

# Is Pakistan Diversifying its Agriculture Production?

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## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The National Food Security Policy of Pakistan (2017) is a significant document. It outlines the strategic framework for enhancing food security in all its dimensions: access to food, availability of food, use of food and food stability. The emphasis of this plan, however, is only on the target of food availability and on whether Pakistan is diversifying from food crops to non-food crops. The primary focus in this brief will be to analyze patterns of production, land use of food and non-food crops and to determine how patterns are changing for wheat, maize and rice as imported food crops from Pakistan.

## DIVERSIFICATION IN PRODUCTION – POLICY BACKGROUND

Each country, while drawing its food security objective, has to decide how much its requirement of staple food crops is. That is the basic requirement because the food security of any population starts from meeting its basic cereal requirements first and then the discussion of other crops comes in from point of view of food security and dietary nutrition. This has generated a traditional stance of food self-sufficiency in cereal crops. Pakistan has traditionally also followed this stance (Qureshi, M. G. et al., 2019). However, learning from the economic transformation of successful countries like China, the international consensus is that diversification into non-food cash crops can serve as profitable options. Why? Because by indulging in cash crops, a country can increase its foreign reserves via exports and use those reserves to fill in-demand shortages of food grains if needed Joshi, P. K, A. Gulati and R. Cummings Jr. (eds.) (2007). Hence, the donor's consensus for Pakistan is evident from the discussion in Qureshi, M. G. et al., 2019 and Joshi, P. K, A. Gulati and R. Cummings Jr. (eds.) (2007), I believe this is an important policy topic to look into.

## PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY POLICY (2017) – OVERVIEW

This policy document is extremely comprehensive as it can be inferred from the representation of policy elements in the figure below. Reviewing all four dimensions of food security namely availability, access, utilization, and stability is beyond the scope of current policy view. I have confined my discussion only to food availability aspect of National Food Security Policy Document, with a focus on the question of diversification i.e. are we diversifying from food crops like wheat, maize, cotton to other cash crops like sugarcane and cotton?

Pakistan has been ranked 88 out of 132 countries with a score of 24.6 in the Global Hunger Index 2020. The Slough hunger is decreasing overtime, as it can be seen in figure 2, in terms of its ranking Pakistan is doing worse than most other countries. Hence food insecurity is an important issue for Pakistan.

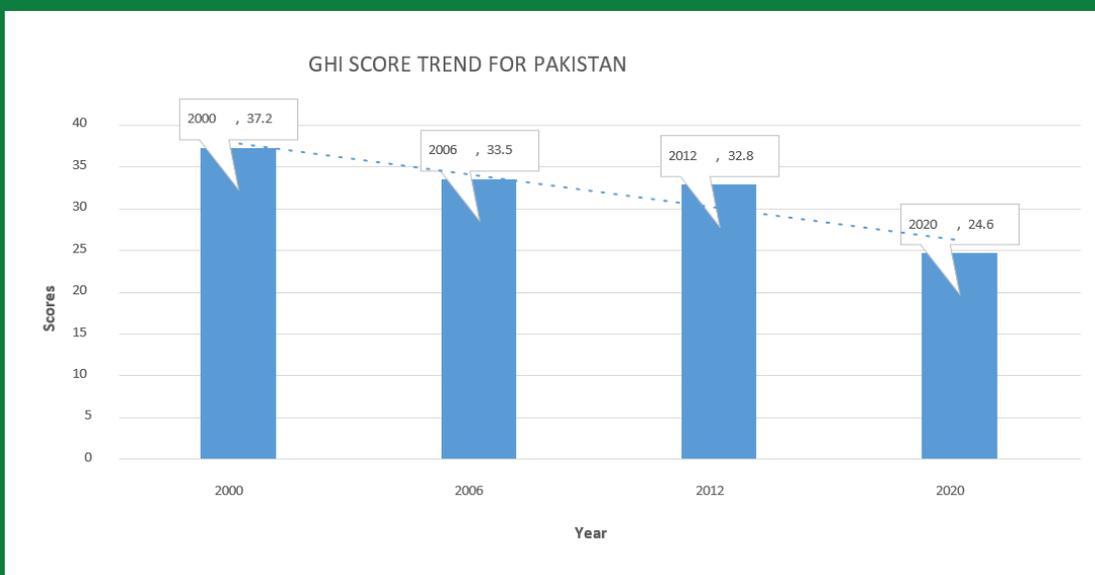
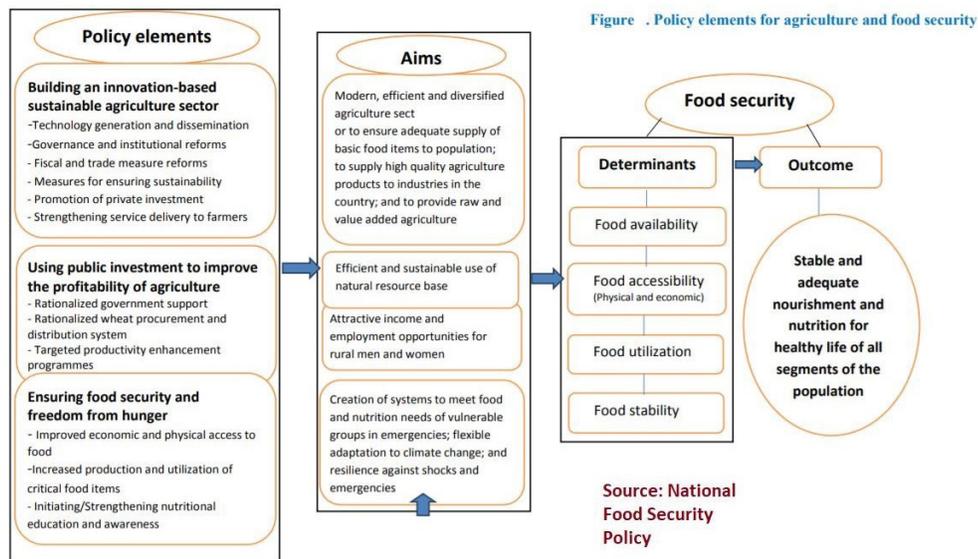


Figure 1: Pakistan's National Food Security Policy (2017) Document and Global Hunger Index - Overview

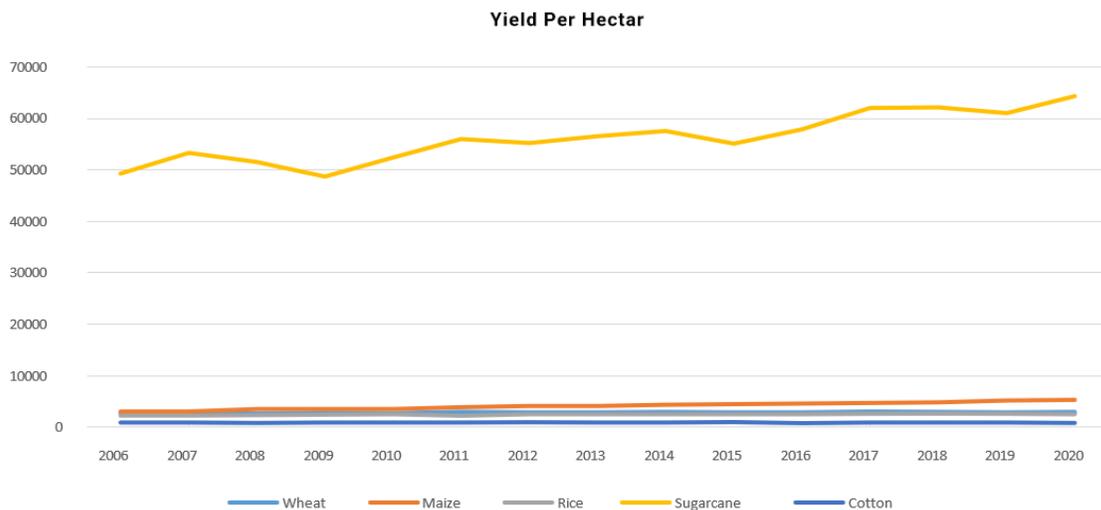


## DIVERSIFICATION IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION- KEY PATTERNS

Although yield per hectare is much higher for sugarcane has been increasing over time, we did see marginal changes in its share crop wise composition. On the other hand, we do see the production of cotton going down and maize slightly gaining the space left by cotton. From patterns below, it is very clear that Pakistan is still continuing with the policy of holding on to production of staple food crops.

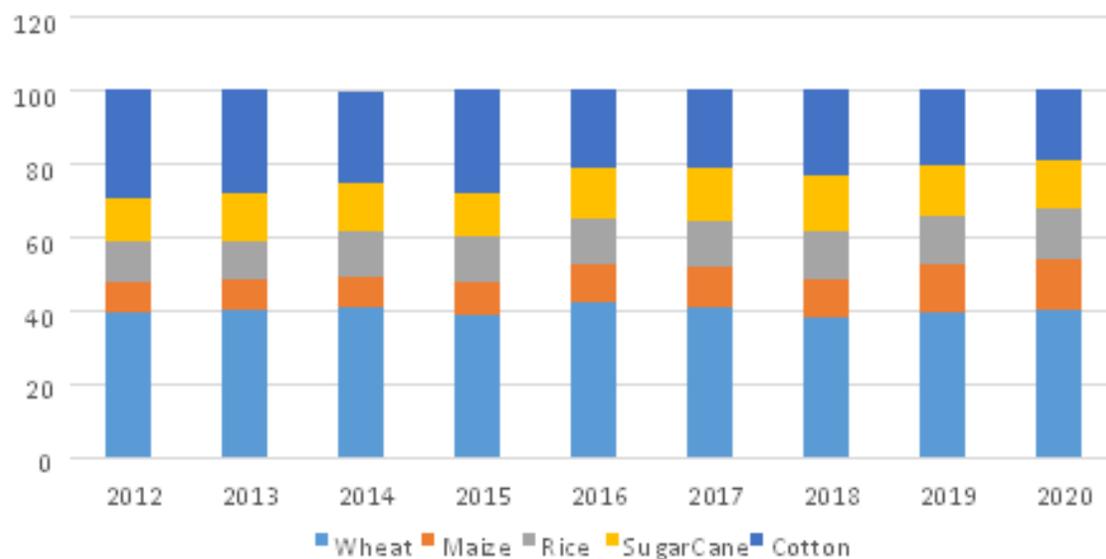
## CONCLUSION

From our investigation into one of the policy objectives of Pakistan's National Food Security Policy (2017), we can conclude that Pakistan should diversify its product mix to high-value crops non-food crops like sugarcane. However, our results show that the crop production of rice and wheat are very stable over time, whereas maize is gaining crop production space from cotton. Such outcome can be the aftermath of the textile industry's failure post energy crisis of 2007-08 or it can could reflect the better and profitable maize variety that Pakistan has produced genetically. However, in terms of sugarcane, we see patterns marginally increasing and decreasing but we do not see a major shift from wheat, rice, and maize to sugarcane production despite its higher yield.



Source Economic Survey of Pakistan 2019-20

### CROP WISE COMPOSITION OF OUTPUT OF IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL CROPS (% Share)



Source Economic Survey of Pakistan 2019-20

## REFERENCES

Joshi, P. K., Gulati, A., & Cummings, R. W. (Eds.). (2007). *Agricultural diversification and smallholders in South Asia*. Academic Foundation.

Qureshi, M., Ghani, E., Din, M. U., & Qadir, U. (2019). 1 Vulnerability in Food Supply and Food Access—Evidence from ECO Region.