

Thematic Readings

Food Security, Conflict and Climate Change

Overview

While there is a growing body of literature examining the links between 1) climate change and food, 2) food security and conflict and 3) climate change and security, there are few publications that combine analysis of all three dynamics. The following selection of studies provide the best combined analysis of the relationship between food security and conflict, assessing how it will be affected by projected climate impacts on food supply within the context of other changes to food market dynamics.

Key Reading

CCAPS (Climate Change and African Political Stability), 'Climate change, global food markets and urban unrest'

The [CCAPS research brief 'Climate change, global food markets and urban unrest'](#) gives the best encapsulated overview of food, climate change and security dynamics. The report examines the ways that political institutions mediate the relationship between food prices and urban unrest; although much of the emphasis is on comparing the relative impact of democracies vs. autocracies, this focus elucidates many of the mechanisms important for other security risks, including fragility and conflict. The report closes with a section on climate change and food markets, outlining the impact of declining crop productivity and increasing risk of crop failure on food security and price volatility, which is particularly high when food production is concentrated in major exporting countries. It also highlights a widening gap in agro-climatic fortunes between higher-latitude and mid-latitude countries, as crop yields are projected to decline in many tropical developing countries.

The Research Brief is complemented by the authors' more in-depth academic article:

>> Hendrix, Cullen / Stephen Haggard (2015): 'Global food prices, regime type and urban unrest in the developing world', *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (2), available online: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/52/2/143.abstract>.

Additional Reading

For more in-depth analysis of the food, climate and security nexus, these publications provide greater regional granularity as well as recommendations for responses to minimise risk, including humanitarian assistance and adaptation programming.

CCAPS, 'Food price spikes and social unrest in Africa'

[This research brief](#) looks at the circular relationship between food prices and unrest, defined here as riots, labour strikes, electoral violence, student demonstrations and communal conflict. Uniquely, it uses national consumer food price indices rather than international commodity prices to gauge economic impacts on consumers, and compares this with monthly data on incidents of civil unrest from 40 countries over a period of 21 years. It also integrates rainfall scarcity as an instrumental variable, arguing that the established correlation between rainfall deviations and conflict can be explained by impacts on agriculture, resulting in rising food prices. It recommends that agricultural adaptation to climate change focus more on ensuring consistent availability and access to food than on long-term productive capacities.

This briefing is also accompanied by an academic article:

>> Smith, Todd Graham (2014): 'Feeding unrest: Disentangling the causal relationship between food price shocks and sociopolitical conflict in urban Africa', *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (6), available online: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/51/6/679.abstract>.

World Bank, 'Food insecurity and conflict: Applying the WDR framework'

[This report](#) gives a thorough overview of food insecurity and conflict linkages. It focuses on the ways that national governments, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs can intervene to minimize risks of political violence; for example by protecting both consumers and producers from food price shocks and income instability. It identifies climate change as one of several drivers that will contribute to increasingly volatile food markets, noting climate impacts on crop yields and international commodities markets, as well as the effect of biofuels on food prices.

>> Brinkman, Henk-Jan / Cullen S. Hendix (2010): *Food Insecurity and Conflict: Applying the WDR Framework*, World Development Report 2011 Background Paper, World Bank.

Wilson Center Environmental Change and Security Program, 'Harvesting Peace: Food Insecurity, Conflict and Cooperation'

[This study](#) examines the complex linkages between conflict and food security, focusing on how humanitarian and development organizations, should integrate this analysis to mitigate food insecurity and prevent conflict, with specific reference to USAID. It mentions climate change only in passing, but provides substantive recommendations for addressing food and conflict jointly, which has relevance for climate adaptation and response to climate-driven disasters, although this is not the focus of the report. It closes with an annex exploring ways of integrating data related to food insecurity into current concepts and theories of conflict, in order to better understand what levels or aspects of food insecurity are most likely to directly contribute to or cause conflict, and in what circumstances.

>> Simmons, Emmy (2013): *Harvesting Peace: Food insecurity, conflict and cooperation*, Environmental Change and Security Program Report 14 (3), Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center.