FOOD AND FOREIGN POLICY
Options for the UAE and Other Import-dependent Countries

Food has become a central area of 21st century foreign policy. A large number of countries depend on global food markets, which are increasingly under pressure.

Similarly to its neighbours, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is highly dependent on food imports. It relies heavily on a trade-based approach to food security, buttressed by oil income-enabled fiscal reserves.

For import-dependent countries like the UAE, food security policies need to have a strong focus on the external, alongside the domestic, side. Domestic production, even if socially and psychologically important, provides less than 10% of the country’s food supply.

The UAE has taken a number of steps to support national food security, including fiscal measures, strategic reserves, overseas agro-investments and contingency planning.

GLOBAL FOOD MARKET DRIVERS

Key drivers and factors creating pressures and uncertainties for the global food production system include:

- Population growth and rising living standards
- Extent of land availability and pace of efficiency improvements
- Concentration of main commodity exporters
- Environmental change (incl. climate change)

EXTERNAL FOOD SECURITY POLICY OPTIONS

The best-known external food security policy options include foreign investments, preferential trade agreements, strategic reserves and securing vital trade routes. Additional options exist:

- Promoting an international regulatory environment favourable to a country’s food security interests
- Supporting regional cooperation on food security
- Managing bilateral ties: balancing trade & diversifying partners, including through agro-investments
- Considering food trade & investments in a broader foreign policy framework
- Taking a more strategic approach to food security in foreign policy
- Considering food-related development assistance in a broader foreign policy framework

TAKING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO FOOD AND FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy can play a role in supporting a country’s food security strategy and vice versa. Taking a strategic approach to food in foreign relations can support other domestic and foreign policy goals, including economic growth and diversification, and a stable regional environment. Such an approach should be underpinned by a broad, unified and coherent national food governance model and policy.