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Food Security, Poverty Reduction and Gender Changes of Food Habits in Sudan

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Abstract

What is food? In biological terms human beings could eat all natural products which are not poisoned. But there are many differences between the various types of food people consume in different societies all over the world. In some societies specific types of food are eaten in other these particular food is taboo.

Thus food is more than its pure nutritional values in a biological sense. For human societies is it important to define the categories of eatable and avoidable food. Thus, cultural factors are not of less importance than biological considerations and the availability of food in general. Furthermore people don't eat natural products but meals which are prepared in a particular culturally accepted way. In addition, the eating habits are related to particular cultural norms.

Therefore, the preparation and eating of different meals are cultural performances. Food is directly related to culture and differs from society to society. We find differences not only in the so called eating cultures of different regions but at the same time in one society. Class, gender and age difference have to be taken into account. At the same time we find differences in one household when we look at the hierarchies of household members and gender roles. Even concepts and functions of kitchens and private spaces are influenced not only by ecological factors but furthermore by specific socio-cultural, economic, political and legal principles. Some of the relevant factors are: Access to resources, income, rules and regulations.

General statistics on food availability don't offer information about the real food situation, like the access to food of different regions, households and individuals, because these general statistics don't consider socio-cultural contexts. National food security does not only rely on the amount of food, but also on the purchasing power and capacities (like access to fuel wood, water, cooking utensils) to prepare meals out of raw products under the consideration of particular local socio-cultural concepts.

Keywords: Culture, food, gender, local knowledge