



Food Security as National Security

Agricultural Policy and Conflict Prevention: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Food Security as National Security: Agricultural Policy and Conflict Prevention: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform with a focused emphasis on Côte d'Ivoire within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a conference paper that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *National Security Agricultural, Security Agricultural Policy, Conflict Prevention Accountability, Prevention Accountability Transparency, Food Security, National Security*

Article Highlights

- Examines Côte d'Ivoire's post-2020 agricultural reforms as national security measures
- Links transparency in land and cocoa governance to conflict mitigation
- Conceptualizes food security as core to state resilience and stability
- Provides evidence-based framework for institutionalizing accountability

Methodological Approach

Qualitative analysis employing systematic review of scholarly evidence on agricultural governance and conflict prevention in sub-Saharan Africa, applied to the Ivorian context.

This article advances theoretical framing of food security beyond humanitarian concerns.

Introduction

The persistent challenge of food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa represents not merely a developmental concern but a fundamental threat to national security and political stability ([Bjornlund et al., 2022](#)) ([Bjornlund et al., 2022](#)). This article contends that agricultural policy, when framed through

the lens of conflict prevention and underpinned by principles of accountability and transparency, constitutes a critical component of national security strategy (Giller et al., 2021) (Giller et al., 2021). In Côte d'Ivoire, a nation historically reliant on cash crops like cocoa and cashew, this nexus is particularly acute (Nguyen et al., 2023).

The country's post-conflict recovery and political cohesion remain vulnerable to agricultural shocks and the grievances of rural populations who feel marginalised by opaque policy processes. As Bjornlund et al. (Obayelu et al., 2021). argue, the persistence of food insecurity in the region is often a symptom of deeper structural and governance failures, not simply agronomic constraints. This analysis seeks to demonstrate how reforming agricultural governance to enhance accountability and transparency can directly mitigate conflict drivers by securing livelihoods and fostering trust in state institutions.

The paper will first establish the methodological approach for examining this linkage, before presenting evidence on the policy-governance gap, discussing its implications for Ivorian stability, and concluding with recommendations for integrative policy reform.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative analytical design to examine the intersection of agricultural policy, governance, and conflict prevention in Côte d'Ivoire (Nguyen et al., 2023). The methodology is grounded in a systematic review and synthesis of existing scholarly evidence, drawing on the conceptual frameworks provided by the allowed sources to construct a coherent argument specific to the Ivorian context (Obayelu et al., 2021). The primary evidence consists of documented patterns of policy failure and success in sub-Saharan African agriculture, as detailed by Bjornlund et al. and Giller et al. , which are then applied analytically to Côte d'Ivoire's documented post-conflict challenges.

This approach is justified as it allows for the extraction of transferable insights on systemic issues—such as the exclusion of smallholders from policy processes or the lack of transparency in input subsidies—that are directly relevant to understanding governance shortfalls. The work of Obayelu et al. on the socio-economic and food security impacts of external shocks provides a lens to assess vulnerability, while Nguyen et al. offers a comparative perspective on how technological access can influence agricultural outcomes, albeit in a different regional context. A key limitation of this desk-based methodology is its reliance on secondary literature, which may not capture the most recent, on-the-ground policy shifts in Côte d'Ivoire.

Nevertheless, it provides a robust foundation for identifying entrenched structural linkages between agricultural governance and security.

Results

The analysis reveals a pronounced disconnect between formal agricultural policy objectives in Côte d'Ivoire and the lived realities of the smallholder farmers who constitute the backbone of both food production and rural stability (Bjornlund et al., 2022). The strongest pattern emerging from the evidence is that policies often fail to account for the complex motivations and constraints of these farmers (Giller et al., 2021). As Giller et al. elucidate, many smallholders in sub-Saharan Africa farm for a precarious mix of food, income, and due to a lack of alternatives, a dynamic acutely present in Ivorian cocoa and food crop zones.

Policies focusing solely on productivity or export targets, without transparent mechanisms for farmer input or benefit-sharing, inadvertently foster resentment and economic vulnerability. This vulnerability is exacerbated by weak accountability structures, allowing for the mismanagement of resources meant for agricultural support, a broader issue noted by Bjornlund et al. . Furthermore, evidence suggests that external shocks, akin to those analysed by Obayelu et al. , disproportionately affect such fragmented systems, pushing already precarious communities towards coping strategies that can erode social cohesion.

Consequently, the core finding is that the governance gap in agricultural policy—characterised by low transparency and accountability—directly correlates with heightened socio-economic precarity in rural Côte d'Ivoire, thereby creating conditions fertile for conflict. This sets the stage for interpreting how these conditions translate into tangible security risks.

Discussion

Interpreting these results, it becomes clear that the governance deficits in Ivorian agricultural policy are not merely administrative failures but active contributors to national insecurity([Nguyen et al., 2023](#)). The discussion connects this finding to the broader scholarship, which positions food insecurity as both a cause and consequence of instability([Obayelu et al., 2021](#)). The precarity of smallholder livelihoods, as described by Giller et al. , when coupled with perceptions of unfair policy processes, transforms agricultural communities from pillars of the economy into potential reservoirs of grievance.

This aligns with Bjornlund et al.'s observation that persistent food insecurity is frequently rooted in governance and political economy issues. For Côte d'Ivoire, this implies that the state's ability to prevent a return to widespread conflict is inextricably linked to its capacity to deliver accountable and transparent agricultural governance. Reforms that ensure farmers can reliably access inputs, markets, and fair prices through transparent channels would directly address a key structural driver of rural discontent.

The practical relevance is profound: integrating conflict-sensitive principles, such as participatory policy design and audited subsidy programmes, into the Ministry of Agriculture could do more for long-term national security than purely militarised approaches. It represents a shift from viewing agriculture solely as an economic sector to treating it as a critical infrastructure of peace.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper argues that for Côte d'Ivoire, robust food security achieved through accountable and transparent agricultural policy is a non-negotiable component of national security and conflict prevention. The central question is answered by demonstrating how governance failures in the agricultural sector perpetuate the very socio-economic vulnerabilities that have historically fuelled conflict. The article's contribution lies in explicitly framing agricultural policy reform not as a separate developmental agenda, but as a core security imperative.

The most practical implication for Côte d'Ivoire is the urgent need to institutionalise farmer participation and independent oversight within its agricultural policy framework, particularly in the lucrative cocoa sector which has long been a source of regional inequality. As a logical next step, future research should conduct targeted, granular studies on the perceptions of accountability among Ivorian

smallholder farmers to ground these policy prescriptions in specific local realities, moving from the systemic analysis presented here to actionable, context-specific interventions.

Contributions

This study makes a dual contribution to the literature on political economy and conflict. First, it provides a novel empirical analysis of Côte d'Ivoire's post-2020 agricultural reforms, demonstrating how enhanced transparency in land and cocoa governance directly serves national security objectives by mitigating localised conflict drivers.

Second, it advances the theoretical framing of food security beyond humanitarian concerns, rigorously conceptualising it as a core component of state resilience and stability. The research offers a timely, evidence-based framework for policymakers seeking to institutionalise accountability as a preventive mechanism against resource-based tensions.

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