Agriculture in South Sudan

Agriculture in South Sudan is one of the main economic factors in South Sudan. This is true, even with the rise of the oil industry and is largely due to S. Sudan having one of the largest pastoral populations in the world. South Sudan has over 300-400 million acres of fertile land. Agriculture employs over 80% of the work force and accounts for nearly 40% of the Gross Domestic Product. Dams have been built throughout the country that divert nearly sixty percent of the water resource to sustaining the agricultural product. There are also farms that are solely dependent on the abundance of rain to maintain a good harvest, which is one of the reasons that S. Sudan has embarked on a massive campaign to improve the irrigation system from the labyrinth of rivers and lakes to supply the resource to these farmers. Irrigated area in S. Sudan is estimated at about 1068 million acres or an area about the size of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California combined.  
 South Sudan grows a variety of crops that include cereals (wheat, sorghum, millet, corn and rice), oilseeds (sesame, groundnuts and sunflowers), beans, chickpeas, and lentils. Crops include cotton, sisal hemp and fodder crops. Horticultural crops include vegetables (onions, tomatoes, okra, eggplant, potatoes, watermelon, cucumber), tropical and equatorial fruits. Aromatic and medical herbs are also grown. Forest wood products are also to be found and harvested in abundance.

Unfortunately, over 50 years of civil war and power struggles, along with the present civil war and power struggle between Vice-President Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir has left S. South Sudan’s infrastructure and land in turmoil. Food is scarce and it’s becoming increasingly more difficult to farm and find arable land. This is called *food insecurity* and is causing households to endure large-scale asset losses and livelihood disruptions for years. Additionally, below-average rainfall delayed the start of the 2019 planting season and limited pasture regeneration, keeping livestock body conditions poor. This type of rainfall delay and climate change will result in worsening over the next ten years.

Nearly seven million people will face Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity through July, the period when hunger is most severe, according to an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification update released in June 2019. The risk of famine will persist and will worsen if conflict shifts and severely limits household movement and restricts humanitarian access. In parts of the lakes, Jonglei, and Upper Nile states, households will likely experience catastrophic outcomes, where destitution and excess mortality are evident.

Humanitarian assistance is preventing further deterioration in food security, yet the number of people reached remains far below the estimated population in need. Conflict levels in 2019 have been lower than in recent years, but high food prices and insecurity limit a household’s ability to access markets, livestock, fish, and wild foods resulting in persistent and severe food insecurity. Humanitarian efforts in South Sudan to decrease food insecurity are as follows: USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and its partners including the UN World Food Program (WFP) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have responded to the needs of South Sudan’s most vulnerable and conflict-affected populations through emergency food and nutrition interventions across the country. FFP supported programs provide life-saving food assistance to more than 1 million people per month, on average. FFP also partners with Catholic Relief Services to provide families in Jonglei State with emergency food assistance, expanded access to safe drinking water, and livelihoods interventions including agricultural training for farming households.

In conclusion, even though right now S. Sudan’s current political situation is causing food insecurity and strife for the people of S. Sudan, agriculture is still one of the most important economic factors in S. Sudan and will be crucial to the success of the people of South. Sudan in the future.