

Assessing Resilience of Household Food Security in Zambia

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Traditionally, food security research tends to focus on reducing future likelihoods to experience food inadequacy, i.e. vulnerability thinking. Recently, focus has been shifted toward building a food system that can withstand shocks without losing its main function, i.e. resilience thinking. The two concepts are not opposite but interlinked. A shift from vulnerability reducing thinking toward resilience enhancing thinking, though subtle on a surface, implies a much greater efforts demanded on all parties involved in manifesting a food secured system. Such shift in perspective is analogous to a psychological shift of sport players from playing not to lose toward playing to win. It is argued in this study that combining vulnerability and resilience indicators will provide richer insights for adaptive responses and managements.

Early resilience research defines resilience as recovery time after perturbations. In actuality, the resilience as returning times after perturbation posts a practical difficulty in that it cannot be assessed independently of manifested disturbances. Its retroactive nature makes the short-run resilient concept less useful for utilizations as policy tools to guide anticipatory responses to future shocks. In this study, we define resilience as capacity to absorb shocks, capacity to adapt and capacity to learn, innovate and transform. Under what may be called a long-run resilient perspective, we use a latent variable approach to measure social-ecological resilience to food insecurity as proposed by Luca Alinovi and others of the FAO. Factors associated with resilient food system are identified and utilized to quantify latent values of resilience scores in a two step procedures. The resilience scores were subsequently mapped out to identify weak resilience regions. Causes of low resilience to food insecurity were also determined. Policy implications for enhancing resilience to food insecurity among the vulnerable groups and areas were discussed.

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