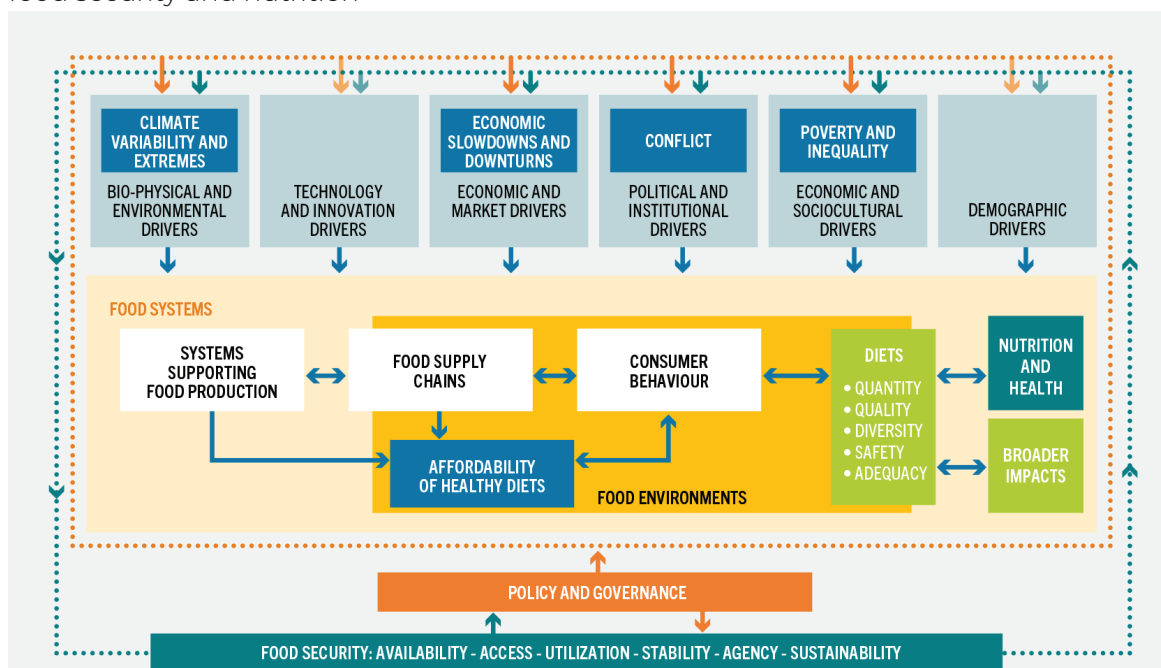


FOOD SYSTEMS LENS: CRITICAL TO ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION TRENDS

Conflict, climate variability, and economic slowdowns and downturns (now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic) are behind the recent rise in hunger and the slowing progress of reducing all forms of malnutrition. Their adverse influence is made all the more difficult by high and persistent levels of inequality. In addition, millions of people around the world suffer from food insecurity and different forms of malnutrition because they cannot afford the cost of healthy diets. These major drivers are unique but not mutually exclusive. They interact to the detriment of food security and nutrition by creating multiple, compounding impacts at many different points within our food systems.

Figure 1 presents a food systems diagram to illustrate how the drivers behind recent food security and nutrition trends specifically create multiple impacts throughout food systems (food systems, including food environments). These have led to impacts on the four dimensions of food security (availability, access, utilization, and stability) as well as the two additional dimensions of agency and sustainability.

Figure 1. Impacts of various drivers are transmitted throughout food systems, undermining food security and nutrition*



Source: Adapted from HLPE. 2020. Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome.

For example, conflicts negatively affect almost every aspect of a food system - from production, harvesting, processing, and transport to input supply, financing, marketing, and consumption. Direct impacts can include the destruction of agricultural and livelihood assets, as well as disruptions and restrictive trades and movement of goods and services. These can negatively affect the availability and prices of food, including nutritious foods. Similarly, climate variability and extreme weather conditions create multiple and compounding impacts on food systems. They negatively affect agricultural productivity, and also affect food imports as countries try to compensate for domestic production losses. Climate-related disasters can lead to significant impacts across the food value chain, with negative consequences on sector growth and on food and non-food agro-industries.

On the other hand, economic slowdowns and downturns primarily impact food systems through their negative effects on people's access to food, including the affordability of healthy diets, as they lead to rises in unemployment and declines in wages and incomes. This is the case irrespective of whether they are driven by market swings, trade wars, political unrest, or a global pandemic, such as COVID-19.

The unaffordability of healthy diets is a result of the effects of other drivers or factors on people's income and on the cost of nutritious foods throughout the food system. As such, it is a driver that acts within food systems to negatively affect food security and nutrition.

Poverty and inequality are critical underlying structural factors that amplify the negative impact of the major drivers. Their impacts are felt throughout food systems and food environments, ultimately affecting the affordability of healthy diets and food security and nutrition outcomes.

Beyond their direct impacts on food systems, these major global drivers and underlying structural factors weaken food security and nutrition through interconnected and circular impacts on other systems, including environmental and health systems.

Source:

Chapter 3: Major drivers of recent food security and nutrition trends. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5409en>