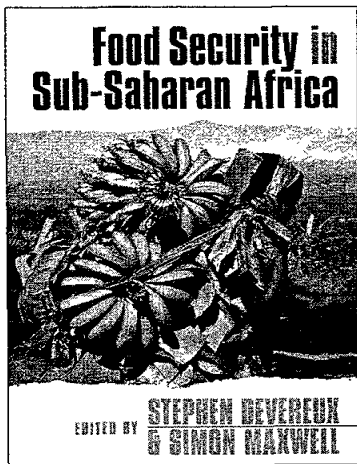




attention, as illustrated by the FAO conference on global food security which had been planned for the end of this year. This attention is much needed and particularly important for Africa, where poverty and hunger are getting worse compared with most other parts of the world, as is argued in this book. It discusses the evolution of thinking about food security and experience with targeted policy and planning. One sea change in approach has been the acceptance that lack of food is more a consequence of household level poverty than of inadequate production or availability. Policy and institutions are crucial for assuring food security, and fortunately there is room for optimism, with a series of West African countries improving greatly their performance. Dealing with food security essentially requires a multi-sectoral approach, in contrast to donor support programmes which are emphasising a sectoral approach. Most countries are now better

prepared logistically, to deal with disasters. Preventing food insecurity is, however, key and much still needs to be done while important challenges also lie ahead. Shocks to food supplies may become more severe if climate change starts to bring major changes to farming systems, and if violent conflict remains unchecked. The outcomes of globalisation and trade agreements for poorer, import dependent economies are uncertain, as are the effects of new technologies which may transform agriculture. Although agriculture will remain a core sector for food security, urban poverty is on the rise too, requiring a different approach. Effective solutions require policies that address the root causes of chronic food insecurity, which need to be based on evidence and understanding of poor people's livelihoods.

The Development Gateway has developed a useful site on food security with interactive features and searchable data by country:
<http://developmentgateway.org/all-topics>



Agro-Silvo-Pastoral Land Use in Sahelian Villages. *Advances in Geocology* 33. L. Stroosnijder and T. van Rheenen (eds.). 2001. Catena Verlag GMBH, Germany. ISBN: 3-923381-45-X. 408pp. To order, fax: +49.6408.64978 or email: catenaverl@aol.com

This book is a very important contribution to the on-going debate on the future of the Sahelian region, and whether its peoples and the livelihoods they pursue can adapt to declining rainfall and rising population levels. The popular perception of the Sahel by many policy makers, development workers and the wider community is of a region in continuing decline. Desertification and environmental degradation as a result of poor rainfall and inappropriate land use systems are widely believed to be irreversible, thus condemning the region to perpetual poverty and dependence on foreign assistance.

The results of ten years of detailed local level research in the Sahel and especially Burkina Faso by Wageningen University in partnership with the University of Ouagadougou within the *Antenne Sahélienne* programme challenges this doomsday view. The research sought to determine the conditions under which rural people are able and willing to improve the