Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition

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Global hunger is on the rise...
The global community is falling short with respect to SDG 2 on many fronts

- Over 800 million people chronically undernourished
- 2.37 billion people face moderate or severe food insecurity
- 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020
- 1.9 billion adults are over-nourished
- 1.5 billion people suffer from one or more forms of micronutrient deficiency
- Uneven quality of food environments
- Precarious food system livelihoods
- Food systems have crossed several of the proposed “planetary boundaries”
- Food systems are increasingly vulnerable to climate change and economic downturns
- COVID-19 & war in Ukraine have exacerbated these trends
The Food Systems Summit identified the need for a **food systems approach** to address these interconnected challenges.
Why focus on food systems?

Each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intersects with food and agriculture in various ways.
Food systems have multiple, overlapping functions in society:

- Food is a basic human need
- Access to adequate food is a human right
- Food systems provide diverse types of livelihoods for nearly 1/3 of humanity
- Deeply entrenched in ecosystems
- Cornerstone of cultural norms and practices
- Food is a market commodity
A food system gathers all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes.” (HLPE, 2017)
Food security as the goal

“Food security (is) a situation that exists when ALL PEOPLE, AT ALL TIMES, have PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACCESS to SUFFICIENT, SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS food that meets their DIETARY NEEDS and FOOD PREFERENCES for an active and healthy life.”
Traditional ‘four pillars’ view of food security

- Availability
- Access
- Utilization
- Stability
A food systems perspective encourages us to **widen our understanding of food security** to six dimensions:

**Agency** – improving **rights and capabilities** of people to feed themselves with dignity and to relate to and shape their food systems on their own terms.

**Sustainability** – strengthening the economic, social, and ecological bases that generate food security and nutrition for future generations.

*HLPE-FSN 2020*
All six dimensions are implicit in the definition of food security – we need to explicitly recognize all dimensions.

“All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”
The main activities within food systems from production to consumption to outcomes....
Food systems approach encourages us to recognize the interconnectedness of food systems with other systems.
Food environments are a key aspect of how people interface with food systems.
Interrelated Nature of Food Supply Chains, Food Environments, & Diet Quality

Diet Quality, Diversity, Quantity, Safety and Adequacy

Consumer choices and awareness
Availability, access and affordability
Policy environment including nutrition guidelines and food safety regulations

Input systems → Production systems → Storage and trade → Packaging and processing → Retail and marketing → Consumption
Diverse drivers outside of food systems affect their functioning.

Source: HLPE-FSN 2020
Drivers of food system change are complex, interrelated, and constantly evolving.
Policy and governance shape the rules and norms by which food systems function.
Achieving Sustainable food systems and food security requires **critical policy shifts** as informed by the **scientific literature**

**Old approach**

- Exclusive focus on increasing agricultural supply in a context of population growth
- Viewing FSN as a sectoral issue
- Exclusive focus on reducing hunger and undernutrition
- Focus on finding globally applicable FSN solutions

**New approach**

- Working toward a radical transformation of food systems as a whole to improve FSN and achieve Agenda 2030
- Viewing FSN as a system interconnected with other systems and sectors
- Focus on hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, in their complex relation to one another
- Understanding that FSN is context-specific, requiring diverse solutions
How policy shifts support food security via a sustainable food systems approach

CRITICAL POLICY ELEMENTS

- Recognize need for radical transformation of food systems
- View FSN as a system interconnected with other systems and sectors
- Focus on hunger and malnutrition in all its forms
- Recognize FSN is context specific and requires diverse solutions
- Enabling Conditions: Governance and Research

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT THE SIX INTERCONNECTED DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY

- Availability (productive & prosperous)
- Sustainability (regenerative)
- Agency (empowering)
- Stability (diverse & resilient)
- Utilization (healthy & nutritious)
- Access (equitable)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, ESPECIALLY SDG2 - ZERO HUNGER

Source: HLPE-FSN 2020
Key criteria to ensure a food systems approach is part of food policies

➢ Food policies extend **beyond food production** – to also include:
  ◦ All dimensions of malnutrition (hunger, overweight, micronutrient deficiencies, etc)
  ◦ Affordability of healthy diets
  ◦ Planning for resilience of food supply in the face of potential shocks
  ◦ Consideration of sustainability dimensions of food production, processing and diets
  ◦ Rights and power dynamics considered from production to consumption, with emphasis on empowering the most marginalized populations to exercise their right to food

➢ Food policies are situated at the intersection of policies governing other systems – Economic, health, ecosystems, sociopolitical systems and explicitly link **food systems and the SDGs**

➢ Food policies that take the **quality of food supply chains and food environments** into account

➢ Food policies recognize multiple and diverse drivers that affect outcomes

➢ Food policies are context specific – avoiding one size fits all approaches
Thank you!

Key references:
