

# **The importance of evidence and data to hold a spotlight on food systems**

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A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding several fresh vegetables. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with fingers wrapped around a bunch of carrots and green beans. The carrots are bright orange and have some soil on their roots. The green beans are vibrant green and appear to be fresh. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the textures and colors of the produce.

Why do we focus on  
food systems?



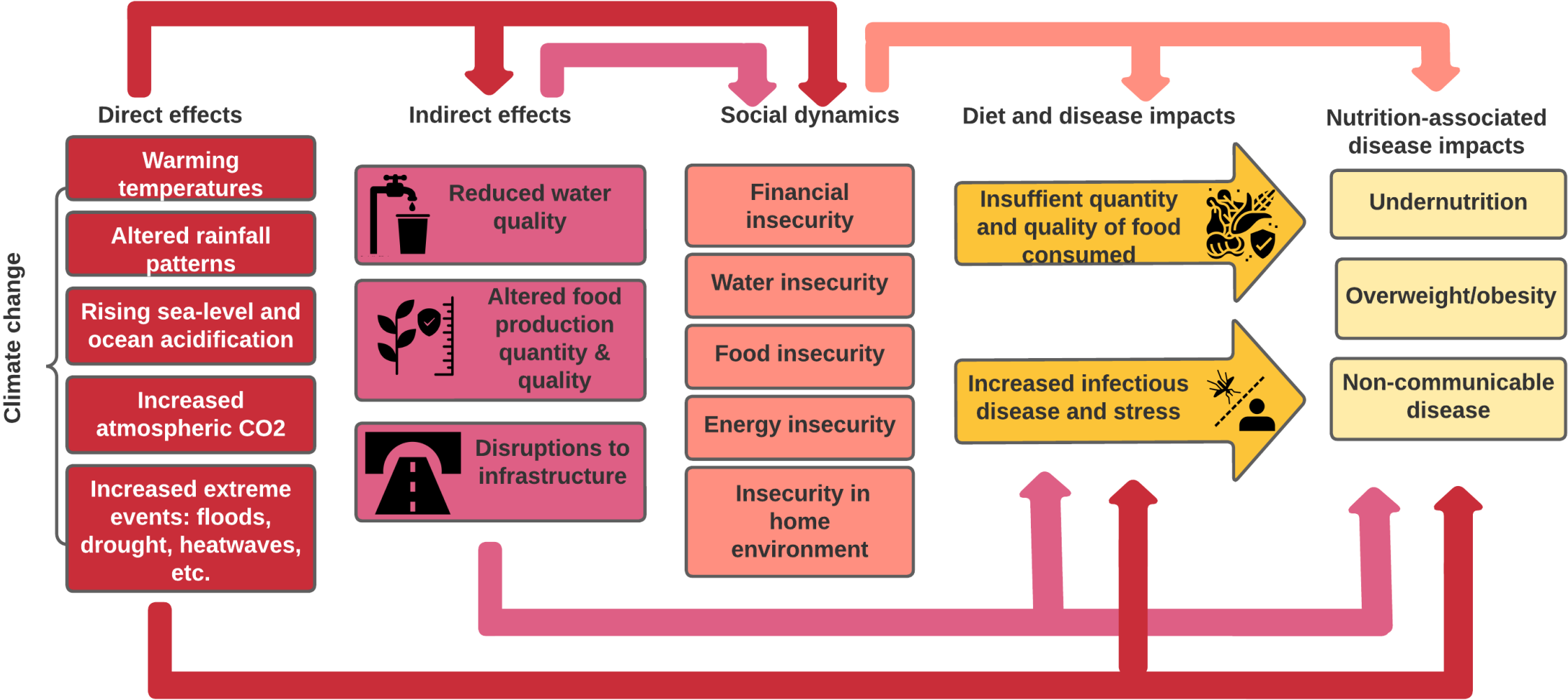
# Food systems

are *victims* of climate change

are *transgressors* of climate change

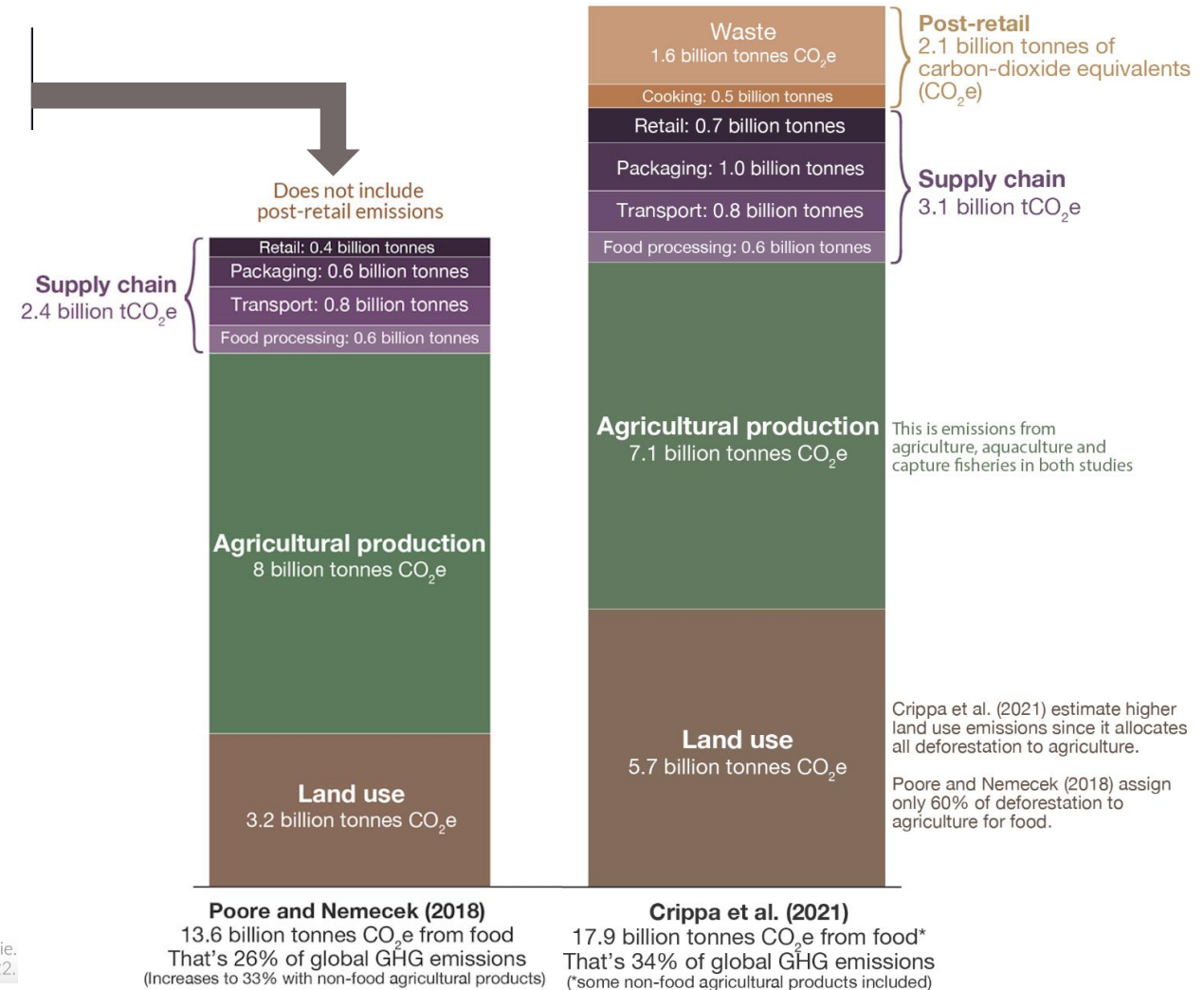
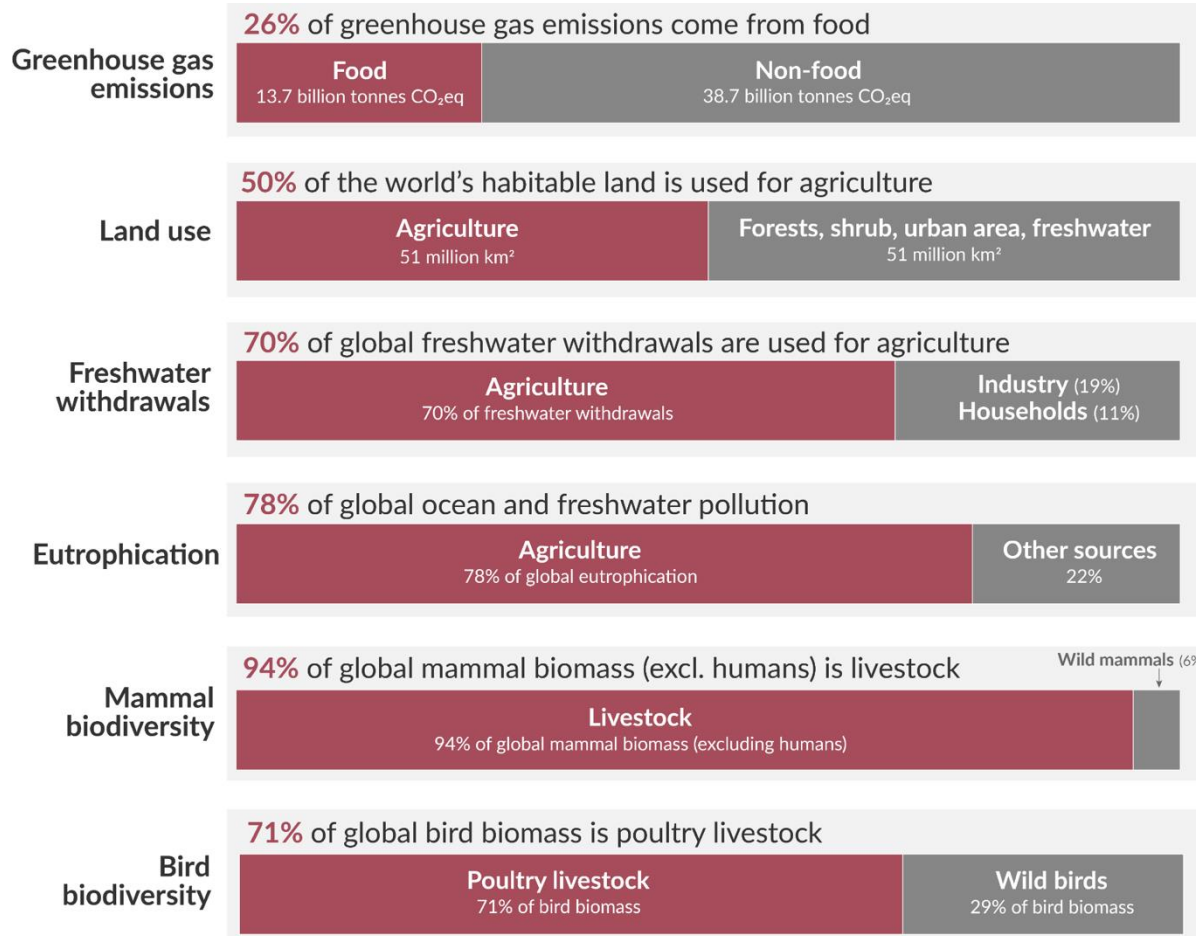
are *solutions* in mitigating and adapting to climate change

# 1. Climate is impacting food systems and other systems relevant for diets and nutrition



Fanzo, J. C., & Downs, S. M. (2021). *Nature Reviews Disease Primers*, 7(1), 90.

# 2. Food systems are impacting environmental resources and climate



# 3. Improving diets and nutrition remains challenging across the world

**733 million (9%)**

of the world's population are undernourished

**148 million (23%)**

children under five years of age are stunted

**45 million (7%)**

children under five years of age are wasted

**37 million (5.5%)**

children under five years of age are overweight

**2.5 billion**

adults are overweight or obese

**2.8 billion (35%)**

of the world cannot afford a healthy diet

**28% (average)**

increase in food inflation globally since the pandemic

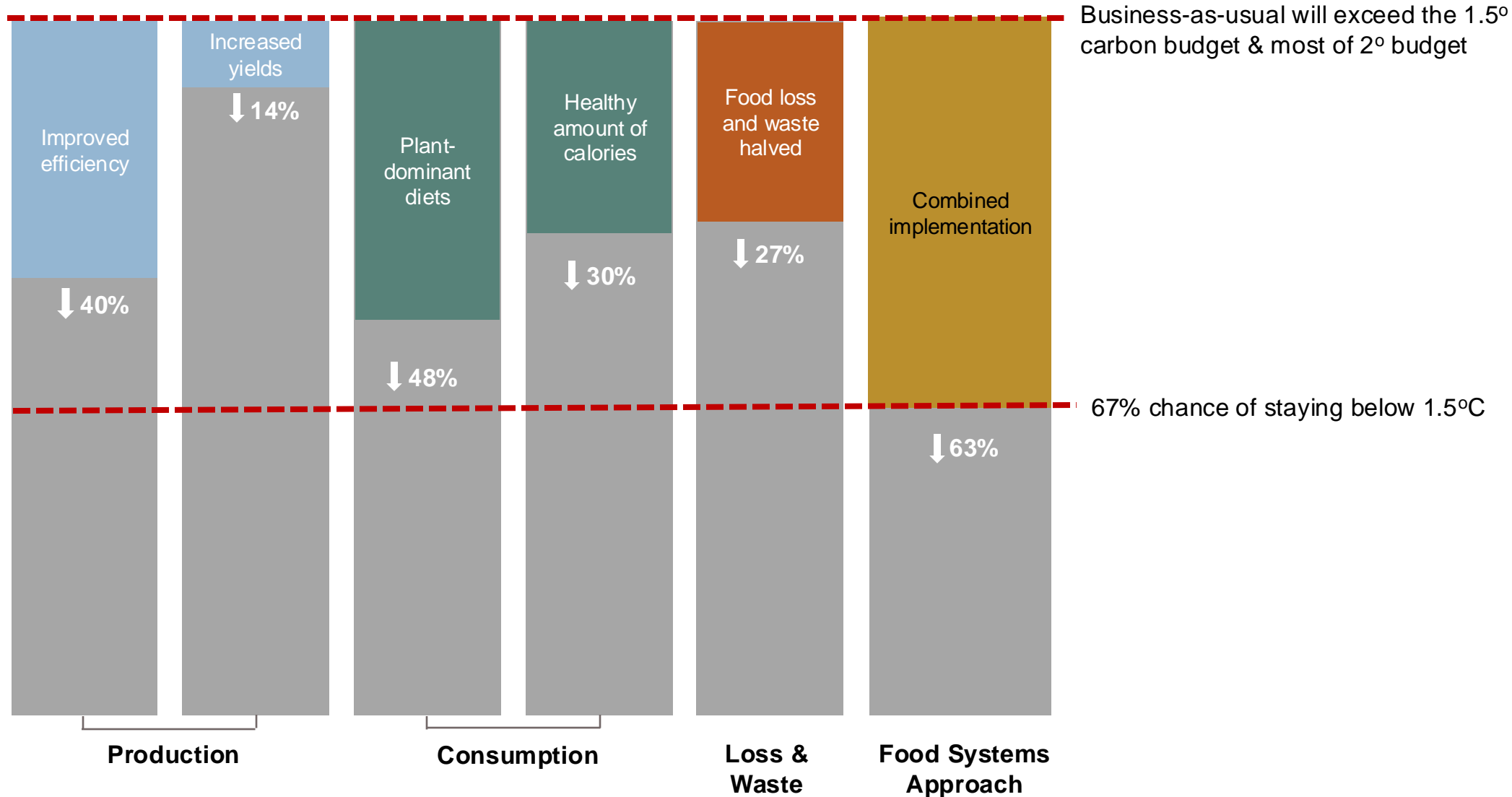
**82% (34 out of 41 countries - 2/3 of the world)**

do not consume the 5 recommended healthy food groups

**11 million deaths annually (20%)**

are linked to poor diets

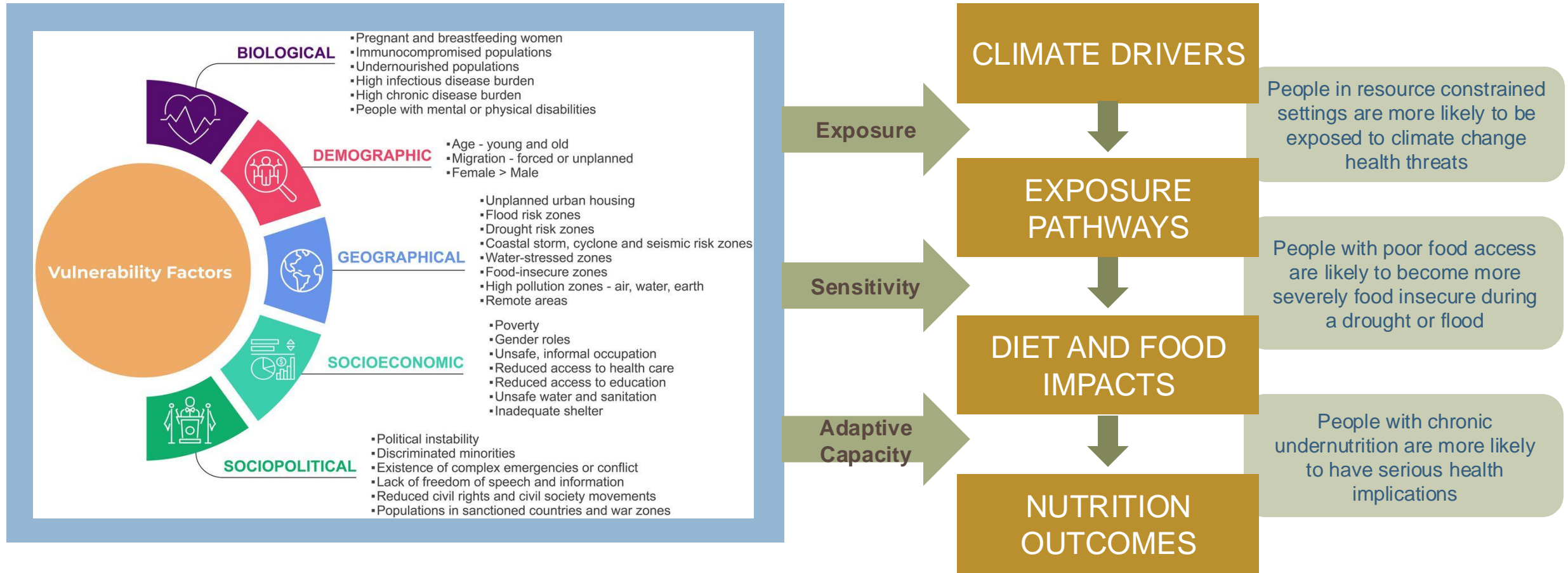
# 4. Achieving the Paris climate change targets requires multi-level food systems action



# 5. Resource-constrained settings and vulnerable & marginalized populations need prioritization

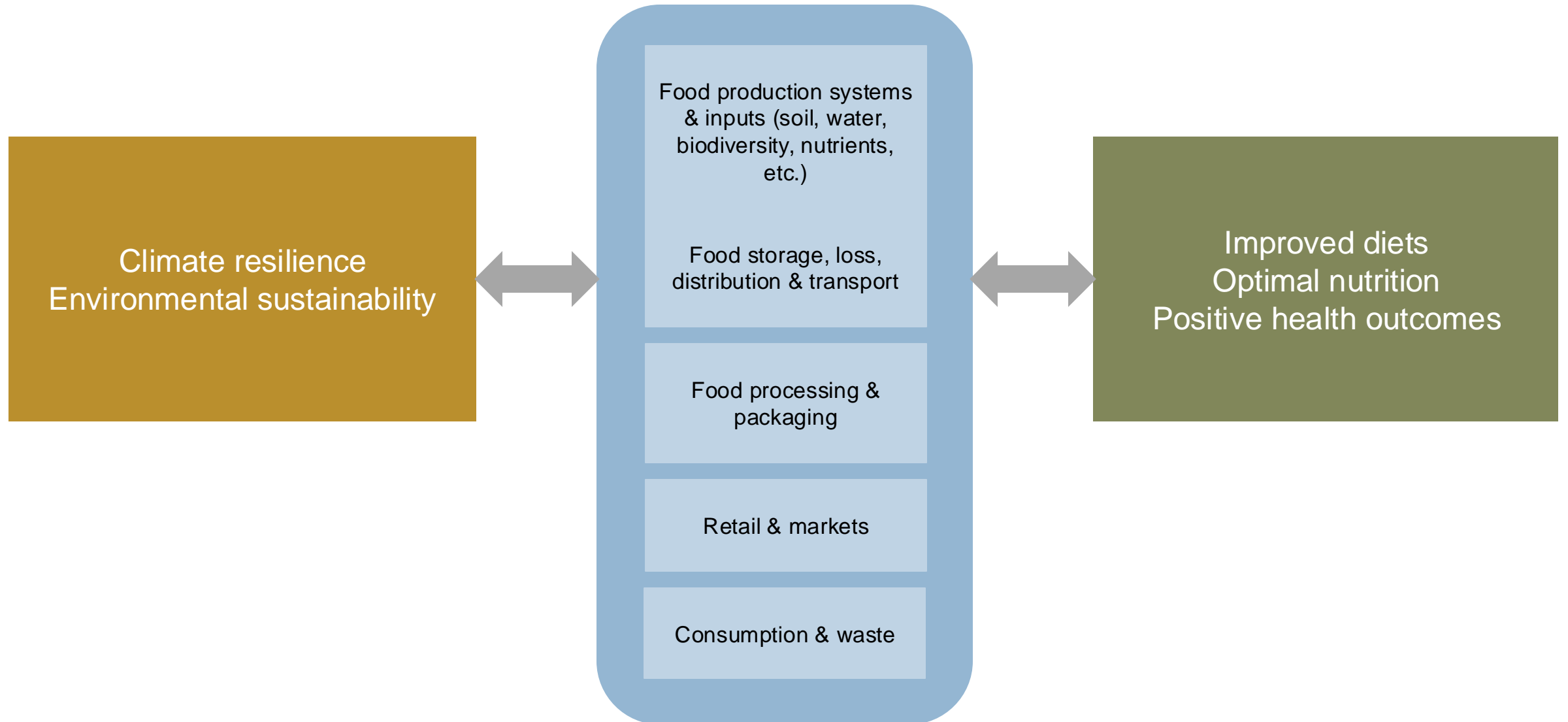
**Elements of vulnerability & marginalization interacting with social determinants of health**

**Casual chain of climate drivers to nutrition outcomes**





# Food systems are the *lifeline* between climate & nutrition





Our research in the  
last decade informs  
our current research  
portfolios

# Current Research Focus Areas

01

Prioritizing and framing food systems in climate and international development *global* agendas

02

Improving *national* food system decision-making with better food systems science

03

Understanding how *local* foodscapes influence healthy and sustainable diets

04

Exploring climate-impacted geographic poverty traps on nutrition outcomes

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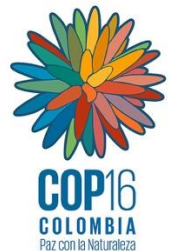
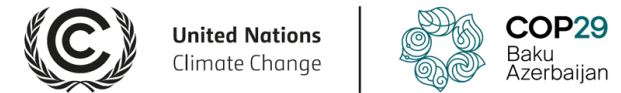
04

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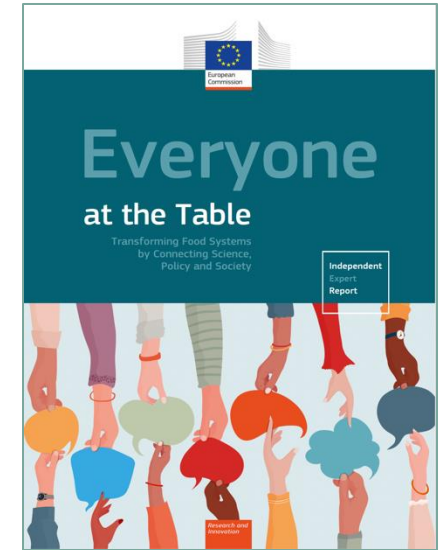
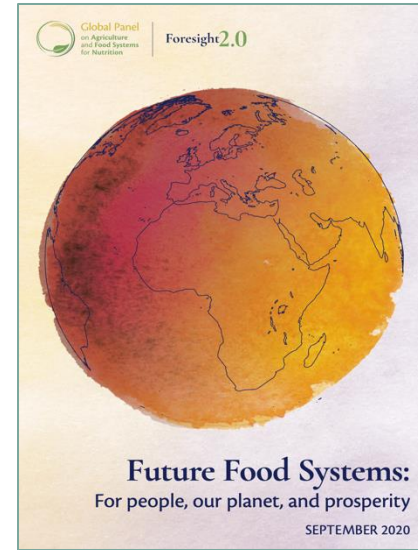
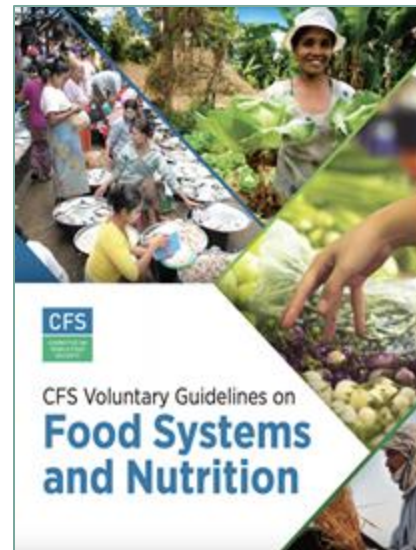
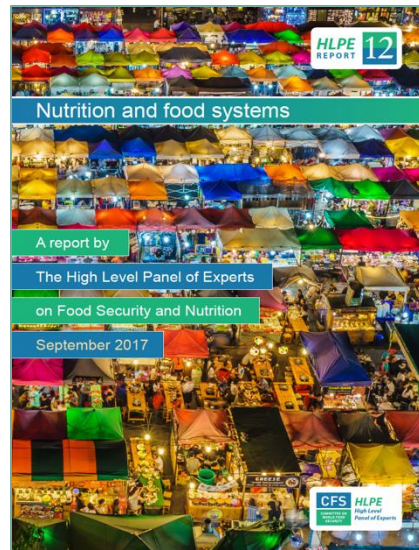
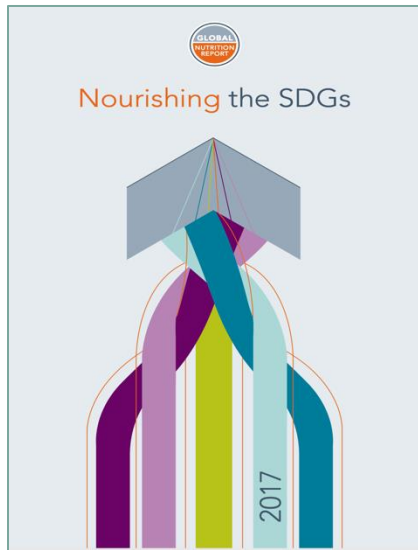


# Area 1: Prioritizing and framing food systems in climate & international development *global* agendas

- The international development agenda is a crowded, distracted, gatekeeping space.
- Attention towards food security ebbs and flows, but with climate change, wars, & the post-pandemic economic downturn, more policymakers are looking to how to “transform food systems.”
- ***This research aims to understand how to ensure food security and systems remain high on the agenda by providing guidance and evidence on their importance for sustainable development.***



# 2016 to 2020: Established the notion of “food systems” and their political relevance for sustainable development

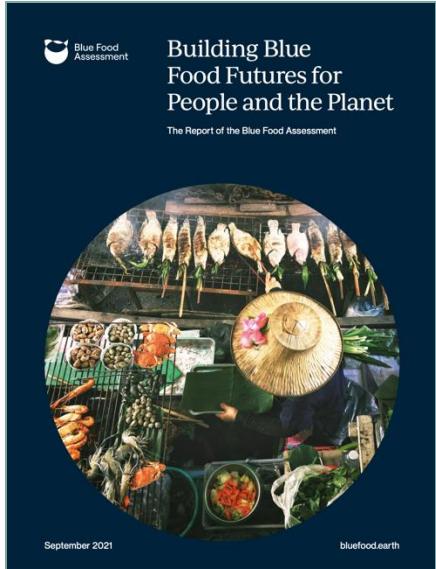


**Evidence-based guidelines** on appropriate **policies, responsible investments and institutional arrangements** needed to address sustainable food systems while also addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability issues and impacts.

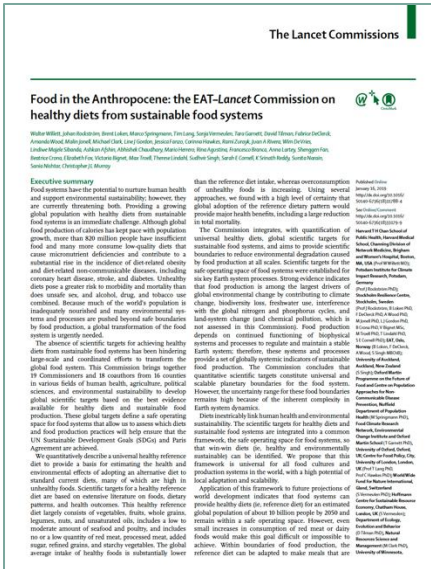
# 2019 to 2023: Determined the evidence base and scientific targeting for food system *transformations* for both human and planetary health



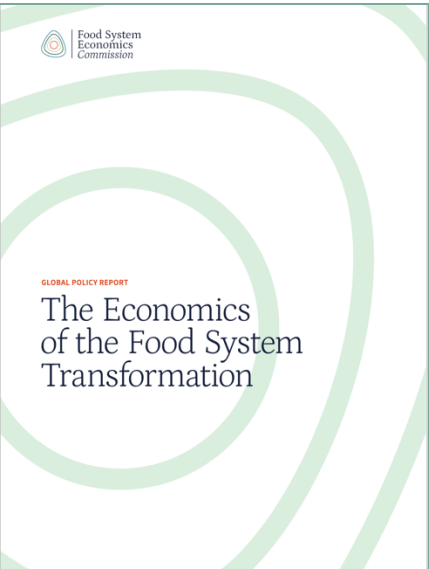
Science to transform food systems



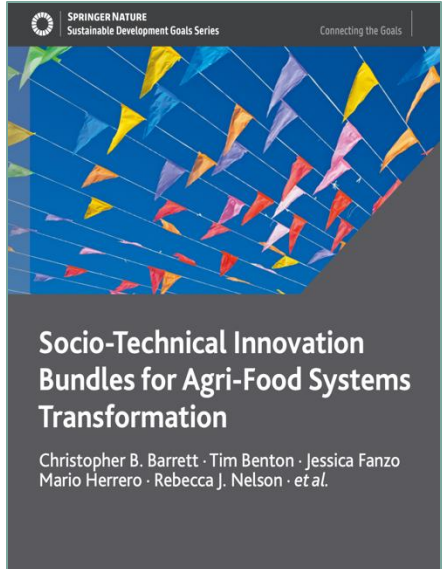
Importance of blue foods in food systems



Food and planetary boundary scientific targets



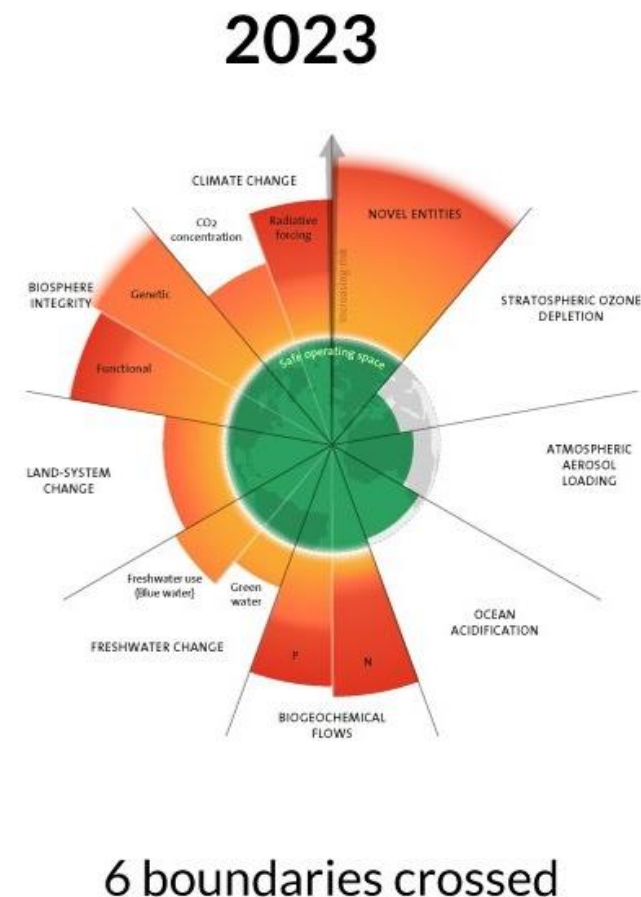
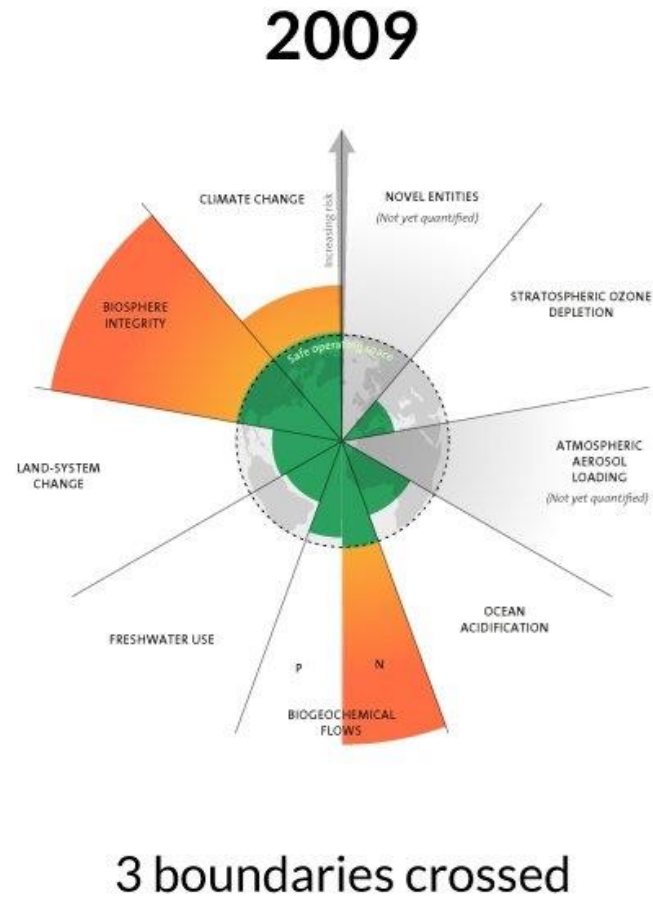
The economic case to transform food systems



The socio-tech innovation needed to transform food systems



# Planetary Diet: Significant report on setting scientific targets for diets within planetary boundaries





# Planetary Diet: Significant report on setting scientific targets for diets within planetary boundaries

nature

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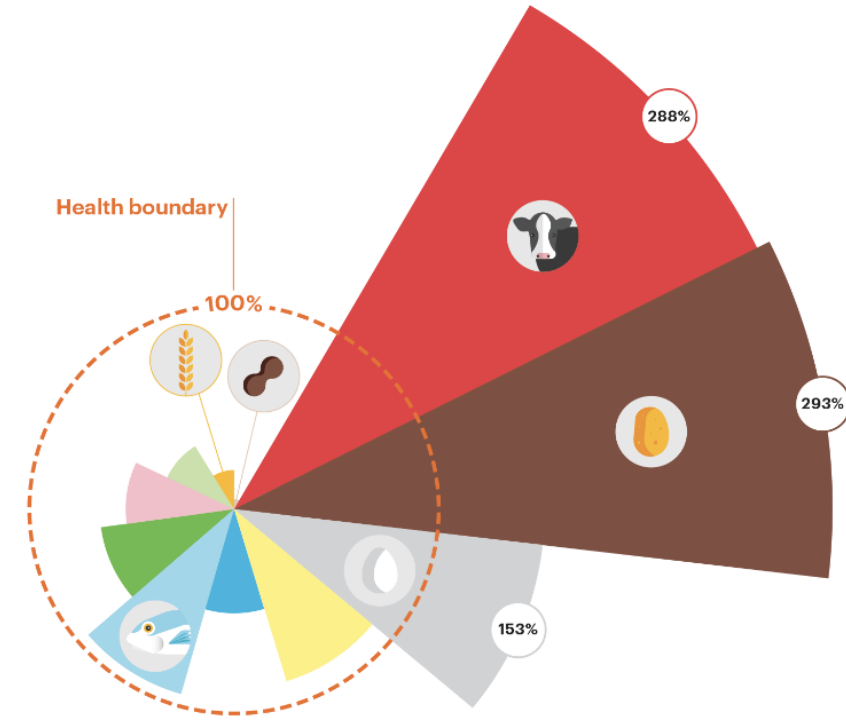
[nature](#) > [news](#) > article

NEWS | 15 April 2024 | Correction [22 April 2024](#)

## Revealed: the ten research papers that policy documents cite most

An exclusive analysis shows that economics and interdisciplinary teams get the attention of policymakers.

9645 citations to date



# Lessons at the *global* level

- If you flood the landscape, you can garner attention. But it is ***transient and often temporary***.
- While food systems have reached a higher priority, policymakers often don't know how to navigate such a complex system and are unaware of trade-offs and which levers to invest in. ***Providing data*** is critical if we want evidence-based decision-making.
- While global governance matters for food systems, there is a need for ***national*** and ***local*** context, governance, solutions, and investments if we want communities to reap benefits and adapt.

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## Area 2: Improving *national* food system decision-making with better food systems science

- Food system transformation is urgent, requiring rigorous, science-based monitoring to guide public and private decisions and support those who hold decision-makers to account.
- Yet, policymakers are often in the dark on how food systems are performing, potential near- and long-term risks, and where to intervene.
- ***This research aims to develop global guidance & better data tools, metrics, and models to unpack some of the most complex food systems science issues.***



**Food Systems Dashboard**



**Food Systems  
Countdown  
Initiative**



# Built a food systems tool to guide diagnosing and decision-making



**Food Systems Dashboard**

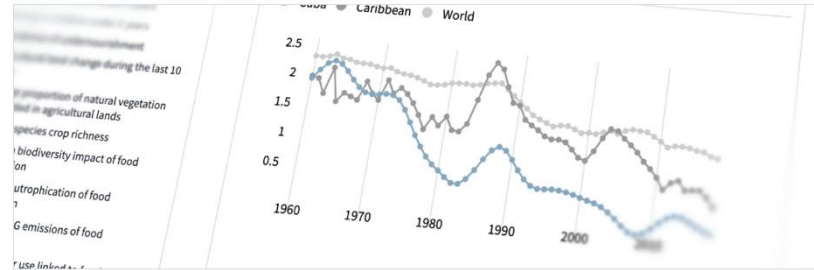
[foodsystemsdashboard.org](https://foodsystemsdashboard.org)

The Food Systems Dashboard gives a complete view of food systems by bringing together data from multiple sources. It's now possible to compare drivers, components, and outcomes of food systems across countries and regions, gain insights into challenges, and identify actions to improve nutrition, health, and environmental outcomes.



## Global Data

View global data for hundreds of indicators spanning every aspect of food systems.



## Country Profiles

Dive into country-specific data, including our food systems diagnostics.



## Policies and Actions

Explore evidence-based interventions that can help improve outcomes of food systems.



Describe



Diagnose



Decide

# Mapping tool: Analyze indicators in various ways

## Food Systems Dashboard

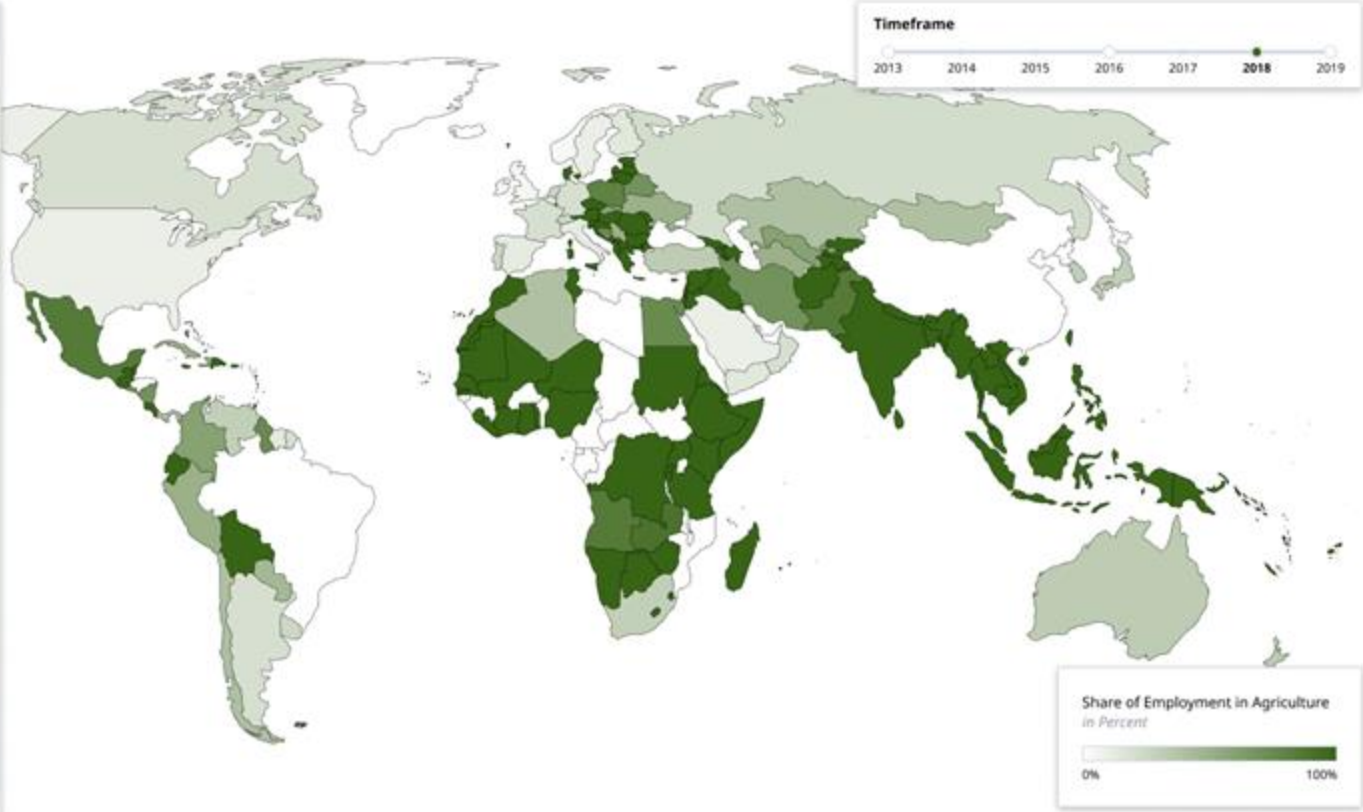
Worldwide Data Country Index Background Information

Food Supply Chains > Production Systems & Input Supply > Share of Employment in Agriculture

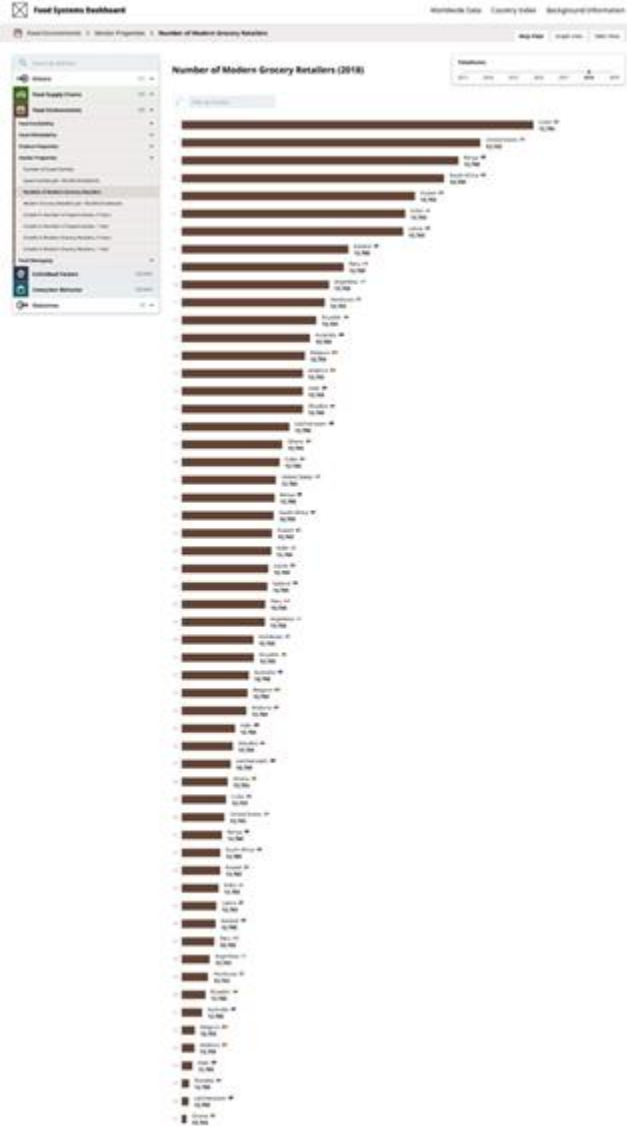
Map View Graph View Table View

Search by Indicator

- Drivers (375)
- Food Supply Chains (133)**
  - Production Systems & Input Supply
    - Percentage of Cultivated Land Equipped for Irrigation
    - Agriculture, forestry, & Fishing, Valued Added Per Worker
    - Share of Employment in Agriculture**
      - Cereal Yield
      - Fertilizer Consumption
      - Proportion of Population with an Account in a Financial Institution
      - Average Size of Agricultural Holding
      - Comprehensiveness of Conservation of Useful Wild Plants (Mean Value)
      - Vegetable Yield
      - Biofortified Crops Released, in Testing, in the Pipeline
      - National Biofortification Policies & Programs
      - Proportion of Area with Small to Very Small Fields (Areas <2.56ha)
  - Storage & Distribution
  - Processing & Packaging
- Food Environments (208)
- Individual Factors (NO DATA)
- Consumer Behavior (NO DATA)
- Outcomes (82)



source Food Balance Sheets: Bovine Meat - Food Supply Quantity FAO



## Indonesia

Search for Indicator

Drivers	11
Food Supply Chains	5
Food Environments	39
Food availability	No Data
Food affordability	27
Product properties	No Data
Vendor properties	12
Food messaging	No Data
Individual Factors	21
Outcomes	16



Show Metadata Download Data (CSV)

Bappenas (Indonesian Ministry of Planning and Development) will assume management of the FSD in June. They will use it for the development of the:

- National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN)
- National Action Plan for Food and Nutrition
- And piloted in Jakarta City, Bogor Regency, and Tangerang Regency at local government level

## Nigeria

Search for Indicator

Drivers	37
Food Supply Chains	45
Food Environments	31
Food availability	13
Food affordability	17
Cost of nutrient adequacy (CoNA) as a percent of household food expenditure - Total	
Cost of nutrient adequacy (CoNA) at purchasing parity (PPP) prices for food - Total	
Cost of nutrient adequacy (CoNA) in local currency units (LCU) - Total	
Cost of recommended diet (CoRD) as a percent of household per capita food expenditure - Total	

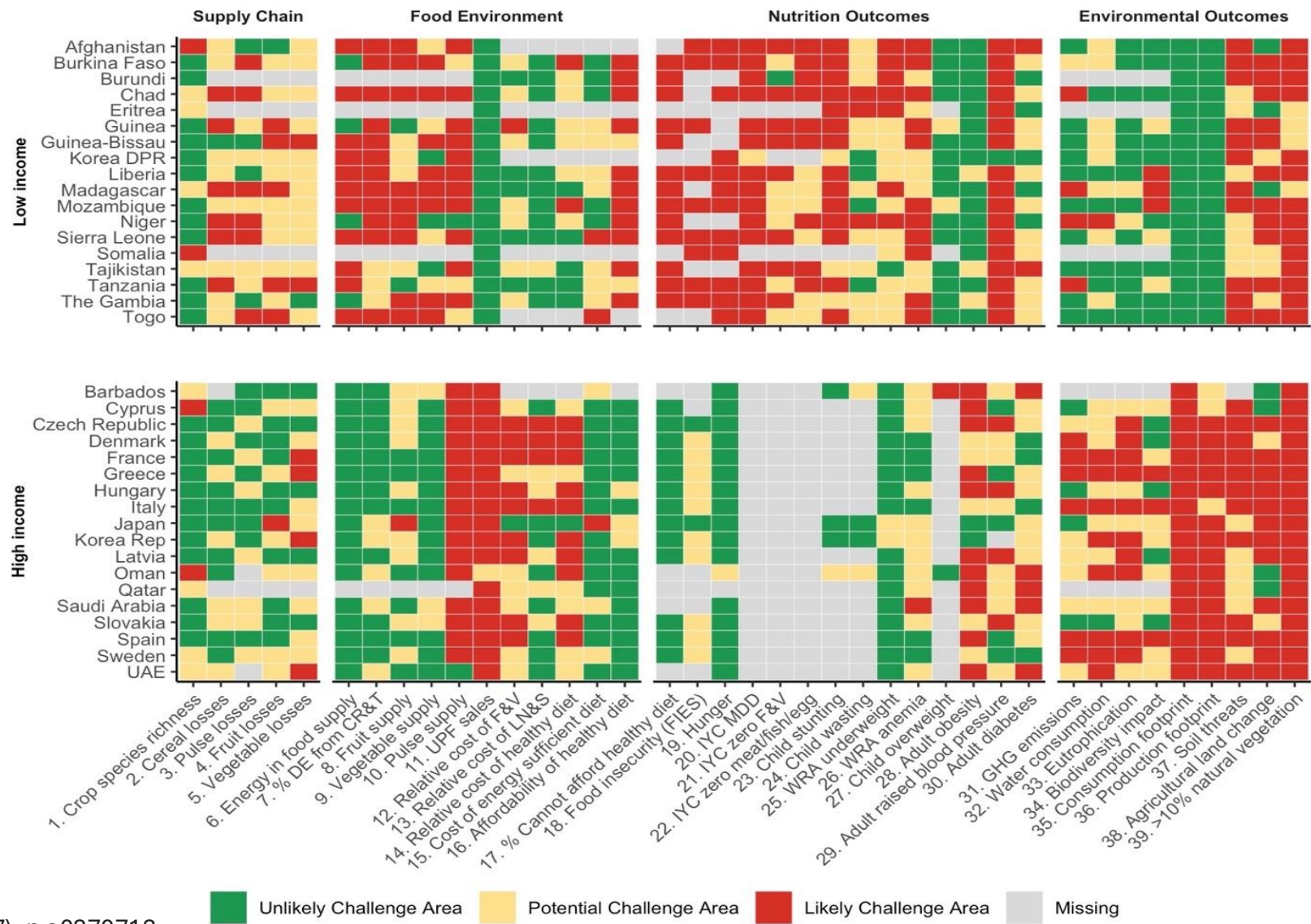


Show Metadata Download Data (CSV)

All the subnational dashboards were developed in partnership with relevant ministries and plan to develop diagnose and decide functions



# The Dashboard diagnoses food systems performance





# Monitoring food systems contributes to accountability and action

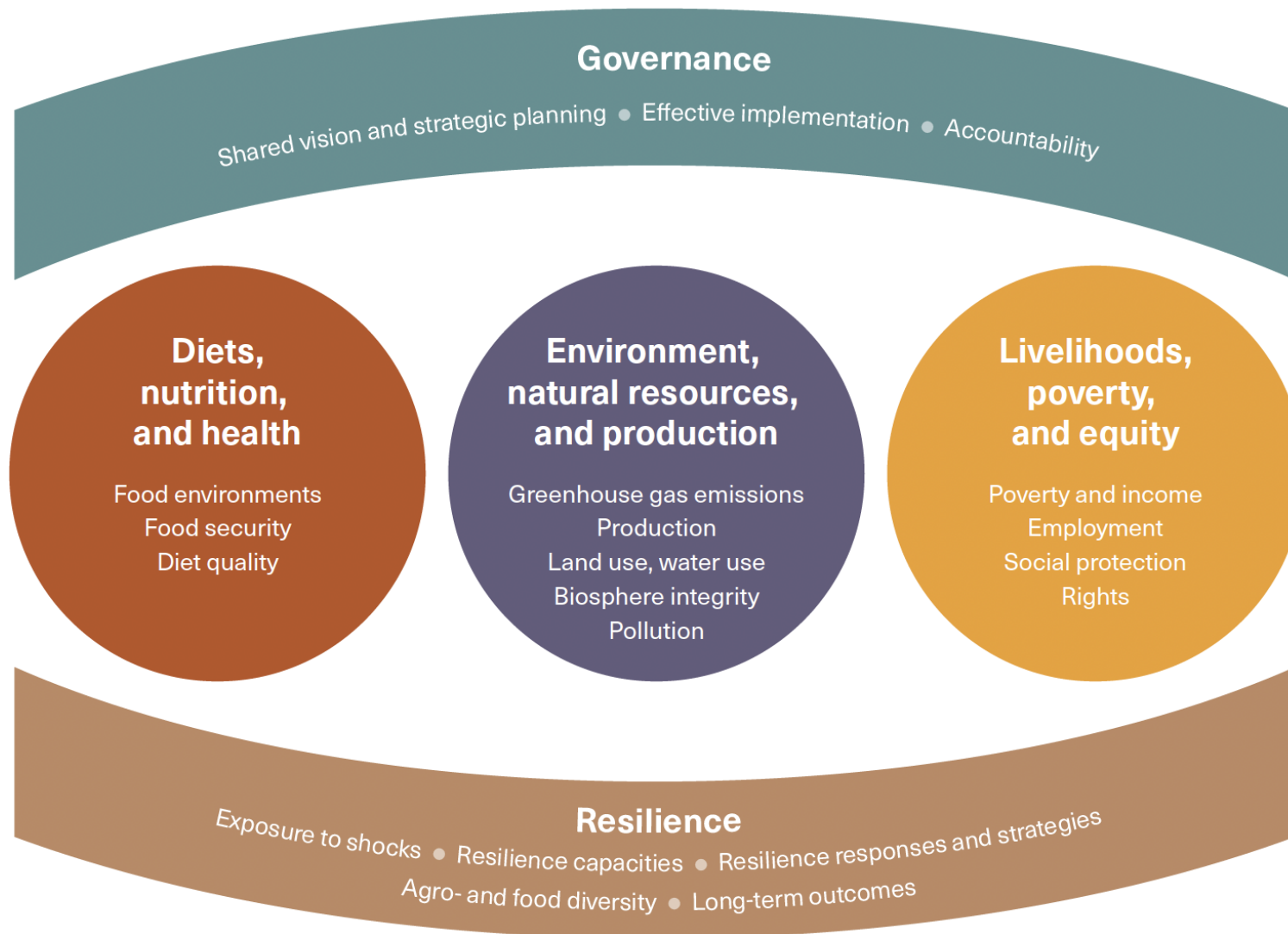


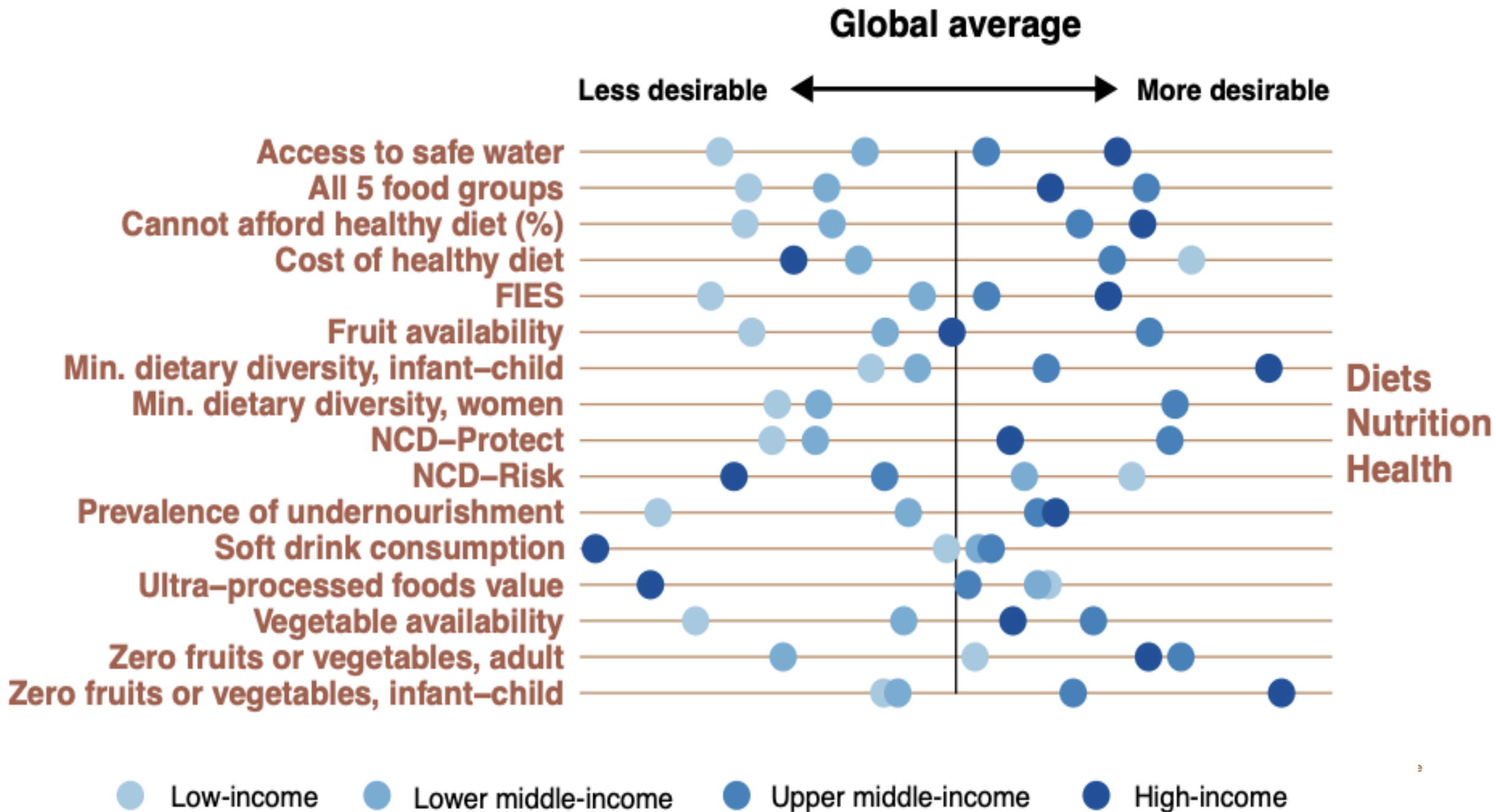
**Food Systems  
Countdown  
Initiative**

[foodcountdown.org](https://foodcountdown.org)

- **The Food Systems Countdown Initiative** is a collaborative effort to monitor food system change and performance over the next 8 years.
- Such monitoring can help aligning decision makers around key priorities, incentivize action, hold stakeholders accountable, sustain commitment by demonstrating progress, and enable course-corrections.
- The FSCI is an interdisciplinary collaboration of 65 scientists representing every region of the world from 32 organizations -- Civil Society, Academia and the UN that emerged from the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit.

# How the FSCI is organized





# Thematic area 1: Diets, nutrition, and health

### Access to safe water



### Ultra-processed food sales per person



### Prevalence of undernourishment



### Cannot afford a healthy diet (%)



### Consumed all 5 food groups



### Zero fruits or vegetables



Less desirable ← **Global average** → More desirable



# Lessons from the *national* food systems science level

- No single region of the world has a monopoly on food systems successes or on food systems challenges. Every region has significant room for improvement and countries can learn from each other.
- Without a monitoring system that shows strengths and weaknesses at the national level, country attempts to transform their food systems will lose their bearings and lose their way.
- There are critical data gaps that are preventing to effectively monitor progress of food systems transformation in different dimensions. Efforts and investments should be made in the near term to fill existing data gaps.
- Researchers should ensure these indicators and their data are useful and interpretable by policymakers and other food actors in ways that are relevant for food system decisions and action.

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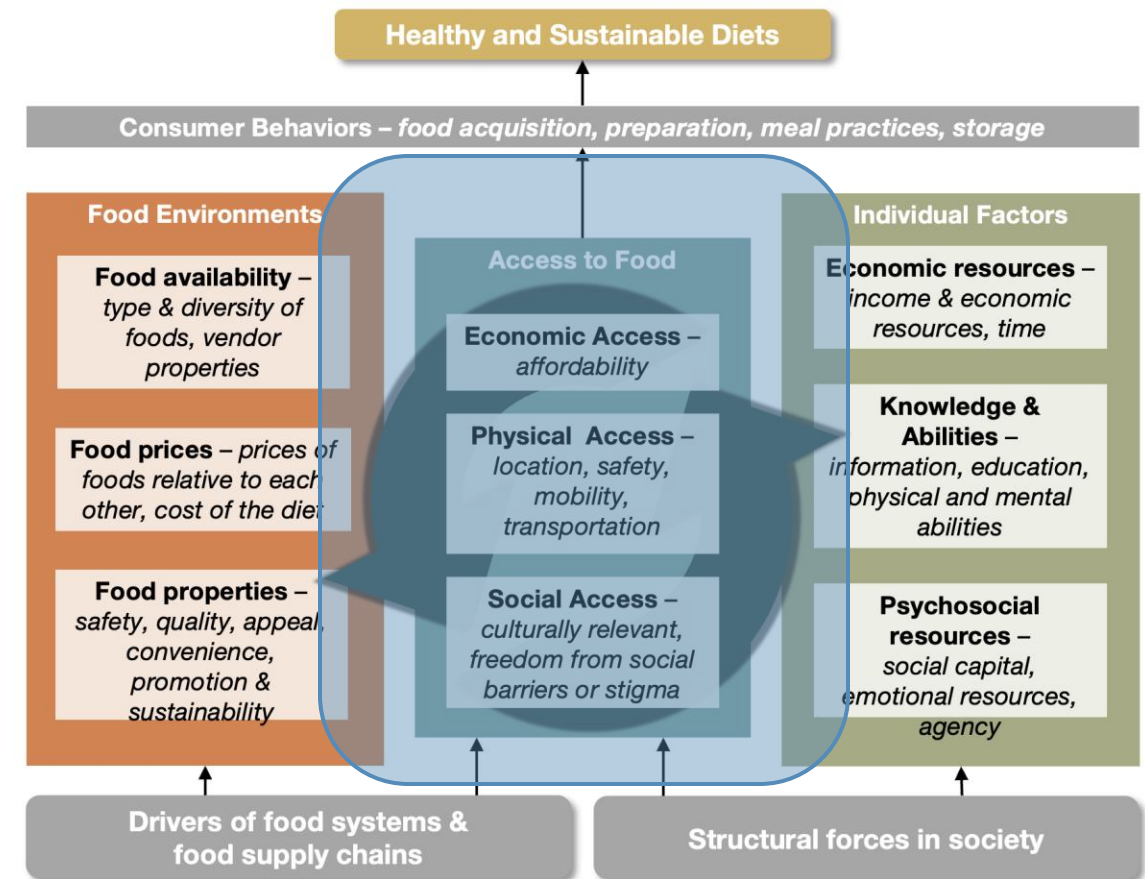
04

Exploring climate-impacted geographic poverty traps on nutrition outcomes

# Area 3: Understanding how *local* foodscapes influence healthy and sustainable diets

## “Ground-truthing the EAT-Lancet Diet

- Local foodscapes and environments influence what and where food is grown, biodiversity, and what foods are available and accessible to communities.
- Geopolitics, climate change, urbanization, and population pressures are changing local foodscapes in profound ways that are, in turn, influencing people’s access to healthy and sustainable diets.
- ***This research aims to understand how various localized, contextual factors influence the health and sustainability of diets in communities.***



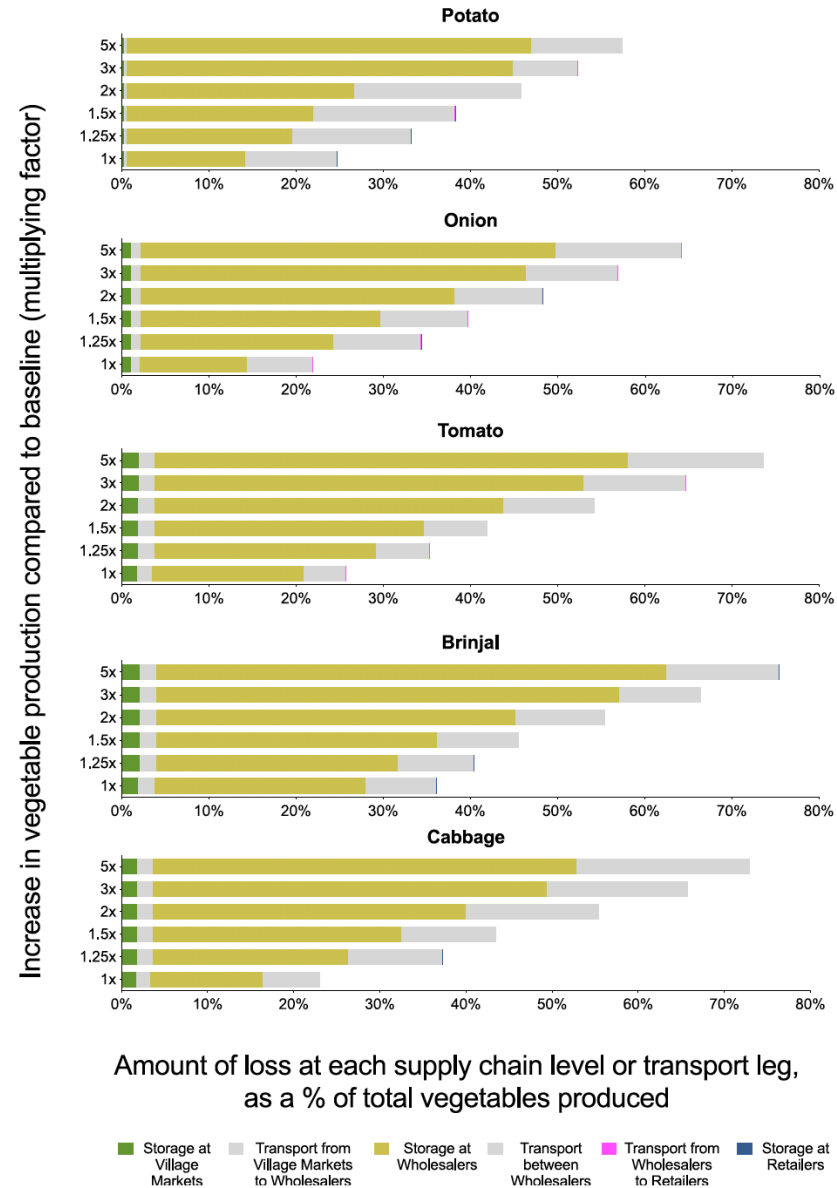
# Investigating the localized drivers that impact access to healthy and sustainable diets in Southeast and South Asia

**Geographic Focus:** Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam

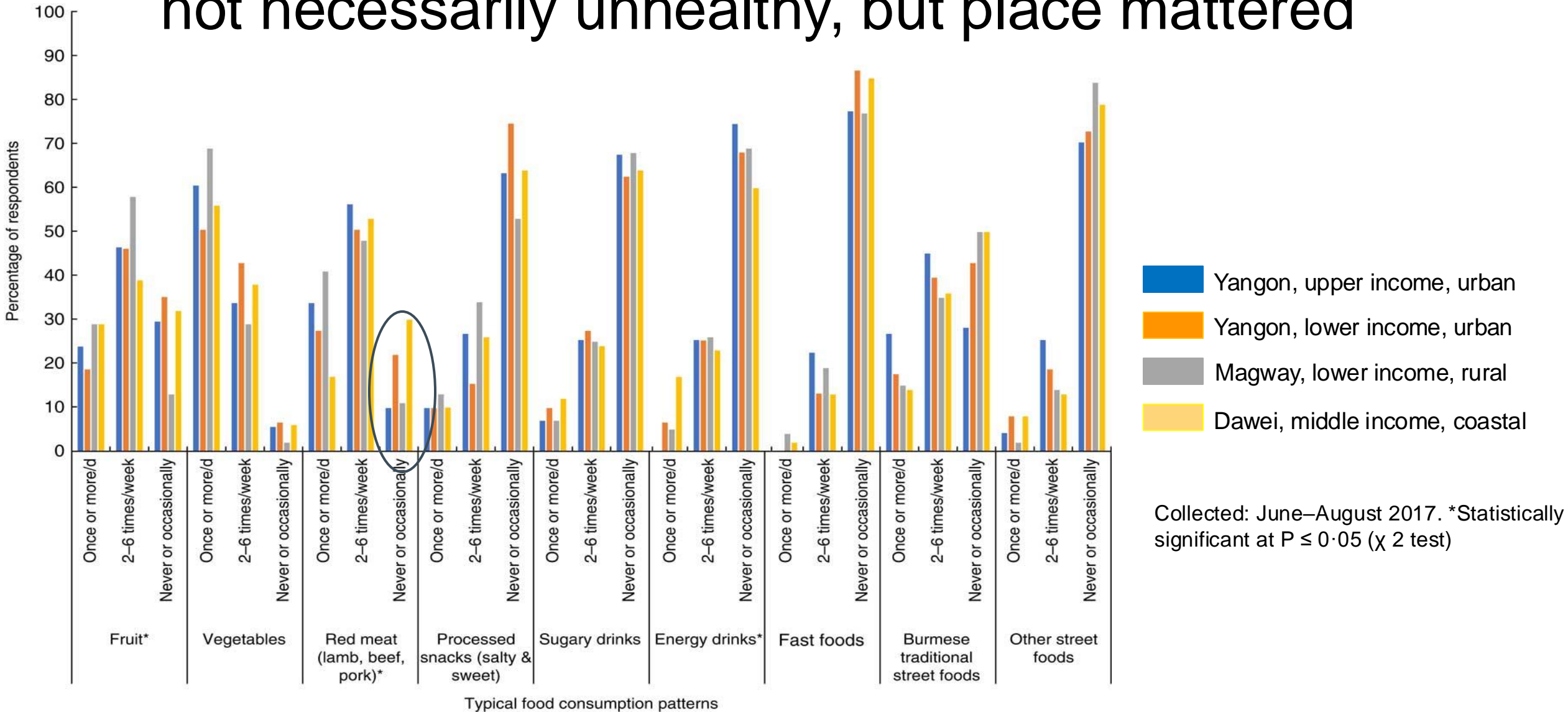




# Loss of vegetables across supply chains in India



# In Myanmar, consumers' typical dietary intake is not necessarily unhealthy, but place mattered



# Attributes of food groups make a difference in preferences and food choice in peri-urban Vietnam

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Fruits</b>	<b>Instant foods</b>	<b>Snack foods</b>
Nutrition	100.00	100.00	57.21	100.00
Food safety (immediate)	26.20	35.86	52.22	94.62
Food safety (future)	14.83	97.10	45.23	81.65
Naturalness	35.60	53.45	8.96	11.66
Convenience	12.51	21.38	100.00	56.34
Taste	22.20	86.19	32.23	97.59
Tradition	7.96	8.12	9.09	9.30
Appearance	2.80	5.98	7.70	10.29
Energy	1.12	3.84	17.81	18.78
Price	0.81	2.36	3.75	5.57
Modernity/Novelty	N/A	N/A	7.36	16.60

# Food access in rural and peri-urban environments is rapidly changing and influenced by urban centers and their mobility touch points but not equally and everywhere.



Beyond price and income: Preferences and food values in peri-urban Viet Nam  
 Winnie Bell<sup>a,\*</sup>, Jennifer Coates<sup>b</sup>, Jessica Fanzo<sup>b</sup>, Norbert L.W. Wilson<sup>c</sup>, William A. Masters<sup>d</sup>

Original Research Communications

Balancing a sustained pursuit of nutrition, health, affordability and climate goals: exploring the case of Indonesia

Saskia de Pee<sup>1,2</sup>, Ridwan Hardinsyah<sup>3</sup>, Fasil Jalal<sup>4</sup>, Brent F. Kim<sup>5,6</sup>, Richard D. Semba<sup>3,7</sup>, Amy Deptford<sup>4</sup>, Jessica C Fanzo<sup>8</sup>, Rebecca Ramsing<sup>5</sup>, Keeve E. Nachman<sup>5,8,10</sup>, Shawn McKenzie<sup>5</sup> and Martin W Bloem<sup>5,6</sup>



The development and application of a sustainable diets framework for policy analysis: A case study of Nepal  
 Shauna M. Downs<sup>a,\*</sup>, Alex Payne<sup>b</sup>, Jessica Fanzo<sup>a,c</sup>

Public Health Nutrition: page 1 of 14 doi:10.1017/S1368980018003427

## The interface between consumers and their food environment in Myanmar: an exploratory mixed-methods study

Shauna M Downs<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, Sara Glass<sup>2</sup>, Kay Khine Linn<sup>3</sup> and Jessica Fanzo<sup>2,4</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Health Systems and Policy, Rutgers School of Public Health, 112 Paterson Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 USA; <sup>2</sup>Berman Institute of Bioethics, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA; <sup>3</sup>HelpAge International Myanmar, USA; <sup>4</sup>School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA

Public Health Nutrition: 25(4), 964–976 doi:10.1017/S1368980021004553

## Examining the trade-offs of palm oil production and consumption from a sustainable diets perspective: lessons learned from Myanmar

Shauna M Downs<sup>1,\*</sup>, Khristopher Nicholas<sup>2</sup>, Kay Khine Linn<sup>3</sup> and Jessica Fanzo<sup>4</sup>



## Measuring Community Urbanicity and Its Influence on Household Food Security Across Nepal's Agroecological Zones

Elizabeth Graham<sup>1,\*</sup>, Andrew I. Thorne-Lyman<sup>2</sup>, John McGready<sup>3</sup>, Yeeli Mai<sup>2</sup>, Swetha Manohar<sup>4</sup>, Samanta Neupane<sup>5</sup>, Jessica Fanzo<sup>1</sup>, Keith P West Jr.<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Washington DC, United States; <sup>2</sup>Department of International Health, Center for Human Nutrition, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, United States; <sup>3</sup>Department of Biostatistics, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, United States; <sup>4</sup>Nutrition, Diet and Health Division, International Food Policy Research Institute, New Delhi, India; <sup>5</sup>Climan School, Columbia University, New York, NY, United States; <sup>6</sup>Nutrition, Diet and Health Division, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC, United States

frontiers | Frontiers in Nutrition | View Perspective | Published: 21 February 2024 | doi:10.3389/fnut.2024.1244002

Check for updates

## Centering context when characterizing food environments: the potential of participatory mapping to inform food environment research

Shauna Downs<sup>a,\*</sup>, Swetha Manohar<sup>b,1</sup>, Wiktorija Staromiejska<sup>c</sup>, Chamruvithy Keo<sup>d</sup>, Sophie Say<sup>e</sup>, Nyda Chhin<sup>f</sup>, Jessica Fanzo<sup>g</sup> and Serey Sok<sup>h</sup>

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 mapping to inform food environment  
 research.  
 Front. Nutr. 11:1244002.  
 doi:10.3389/fnut.2024.1244002



## When increasing vegetable production may worsen food availability gaps: A simulation model in India

Marie L. Spiker<sup>1,2</sup>, Joel Welling<sup>3</sup>, Daniel Hertenstein<sup>4</sup>, Suvankar Mishra<sup>5</sup>, Krishna Mishra<sup>6</sup>, Kristen M. Hurley<sup>7</sup>, Roni A. Neff<sup>1,2</sup>, Jess Fanzo<sup>1,2</sup>, Bruce Y. Lee<sup>1,2,12</sup>



# Lessons from *local* food systems towards healthy and sustainable diets

- While global agendas matter, producing and accessing sustainable, healthy and sustainable diets is incredibly context-dependent.
- Global recommendations must be modified at the sub-national levels based on geographic challenges — adapted to cultural eating habits and traditions, local modes of production and value chains, diseases, and malnutrition burdens.
- Overall, in resource-constrained, climate-vulnerable places, there are increasing challenges for people in accessing healthy and sustainable diets: physically, economically, and socially.

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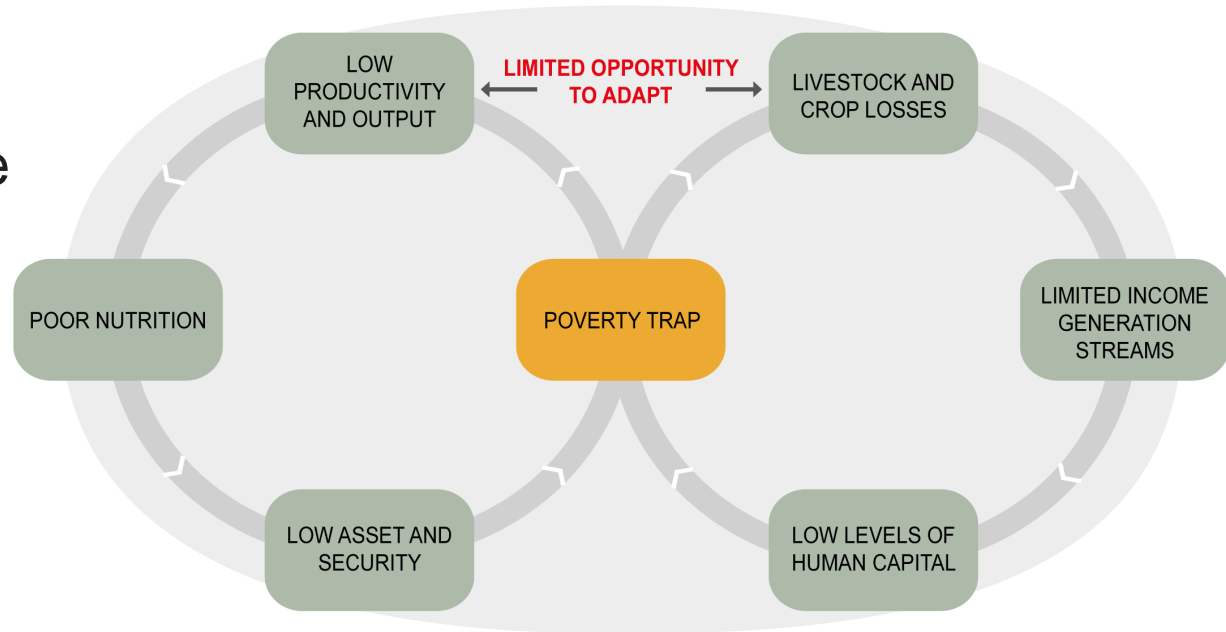
Understanding how *local* foodscapes influence healthy and sustainable diets

04

Exploring climate-impacted geographic poverty traps on nutrition outcomes

# Aim 4: Exploring climate-impacted geographic poverty traps on nutrition outcomes

- Geographic poverty traps occur in areas that are geographically isolated or marginalized (remote, mountainous, overly dependent on a natural resource), and often lack infrastructure like roads, electricity, and clean water, making it hard for communities to escape.
- ***The aim of this research is to explore and analyze how climate further exacerbates geographic poverty traps and how, in turn, these traps further impact food security and nutrition outcomes, leading to deepened nutrition-based poverty traps and limited opportunity to adapt.***



# Climate impacts riverine communities in Cambodia

Evaluating and supporting the health and environmental sustainability of food environments and diets in climate-vulnerable Lower Mekong River communities



Assessing key elements of multi-dimensional river food environments





# Climate extremes faced by herders in Mongolia

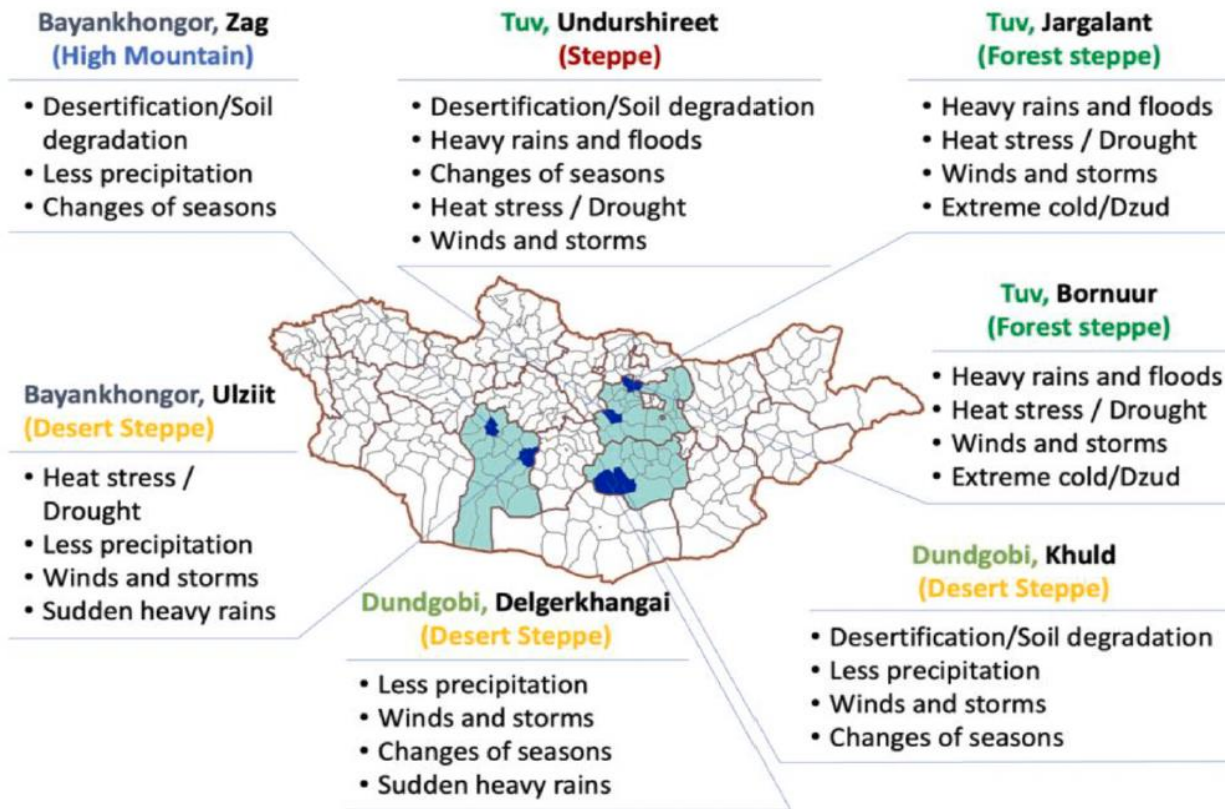


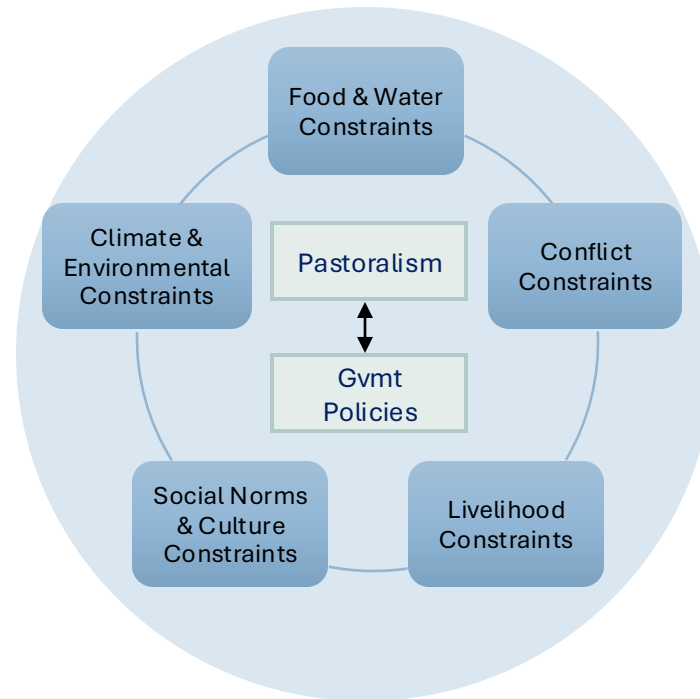
Fig. 2. Signs of climate change perceived by herders or stakeholders associated livestock.



# Climate constrains east African pastoral communities



From our ethnography and photo voice studies, East African pastoral communities are among the most politically and economically marginalized in society and competition for dwindling land is a major instigator of conflict.



**a. Scramble for Life**  
A clear sky with scattered clouds shows lack of rain, and scramble of camels at the water trough show thirst and scarcity of water as a commodity... This photo shows hardship and struggle within this community living with animals. (Borana, TN, male, 36y)



**b. No Water, No Life**  
People are digging shallow wells on the dry river. The photo shows a dry spell and shortage of water; it symbolizes drought and hardship. The community depends on livestock and it is a source of livelihood; the area is semi-arid with insufficient water... The lack of rain and water results in a gloomy future. (Borana, TN, female, 29y)



**c. Innocence**  
Children are swimming and drinking the same water in a dam. This area has a problem with clean drinking water... This community needs urgent solutions to clean drinking water otherwise there could be a problem with disease. Clean drinking water is supposed to be provided to people, and there is a need to raise awareness of the dangers of drinking stagnant water. (Turkana, SLR, male, 22y)

# Lessons from *people* experiencing poverty traps in distinct *places*

- Climate- and nutrition-vulnerable communities should be involved in research in how they are experiencing climate change in the places where they live.
- For those populations already struggling with poverty, climate is making their situation worse, and out-migration is not always an option.
- Climate-adaptation strategies co-produced by communities are essential for those communities to escape poverty traps: we argue that investing in local food system supply chains and nutrition are potential strategies.

# We have more knowledge than ever before

## Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change

By Nathaniel Rich

Photographs and Videos by George Steinmetz

AUG. 1, 2018

“The risks of making well intentioned but inappropriate policy choices are much smaller than the risks of using a lack of evidence as an argument for inaction.”


--UN HLPE report on food systems and nutrition (2017)





# We can't give up on research and evidence


- At a time when facts and evidence are under ever greater scrutiny, and even openly disregarded as suspect by some political and business leaders, the rigors of science and evidence must be maintained.
- Research has a vital role in charting a positive and sustainable direction for global food security, nutrition, and health.
- Research can and does bring about wholesale changes in attitudes, political thought, and action.



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## Global Food Security

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Perspective


### A research vision for food systems in the 2020s: Defying the status quo

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Andrew Moore/Yancey Richardson Gallery

# Conclusion

- Food systems research is still evolving over the last 15 years but much more is now known about the necessity to take a food systems approach.
- While global evidence is critical, national and sub-national local context research is key to understand adaptation solutions.
- Everyone has a role to play in improving food systems because every one of us participates in this system, sometimes multiple times a day.





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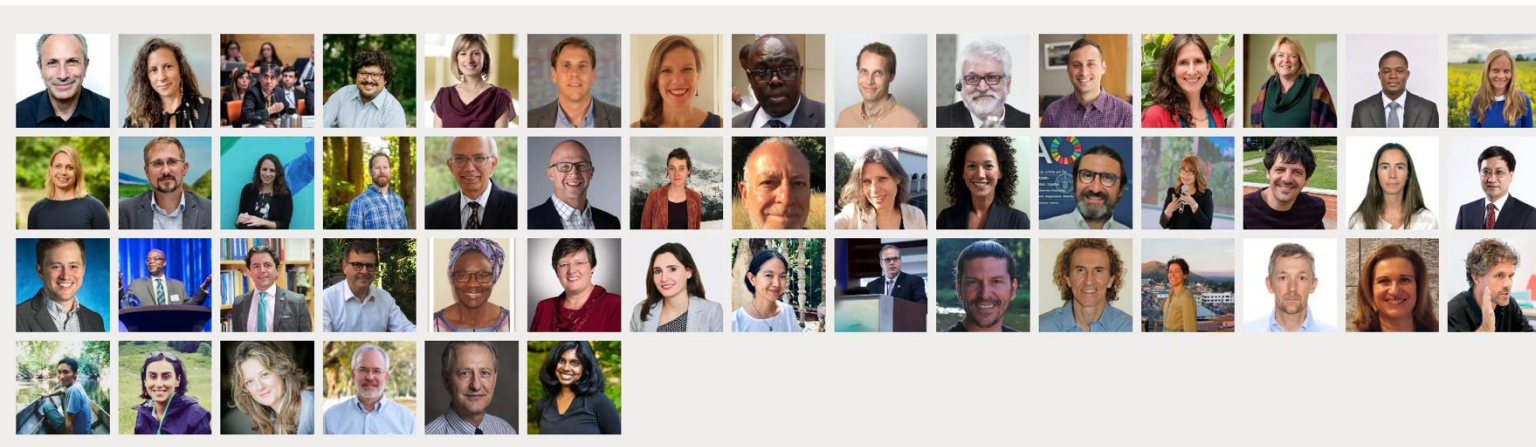


Elizabeth Fox



# Incredible collaborations on key projects

## The Food Systems Countdown Initiative Collaborators



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ΙΣΝ / SNF

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**Thank you!**

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