



*Review*

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## MIGRATION FLOWS AS A FACTOR, AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY

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### ABSTRACT

The report explores various aspects of the influence of migration flows on food security. It begins by examining the definition and causes of migration and focuses on the origins and nature of migration flows to EU member states. The report assesses both positive and negative effects of migration on recipient countries, particularly its impact on food balance and food security. It also discusses the regulation of migration flows and risk management.

Highlighting the importance of the analysis of migration flows, the report addresses the challenges associated with managing risks related to migration and food security. It suggests effective policy measures to mitigate these risks. Notably, migration flows can contribute to population growth in certain areas, leading to increased food demand and potential strains on existing food systems.

To address these challenges, the report emphasizes the need for enhanced cooperation between countries. This involves sharing information, adopting best practices, establishing robust regulatory mechanisms, coordinating humanitarian aid, and establishing networks for swift crisis response.

The aim of the present study is to underscore the importance of understanding the interplay between migration flows and food security. It advocates for access to safe and nutritionally balanced food for the most vulnerable segments of society.

**Key words:** Food security, migration flows, hunger, food systems, food safety, analysis, preventive activities.

### INTRODUCTION

The choice of the present topic stems from the conviction that in the sphere of food security it is crucial to understand the issues related to migration processes, both from a local and a global perspective. Their correlation with other factors, connected to various aspects of national security, involving the roles and significance of governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, international bodies, and the private sector, is decisive in shaping a targeted and consistent policy within the security system. This topic seems somewhat neglected by both state and non-governmental organizations, including those dedicated to migrant rights.

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### A FEW WORDS ON MIGRATION

The observed continuous increase in the movement of significant masses of people over the past decade, the spread of this phenomenon across the old continent, the looming long-term nature of migration processes, the continuing low level of preparedness to cope with it on the part of both European and national institutions, and the lack of in-depth analyses of possible consequences on the national security system, including food security, are just some of the reasons underscoring not only the relevance, but also the importance of the chosen topic.

When discussing migration and its impact on food security, a clarification of this concept is eminent. What is the definition of migration? Britannica defines migration as “*the regular, usually seasonal, movement of all or part of an animal population to and from a given area*” (1).

The Dawn Journal, a peer-reviewed online journal, defines migration as “*the displacement of the individual from its own country to a strange one*” (2). Introduction to Human Geography, a textbook published by Pressbooks, defines migration as “*the physical movement of people from one place to another; it may be over long distances, such as moving from one country to another, and can occur as individuals, family units, or large groups*” (3). There are many variations of the definition of migration, but in the author's opinion, the best and most comprehensive definition is provided by the Oxford Academic English Dictionary: “*The movement of large numbers of people, birds or animals from one place to another*” (4). It is also important to clarify the definition of *food security*, which is a multidimensional concept encompassing the availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food resources to ensure a consistent and nutritious diet for individuals and communities. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations defines *food security* as existing “*when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*” (FAO, 1996) (5).

The ongoing destabilization processes in Africa, the Middle East, and, in recent years, Latin America and even Europe have given rise to a continuously increasing migration flows, posing a threat to global food security.

The topic, related to the impact of migration flows on food security remains a relevant and highly interesting for both the scientific community and policymakers, as well as for society in general. The impact of migration on food security is a complex and multi-layered process that affects both the source countries of migration and the receiving countries. Some key areas where these processes have a direct impact include:

**Demographic changes:** Migration can lead to significant demographic changes in receiving countries. If these changes are not effectively and efficiently managed, they can negatively impact food security. The increase in population due to intensified migration pressure can place additional burdens on agriculture and the food system of the affected country.

**Sustainability of Agriculture:** Migration can have a negative impact on the sustainability of agriculture in both donor and receiving countries. The departure of labour from the agriculture sector in donor countries can negatively affect food production and food security. Conversely, the inability of incoming migrants to access employment in the receiving country, the lack of effective integration mechanisms, and other factors can lead to serious food insecurity with all its resulting consequences.

**Climate change and conflicts:** Climate change and conflicts are key factors with the potential to trigger large migration waves. The increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons due to climatic disasters or conflicts can pose significant challenges to the receiving countries.

Understanding and addressing the intricate relationship between migration flows and food security is essential for developing comprehensive and effective policies. As the global community faces these challenges, collaboration between nations, international organizations, and various stakeholders becomes paramount to ensuring food security on a global scale.

### **Origin and Nature of Migration Flows to EU+ Member States**

The new millennium began with an unexpected and, to some extent, surprising phenomenon in terms of both scale and speed of development – migration pressure. While the movement of global human masses from one place to another is not a novel phenomenon and has existed throughout human history, the events in this sphere over the past fifteen years caught us unprepared (6, 16). Over a short period of time, international migration has become a global issue, occupying a significant place on the world agenda. In its latest Annual Report for 2022 on international migration in 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) notes with concern that the number of international migrants worldwide continues to grow, reaching 281 million, and representing 3.6% of the global population (7). Compared to the figures of 258 million in 2017, 220 million migrants in 2010, and 173 million in 2000, this indicates a persistent upward trend, amounting to a substantial 62% increase over the entire period (7).

Finding suitable and profitable employment is the primary reason people migrate internationally, and migrant workers constitute a large majority of international migrants globally.

The second reason is the lack of security in certain regions of the world. The International Organization for Migration (IOM/IOM) estimates that in 2021 the global movement of people from one place to another reached a record high (7).

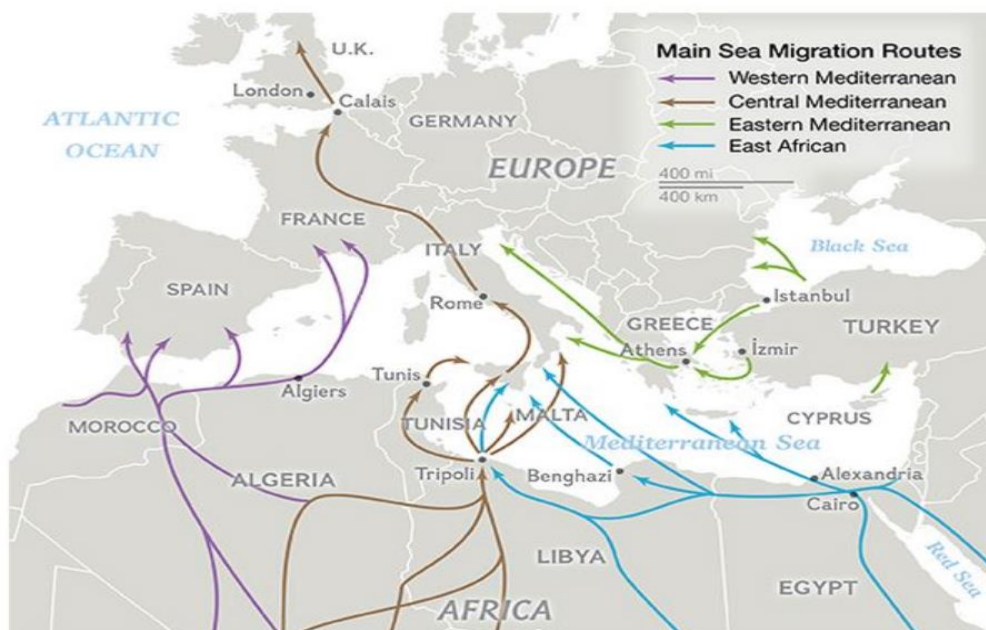
While many people migrate by choice, many others migrate out of necessity. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was 79.5 million at the end of 2019 (8). Of these, 26 million were refugees (20.4 million under the mandate of

UNHCR, 5.6 million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of UNRWA). 45.7 million were internally displaced, 4.2 million were asylum-seekers, and 3.6 million were Venezuelans displaced abroad. It should be noted that data on the consequences of the war in Ukraine, which also generated an unprecedented wave of refugees, have not yet been published. This will in no way change the above estimate but only confirm it.

According to UNHCR, as of 2020, the distribution of refugees by continents was as follows: Asia (39%), Africa (29%), Europe (17%), America (14%), and Oceania (1%). (3)

The main migration routes to Europe can be observed from the following graphics (**Figure 1**).

### Mediterranean Sea Route



**Figure 1.** Mediterranean Sea Route (20)

The Central and Western Mediterranean routes are mainly used by migrants from Africa who, via Italy and Spain, move to the desired destinations in Western Europe. Migrants from both Africa and the Middle East pass through the Eastern Mediterranean Route. As a rule, it is the most heavily burdened migration route (9), which impacts Italy, Greece, and Bulgaria. These countries, serving as external borders of the European Union, bear the brunt of the first and largest migration pressure. The primary flow of refugees to the Republic of Bulgaria arrives from the direction of Turkey and

consists mainly of residents from Central and Eastern Asian countries (**Figure 2**).

### Impact of Migration Flows on the Food Security System of Host Countries

Migration flows impact not only negatively the food security system of the receiving country, such as the Republic of Bulgaria, but also some EU member states. It is part of their national policy to address labour shortages in specific sectors or other issues by actively encouraging the intake of migrants from certain countries.

### Eastern Mediterranean Route

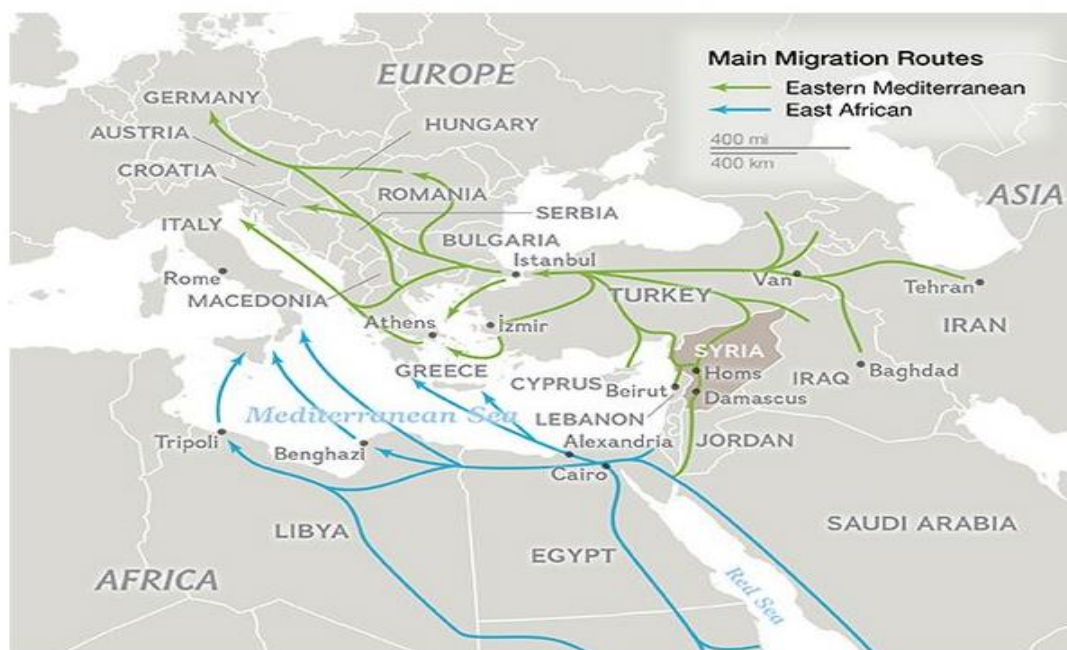


Figure 2. Eastern Mediterranean Route, (20)

The positive impact of migration flows (10, 15) on the food security system of receiving countries can be realized in several directions, such as:

**Increase in agricultural workforce:** Migrants could be engaged in agricultural and farming activities in the receiving countries (11). Their labour can be utilized to support food production, especially in areas with a demand for additional workers. This can contribute to increasing the productivity and efficiency of agricultural activities, consequently enhancing overall food security.

**Diversification of production and food base:** Migrants can bring in new knowledge, traditions, and experience in agriculture and the food industry of the receiving countries. This can lead to diversity in food production and an expansion of the country's food base. For instance, migrants with experience in growing specific types of fruits or vegetables can help broaden the range of available foods, improving nutritional diversity.

**Contribution to the economy (12):** Migrants can actively participate in the economy of the receiving country, leading to increased income and market opportunities. This can contribute to improving access to food (a crucial component of food security) and reducing poverty among

migrants and the population at large. The increased availability of labour can also encourage the development of agricultural enterprises and investments in agriculture.

Despite these potential benefits, it is important to note that the positive impact of migration flows on the food security system of receiving countries may be limited or accompanied by different challenges. Some of these challenges could include:

**Integration and access to resources:** Migrants, especially those without legal status in the receiving country, will inevitably face difficulties in their integration into the new community and in accessing resources, including land, capital, and information. This will limit their ability to develop agricultural activities or contribute to the food system of the receiving country.

**Competition and emergence of social tension:** Engaging migrants as a workforce can lead to competition for employment and confrontation between migrants and the local population (8). This can cause social tension and inequality, negatively impacting food security for both migrants and the local population.

**Potential changes in food consumption:**

Migration can alter the dietary preferences and food consumption in the receiving country. The need to cater to the new nutritional needs and preferences of migrants may lead to additional stress on the food system.

It is evident that migration flows can, to some extent, have a positive impact on elements of the food security system in receiving countries by increasing the workforce, diversifying production, and contributing to the economy. However, in such situations, it is crucial to understand and effectively manage the accompanying challenges related to the integration of migrants and competition in the domestic market (13).

The media and society primarily focus on the harm and negative impact of migrants who have settled in the host country. The following could be the negative aspects of the impact of migration flows on the food security system of the receiving countries:

**Vulnerability of the receiving country's food security:** A large number of migrants arriving in countries already vulnerable from a food security standpoint can result in additional strain on the food system. The host country may struggle to provide enough food for both migrants and the local population, posing a serious risk of social tension.

**Unbalanced resource consumption:** The significant influx of migrants may lead to a mismatch between available resources (such as land, water, fertilizers, etc.) and the needs for food production. This imbalance can strain natural resources, including water sources and soils, negatively affecting the food security of the receiving country.

**Economic pressure:** The large number of migrants can exert significant economic pressure on the host country, especially concerning social services and public assistance (14). This pressure may impose restrictions on investments and resources that are necessary to improve food security.

**Risk of conflicts and instability:** Massive migration flows can create tension and conflicts in host countries. Competition for limited resources, jobs, and social services may generate strife between migrants and the local population. These conflicts can negatively impact food security by disrupting the

production of locally traditional foods, access to markets, and the distribution of food resources.

**Insufficient infrastructure and resources:**

Welcoming a large number of migrants may overwhelm the infrastructure and resources of host countries. The lack of suitable agricultural infrastructure, water sources, storage facilities, and transportation to meet increased needs can hinder effective food production, storage, and distribution, leading to food insecurity.

**Risk of expanding unsustainable agricultural practices:**

In some cases, the increased demand for labour in agriculture may lead to the adoption of unsustainable and/or illegal farming practices. This could involve excessive use of pesticides and chemicals, unlawful land use, and a reduction in biodiversity. These practices may harm the environment and ecosystems, negatively impacting long-term food security.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

All these negative aspects individually or in interaction with each other pose serious challenges to the food security of the host countries and can lead to instability and vulnerability in the food balance. Therefore, it is crucial to implement strategies and policies aimed at an efficient and effective management of the migration flows and ensuring a sustainable food security system in the host countries. Some possible measures could include:

**Establishment and practical implementation of a comprehensive Integration and Support Program for Migrants in the host country:**

Creating mechanisms for the integration and support of migrants can help reduce social tension and conflicts, as well as enhance their opportunities for participation in agricultural activities and the food system. This may involve educational programs, training, access to credit and resources, as well as the protection of their rights.

**Ensuring necessary investments in agriculture and rural areas:**

Supporting the development of agriculture and infrastructure in rural areas can lead to increased productivity and, consequently, the sustainability of the host country's food system. Investments in modern technologies, innovative systems, and methods, coupled with an educational system that prepares a new type of workforce, will improve market access and contribute to the development of the agricultural sector.



**Supporting agricultural producers and small farmers:** Providing support and resources for local agricultural producers and small farmers can contribute to strengthening the food security system in host countries. This may involve training, technical assistance, financial support, and access to markets to help these producers stabilize, develop, and expand their activities.

**Implementing an integrated resource and environmental management system:** The goal is to ensure sustainable management of resources, including land, water, and energy. This can be achieved by promoting sustainable agricultural practices, caring for and preserving biodiversity, and addressing climate change. Integrated resource and environmental management can help maintain healthy and fertile soils, conserve water resources, and preserve biodiversity, which are crucial for food security.

**Improving information and monitoring systems:** Developing effective systems for collecting, analysing, and providing information on agriculture and food security will contribute to a better understanding and forecasting of needs and challenges in this area. As a result, it will lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness of the measures taken. This can support host countries in developing and implementing appropriate policies and actions.

**Promoting international cooperation:** Migration flows and food security are global challenges that require cooperation between countries. Supporting international cooperation and coordinating policies among EU member states and in collaboration with countries that are sources of migration flows, and with the assistance and interaction with other international bodies, can help successfully to address and cope with all challenges, and build sustainable food security systems.

**Maintaining a national migration management system:** Last but not least, following a comprehensive review, it is imperative to undertake a complete reorganization of the national system for managing migration processes. This system should possess the necessary human and material resources for monitoring, analysis, and management of migration flows, ensuring a timely, efficient, and adequate response in the event of a migration crisis.

All these measures and approaches should be implemented, considering the specific needs and capabilities of the host countries, taking into account economic, social, and environmental aspects. It is also crucial to ensure fair and equal treatment of migrants and to guarantee their integration into the host country, including its food system, through their active participation.

In conclusion, it is of utmost importance for the national authorities of the countries to possess the necessary potential and organization for managing migration risks, based on an understanding of the impact of migration flows on security, including food security. This ensures the country's readiness to meet the aforementioned challenges.

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