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"The 29 countries where the EBRD operates, especially the big three grain producers, Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, have some of the greatest potential to increase food production globally." - Thomas Mirow, President of EBRD, in Financial Times, June 23rd 2011.

The Challenge

Food security, next to climate change, has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century. The Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, adopted in 2009 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its member states, warned that the “number of people suffering from hunger and poverty now exceeds 1 billion”. The Summit further informed that global agricultural output must increase by at least 70% between now and 2050 to feed the burgeoning world population, estimated to top 9 billion that year according to UN projections.1 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon’s Zero Hunger Challenge, launched at the Rio+20 meeting in 2012, likewise conceived food security a “top priority”. The fundamental right to food was also stipulated in the Rio+20 outcome document.

While the international community has been successful in reducing extreme poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals in this respect, progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition has been slower. The ambitious goals set for 2015 in this area – to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger – are unlikely to be met.2 The global trend of rising food prices, a consequence of growing food demand and slow supply growth, further impedes progress towards universal food security. In consequence, 25,000 people and more than 10,000 children die of hunger and associated diseases around the world every day. And between 2010 and 2012 alone more than 870 million people faced famine.

Being one of the world’s leading exporters of grain and flour, Kazakhstan is rising to the challenge. Promotion of food security is an integral part of President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, outlined in his annual state of the nation address on December 15th, 2012, and one of ten global challenges that the country proactively seeks to address.3 The extent of this commitment is not limited to merely

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3 Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N.Nazarbayev, “Strategy Kazakhstan-2050: new political course of the established state”, December 14 2012. Available at:
raising food production capacity and ensuring national self-sufficiency, which has been expressed in such initiatives as the $116 million allocated to a domestic Kazakh Food Security Fund, but to expanding agricultural exports, meeting regional and global demand, and playing a leading role multilaterally on these questions.

Kazakhstan’s Capacities in Promoting Food Security

Occupying a territory equivalent to the size of Western Europe and with agricultural land making up around 80% of the country, Kazakhstan’s capacities in promoting regional and global food security are substantial. The availability of 1.5 hectares of arable land per inhabitant is the second highest in the world, and Kazakhstan consistently ranks among the world’s ten largest wheat exporters.\(^4\) It was the sixth largest in 2011-2012 when Kazakhstan’s bumper crop of nearly 27 million tons of grain allowed for 15 million tons of exports.\(^5\) The World Food Program concluded that “wheat markets in northern Kazakhstan and the Punjab area of Pakistan are key markets to watch in relation to regional wheat market dynamics and regional wheat availability.”\(^6\)

Kazakhstan’s challenges upon Independence in 1991 – including transitioning from a planned to a market economy – were immense, and the agricultural sector was not an exception to this rule. Still, value added per agricultural worker has nearly doubled from $1,000 in 1995 to almost $2,000 in 2010, which attests to genuine progress in overcoming the challenges of independent statehood.\(^7\) Moreover, per capita food production in Kazakhstan increased by 4.8% annually between 2000 and 2011 – the third biggest per capita increase in FAO’s Europe and Central Asia region. This is all the more significant since this administrative region outpaced all other FAO regions worldwide in per capita food production growth over this period. Particularly rapid growth was seen in cereals, in which crop per capita production surged by 6.4% annually in Kazakhstan from 2000 to 2011, second only to Ukraine.\(^8\) Consequently, in 2012 Kazakhstan’s agricultural exports increased by 60%, totalling $3.128 billion, compared to the preceding year, and grain exports in 2013-2014 rose by 25% from the year before.\(^9\)

Such expanding production has enabled Kazakhstan to promote food security, not only at home but among its neighbors and regions further afield. For example,


Tajikistan depends on Kazakhstan for 90% of its imported wheat, with no less than 45% of Kazakh wheat destined for Central Asian markets in 2014. Today, Kazakhstan is diversifying grain exports beyond the CIS area and new trading partners are emerging in China, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, particularly in Iran.

To further this export-oriented trend, steps have been taken to raise agricultural production by investing in technology and science. Starting in 2013, the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture began reforming the system of agricultural science by developing a National Agricultural Research and Educational Complex comprising the Joint Stock Company KazAgroInnovation, agrarian universities, and others. In addition, requisite legislation has been enacted for implementation of the AgroBusiness 2020 program, designed to ease business in the agricultural sector. Kazakhstan also hosts the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC), an intergovernmental organization connecting scientists from the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with their peers in the EU, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway and the United States, facilitating joint work in such critical areas as biosafety and biosecurity. These initiatives together with Kazakhstan’s substantial agricultural base naturally endow the country to be a key player in promoting food security in its neighbourhood and beyond.

Kazakhstan: Central Asia’s Breadbasket

Kazakhstan’s largest footprint in addressing the challenges of food security is undoubtedly in Central Asia and Afghanistan, though not limited to this region. Being the largest donor among the Central Asian states, Astana has since 2006 provided more than $60 million in humanitarian aid, a sizeable share of which has been allocated to Afghanistan and also neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and nearby Tajikistan. For example, from 2009 to 2011 Kazakhstan provided $5 million for projects in Afghanistan related to water supply, infrastructure development, and delivery of grains and other commodities. Grain, flour, and food products have also been delivered to Afghanistan under the FAO’s and WFP’s procurement programs, the latter of which considered Kazakhstan one of the most important grain suppliers to Afghanistan in 2011.

This year, 2014, the government of Kazakhstan has set aside $2 million worth of food supplies to Afghanistan from its national food reserve, including 1,266 tons of wheat.

11“Kazakhstan Diversifying Grain Export Destinations,” Times of Central Asia, April 14 2014.
flour, 1,000 tons of sugar, and butter amounting to 189 tons. Beyond humanitarian aid, Kazakhstan is also exporting food supplies to Afghanistan. In the summer of 2013, for example, fourteen companies visited Afghanistan as part of USAID’s Regional Economic Cooperation project, resulting in trade deals worth $7 million, including among them $2 million of flour, $650,000 of vegetable oil, and $300,000 worth of medicines.

Humanitarian and food assistance programs in the neighboring states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan deserve equal recognition. In 2012 Kazakhstan delivered 80,000 liters of vegetable oil and 120 tons of wheat flour to Tajikistan, while two years earlier Kazakhstan extended 3,700 tons of diesel gas to support Kyrgyzstan’s agriculture and spring sowing, worth approximately $1.93 million. Added to this should be the provision of 4,000 tons of rice to Kyrgyzstan starting in 2010, valued at around $3.52 million, as well as buckwheat, canned meat, flour, and other food products to a total value of $7 million. Such assistance is also visible at a global level. One could cite, for instance, the 5,000 tons of Kazakh food aid delivered to Turkey after its devastating earthquake in 2011, as well as similar donations to Serbia and other countries.

Kazakhstan recognizes food insecurity as interrelated with poverty, illiteracy, dilapidating infrastructure and other problems facing the developing world. Thus, from 2010 to 2014 Kazakhstan sponsored scholarships worth $50 million for one thousand Afghans receiving education in Kazakh universities, including students of agricultural science. No less significant, the Kazakh government has donated to Afghanistan a MI-171 airplane (to use for humanitarian cargo and rescue operations in Afghanistan), an IL-76 (for transporting humanitarian aid cargo from the United Arab Emirates to Afghanistan within the UN World Food Program), and other transport-related and infrastructural aid.

While Kazakhstan considers domestic food security and bilateral assistance essential, the complex nature of the problem requires multilateral solutions beyond recipient and donor. As stated by Mr. Akan Rakhmetullin, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations:

“While we consider that fulfilling food security is part and parcel of national responsibility, we are also convinced that, considering the complex and inter-linked nature of food security, multilateral cooperation and action should be the integral elements to overcome...”

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Hence, Kazakhstan has been determined to lead on these issues by establishing multilateral institutions on food security comprising regional states and by cooperating closely with external donors.

**Taking the Lead: The OIC Food Security Fund and Cooperation with Other Donors**

One such Kazakh multilateral initiative is the launch in 2011 of a Food Security Fund within the framework of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Pioneered by Kazakhstan and headquartered in Astana, the OIC Food Security Fund aims to “develop a system of mutual food assistance within the OIC [and] include the possibility of creating a pool of food in the interested states.” A Statute of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) was drawn up to this effect at the 40th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in December 2013, with Kazakhstan as founding member and encompassing Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Iran, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, Turkey, Uganda, and the Union of Comoros. By providing concerted expertise on sustainable agriculture, rural development, and mobilizing financial resources for developing agriculture, IOFS aspires to become a leading agency in meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals among participating states, and assist in the quick distribution and redistribution of reasonably priced food.

Next to this initiative, Kazakhstan has teamed up with other external donors and multilateral organizations to promote food security. For example, in 2013 USAID, UNDP, and Kazakhstan launched a Wheat and Central Asia Food Security initiative aimed at improving the resilience of Kazakhstan’s wheat sector and facilitating a regional dialogue around the impact of climate change on Central Asian food security. Food security is also an integral part of the U.S.-Kazakhstan Strategic

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Partnership and bilateral consultations were held in February 2012 on the matter between the U.S. and Kazakh foreign ministers.\textsuperscript{28}

On May 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2013, Kazakhstan, China, and Indonesia jointly prepared a number of considerations related to food security for the deliberations on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals in New York. They were presented by the Kazakh Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations at the Open Working Group Meeting, who spoke on the troika’s behalf. Among other issues, their joint statement highlighted the need to revisit “the key structural issues that determine global food security”, especially increasing access to advanced research and technology; promoting trade and investment in ensuring food security; and addressing environmental-related challenges in causing global food crises.\textsuperscript{29} Kazakhstan’s aspiration to contribute solutions to UN-wide projects on food security also extends to local Central Asian collaborative initiatives, for example, in the planned establishment of KazAID international aid agency and in the bid to make the southern Kazakh city of Almaty a regional UN diplomacy hub.

\textbf{KazAID and Almaty as a UN Regional Diplomacy Hub}

Kazakhstan is today an upper-middle-income country with per capita GDP in 2013 approximating $13,000. Kazakhstan’s rapid economic growth, averaging more than 10% from 2000-2007, has enabled the country to become an important donor in its own right. During the presentation of the 2013 Human Development Report, Kazakhstan announced that it was working to create an agency for official development assistance, KazAID. Envisioned to coordinate and implement the republic’s development aid, KazAID will be established in parallel to a Regional Center of Multilateral Diplomacy in Almaty which will “enhance the cooperation in Central Asia and bring the neighbouring countries and regions into the orbit of development assistance.”\textsuperscript{30} Kazakhstan has also expressed its readiness to provide active support to the UN’s Almaty office to strengthen its regional presence and expand its project activities.\textsuperscript{31} The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), for its part, has expressed the need to reinforce “Kazakhstan’s role of a regional leader in responding to emergencies and providing humanitarian aid to the region and worldwide.”\textsuperscript{32} Using Almaty as a United Nations regional diplomacy hub, and the planned establishment of KazAID, clearly provides synergies that would directly and tangibly benefit the food situation in Central Asia and facilitate coordinated responses to other interrelated developmental challenges.

\textsuperscript{31} Interfax Kazakhstan, July 10 2011.
Remaining Challenges

Addressing the nation in 2014, President Nazarbayev set out an ambitious program to improve agricultural efficiency to further enhance food security in Kazakhstan and beyond, focusing particularly on the vital contribution of the private sector. The program corresponds with recommendations of the EBRD and other multilateral development agencies to national governments, who all duly emphasize the importance of market transparency, better risk management technology, and greater public-private policy coordination to address remaining challenges in assuring world food security.³³

While the World Food Program today categorizes Kazakhstan as a country with “limited government intervention in the grain market”,³⁴ the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy aims to further progress achieved thus far. In the realm of food security, the strategy rests on four pillars: first, to attract investments and advanced technology whereby “agricultural lands should be used by those who introduce new technologies, continuously improve productivity, and perform on the basis of the best international standards.” Second, to develop an effective land market and achieve transparent pricing mechanisms, removing barriers that impede business development in agriculture, farmers’ cooperation and efficient land use. Third, to promote loans to farmers and small and medium-sized businesses in parallel to the creation of an effective system of guarantees and insurance of loans to rural producers. And fourth, to strengthen the country’s role as a major regional exporter of meat, dairy and farming products.³⁵

The joint venture established between Global Beef Consultants LLC of the U.S. State of North Dakota and the Kazakh government is one example of how this vision is being realized. Since 2010, the $50 million joint venture has imported 2,040 Angus and Hereford cattle from North Dakota – a figure set to reach 40,000 – and Kazakhstan is now the fourth largest importer of North Dakota products, principally in farm machinery. The State government of North Dakota has opened a trade office in Kazakhstan and its Kazakh counterpart is actively seeking additional agricultural investors in the U.S., for instance by allocating long-term, 10-year leases of land. Modern technologies are being brought to Kazakhstan as a result of this openness to foreign investment.³⁶

The steps outlined by President Nazarbayev will serve to reinforce Kazakhstan’s capacity in promoting food security at home as well as among its neighbours, allow Astana to continue to lead multilaterally on the issue in collaboration with other donors, endow KazAID with the means to realize its mission, and position Kazakhstan as one of the countries of the world with the greatest potential to increase food production globally. In that capacity, Kazakhstan aspires to become a

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key player in meeting the urgent needs of hunger and malnutrition expressed two years ago in Rio.
In September 2013, Kazakhstan announced its bid to secure a seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in the years 2017/18.

As a regional leader and global partner in matters of energy security, and a valuable contributor to international peacekeeping missions, Kazakhstan wishes to bring its unique experience and expertise to bear on some of the pressing challenges currently facing the UNSC.

Its bid is based on four central pillars: food security, water security, energy security and nuclear security.

KazakhstanUNSC.com, its publications, and its occasional newsletters and bulletins aim to set out, in clear and concise terms, the main policy priorities of Kazakhstan’s UNSC bid. The multilingual website also supplies details of political, economic and social developments inside Kazakhstan and about its international foreign policy initiatives.

Kazakhstan has the experience, political will and resources to make a valuable contribution to the global challenges faced by the UNSC. It is fully engaged in its commitment to assume such responsibilities on the Security Council.

Home to over 130 different ethnic groups, Kazakhstan is nothing less than a microcosm of the United Nations. In the spirit of a committed and principled partner in the family of nations, the Republic of Kazakhstan has announced its bid to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in the years 2017/18.

Subscribe here for all the latest news, publications and developments relating to the bid.