

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The transformation of food systems towards achieving equality and inclusivity

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the linked flaws in our social, financial, and agricultural systems and provides lessons for creating more equal and sustainable food systems. Food workers are vital yet viewed as a lower class, and non-white migrant food workers experience particular types of injustice, all of which lead to food insecurity that not only represents but promotes injustice. These lessons, chosen for their moral importance, global application, and political intensity show how the pandemic linked injustices are weakening recovery. Gender issues can arise when food systems are transformed. Women are heavily represented as the low-paid employees in the food chain, such as those in agriculture, distribution, and sales, in addition to doing 75 percent of total of the unpaid work as carers. They spend 2.5 times as much time on basic household duties than men do, and they are responsible for cooking meals for the household 85% of the time. They only account for 15% of total property owners. A Food Systems Conference was held in 2021 by United Nations Secretary General António Guterres as a part of the Decade of Action to realize the sustainable development goals. They wanted to change how people create, eat, and discard food through exchanging experiences, data, and innovative concepts.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Food systems

Food systems include the full spectrum of actors and their connected value-adding activities that are involved in the creation, aggregation, processing, allocation, usage, and disposal of food items that come from the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and food industries, as well as the larger socioeconomic, and natural environments in which they are embedded. A sustainable food system is one that promotes nutrition and food security for everyone while

preserving the financial, social, cultural, and environmental foundations necessary to provide these outcomes for future generations.¹

Raw materials

Any material, such as oil, cotton, or sugar in its natural condition, before it has been processed for use.²

Food distribution

Food distribution is composed of a variety of companies, organizations and programs that collect food from producers, store it in warehouses, and then distribute the food to manufacturers, grocery stores, restaurants, cafeterias, government aid programs and more.³

Soil erosion

Soil erosion is the natural process in which the topsoil of a field is carried away by physical sources such as wind and water.⁴

Poverty

The state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.⁵

Climate change

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.⁶

¹ https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/food-systems-definition-concept-application-un-food-systems-summit-paper-scientific_en

² "Raw Material." *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/raw-material>.

³ Fram, Lauren. "What Is Food Distribution? (+How It Works)." *Learn Hub*, <https://learn.g2.com/food-distribution>.

⁴ Admin. "What Is Soil Erosion? - Definition, Causes, Effects, Prevention." *BYJUS*, BYJU'S, 7 June 2022, <https://byjus.com/biology/soil-erosion/>.

⁵ "Oxford Languages and Google - English." *Oxford Languages*, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>.

⁶ "What Is Climate Change?" *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>.

Oligopoly

A state of limited competition, in which a market is shared by a small number of producers or sellers.⁷

Income inequality

Income inequality, in economics, significant disparity in the distribution of income between individuals, groups, populations, social classes, or countries. Income inequality is a major dimension of social stratification and social class. It affects and is affected by many other forms of inequality, such as inequalities of wealth, political power, and social status. Income is a major determinant of quality of life, affecting the health and well-being of individuals and families, and varies by social factors such as sex, age, and race or ethnicity.⁸

Malnutrition

Lack of proper nutrition, caused by not having enough to eat, not eating enough of the right things, or being unable to use the food that one does eat.⁹

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The phrase "food systems" refers to all the components and actions involved in growing and eating food, as well as the results of these actions on the economy, human health, and the environment.

The four components of food systems

The first component of a food system is production. This stage entails the transformation of raw materials into finished edible products. The majority of food and raw materials are derived from plants and animals. Nearly 90% of the food in the world is produced

⁷ Ibid5

⁸"Income Inequality." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/income-inequality>.

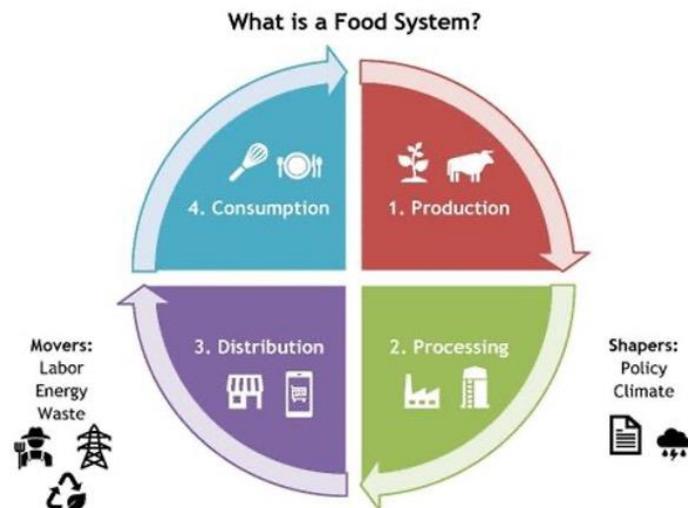
⁹ Ibid5

by these plants and animals. Grain, honey, meat, dairy products, vegetables, fruits, and other food and raw resources may all be extracted.¹⁰

The second component of a food system is the processing of foods. This stage refers to any technique used to transform fresh ingredients into food items. These include washing, cutting, pasteurizing, freezing, fermenting, packing, and several other processes. Food processing also entails adding ingredients to food, such as preservatives or vitamins, to increase shelf life.

The third component of a food system is distribution. Food distribution is the method through which food is made available to the public. Farmers and food processors provide their goods to food distributors, who then collect them, store them in warehouses, and deliver them to retail and wholesale customers. Distributors are essential to the operation of large companies like supermarkets, chain restaurants, and companies that supply food services to hospitals, schools, and other organizations. For instance, a supermarket does not have the time to replenish its shelves

by making purchases from hundreds of different farms and processors. Meanwhile, a single farmer hardly ever produces enough food to warrant a huge company buying from them directly. To enable bulk sales, a distributor combines products from several suppliers and processors.



The fourth component of a food system is consumption. This is the process in which humans take food into their bodies by eating. Food consumption is crucial as it protects

¹⁰ Burger, Mia. "What Makes up a Food System? Breaking It down into 4 Parts." Sustainable Food Center, 10 June 2020, <https://sustainablefoodcenter.org/latest/blog/what-makes-up-a-food-system-breaking-it-down-into-4-parts> .

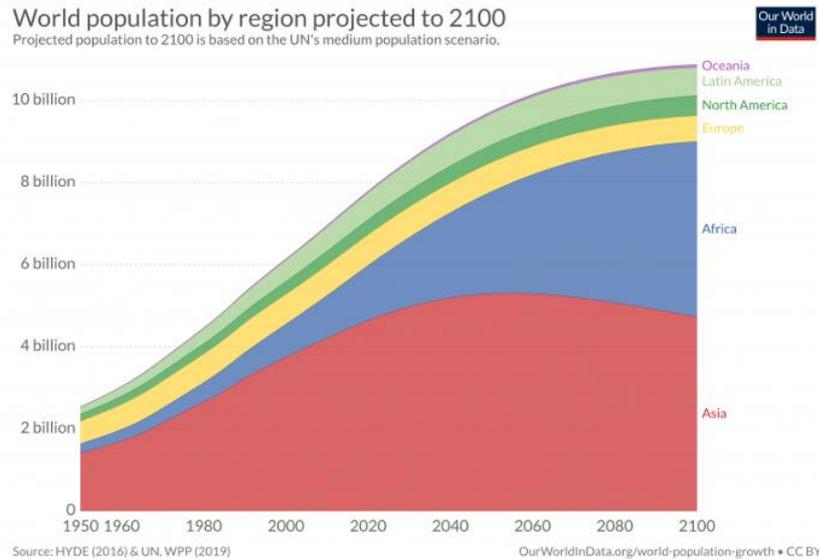
humans from a variety of chronic noncommunicable illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, and heart diseases.

Causes of food inaccessibility

Lack of access to farming land

Around three million hectares of agricultural land are lost annually due to soil erosion, which

occurs when soil particles are carried by wind or water from one site to another. When agricultural land is transformed and utilized for roads, homes, industries, and other urban necessities, an extra four million hectares are lost every year. Due to soil erosion and conversion to urban usage, over 140 million hectares of agricultural land in the United States have been lost in the past 30 years.



Rapid population growth

¹¹According to the United Nations (UN), in 1950, five years after the United Nations was established, it was believed that there were 2.6 billion people living on Earth. In 1987, it hit 5 billion, and in 1999, it hit 6 billion. The world's population was expected to be 7 billion people in October 2011. the population of the world is projected to rise by 2 billion people

¹¹ Ritchie, Hannah. "More than 8 out of 10 People in the World Will Live in Asia or Africa by 2100." Our World in Data, 15 July 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/region-population-2100>.

during the next 30 years, from 7.7 billion people now to 9.7 billion in 2050, with a potential high of approximately 11 billion people around the year 2100. According to Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), food production has to increase by 70% by 2050 to if the estimates of the UN are accurate as the demand for food frequently rises as the population grows, which generally leads to increased usage of arable land and water. However, earth lacks the necessary resources, such as labor and raw materials, to achieve food inclusivity if the population growth rate reaches extremely high levels.

Poverty

One primary source of hunger in the world is poverty. Most hungry individuals have an average daily income of less than \$1.90, which is considered to be extreme poverty. smallholder farmers in emerging nations are the biggest segment of the global population living in severe poverty. They lack the soil necessary to cultivate enough food to feed themselves throughout the year, and the little money they make selling what they grow makes it impossible for them to afford to buy food from other sources after their own supply runs out.

Climate change

The poorest developing nations are already feeling the impacts of climate change while having made little contribution to its causation. Security of food and water is seriously harmed by climate change. The globe is currently facing its biggest environmental crisis ever. Thus, food shortages are likely to emerge all around the globe.

Food shortages

Food shortages are frequent in developing nations. Smallholder farmers and their families, who rely on their own excess to live between harvests, are those who are most impacted. The "hungry season" is the time period before a harvest. As the previous harvest runs out, families reduce the number of meals they eat. Depending on the extent of the preceding harvest, this time frame might stretch for many months. Similar to this, very low-

income families in the US run out of money at the end of the month. Families start eating less often and finally stop eating completely on certain days.

Waste of food

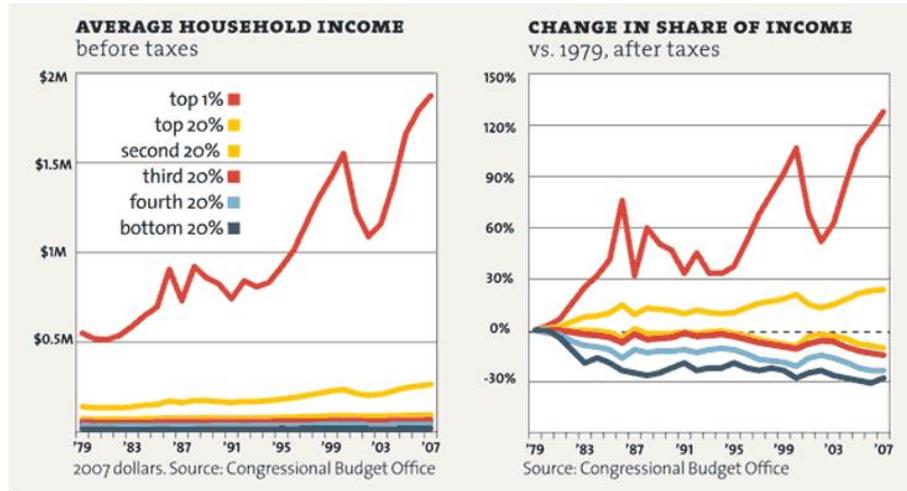
Food waste has broad-ranging implications on both a national and international level. Up to 40% of all food produced in the U.S. is left uneaten, and 95% of food waste is disposed of in landfills. At 21%, it makes up the majority of municipal solid trash. More than 38 million tons of food waste were produced in 2014, with just 5% being redirected to composting facilities instead of landfills and incinerators. Methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming, is produced when food waste decomposes. One-third of the food produced worldwide is thrown away uneaten, adding to the environmental load. More than 25 million Americans could be fed each year if food waste were reduced by 15%. Thus, waste of food contributes to both climate change and hunger.

Oligopoly in food production

Oligopolistic markets are the markets which are dominated by few large firms. Few huge businesses now control crucial choices affecting our country's food system, giving them disproportionate power to lobby legislators, steer food and industrial research, and sway media coverage. The way, where, and by whom food is produced, as well as who gets to eat it, are all decisions that these businesses have a significant amount of authority to make. This pattern has been observed all around the world. Many corporations abuse their market power in an attempt to maximize their joint profits by colluding and deciding to fix high prices. This harms the consumers who will consume less as they must raise their expenditures due to higher products' prices. Some consumers will not be able to afford many food products, resulting in food insecurity and hunger.

Income inequality ¹²

Income inequality in economics is the degree to which money is divided unevenly among a group of individuals.



The wealthiest

one percent of families in the world control 43 percent of all personal wealth, while the poorest half own only one percent. Income disparity raises the chance of severe food insecurity, and this effect is 20% more in low-income nations than in middle-income ones. Income inequalities are also linked to undernutrition as the low-income households are not able to afford the food products.

Consequences of food inaccessibility

Health problems

Some health problems related with food insecurity are osteoporosis and bone fractures, inability to reproduce, weakened immune system, and chronic fatigue. Children are also adversely affected as they face developmental challenges.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition occurs when a person's diet lacks sufficient nutrients, or the eating habits followed do not provide a proper dietary balance for optimal health. Malnutrition is often due to food insecurity and is connected with underweight and delayed growth.

¹² Gilson, Dave, and Carolyn Perot. "It's the Inequality." Mother Jones, 8 Feb. 2011, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in-america-chart-graph/>.

High healthcare system costs

Healthcare system costs are the real expenses of providing health-care services, including the price of surgeries, treatments, and drugs. Food insecurity and malnutrition raise the governments' expenditures on healthcare systems and therefore governments sacrifice other plans- such as building schools- or have to impose higher taxes. Thus, society at large is affected negatively by food insecurity. For instance, in the US malnutrition leads to a government expenditure of 15.5 billion dollars each year as undernourished patients cost around 20% more to treat on average due to prolonged lengths of stay and hospital readmissions.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (USA)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced on June 3, 2022, major investments in urban agriculture, including \$43.1 million in grants and cooperative agreements, as well as six new urban county committees to assist implement essential USDA programs to urban farmers. These measures contribute to USDA's efforts to improve the food supply chain and alter the food system to make it more equitable, efficient, and sustainable.

Ireland

Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI) was founded in 2014 to provide the experience of Ireland's state agri-food organizations by collaborating with other nations in order to assist them increase food security, sustainability, efficiency, and quality. Since its inception, SFSI has secured projects totaling more than €8 million and has directly promoted new export prospects for other Irish enterprises and organizations. It has had a significant and beneficial impact on customer perceptions of Ireland's agri-food systems, as well as contributing to attempts to win market access for Irish goods in new markets in North Africa and the Middle East.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

FAO in 2018 proposed some guidelines in order to effectively transform food systems to achieve “zero hunger” by 2030. These recommendations are primarily intended for decision-makers in charge of incorporating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's set targets into national policies and programs. They can be useful to public and commercial stakeholders interested in food and agricultural, as well as rural development, including investors, academics, and technical specialists. This document includes 20 practical and interrelated activities aimed at changing food and agriculture and boosting accomplishment across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These activities include the access of smallholders to marketplaces, the promotion of income and production diversification, the conservation of water, and the monitoring of the world’s limited resources.

European Union (EU)

Food 2030 is the EU's research and innovation agenda aimed at transforming food systems and ensuring that everybody has access to cheap, healthy meals in order to live a healthy life. The EU plans to achieve that by developing the urban food systems, finding protein and dietary substitutes, conserving water and food, and encouraging food systems in Africa.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
18th - 19th Century	The Industrialization boom helps increase efficiency and output in the food industry.
1809	Canning is invented which extends food shelf life and helps facilitate global trade as canned food can be transported more safely.
1863	Pasteurisation is invented, which helps increase shelf life and food safety.
1909	The Haber-Bosch (Nitrogenous Fertiliser) process is invented, enabling agriculture to keep up with global population booms.

1996	The World Food Summit took place, which resulted in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. The summit placed an emphasis on eradicating food security through food systems.
2004	The Food Alliance is created.
2004	Certified Humane Raised & Handled is founded.
2008	The Global Agro-industries Forum takes place, which aims to increase inclusivity in the agricultural industry, through methods such as increasing market opportunities for small-scale rural producers of developing countries by improving their production, processing, and marketing capabilities.
2015	The Milan EXPO 2015 takes place in which the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) is signed and the Sustainable Food Systems Programme (SFS) is created, which aims to create more sustainable and inclusive food systems.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The United Nations Food Systems Summit

On 23 September 2021, the Food Systems Summit 2021 convened under the leadership of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. As the world is currently not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, the summit was held to launch new forward actions to transform the world's food systems, as part of the Decade of Action to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The summit was guided by Action Tracks which actively brings together key stakeholders in order to transform the food systems. The summit also organised Food Systems Summit Dialogues such as Member State Dialogues

in order to encourage and guide Member States towards actively developing pathways towards efficient, inclusive, sustainable, and equal Food Systems.

Following the summit, on 1 January 2022, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub was launched, having been organised (and hosted) by FAO, intending to leverage the range of assets of the UN system in order to support nations in further developing and implementing national food system transformation pathways.

The Millenium Development Declaration and the 2030 Agenda

On 6 - 8 September 2000, the Millenium Summit was held by the United Nations-General Assembly (UN-GA), by its Resolution A/RES/53/25, where member nations ratified the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2), which were the basis of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of which goal 1 pertains to food systems.

In April 2008, the then United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon - in order to keep within progress of the MDGs - established the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF), which the Secretary-General was the chairman of and was assisted in this function by the FAO Director-General as Vice-Chair. The primary aim of the Task Force was to promote a comprehensive and unified response to the challenge of achieving global food security, including by facilitating the creation of a prioritised plan of action and coordinated its implementation. The Task Force later responded to the request for a plan of action via producing and adopting the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA).¹⁵

Succeeding the Millenium Declaration, negotiations regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda began in January and ended in August 2015, which culminated in the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1). The 2030 Agenda was the basis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), of which Goal 2 (with an emphasis on targets: 2.3, 2.4, 2.a-2.c) and Goal 12 pertain more to food systems.

On 21–23 November 2018, the Committee on Environment and Development, a part of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), held its 5th session, delving into Enabling sustainable food systems through mechanisation solutions for production and processing (ESCAP/CED/2018/INF/1) as part of item 4 of it's provisional agenda (Solutions to accelerate

¹⁵ “High Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security (HLTF).” United Nations, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/issues/food/taskforce/>.

progress with respect to the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

UN Food Systems Summit 2021

The UN Food Systems Summit, which took place on September 23 in New York during the UN General Assembly, laid the groundwork for the reform of the world's food systems in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. A major turning point in the global effort to accomplish all the SDGs was the UN Food Systems Summit. Scientists concur that altering our food systems is one of the most effective methods to reverse course and carry out the 2030 Agenda's objectives. We will also be able to respond to COVID-19's appeal to "build back better" by rebuilding the world's food systems.

Special Rapporteur on the right to food (resolution 2000)

The objective of this resolution was to define the moral content of the right to food and clarify countries' obligations through a yearly report, as well as to advocate for a human rights-based approach to trade, development, and various contexts like armed conflict and climate change among different audiences, including nations, UN agencies, and civil society organizations. Another crucial objective was to preserve the right to food through diplomacy and country missions, providing victims of human rights abuses a voice and helping to find solutions to their suffering.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Empowering women in agriculture as studies have shown that they face gender-based violence.

Women in agriculture faced and continue facing gender-based violence and this is having a huge impact on the way the food systems function. Women, who are a key factor for agriculture and food systems in general, must be empowered by the society, in order for them to be able to perform well and not face gender-based violence in their working place.

Funding LEDCs in order for them to be able to support the transition.

It is crucial for Less Economically Developed Countries to be supported financially by MEDCs or the World Bank. In order to make the Food Systems transition a universal change, every country, no matter what its financial profile is, should be able to be involved in the Food Systems transition procedure.

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