



THEME OF THE HLPE REPORT FOR 2024 – WITH DRAFT DECISION

MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Committee:

- a) Considers document “CFS 2022/50/8 “Theme of the HLPE Report 2024 – with Draft Decisions”, as presented by CFS Chairperson Gabriel Ferrero;
- b) Requests the HLPE to undertake the following study [insert title] to be prepared and presented by the CFS HLPE-FSN in 2024;
- c) Requests that the theme of the 2028 CFS HLPE-FSN report be included in the next MYPoW (2024-2027).

[Note for Bureau and Advisory Group members: following the meeting on 23 March 2022, three shortlisted proposals from the HLPE note on Critical, Enduring and Emerging Issues are presented below for consideration]

BUILDING RESILIENT AND EQUITABLE SUPPLY CHAINS FOR FSN

Rationale

Major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, extreme weather events due to climate change and natural disasters, reveal structural vulnerabilities in food supply chains. There are also deep inequalities and unsustainable practices in the current food distribution and marketing systems (HLPE, 2021; 2022). Food supply chains have become increasingly complex in recent decades, characterized by growing cross-border trade in food products organized along “just-in-time” distribution systems and the reliance on millions of food system workers to supply inputs and produce, process, move, market and prepare food along the way to its ultimate destination. Food supply chains depend on well-functioning transportation networks (Colon *et al.*, 2021), require vast quantities of land, water and fossil fuel energy (Taherzadeh *et al.*, 2021), and rely on regulations to ensure safety and quality (Machado Nardi *et al.*, 2020). In the case of globally oriented food supply chains, these rely on predictable channels of international trade, enabled by globally agreed upon rules. Domestic food supply chains require robust local and regional infrastructure for inputs, production, stockholding, processing, distribution and marketing. Food supply chains can become strained when any one of the factors required for their proper operation is affected negatively. The risks associated with disruptions and existing inequities in these systems can be multiplied when food supply chains rigidly rely exclusively on global or local supplies and labour, or when there are multiple shocks affecting food systems at the same time (FAO, 2021a). It is important to recognize that food supply chain dynamics are also highly context-specific, with unique structures and organization in different regions and countries (Nchanji and Lutomia, 2021).

Although global, regional and local (often informal) supply chains provide livelihood opportunities, power differentials within those systems can be considerable. Food supply chains are often dominated by just a handful of large transnational firms aiming to achieve economies of scale. But the firms at the top can have disproportionate power to shape supply chains in ways that may be disadvantageous to those with less influence (Clapp and Moseley, 2020). Those actors with the least power – including small-scale producers, processors and traders, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and refugees – often have the least opportunity to generate sufficient income within the supply chains and bear disproportionate risks in cases of supply chain disruption (HLPE, 2020; 2021). Staple crop production for international trade is also highly concentrated, with just a handful of countries supplying nearly all the wheat, maize, rice and soybeans that are traded on global markets, and just a handful of firms dominating their trade (HLPE, 2022; Clapp, 2015). Similarly, just a few firms tend to dominate in markets for agricultural inputs and for food trade, processing and retail (Howard, 2016), especially in the Global North. Meanwhile, small-scale producers often face challenges in accessing markets (Battersby, 2020) and food system workers often experience harsh working conditions and low levels of compensation (Klassen and Murphy, 2020).

Food supply chains risk disruption from many different types of shocks, including conflict, climate vulnerability, human and animal diseases, financial shocks and local disasters (e.g. Davis, Downs and Gephart, 2021; Béné, 2020). These types of shocks have the potential to negatively impact multiple dimensions of food security. For example, recently experienced shocks, including COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, have resulted in uneven food availability due to blocked trade, lack of inputs or labour shortages. Supply chain disruptions can also lead to higher food prices that diminish food access and can lead to consumers shifting to less healthy diets. Markets can also become unstable, and prices can rise sharply due to sudden trade restrictions, low stock levels, transportation blockages and infrastructural damage or weakness. Disruptive food system shocks can also lead to wastage, which undermines sustainability. And food supply chain vulnerabilities can deepen inequalities and weaken livelihoods in ways that diminish the ability of food system actors (including producers, workers, traders and consumers) to interact with food systems on their own terms (HLPE, 2021).

There is wide recognition of the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of food supply chains, and growing calls to improve their functioning so that they work better for all participants (HLPE, 2020; CGIAR, 2021). Given the

increased frequency of shocks to food supply chains in recent years and the growing risks from a range of sources, it is imperative to explore more deeply how they can be made more resilient – that is, more capable of recovering, adapting and transforming in the face of shocks – as well as more equitable and sustainable, so that they are able to support all six dimensions of food security. Potential measures to improve the functioning of the supply chain include: encouraging greater diversity at all stages of food production, processing, trade and retail, allowing for a better balance between food supply chains at global, regional and local levels, to reduce overreliance on a single food supply channel; making supply chains more inclusive, including creating more equitable employment and income opportunities; finding innovative means of connecting input suppliers to producers and producers to processors and traders, including the use of widely accessible digital technologies; instituting more effective measures to ensure environmental sustainability at all points along food supply chains from production to consumption; increasing the transparency of input and output markets and developing international agricultural trade rules that support resilient food systems; strengthening infrastructure to support supply chains at multiple scales, including the local and regional level; and adopting more coherent policies that support measures for improving supply chain resilience.

Key questions that the CFS may want to request the HLPE-FSN to examine in a report:

1. What are the main types of vulnerabilities facing food supply chains and what are the potential consequences for food system actors (including input suppliers, food producers, traders, food system workers and consumers), considering different kinds of potential shocks, such as climate change, plant or animal diseases, economic crises, changes in trade rules and conflict?
2. What kinds of inequities and power imbalances are present in food supply chains and how do they affect food security and nutrition and food system livelihoods, especially for those groups facing multidimensional and intersectional aspects of inequality and vulnerability?
3. What characteristics are needed to make food supply chains more resilient, and what types of metrics are useful in measuring and tracking resilience in food supply chains?
4. What are the potential benefits and costs of different supply chain models for supporting FSN, including specialized global supply chains centred on international production and trade, compared with food supply chains more focused on local and regional production and trade, especially in terms of strengthening diversity and resilience in food supply chains?
5. What types of policy changes are needed, including with respect to global trading rules, to enhance the resilience of local, regional and global food supply chains, including consideration of inclusive and equitable employment opportunities, environmental sustainability, access to healthy diets and human rights?
6. What is the role of states in building more resilient food supply chains, including with respect to providing infrastructure, regulatory measures, international policy coordination and policy coherence?
7. What measures are necessary to incentivize private sector strategies and investments that promote supply chain resilience?

STRENGTHENING URBAN AND PERI-URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF URBANIZATION AND RURAL TRANSFORMATION

Rationale

Almost sixty percent of the global population currently live in urban centres (UNDESA, 2018; Acharya *et al.*, 2020), seen as engines of growth and employment, producing over 80 percent of the global GDP (*ibid.*), but also facing huge challenges in guaranteeing access for all residents to essential services such as health, education, transportation and food. The increase in urban population will be particularly sharp in Africa and Asia, with the fifteen fastest-growing cities in the world all located in Africa. Alongside this urbanization, there has been a “geographical decoupling” (Langemeyer *et al.*, 2021) of cities from sources of food supply, with urban and peri-urban land use being reoriented for more profitable uses. As such, cities and towns are fast losing peri-urban agricultural lands, which have historically provided them with fresh food. Urban areas are also experiencing higher rates of extreme weather events that affect people’s livelihoods, while inequalities among urban populations are growing (Pelling *et al.*, 2021). These trends mean that urban areas also concentrate risks for food insecurity and malnutrition, as became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, urban areas are resourceful and are hubs for education, technology and innovation, health and social services as well as for food production, processing and distribution.

The informal food sector is critical to the food security of poor urban households in most rapidly growing towns and cities in the Global South, comprising a complex network of suppliers, transporters, hawkers, retailers and street and market food vendors, in addition to farmers, and making food more accessible and affordable to urban consumers. Yet, these informal sector actors mainly rely on their own resources and capital and have very little policy support for strengthening their enterprises and ensuring quality, in terms of market intelligence, transport and logistics, cold chains or waste reuse facilities (Tefft *et al.*, 2017). In fact, in the absence of specific food system planning, the sale and consumption of highly processed foods is growing in most urban centres, while local commerce that guarantees healthy, fresh food at affordable prices, and often in smaller quantities, is neglected, with negative impacts on food security and nutrition (Peyton, Moseley and Battersby, 2015; Battersby, 2017; Acharya *et al.*, 2020).

This policy incoherence is exacerbated by the general dearth of city-level data, analyses and empirical evidence to inform decision-making on urban and peri-urban food issues, making it difficult for policymakers to plan, prioritize, design and track urban and peri-urban food system interventions. Furthermore, governments and famine early warning systems (FEWS) have also not been as good at monitoring food insecurity in urban areas as they have been in rural areas, beyond very basic indicators such as food prices (Moseley, 2001; Krishnamurthy, Choularton and Kareiva, 2020).

The strategies chosen for urban development shape FSN, locally and globally, across the rural-urban continuum. Cities can play a vital role in shaping food system policies to bolster their resilience by sourcing locally or regeneratively grown food where appropriate, facilitating sustainable urban and peri-urban production of nutritious food, avoiding food waste and strengthening investments in circular bioeconomy, building inclusive food markets and designing and marketing healthier food products, while mitigating and adapting against the adverse impacts of climate change (HLPE, 2020; Heck and Alonso, 2021).

Urban and peri-urban agriculture is an important option with potential positive impacts on dietary diversity, the quality of city spaces and community action and empowerment. Yet, in most cities, especially in the Global South, there is little state support for urban and peri-urban agriculture. Instead, current regulations in cities and the market value of land limit opportunities for local production. A recent survey indicates that municipal governments play an enormous role in identifying and connecting food system actors to foster innovative community-based initiatives to support food security and nutrition (FAO, 2020). In the face of the dramatic consequences of the pandemic, for example, home gardens provided nutritious and healthy food supplements to the urban middle classes (Lal, 2020). Local markets multiplied, as did initiatives by family producers for home delivery of baskets of fresh food and initiatives for food donations to low-income communities. Many people in urban areas, especially migrants, the undocumented and informal workers, were forced to go to food banks

and charities, with great harm to their dignity and agency (Rao *et al.*, 2020). These experiences point to the importance and potential of the territorial dimension of food systems for the realization of the human right to food (Recine *et al.*, 2021).

Given the social and economic significance of urban areas, it is imperative to address the challenges of urbanization in relation to rural transformation to “build back better” in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – addressing poverty and inequality, building resilience and social inclusion and fostering sustainable livelihoods. The specific needs of diverse rural and urban contexts, and the linkages between them, should be considered in formulating food policies. The New Urban Agenda calls for the integration of food and nutrition security into urban and territorial planning (UN Habitat, 2016). Some of the recommended policy measures are: equitable access to land and productive agricultural resources for small-scale producers, investment in rural infrastructure, prioritizing people living under poverty in cities and rural areas to access nutritious food and healthier living conditions, and anticipating the inter-connected future of urbanization and rural transformation (HLPE, 2020; Heck and Alonso, 2021). A more in-depth analysis of food systems is needed in the context of urbanization and rural transformation to ensure that the rights to food and nutrition security, in all its six dimensions, are met.

Key questions that the CFS may want to request the HLPE-FSN to examine in a report:

1. How can urban and peri-urban food systems be made more equitable and accessible both for food system actors and in terms of food security and nutrition outcomes?
2. How can urban food supply chains, formal and informal, local and global, be made more resilient to ensure food security and nutrition within urban settings, in particular for food system workers in the informal economy?
3. What changes are needed in urban planning to better support all dimensions of food security – including support for human rights and agency as well as sustainability, especially for the most vulnerable and those in informal settlements?
4. How can national and municipal governments strengthen the potential for low-carbon, inclusive, relatively self-sufficient and resilient cities and towns to drive improved food security and nutrition in the wake of climate change and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. What are the most appropriate policies along the rural-urban continuum to address issues of land tenure, urban expansion into previous farmland, migration to urban areas and the growing competition for natural resources?
6. What are the potential benefits and challenges of territorial markets for strengthening food security and nutrition for urban populations?
7. In what ways can the incorporation of climate-smart agriculture and circular economy practices in urban and peri-urban agriculture provide climate co-benefits for all and enhance climate resilience?
8. How can citizens be engaged and empowered to drive inclusive, transparent, participatory processes for urban transformations and how can complementarity between top-down and bottom-up approaches be ensured?

CONFLICTS AND THE FRAGILITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS

Rationale

Conflict is one of the major drivers of hunger and malnutrition, which, in turn, can be drivers of conflict. The ongoing dire situations in conflict and post-conflict areas – including Afghanistan, Central African Republic, northeastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and, most recently, Tigray, Ethiopia – have increased the incidence of extreme hunger and malnutrition (von Grebmer *et al*, 2021). On a global scale, the current war in Ukraine is exacerbating global food system challenges due to the blockage of grains and other produce, price increases, damage to agricultural infrastructure and the interruption of the farming cycle. Moreover, export restrictions and economic sanctions have an enormous impact on net food importer countries and regions that are already food insecure. With the global grain market overwhelmingly concentrated in just a handful major exporting countries and a few corporations, the impact of these disruptions is being felt widely and deeply throughout the world (HLPE, 2022).

When conflict meets with the climate emergency, extreme weather events, infectious diseases and competition over access to resources like water and arable land, severe food insecurity deepens (FAO and WFP, 2016). In 2021, 70 percent of people experiencing acute hunger were living in countries affected by conflict (FAO and WFP, 2022). At present, there are more than 49 million people, living in over three dozen countries, who are just one step away from a declaration of famine (UN, 2022), a number which has continued to climb in recent years. These fragile states and individuals are in a dire situation.

Without lasting peace, the international community is unlikely to reach the goal of zero hunger. Conflict adversely affects all six dimensions of food security (HLPE, 2020) – displacing farmers and pastoralists, destroying agricultural assets, disrupting markets, increasing food prices and undermining livelihoods. The resulting situations of severe hunger and malnutrition especially impact those already vulnerable, such as smallholder and subsistence farmers, herders, women, children, Indigenous Peoples and racial or ethnic minorities (Moseley, 2017). In conflict situations, severe hunger and malnutrition often spread quickly to neighbouring places through forced displacement and migration. Without an urgent response, conflict-driven hunger not only kills people, but destroys entire food systems (Elver, 2017).

A precursor to adequately responding to these crises is reliable food security data on conflict zones as the conflicts emerge. Beyond early warning systems, however, access to conflict-affected populations is generally limited (Lander and Vetharanim Richards, 2019), preventing the collection of the data needed to push for fast action.

Humanitarian short-term emergency response is vital, yet ultimately not enough. Such operations are typically meant to address immediate crises, rather than enable the development of long-term peace and sustainable food systems. Moreover, humanitarian organizations are already stretched beyond their capacity to solve even immediate emergencies because of limited financial resources (Development Initiatives, 2021) and increased food prices. The World Food Program (WFP) is paying 44 percent more for food this year as compared to 2019 – an additional USD 73 million per month (WFP, 2022).

Although long-term development assistance and investment are key to breaking the vicious problems of hunger and conflict, without peace building, the impacts of such efforts are limited. The international community has an obligation to respond to the human tragedy of conflict-driven hunger, given the United Nations Charter, the founding principles of Rome-based institutions and international human rights commitments. This includes support for local conflict-resolution strategies wherever possible.

There are examples around the world where effective development policies have helped respond to conflict-driven hunger and solve conflict, giving hope for peaceful recovery and the restoration of sustainable and equitable food systems (FAO, 2016). A long-term, holistic approach is necessary for solving structural problems

relevant to food insecurity, such as political and economic shocks, depleted and looted natural resources, and socioeconomic exclusion as a result of conflict (CFS, 2015). Diligent work towards implementing social protection systems to cover the poor and vulnerable will help to resolve these structural problems in the future (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] Target 1.3).

The HLPE-FSN, in its 15th report (2020), provides recommendations to address the needs of those affected by conflict. These recommendations include providing timely, adequate nutritious emergency food relief; enabling access to clean water and sanitation to facilitate food production, preparation and utilization; building functioning food systems in postconflict situations; and building development and governance capacity (HLPE, 2020). Moving all food systems towards sustainability through innovation, technology, agroecology and localised best practices before, during and after conflicts will reduce their drastic impacts in the long run. This includes, for example, protecting the rights of internally displaced persons and refugee food workers, testing agrispacial solutions to minimize security risks, and investing in small-scale livestock capital and future crops (Townsend *et al.*, 2021).

Key questions that the CFS may want to request the HLPE-FSN to examine in a report:

1. How is the right to food compromised in conflict situations? What research and data are needed to better understand these dynamics?
2. What are the main challenges for humanitarian action in ensuring access to food on the part of vulnerable populations in situations of conflict, including the complex relationship between conflict and other multiple crises such as climate change and the pandemic?
3. What are the main factors driving gender-based food insecurity and inequalities during conflict and fragility?
4. What are the most promising policies, approaches and innovations to support local food systems and ensure resilience in conflict-prone areas?
5. How can local people affected by conflict be enabled to be agents of change rather than passive receivers in times of humanitarian assistance?
6. How can the international community promote the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to prevent conflict-related hunger crises, while building long-term sustainable and equitable food systems?
7. How can policies and laws such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2417 help to pre-empt the use of starvation as a weapon of war? How can they be best enforced?
8. What are the consequences of economic sanctions on human rights, food security and nutrition in conflict and postconflict societies?
9. How can innovative research methodologies help to mitigate food insecurity during times of conflict?