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**ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY**  
*Through*  
**THE BRI COOPERATION**

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07th January, 2026

**CRCSF PUBLICATIONS**



With each passing year, the seasons change their rhythm, & farming becomes an unpredictable business. For a farmer in Central Asia's dry-lands or East Africa's heat-pressed fields, rain is no longer a reliable resource. Instead, it is unpredictable and fleeting, or it arrives all at once as a devastating flood. Heat waves now destroy crops weeks before they are mature, leaving once-fertile soils cracked & worn out. In this warming planet, the issue has switched from growing food to surviving in a system under relentless pressure.

It's a problem of broken connections. Crops frequently deteriorate in the mud because there are no warehouses to keep them fresh, while distant cities confront skyrocketing prices. Fragile trade routes are easily cut off by conflict or high costs, implying that food exists but cannot reach those who require it. For millions of people, food security is a critical need that remains unfulfilled.

The Belt & Road Initiative is bridging this gap by integrating agriculture into the world's larger economic arteries. It views the farm not as an isolated piece, but as the hub of a global network. The BRI is repairing the gap between the field & the dinner table by connecting rural producers to modern irrigation, solar-powered cold storage, & speedier transportation. Through this integration, food waste is shrinking & regional trade is becoming a shield against global shocks. This project has the potential to transform fragile landscapes into robust, interconnected networks.

Amid climate change, the BRI offers more than just roads; it ensures that even when the weather is unpredictable, the supply of food remains steady. The concept of food security extends far beyond mere availability; it's about ensuring people can produce, access, & consume nutritious food. The Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) outlines four pillars of food security: Availability, Access, Stability, & Utilization. The Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) has introduced the "Food Silk Road" concept, focusing on linking agricultural systems & enhancing food security through investment, trade, & technology sharing.

The BRI's agricultural investments and technology transfers are pivotal in achieving food security. Over 650 agricultural cooperation projects have been launched, targeting production, storage, processing, & logistics infrastructure. These investments modernize farming systems, reduce post-harvest losses, and introduce advanced technologies. For instance, BRI-linked agricultural parks facilitate foreign direct investment (FDI) in agro-industry, connecting local producers with regional & global markets.

**Key Benefits of BRI's Agricultural Investments:**

- Improved infrastructure for transportation & storage has increased food availability, guaranteeing that more product reaches markets.
- Trade agreements & logistics corridors have expanded access to food, connecting farmers to broader markets.
- Reliable supply routes & storage facilities have stabilized food supplies, reducing shortages & price volatility.
- Better food consumption has been made possible by shared agricultural technologies & increased productivity, enabling communities to maximize their harvests.

However, the success of these investments is dependent on robust local institutions and governance. Transparent rules & inclusive coordination are critical for ensuring that productivity increases benefit small farmers & vulnerable communities.

Food security does not stop at national borders. What matters increasingly is how countries are connected through food trade networks & whether these networks can withstand disruptions. Pakistan's food security, for instance, is deeply intertwined with its regional & global trade partnerships. The country's reliance on imports for staple foods like wheat & edible oils makes it vulnerable to global price fluctuations & supply chain disruptions. In 2022, Pakistan's food imports bill surged to \$10.7 billion, a 30% increase from the previous year, highlighting the country's exposure to global market volatility.

The Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) offers Pakistan opportunities to diversify its trade networks & strengthen its food security. Through agricultural cooperation & investment, Pakistan can improve its irrigation systems, adopt modern farming techniques, and enhance crop yields.

China–Pakistan cooperation has already led to the introduction of high–yield seed varieties & water–efficient irrigation systems in Pakistan, helping to address the country's chronic productivity gap. For example, the China–Pakistan Agriculture Technology Park in Gwadar aims to increase crop yields by 20–30% through the use of advanced farming technologies.

However, Pakistan's food security remains vulnerable to climate–related shocks, economic instability, & regional disparities. The 2022 floods inflicted nearly \$4 billion in agricultural damage, highlighting the sector's vulnerability to climate extremes.



To address these challenges, Pakistan needs to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, and promote inclusive and equitable food systems. The BRI's focus on regional connectivity and economic cooperation can play a crucial role in supporting Pakistan's efforts to achieve food security, but it requires careful policy coordination and institutional support to ensure that benefits are shared equitably among all stakeholders.

In my view, Pakistan's food security challenges are as much about policy and governance as they are about production and trade. Strengthening agricultural research and extension services, improving access to credit and markets for small farmers, and promoting climate-smart agriculture are essential steps towards ensuring food security in Pakistan. The BRI can be a game-changer for Pakistan's agriculture sector, but it requires a more nuanced approach that prioritizes sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience.

The BRI has the potential to transform food systems and boost food security. By connecting farmers, markets, and countries, it can help communities grow more food, reduce waste, and cope with climate shocks. But for this to happen, we need to make sure everyone benefits – small farmers, local communities, and not just big investors. With inclusive governance, fair access, and environmental safeguards, the BRI can become a game-changer for food security. It can support livelihoods, strengthen regional ties, and nurture growth that lasts