*

It is defined as the “sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis”. According to Gregory P.J. et al, the availability of food is in connection with how food is supplied through production, distribution and exchange. The production aspect of food is determined by many factors that include land ownership, and its appropriate

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