

# **Food and nutrition security and the economic crisis in Indonesia.**

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## **Abstract:**

Indonesia has been afflicted by an economic crisis since July 1997. The economic crisis was preceded by a long drought associated with El Nino. The result has been a decline in food production, especially rice. In the eastern part of the country, especially in Irian Jaya, there was food insecurity during the early stages of the economic crisis. When the crisis escalated to become an economic, social and political crisis in 1998, food insecurity spread to other provinces, especially to urban areas in Java. The crisis led to increasingly high inflation, unemployment, poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. The official figures indicate that poverty in Indonesia increased from 22.5 million (11.3%) in 1996 to 36.5 million (17.9%) in 1998. Food production decreased by 20-30% in some parts of the country. Compared with prices in January 1998, food prices had escalated 1.5- to threefold by August/November 1998 when acute food shortages occurred, especially in urban Java. Coupled with a drop in purchasing power, the higher food prices worsened health, nutritional status and education of children of urban poor and unemployed families. Despite social and political uncertainties, the Indonesian Government has taken prompt action to prevent a worsening of the situation by massive imports of rice, instituting food price subsidies for the poor and launching social safety net programmes to cope with food shortages and malnutrition. The present paper attempts to highlight the impact of the economic crisis on food insecurity and malnutrition in Indonesia.