



***Communication accompaniment for food security projects and plans in
Algeria...***

Importance, objectives and foundations

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Abstract:

Away from the language of numbers and statistics, and away from the analytical and forward-looking readings related to food security indicators, whether at the national, regional or global level, we aim through this research paper to talk about one of the elements of food security programs and projects that are somewhat marginalized when dealing with this topic : communication . Communication plays a key role in accompanying the realization of food security programs and projects, it combines participatory methods and processes with a range of media and tools (from local radio to information and communication technologies) in order to achieve the communication for development quest to meet the needs of the strategic target audiences of those projects and programmes.

Finally, we concluded that communication approach contributes to achieving a participatory vision in the various stages of the project, from planning to achievement, which guarantees communication efficiency according to the nature of the project and the nature of the audience, as well as achieving the set goals.

Keywords: communication for development - communication accompaniment - project - food security - communication strategy .

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of food security appeared in international forums in the seventies of the twentieth century, the premise of the idea was the possibility of ensuring food for all the world's population (Quissi and Ben Moussa, 2022), after the idea was based quantitatively at the time, the talk about food security turned to qualitative aspects, since the mid-nineties of the last century, the question has become about how to provide food to the world's population not only in sufficient quantities, but provided that this food is healthy, the food security equation turns into the sum of the following elements:

- Abundance (food in sufficient quantities)
- Accessibility (available)
- Quality (nutritional value)
- Suitable for local food culture
- Fairly distributed
- It is produced taking into account social and environmental factors (FAO, 1996)

During the new millennium, and in view of the major developments and changes that occurred at the international level, food security has become a pivotal and sensitive issue that has occupied the forefront of countries' attention, including public security and national sovereignty, food security, along with energy security, health security, and water security, have become stakes for the future of countries and the global geopolitical map.

For its part, the Algerian state has been able, since independence, to achieve significant results in the field of food security through the policy adopted and the measures taken, but today, in light of the current economic, political, health and climate challenges, it is called upon to reconsider the food security model followed, what was achieved was a powerful blow, but with many weaknesses and frailties (Daoudi, 2021).

In this context, hundreds of studies and research have been completed on the subject of food security in Algeria, in its entirety, it reviewed several aspects, the most important of which are:

- Measuring sustainable food security in the agricultural community
- Policies for achieving food security in Algeria
- The food security situation in Algeria and global food security indicators
- International interest in food security and mechanisms for its protection
- Ways to achieve sustainable food security
- The role of food security in achieving development goals sustainable development in Algeria
- The dilemma and challenges of achieving food security in Algeria
- Sustainable development as a mechanism to achieve food security
- Social and economic indicators of food security in Algeria
- Evaluation studies on the effects of agricultural development programs on food security indicators in Algeria
- Challenges of the food industry sector and their repercussions on food security in Algeria.

Our attention was previously drawn to the failure to address a topic that we consider to be very sensitive and important in the field of food security, this is the issue of communication as an essential and effective element in the effort to achieve and implement various food security programs and projects, this is precisely what we seek to highlight through this scientific contribution : **What is meant by communication for development? What is the purpose of communication accompaniment for food security projects and programs? What are the stages and steps of this accompaniment?**

Through this scientific paper, we seek to clarify the following elements:

- Definition of communication for development and its most important principles and objectives.
- Stages of designing a communication strategy to accompany food security projects.
- Communication objectives of food security programs and projects and their importance in achieving general objectives.

1. The concept of communication for development (C4D) :

Over the past few decades, the role of communications in development cooperation has undergone significant changes interest in the communicative dimension of food security through the call for participatory forms of cooperation has witnessed a qualitative leap.

1.1 Definition of communication for development:

The “Communications for Sustainable Development” initiative falls within the project launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Lands, which aims to support communications for development in the areas of climate change and food security , it is a project that works in partnership with development organizations and programs, universities, non-profit organizations and parliamentary groups to strengthen capacities in the field of communication in order to adapt to climate change and food security (FAO ,1999) .

The project includes three (3) dimensions:

A .Share knowledge related to food security

B. Strengthening capabilities through networking (creating a network) and partnerships in order to exchange information and stimulate cooperation among the various parties related to the project.

C. Technical support.

In this framework, communication for development plays a key role because it combines participatory methods and processes with a range of media and tools (From local radio to ICT) , in order to realize the C4D endeavor to meet the information needs of audiences and stakeholders, this communication approach contributes to achieving a participatory vision in the various stages of the project, from planning to implementation, which ensures communicative efficiency according to the nature of the project and the nature of the audience, as well as the established goals.

Accordingly, communication for development is a method of communication that supports sustainable development programs with the aim of facilitating their understanding and acceptance by the target population (FAO, 2012, p. 11), it does not constitute a specific communication specialty, but it is the hinge point between communication and project management. Communication for development is a social process based on dialogue and the use of a wide range of tools and methods , its goal is to work on different communication levels, such as listening to others, building trust, exchanging knowledge and skills, implementing policies, discussing, and learning in order to achieve significant and lasting change (World Conference for Development, Rome, 2006).

C4D should not be confused with isolated incidental communication events or activities launched during a project , rather, communication for development should be viewed as a common thread that accompanies and supports the project through a wide range of communication activities (FAO, 2012).

1.2 Communication support for development and food security projects :

Communication for development is a comprehensive activity that spans the entire project cycle , meaning that it begins with the planning stage, ends with evaluation, and passes through the implementation and follow-up stage , therefore, it is necessary for experts of this type of communication to be involved from the project planning stage rather than being called only in case of difficulties that require communication efforts , including communication from the beginning of the project design contributes to improving the integration of cooperation activities into the communication process, which allows planning of human and financial resources in the long term , this is precisely what we mean by communication accompaniment for food security projects.

Many analytical research projects or projects of a practical-executive nature related to food security remain locked away and are not activated or benefited from their results, due to insufficient communication, whether they come from governmental or ministerial agencies or research groups at the level of universities, research laboratories or research centers , that is why voices have been raised since the mid-nineties of the twentieth century calling for communication accompaniment for development projects in various fields, where communication is used as a tool to enhance the social and political impact of the project , it is therefore necessary to establish close cooperation and a clear division of labor between

technical experts and communications specialists, the former defines messages and topics for discussion, while the latter defines publishing tools and dialogue spaces.

1.3 Principles and objectives of communication for development :

The communication contribution to development programs and projects in general and food security in particular has always been limited to the media-reporting dimension based on transferring information through a one-way, unbalanced model that places the sender (whether a country, an organization, or a governmental body) at the center of the communication process, away from the recipient, who is considered part of this perception is negative within the communication process , he is not involved in the planning processes for food security programs, even though he is primarily concerned with them .

In light of the sterility of this communication model, practitioners and interested parties tended to prefer a communicative approach within the two-way model of communication, which ensures exchange and interaction between the parties to the communication process: owners of development projects, including food security programs and projects, and those concerned and targeted by those programs, to arrive at the two-way balanced symmetrical communication model, which added to the issue of exchange and interaction a basic principle, which is the common interest and balance between the goals and interests of the parties to the communication process , this is the basic premise adopted by the food and agriculture organization of the United Nations when it called for the necessity of accompanying development projects and programs in general and food security in particular with a participatory communication strategy, which was called communication for development or participatory communication (Bessette & Rajasunderam, 1996).

The issue of participation and its centrality in communication for development emerges in its endeavor - in addition to transmitting and sharing information - to recruit the feelings and feelings of the target groups by getting closer to livelihood , this would ensure the continuity or sustainability of the impact. Communication for development addresses a common weakness in development projects, which is that they propose change based on institutional processes, laws, principles, evidence, and technical training , these projects generally ignore the fact that change also requires emotional preparation and training (FAO, 2012).

Communication for development is also based on two basic pillars:

- **Dialogue:** Trying to convey information without dialogue is futile, as it is the key to possessing information , people accept new ideas when they are not seen as mere recipients of information in a context that deprives them of equal comment, questioning and dialogue , therefore, the process of implementing food security projects requires spaces in which all stakeholders can express their opinions freely and without restrictions.
- **Starting from the local culture:** communication for development is always built from the local context and from local resources, maximizing their impact also requires the use of local methods, channels, traditions and languages, which vary from one context to another.

Based on the above, communication for development seeks to:

- a. Facilitating access to information related to the project
- b. Strengthening involvement and participation in the project
- c. Strengthening capabilities to complete the project
- d. Influencing public policies

The objectives of communication for development can generally be summarized in the following figure:

Figure No. 01: Objectives of communication for development



Source : Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Rome, 2012, *Manual of Communication for Food Security*, <https://www.fao.org/3/i2195f/i2195f.pdf>, p 15.

2. Stages of designing a communication strategy accompanying food security projects.

In the opening of the handbook on communication for development, Manuel Sager (Swiss director of development and cooperation) starts from a basic idea that he considers a golden rule , it is that development depends on communication. Political dialogue, awareness, sensitization, or persuasion in favor of social and institutional reforms cannot be conducted except by using communication tools (Alarcón, Andersone, & Autres, 2016).

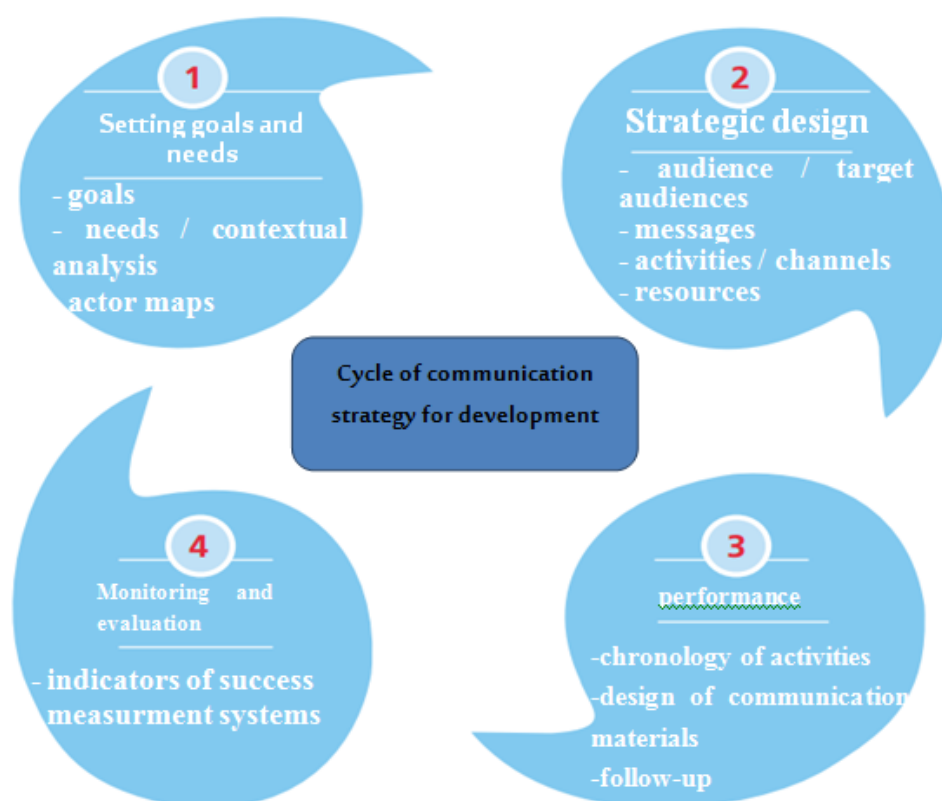
Communication for development is not an integral part of project management , but it is a comprehensive and essential activity aimed at strengthening dialogue with beneficiaries, partners and authorities in order to promote program adoption and engagement at the local level and to create a sustainable impact (Alarcón, Andersone, & autres, 2016) , in this context, food security professionals have increasingly recognized their need to communicate strategically with stakeholders so that their work has maximum impact , while most organizations have invested heavily in food security research and related analyses, many organizations still need to improve

their communication strategies, to ensure that its results reach the intended audiences and take the necessary actions.

2.1 Communication strategy:

A communication strategy is a way to ensure that communication efforts contribute to project objectives in a consistent and effective manner, the communication strategy also contributes to clarifying needs in terms of time, human and material resources, as well as how to use them well, in general, the process of designing a communication strategy around a food security project or plan goes through four stages that can be embodied in Figure No. 02.

Figure No. 02: Stages of designing a communication strategy for a food security project or plan :



Source: (FAO, Food Security Communication Manual, 2012)

2.2. Setting goals and recognizing context :

Setting goals means what are we aiming for? This is the starting question, do we want to expand participation? or raise awareness to bring about behavioral change? or empower vulnerable groups? , it is possible to pursue several goals at the same time, however, to achieve a stronger effect, it is recommended to focus on one or two main goals.

A. Recognize the context:

Communication procedures must respond to the needs of the context, it is important to study the social, cultural and communication environment towards which the project is directed, the context study should adopt a participatory format in order to integrate the views of all those involved in the project: what is the target audience's knowledge of the topic we want to address? what are his practices in this regard? is the topic related to biases or preconceptions? what institutional capabilities, risks and opportunities need to be taken into account? is the environment conducive or hostile to change? how do people get information? who are the opinion leaders? what are the most common means of communication?

B. Contextual analysis or field study:

A field study aimed at illuminating these questions usually takes the form of a series of interviews with randomly selected key actors and potential beneficiaries, the control groups method is often used, the field study provides those responsible for the project's communication strategy with information about the level of knowledge of the population, local cultural characteristics, favorable or inhibiting factors, the influence and extent of social networks, and other information (Bennett & Jessani, 2011, p. 61).

C. Mapping actors:

Every society includes people, associations or institutions that have a strong influence on opinion formation, actor mapping allows us to get an overview of influential groups and their positions regarding the target topic, mapping identifies opinion leaders, potential project allies, and potential opponents of the project, this also allows target groups to be identified with greater certainty and resources invested more strategically, the actors are not limited to the population involved in the project, but rather to all interest groups, as will be explained later.

2.3. Strategic design**2.3.1 Identifying the audiences involved in the food security project :**

There are many parties involved in the project, or what is known as stakeholder, we find for example, (JONES, 2008, pp. 26-27):

- ✓ Current or prospective beneficiaries of the project (farmers, livestock breeders, landowners, banks, ...)
- ✓ Intermediaries are people or organizations that provide information or services to beneficiaries, such as agricultural agencies, importers of agricultural equipment, or agricultural support funds, for example.
- ✓ Counterparts are other organizations or projects working in the same region or in the same field or partners.
- ✓ Donors: organizations that fund or can provide funding.
- ✓ Political decision makers: People, organizations or entities that make decisions that affect beneficiaries or the project, such as local political officials, ministers, parliamentarians and high-ranking officials.
- ✓ General public: all people who are not directly involved in the project and may be interested in food security issues.
- ✓ Mass media: written, audio-visual or electronic, it is a special audience because it constitutes a means to reach other audiences.
- ✓ Internal audience: field workers, administrative staff, managers and the board of directors.

After identifying different stakeholder audiences, in a second stage, it is necessary to identify the strategic audience related to the project or plan, that must be communicated with it in the framework of communication accompaniment.

The strategic audience is defined as every audience that influences or is affected by the project, on this basis, and before determining the strategic audiences for the project, stakeholder audiences are ranked according to their importance from a communication perspective as follows:

- High priority audience: imperative communication: meaning the necessity of communicating with this audience to achieve the project objectives.
- A second-class audience: an audience that is desirable to communicate with because it will contribute to the project goals.
- Third-class priority audience: useful communication with this audience can be beneficial, but it does not contribute to the project objectives.
- Low priority audience: useless communication, the project should not be looking to reach this audience.

In this way, the strategic audiences for the project are selected according to their degree of importance in the latter's objectives, this also determines its strategic importance communicatively.

In the next stage, after maintaining the strategic audiences, the general characteristics of the strategic audience(s) must be identified through:

- Identifying the size of the audience (whether individuals or organizations),
- Identifying its location (cities, regions...)
- Identifying its current situation (depending on the strategic audience that has been retained, if the strategic audience that has been retained and is concerned with the project is large in size, such as livestock breeders or owners of citrus or olive farms, or any type of crop, for example, the following features must be specified: (educational level, language, age group, profession...),
- Organizing it: does he belong to a specific organization? what are his responsibilities relevant to his status or profession in the event that the strategic audience is organizations, decision makers or senior office holders, for example.
- Identifying the strategic audience from the triple perspective of knowledge/attitudes/behaviors.

For example, if the audience is livestock breeders, considering that the project or plan is directed at them and they are the ones concerned with it, it is necessary to consider:

- ✓ Their current knowledge: what do they know about food security? (Traditional knowledge, seasonal plots, grazing areas, herd management)
- ✓ Their current opinions: what do they think about food security? (their primary interests: taking care of the herds, determining grazing places and water points)
- ✓ Current practices: what are their current actions? (distributing livestock into groups and taking them to graze in distant areas to find pastures and water, sending family members to search for fodder at food distribution points)
- Identifying the audience's areas of strategic interest and information needs, which may be:
 - ✓ information of a quantitative or qualitative nature (in our previous example about livestock farmers, the information they need to implement a project directed to them , it aims to modernize livestock raising methods: cow prices, feed prices, available vaccinations, commercial distribution places, new methods of slaughter, new methods of preserving meat...etc , if a strategic audience other than livestock breeders, such as donors, is maintained, their need for information will differ from the first audience: digital information about the number of project beneficiaries, impacts of activities and use of funding),
 - ✓ The most important sources from which the strategic audience derives its information about the project topic, including the media, forms of communication, and channels it uses.

2.3.2 Identifying communication objectives and messages for strategic audience:

A. Setting goals :

While the project sets practical goals for achieving food security, which are often linked to specific performance, the communication strategy defines another form of objectives - which will not deviate from the overall objectives of the project - called communication objectives, specific to each strategic audience that has been retained and decided to be targeted by the project.

Communication activities should contribute to the project objectives by creating change in the following three characteristics of the strategic audience(s):

- Cognitive axis : that is, the knowledge that you would like the strategic audience(s) to know about the project topic.
- The emotional axis (opinions and attitudes), any changes in opinion that are desired to be brought about on the subject
- The behavioral axis (practices), meaning the changes that are proposed in the actions of the strategic audience , (old practices you want to keep, old practices you want to abandon, new practices you want to create).

B. Linking goals with the needs of the audience/mass :

In order to determine communication objectives, the project goals or plan must be linked to the audience's focus and information needs, taking into account their current knowledge, attitudes and practices.

With good formulation of communication objectives, those in charge of the project will be able to focus on communication activities, formulate messages, and choose communication channels appropriate to the targeted strategic audience , as well as following up and evaluating communication activities and making the necessary changes if necessary.

Table No. 01: basic levels of formulating communication objectives (Safiatou, 2017)

The expected result	Target level	Target audience level
knowledge	media	Ignorance of the subject
Awakening knowledge/alert	Sensitization	Contempt / complacency
Realization	Awareness/behavior change	careless
Commitment/movement	Behavior change	Stillness (not moving)
Conviction/thoughtful decision	Behavior change	abstention
Engagement/supportive stance	Change direction	Objection/resistance
conviction commitment	Change direction	Preserving traditions - Connection to traditions/values - Stick to the current situation - A fossilized mentality

2.3.3 Messages/Activities and Channels :

For each communication goal and each strategic audience, appropriate messages are formulated that target the audience's center of interest and attract its attention (starting from its own interest and then moving towards the public interest) in a simple and attractive manner appropriate to its characteristics and features that were identified in the early stages of the communication strategy , and making his own appeal in those messages that the audience understands.

Communication strategies often go wrong on the side of being overly ambitious, listing a set of messages that are impossible to remember , it is necessary to focus on two or three main messages and convey them persistently through different channels. Quality is better than quantity.

Regarding channels, it is first necessary to diversify communication channels that meet the following conditions:

- ✓ It is popular with the audience being addressed .
- ✓ It is compatible with the level of complexity of the message
- ✓ It provides an acceptable rate between cost and benefit. (Alarcón, Andersone,) & autres, 2016, p. 11)

The choice of media is also closely linked to the size of the audience and its location, and the channels vary according to the project's operational and communication objectives.

The wide audience is often addressed through mass media such as radio, television, or various printed means (newspapers/bulletins and reports/specialized magazines/posters...) , as for the medium-sized audience, it is addressed (depending on educational level, location, and other characteristics) through electronic means or small means such as exhibitions and others , as for the means directed to a small audience, we find meetings, field visits, speeches, and presentation videos, most of them are means that allow interaction, discussion and dialogue with members of the target audience.

- Personal contact: public gatherings and discussions, field visits, exhibitions, forums and workshops .

- Print and electronic media: written media, local and regional radio, video and audio-visual.
- New media and multimedia: social networks, digital newsletters .

Accordingly, the choice of messages, means of communication, and channels is then related to the size of the audience as well as the budget allocated to the communication process.

3. Strategy implementation and evaluation :

3.1 Strategy implementation:

In parallel with the project's intervention strategy, an action plan is developed that provides a comprehensive vision of the communication activities planned during each stage of project implementation , this plan constitutes a road map that specifies the chronology and specific responsibilities of the people and institutions concerned.

Liepart views the communications plan as an operational tool that provides programming and a dashboard for actions to be taken , the communication plan defines a vision and a directive line of an operational nature, provided that it is flexible and allows the necessary adjustments to be made according to the opportunities and threats arising during project implementation (Libaert, 2017).

Considering the communication strategy accompanying the project as a cross-sectional task extending from its beginning to its end, some highlights can be identified in the project roadmap that require more intensive communications, such as setting goals in a participatory manner, or launching awareness campaigns, food security awareness and sensitization campaigns directed to various audiences are considered an essential tool in the process of implementing the project and not a goal in itself , implementing the communication strategy includes: programming communication activities, designing communication materials, and following up on their implementation on the field.

3.2 Evaluation :

After identifying the audiences and arranging them according to their strategy for the project, after determining the communication objectives for each of these audiences, as well as the messages and channels that can convey them to reach the audiences, the stage of actual embodiment of all of the above comes through a communication plan or scheme (or programm) in which all communication activities (for each audience) are determined, as well as the messages that will be addressed to them , in addition to the channels, time period, and duration specified for the communication activities accompanying the project, and who is responsible for each communication activity, and this is in light of the budget allocated to it, let us reach the evaluation stage (Adary, Libaert, & al, 2016) .

Despite the difficulty associated with evaluating communication activities, the communication strategy accompanying the project must be evaluated in the short, medium and long term through a set of numerical indicators (in the form of numbers and statistics) and qualitative (in the form of behavioral and cognitive models).

The measurement indicators are the communication objectives set for the project, the evaluation is carried out with a set of tools. The following table shows the linking matrix between the goal and the measurement tool:

Table No. 02: communication strategy evaluation matrix

Partial target	Measuring tool
Media and definition	ID form
Moving/bringing	Account/note/form
Urge to use	Account/note/uses form
Encourage suggestions of ideas	Account/note/participation form
Urge participation and action	Account/note/participation form
Encourage reading	Readers or followers/account/note form
Introduction to details and understanding	An acquaintance questionnaire/qualitative interview/group meeting
Sensitization / psychological preparation / reassurance	An acquaintance questionnaire/qualitative interview/group meeting
Engage	Involvement/commitment form

Source : Adary, Libaert et al, Communicator, Dunod, Paris, 2016, p121.

The communication strategy should be developed in close cooperation with other components of the project , the communication strategy generally comes in the form of an appendix to the main project document , it is necessary to establish a close link between the intervention strategy and the communication for development strategy as these two elements should not be separated from each other, either in theory or in practice.

II. Methods and Materials:

The methodology used in this study is to employ methodological methods imposed by the importance of the study and its general objective, as it was imposed by the treatment, discussion and then analysis of the subject of *Communication accompaniment for food security projects and plans in Algeria* , which calls for the necessity of choosing the appropriate research method and tools that the problem raises, namely:

The survey and descriptive method, "which is considered one of the most prominent methodological methods in the field of media studies, which represents an organized scientific effort to obtain data and information about the phenomenon or a group of phenomena under study" It is also useful from this methodological method in studying the problem and its dismantling into its hierarchical elements, in order to reach useful connotations.

Based on this, the researcher resorted to the use of analysis and interpretation, to draw logical conclusions in order to answer the questions of the study.

Through this study, we wanted to know the dialectical relationship that links between communication strategies and the food security , as for the tools used, the researcher presented the research contributions related to the concept of communication and food security , in terms of concept, characteristics, features, and forms based on the questions of the study, using observation tool, then scrutiny and analysis to extract the results.

III. Results and discussion :

- Food security is considered one of the most important indicators of sustainable development in Algeria, and it should receive great attention due to its strategic importance.
- There are a group of crises and problems that would hinder achieving food security in Algeria, including climatic and natural conditions such as drought, fluctuating rainfall, and fires.
- In addition to human factors such as speculation, monopoly, and raising prices for no reason, which affects the purchasing power of the Algerian consumer
- The Algerian farmer also suffers from several problems related to water shortages and not obtaining a license to drill wells , the weakness of the agricultural electricity network and the difficulty of obtaining agricultural land
- In order to eliminate all the aforementioned problems and crises, the Algerian state must develop a comprehensive and serious communication strategy that accompanies the development process to achieve food security , by employing digitization and taking

advantage of its interactive and real-time communication advantages, which enable the inventory, monitoring and statistics of all data related to agriculture and the food industry in Algeria, and achieving positive communication with all those in charge of these vital productive sectors, which are considered the main nerve in achieving food security in Algeria.

IV. Conclusion:

It is true and clear that the issue of food security - whether at the global or national level - is a vital and crucial issue, today, it faces a number of new challenges related to climate change, the global health situation (epidemics), wars and conflicts, which in turn have a negative impact on the livelihoods of the population.

It is also true and clear that to confront these challenges, the Algerian state has developed a number of food security projects and plans that focus on people to support their livelihoods by increasing the ability of food production systems to withstand challenges and develop in the future.

It is also true that all of the above requires a set of measures - in the short, medium and long term - to facilitate the implementation of these projects, but with effective communication support that is sufficient to achieve the principle of knowledge exchange, information sharing, and encouraging population participation.

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