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Ingredients of Famine Analysis: Availability and Entitlements

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Abstract

Famines often take place in situations of moderate to good food availability, without any significant decline of food supply per head. The paper presents

an alternative approach to famines, which does not concentrate on availability, but on people's ability to command food through legal means available in the society (including the use of production possibilities, trade opportunities, entitlements vis-à-vis the state, etc.). The approach is explained, focusing on exchange entitlement mappings, fluctuations in which can lead to big shifts in the intergroup distribution of food command. The approach is then applied to the Bengal famine of 1943, the Ethiopian famine in Wollo in 1973, and the Bangladesh famine in 1974, and some general conclusions are drawn about the nature and classes of famines.

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