



REDUCING INEQUALITIES FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

FOREWORD

The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) is the science-policy interface of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the foremost inclusive and evidence-based international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition (FSN). The HLPE-FSN offers independent, comprehensive and evidence-based analysis and advice at the request of the CFS. It prepares its reports through a scientific, transparent and inclusive process, involving extensive consultations and incorporating diverse forms of knowledge and expertise, as well as a rigorous scientific peer review process.

The report, *Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition*, has been produced by the HLPE-FSN at the request from the CFS to analyse quantitative and qualitative evidence regarding how inequalities within food systems impede opportunities to overcome food insecurity and malnutrition. The report seeks to identify ways to address those inequalities and their drivers and provides recommendations.

Inequalities in food security and nutrition, leading to hunger and all forms of malnutrition, exist in all regions of the world both among and within countries. Even in rich countries, low national prevalence of food insecurity may mask large local disparities. Inequalities in FSN reduce people's life chances and quality of life, lower their productivity, perpetuate poverty, and reduce economic growth. These inequalities are exacerbated by fast-evolving climate change and conflicts, disproportionately affecting already vulnerable populations. Furthermore, unequal FSN outcomes have contributed to political unrest, sparking protest and food riots. Addressing these inequalities is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is based on a human rights approach and the pledge to "Leave no one behind".

Against this backdrop, the report provides a comprehensive analysis of inequalities in food systems, their deep, systemic drivers, and the ways in which they affect food

security and nutrition outcomes. FSN inequalities exist throughout the food system, from farm to fork. They include inequalities in access to food production resources and market opportunities for small-scale producers, unequal power dynamics between large food corporations and food producers, as well as unequal access to adequate and nutritious food among consumers. Indeed, food security goes beyond food production and encompasses six dimensions: food availability, access, utilization, stability, sustainability and agency. Agency is key to reducing inequalities in food security and nutrition. It refers to “...the capacity of individuals or groups to make their own decisions about what foods they eat, what foods they produce, how that food is produced, processed and distributed within food systems, and their ability to engage in processes that shape food system policies and governance” (HLPE 2020). Inequalities in FSN are often accompanied by a lack of agency in food systems, especially among marginalized people.

The report adopts an intersectional lens and considers FSN inequalities in a systemic way. Often, multiple disadvantages are compounded along the dimensions of gender, education, economic and social status, location or ethnicity. These multiple dimensions interact and have cumulative effects. Thus, inequalities in FSN, while affecting people in every country in the world, tend to systematically disadvantage certain groups: women, farmworkers and migrants, Indigenous peoples, informal workers and persons with disabilities. This finding has important implications for policy: progress in one dimension or driver of FSN inequality might be constrained or exacerbated by another dimension. The report shows these cumulative effects and potential trade-offs and the need for a holistic approach.

Because of the intersectional nature of inequalities in food systems, the report makes the case for a transformative agenda that would address the systemic drivers of FSN inequality. It highlights a set of principles for designing equity-oriented policies along the entire food system, addressing power imbalances and raising agency through the recognition and representation of marginalized groups, and redistribution of income and resources. The report proposes a set of actions and real world examples of how to embed equity principles into policymaking; provide more equal access to food production resources; make public agricultural research sensitive to equity considerations and the needs of marginalized groups; develop inclusive value chains; and implement territorial, multisector approaches to food system development. The report emphasizes social protection as a key

instrument for responding to food crises and reducing FSN inequalities. It also calls for the integration of universal health care into nutrition initiatives. The resulting recommendations are addressed to the CFS, governments, the United Nations and international agencies, the private sector and civil society, as well as academia.

Bold efforts are required in the face of persistent FSN inequalities and rapid climate change. The CFS and its members can use this report to increase public awareness of FSN inequalities and their drivers and to catalyse the implementation of equity sensitive and transformative strategies and policies.

On behalf of the HLPE-FSN Steering Committee, I would like to thank the international experts of the drafting team, led by Bhavani Shankar, whose expertise and dedication, and impressive (and pro bono) work on this report, have played a crucial role in shaping this comprehensive analysis of FSN inequalities as a call for action.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the many experts, including the members of the HLPE-FSN Steering Committee, and institutions who participated in the public consultations and commented on the report in its previous drafts, as well as to the peer reviewers whose careful reading and suggestions have greatly helped to improve the report. Finally, I wish to thank the HLPE-FSN Secretariat for its tremendous support.

The HLPE-FSN mission is to produce scientific reports to inform the debate among CFS stakeholders and provide recommendations to policy convergence processes. Thanks to the work of the CFS, it is hoped that this report on FSN inequalities can have effective and long-lasting impact in eliminating hunger and all forms of malnutrition. Beyond the CFS, this report will surely be useful to advance the understanding of inequalities and how to address them for every individual or institution involved in food systems, agriculture, nutrition, health, environment and other related disciplines.



Bernard Lehmann
Chairperson of the HLPE-FSN

SUMMARY

The report “Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition” has been developed by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) following the request by the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as included in its Programme of Work (MYPoW 2020-2023).

In particular, the CFS requested the HLPE-FSN to develop a report to: (i) analyse evidence relating to how inequalities in access to assets (particularly land, other natural resources and finance) and in incomes within food systems impede opportunities for many actors to overcome food insecurity and malnutrition; (ii) analyse the drivers of inequalities and provide recommendations on entry points to address these; and (iii) Identify areas requiring further research and data collection.

This report will inform the ensuing CFS thematic workstream on inequalities, aiming at **addressing the root causes of food insecurity with a focus on those “most affected by hunger and malnutrition”**.

RATIONALE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

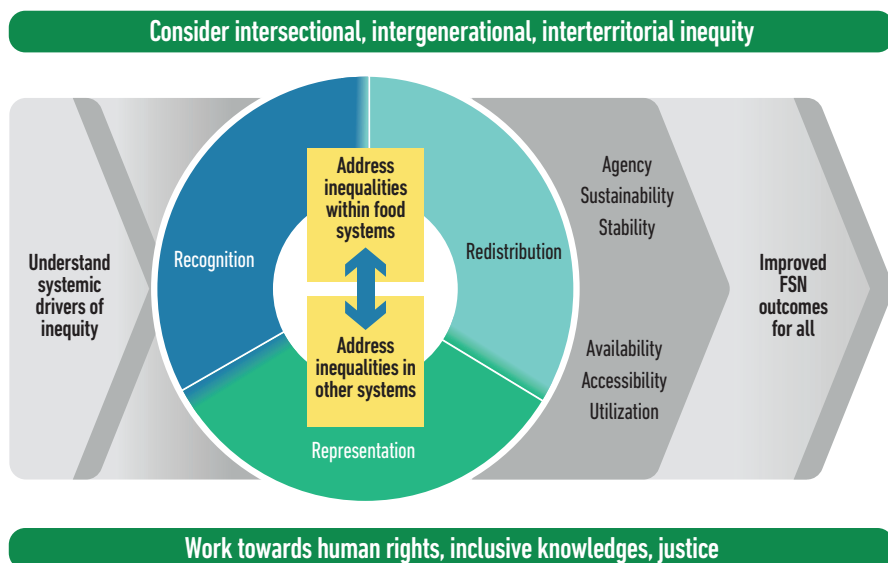
The report is organized around six chapters. **Chapter one explains the report’s focus on inequalities and inequities**. Inequalities in food systems underlie inequalities in food security and nutrition (FSN). It is **vital to address inequalities because they threaten progress on FSN**. Reducing inequalities is **mandated in human rights covenants that states have committed to**. Doing so corresponds

to a natural sense of human justice and fairness that is embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to “Leave no one behind”. The report contributes to a common understanding of key concepts and terms such as inequities and inequalities in the context of FSN. It **defines inequalities** in food systems as the *observed differences in FSN outcomes*, or **related food systems factors** (such as access to food production resources), *between individuals and groups* (when disaggregated by social, economic and geographical position). The latter are underpinned by **inequities, defined as the avoidable reasons why uneven distribution exists** and *why disadvantage accrues systematically, based on asymmetries in social position, discrimination and power*.

The report is developed within a broader framing of human rights and it draws on diverse forms of evidence and data. This includes academic research and reports; qualitative and ethnographic evidence; quantitative and modelled approaches; and Indigenous, local, situated, and tacit knowledge. It draws on different framings for action on inequality and inequity in FSN, including economic redistribution, human rights, and social justice.

The **conceptual framework** describes how inequalities in FSN outcomes are best reduced by addressing inequalities in food systems and in other related systems. **Sustainable change requires understanding and addressing the systemic drivers and root causes of inequity in context**. Understanding inequity and inequality involves recognizing who is marginalized from food and nutrition opportunities, and how and why. In coming to this understanding, it is vital to consider how inequity is intersectional (inequalities interact), intergenerational (inequities are passed on over time), and interterritorial (inequities are spatially and geopolitically determined). In addressing inequality and inequity, **actions must work through processes of recognition** (acknowledging the specifics and history of inequity in each context), **representation** (ensuring that marginalized groups are genuinely empowered to have agency over the choice of actions to address inequity), and **redistribution** (ensuring the opportunities and resources are allocated fairly and that costs do not fall on those with less political power). Actions to address inequalities in FSN outcomes and the inequities that underpin them should work through human rights and justice principles, and consider the range of knowledges and evidence available in framing issues and actions.

FIGURE 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ENGINE OF EQUITY FOR FSN



Source: Author's own elaboration.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Chapter two leverages existing data to describe patterns and trends of inequality in FSN outcomes. While inequalities in food security are particularly seen to affect populations in Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean, **inequality in nutritional status exists globally**. Further, despite gains made in reducing undernutrition in LMICs, the global rise in overweight and obesity among both adults and children undermines the past progress made in nutrition and since 2015, food insecurity has worsened in most regions of the world.

Context motivates the **variability** seen in the factors that contribute to within-country inequality, except for certain **consistently marginalized groups** – women, those without education, Indigenous Peoples and the poor. More qualitative (lived

experience data) and **adequately disaggregated data** along gender, location, economic status, ethnicity, other social group and physical ability is required to systematically quantify and track FSN inequalities. Finally, it is recognized that **many important inequalities are intersectional**, but insufficient data exist to characterize this intersectionality and to identify those most vulnerable in a timely and consistent manner.

Chapter three examines **the proximate drivers of FSN inequalities within food systems and in other systems relevant to FSN**. Within food systems, it explores three broad areas: (i) inequalities in food production resources; (ii) inequalities in food supply chains (iii) inequalities in food environments and consumer behavior.

Within food systems, large, persistent, and often increasing inequalities that constrain FSN exist across the food chain. This includes **inequalities in** distribution of food production resources, access to knowledge and finance, ability to engage with and gain from modern value chains and markets, storage, processing and distribution, and international food trade. Moreover, size and economic status (for instance, small vs large farms) and gender are major inequality dimensions across the food chain, but other sources of inequality, such as Indigeneity and geographical location, are also frequent constraints to FSN. **Food environments** also **provide highly unequal opportunities for FSN**, with low-income populations and minority groups particularly impacted by the inequalities.

Inequalities in other relevant systems, which affect FSN, such as education and health systems, contribute to inequalities in FSN outcomes. As a consequence, **multisectoral governance of FSN provides opportunities to reduce FSN inequality, but requires careful rules of engagement to mitigate power imbalances**.

Chapter four takes a broader social and historical perspective and examines the **deeper systemic drivers and root causes of FSN inequalities**. It is essential to view the vast inequalities in FSN outcomes not just as outcomes of inequalities in food and related systems, but also as the result of deeper, systemic drivers. **Many drivers that act on food systems have underlying drivers within food systems themselves**. For example, climate change and environmental decline harm food system workers and are a threat to FSN, particularly where people and places are most vulnerable to change. However, food systems themselves are major drivers of climate change.

Breaking this harmful feedback has considerable potential for reducing inequalities in FSN outcomes.

Economic and market drivers have fundamentally changed food systems, by shaping market dynamics, flows of finance, and patterns of global trade to consolidate decision-making power and ownership. These changes have **altered dietary patterns in complex ways and curtailed the agency of most food system workers**. While some nutritional benefits accrue, there are concerns about the impacts of a transition towards a Western obesogenic diet that exacerbate FSN outcomes, initially affecting the wealthiest in society but then gradually becoming a problem for the most marginalised or socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society.

Policies related to different dimensions and actors in the food systems have **remained siloed**, and seldom focus on the needs of the most marginalized. In many cases, this has exacerbated pressures and created vulnerabilities. **Violence and conflict are the main drivers of acute and chronic hunger**, undermining people’s agency and exacerbating poor FSN outcomes for the most vulnerable. Geopolitical interests often determine whether the impacts of conflict on FSN outcomes are exacerbated or ameliorated, and where. **Reaffirming the right to food in all geopolitical conflicts can help reduce inequalities in FSN outcomes**.

Sociocultural drivers intersect with all categories of drivers, to create barriers that produce and reinforce existing inequalities. **Historical inequities** will therefore persist, unless explicitly challenged with equity-sensitive policies and practices.

AREAS FOR ACTION

Chapter five presents **actions that can be taken within food and other systems to improve FSN**. These actions are not meant to be exhaustive, but they present priority areas that hold significant potential for reducing FSN inequalities. Equity-informed policy and programmes must be informed by these **first principles: being adaptive to context; focusing on agency and working to undo inequitable norms; and addressing power imbalances**. Business as usual, including incremental action, is too slow to address the scale of injustice in food systems and the rate of change in

relation to climate and environmental threats: **transformative change that explicitly addresses inequality and inequity is needed now.**

To be added to local contexts, a variety of actions to address inequalities are necessary across the food systems and related systems. These are clustered into four broad categories: food production; food supply chains; food environment and consumption; and enabling environment, broader context and governance.

Within **food production**, major action areas to reduce inequalities for FSN include: (i) enabling more equal access to land, forests, livestock and fisheries, (ii) applying agroecological principles across production and broader food systems, (iii) establishing inclusive producer organizations, and (iv) investing in equity-sensitive public agricultural and food- systems research and other rural public investments.

The action areas in **food supply chains** include: (i) adopting inclusive value chain approaches; (ii) developing labour-protection policies, strategies, and programmes for food-system workers; (iii) considering territorial approaches in food system and regional development planning; (iv) investing in equity-sensitive storage, food processing and distribution infrastructure; and (v) investing in improved information systems, leveraging digital technologies.

Under **food environment and consumption**, the main action areas include: (i) food-environment planning and governance; (ii) incorporating behavioural insights into policymaking and programming; and (iii) strengthening social protection.

Several action areas pertaining to the **enabling environment, broader context and governance** include: (i) food- and nutrition-sensitive policy and planning; (ii) addressing corporate power asymmetries in governance; (iii) universal health care that integrates nutrition care; (iv) a holistic approach to climate and sustainability; and (v) inclusive growth for FSN, and policy that goes beyond growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report provides recommendations to support a fundamental transformation of food systems, making them more equitable and inclusive, leading to reduced inequalities and improved FSN outcomes. Drawing upon the different chapters, in particular the detailed action areas in Chapter 5, the report provides recommendations for different groups involved in FSN-related policymaking, research and action – including governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society and research institutions. This chapter begins by presenting the principles underlying the recommendations (Section 1). The recommendations that follow, set forth in Section 2, must be considered in light of these principles to ensure that actions taken truly lead to reduced inequalities and improved FSN outcomes for all. Section 3 outlines a roadmap for formulating equity-sensitive policy, to enable actions to be contextualised for the inequities present in each country and community setting.

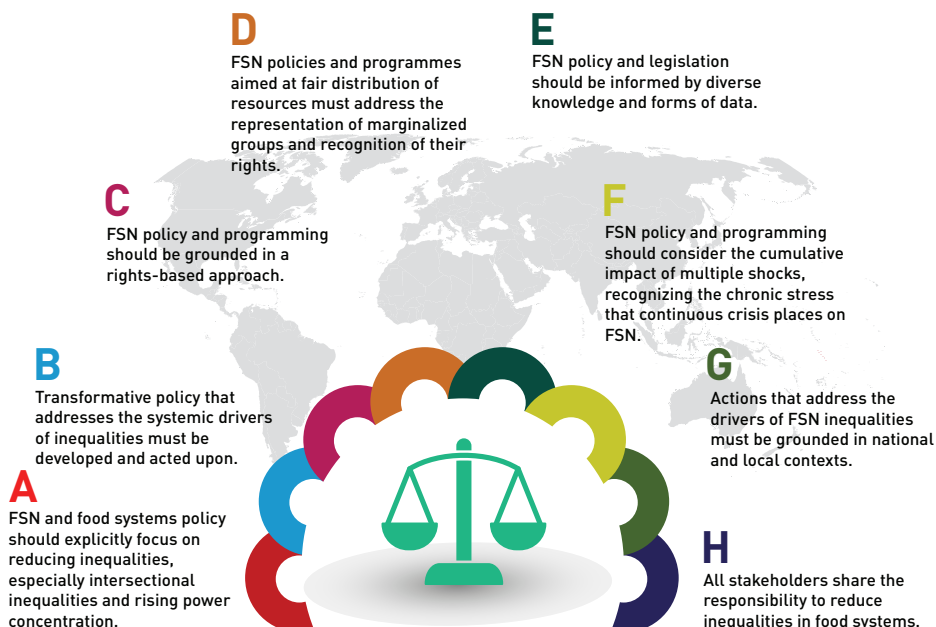
1. PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITY-SENSITIVE POLICY AND ACTION THAT REDUCE FSN INEQUALITIES

The following overarching principles (Figure 12) frame practical recommendations laid out in this chapter.

- A. FSN policy and food systems policy should have an explicit focus on reducing inequalities, devoting particular attention to the interaction of multiple types of inequality that have a cumulative impact on the same groups of people (that is, intersectional inequalities), taking into account rising power concentration in food systems.
- B. In addition to continued incremental action to reduce inequalities and improve

- FSN outcomes, bold, transformative policy that addresses the systemic drivers of inequalities must be developed and acted upon.
- C. FSN policies and programmes should be grounded in a rights-based approach, informed by existing human rights instruments focused on the right to food and other interdependent rights.
 - D. FSN policies and programmes aimed at fair distribution of resources for all must also ensure representation of marginalized groups and recognition of their rights. In strengthening the agency and engagement of marginalized groups, policies and programmes should have an explicit focus on addressing power asymmetries between stakeholders, through embedding the principle of “nothing about us without us” in programme funding, design, provision, monitoring and evaluation.
 - E. FSN policy and legislation should be informed by diverse knowledges, including Indigenous knowledge, and diverse forms of data, in order to broaden the spectrum of evidence informing FSN policy and action.
 - F. FSN policies and programmes should consider the cumulative impact of multiple shocks (climate change, biodiversity loss, health crises, economic and political crises) on the most marginalized people, recognizing the chronic stress on FSN of a state of continuous crisis.
 - G. Actions that address the drivers of FSN inequalities must be grounded in national and local context.
 - H. All stakeholders – government, international organizations, civil society and the private sector – are responsible for reducing inequalities in food systems. Each has a role to play, individually and collaboratively, with due consideration given to conflicts of interest.

FIGURE 12 PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITY- AND EQUALITY-SENSITIVE POLICY AND ACTION



Source: Author's own elaboration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EQUITY-SENSITIVE ACTIONS TO ADDRESS FSN INEQUALITIES

The report's policy recommendations are built on the conceptual framework (Figure 2) and the analysis of proximate and systemic drivers of FSN inequalities and the priority action areas discussed in previous chapters. The first cluster of recommendations includes actions to address inequalities within food systems, such as facilitating equitable access to land, livestock, forests and fisheries; investing in equity-sensitive extension and information systems, infrastructure, food processing and storage; and governing food retail while bearing an equity lens. The second cluster focuses on inequalities in other sectors related to FSN, including health and education; ensuring universal access to public services and social protection; and embedding an equity focus into trade, investment and debt

governance. The third cluster focuses on actions to address the social and political drivers of inequality, including leveraging SDG 10 ('reduce inequality within and among countries'), mainstreaming participatory approaches, building on human rights approaches, and taking into account the context of climate and other crises. The fourth and final cluster highlights the need to invest in and use inclusive knowledge and data systems.

Among other actions, this includes the recognition and inclusion of diverse ways of knowing, the improvement of global and national data collection efforts with respect to capturing information on major inequalities, and investing in public agricultural and food-systems research, to enable better equity focus and understanding and monitoring of equity and equality in FSN-relevant domains.

The recommendations are mapped in Table 3 according to their focus on the redistribution, recognition or representation aspects of equity, as outlined in the conceptual framework and Chapter 1. The aim of these recommendations is to create an enabling environment for all to live with dignity and agency; to have access to sufficient, nutritious, safe, healthy and culturally appropriate food; and to participate in sustainable food systems enabled by fair and inclusive societies.

The recommendations are directed to a variety of actors and stakeholders, including states, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society. Each recommendation indicates the key stakeholders it is addressed to.

A. Tackle inequalities within food systems

1. States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society should work across sectors to **ensure more equitable access to land, forests, aquatic resources and other food production resources, applying rights-based approaches.**
 - i. Bolster the land and resource rights of women, peasants, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups, including legal recognition and inheritance rights; protect communal and collective tenure rights to resources, including enshrining free, prior and informed consent, and promote sustainable community-based management of those resources.
 - ii. Design regulations to improve the functioning of markets for land, inputs, services, and water, while protecting the vulnerable and preventing the concentration of resources.

- iii. Strengthen accountability, monitoring and the requirement for local consent with respect to corporate/international land, forest and water acquisitions.
 - iv. Design and implement asset-building and livelihood programmes, such as land and livestock transfers, tailored for resource-poor, disadvantaged groups.
 - v. Monitor and limit concentration of ownership (over land, transport, wholesale, retail, etc.) in food systems.
2. States, intergovernmental organizations, private sector and civil society should **facilitate the organization of disadvantaged stakeholders and build inclusive institutions and partnerships to improve representation.**
- i. Build and support farmer, fisher, peasant, food-producer, landless and migrant-worker organizations; self-help groups and cooperatives; as well as labour organizations throughout food systems – particularly including women – to ensure better representation and agency. Explicit consideration should be given to inclusivity in participation and group decision-making and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
 - ii. Leverage the benefits of collective action to improve access to inputs, finance, information, value chain opportunities, certification/standards and market opportunities, as well as decent work, safe working conditions and a living income based on careful consideration of, and with a clear plan to address, local contexts and power asymmetries.
3. States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society should **make equity-sensitive investments in supply chains and in disadvantaged areas.**
- i. Invest in territorial approaches in food systems and regional development planning, including in agroecology and in local markets, strengthening regional trade and market connections to create a judicious mix of local and distant market opportunities for small-scale producers and to benefit local consumers.
 - ii. Ensure that supply chains, especially local ones, are enabled to provide improved access to nutrient-dense foods for all consumers at affordable prices.
 - iii. Invest in rural transport, market infrastructure, nutrient-preserving

- food processing and food storage, with special consideration for disadvantaged groups and places, and supporting territorial markets.
- iv. Invest in filling the gaps in access to finance among micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) along the value chain, with special consideration for groups that are traditionally disadvantaged, including small-scale producers, small-scale input providers and traders, and women, as well as those with limited current commercial orientation.
 - v. Invest in information systems across food systems, leveraging digital technologies – such as market-price information services and video-based extension – to help overcome asymmetries in access to information and to spread knowledge and opportunity equitably, with consideration for upholding data privacy and data ownership.
 - vi. Invest in expanding rural, non-farm employment opportunities to ensure that income-generating opportunities exist outside agriculture as alternative pathways to FSN.
 - vii. Invest in civil society and government staff working more closely with marginalized communities, including enhancing their legal capacity to uphold their right to food, decent work and a clean environment.
4. States, intergovernmental organizations, private sector and civil society should **plan and govern food environments including trade, retail, processing with an equity focus.**
- i. Undertake proactive planning of food environments in areas of rapid demographic growth to ensure equitable and affordable access to food, promoting access to nutrient-rich foods, facilitating access to local fishers' and farmers' markets, and restricting marketing and advertising of unhealthy foods.
 - ii. Recognize the role of informal vendors in meeting the FSN needs of populations, including marginalized groups, and develop planning and policy tools to create an enabling environment to enhance their capacity to sell nutritious and safe food.
 - iii. Undertake targeted interventions in food retail environments to mitigate unequal FSN outcomes, especially for populations at risk of food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, such as children, youth and the urban poor. Depending on the specific context, these interventions may include: restricting the sale of unhealthy

food products near educational premises; and promoting public procurement pro-programmes for nutritious foods.

- iv. Implement specific measures aimed at limiting processing and marketing of unhealthy food, with the aim to promote healthy eating. These can include: introducing fiscal measures such as taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and other unhealthy foods, while subsidizing healthy foods; and labelling the nutritional content and/or detrimental effects of ultra-processed foods to support FSN improvements among particularly vulnerable groups.

B. Tackle inequalities in related systems

5. States should **ensure universal access to services and resources that have a direct impact on FSN.**
 - i. Ensure universal access to FSN-relevant services, including primary healthcare, immunization, nutrition education, sanitation and safe drinking water.
 - ii. Ensure universal access to social protection as direct support for FSN among the most marginalized groups, and to enhance access to productive assets for those with food systems-dependent livelihoods.
 - iii. Maximize the fiscal space available to improve basic public services, including more comprehensive and progressive national and international taxes on income, profits, land, wealth and commodity speculation, and use the proceeds to support the most marginalized and address the drivers of unequal FSN.
 - iv. Contribute to ensuring access to decent work for all, including in food systems, as a key condition for a living wage and access to food. This would include implementing labour protection policies, strategies and programmes (such as those on occupational safety and health, regulations on working hours and pay, maternity protection) that protect both the labour and human rights of food system workers.
6. States and international organizations should **embed an equity focus into trade, investment and debt governance** related to FSN.
 - i. Monitor and regulate, as appropriate, corporate power asymmetries in food systems governance and decision-making, and the FSN implications of the expansion of large agribusiness and food corporations.
 - ii. Ensure, through equity-impact assessments that include the

representation of affected groups, that multilateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements do not negatively impact food environments and diets, including a redressal process available to marginalized groups' representatives when complaints arise.

- iii. Ensure greater transparency in the preparation of international and bilateral trade and investment negotiations, and develop systems to support domestic decision-making, coordinated between sectors involved in food, the environment, public health, industry and trade, to ensure that issues of equity are considered and that marginalized groups have a say.
- iv. Take action toward restructuring or cancelling the debt of countries where FSN is constrained by debt.
- v. Continue efforts to decrease subsidies on agricultural production in high-income and emerging countries, except those aiming to enhance the nutritional or environmental qualities of food production and to reduce FSN inequalities, so as to level the playing field for LMICs.

C. Tackle social and political drivers of inequality

- 7. States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society should **leverage SDG 10** ('reduced inequalities') to address the systemic drivers of unequal distribution, access and representation, including by mainstreaming participatory approaches in policymaking and practice to amplify marginalized voices.
 - i. Ensure policies target the most marginalized people, explicitly state which groups they aim to impact, strive to remove barriers and not impose burdens on the most vulnerable, and speak directly to the 2030 Agenda approach of leaving no one behind.
 - ii. Ensure that social policy pays specific attention to women's role, time burdens and other existing burdens in ensuring FSN; envisages men taking on a greater role in FSN and addresses adequate compensation of care workers and community health workers, while avoiding arrangements that exacerbate women's "triple burden" of care.
 - iii. Create interministerial platforms on FSN, with the participation of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forest, health, economy and finance, and trade ministries to enable the convergence of ministerial actions in FSN policy, and charge and equip these platforms to have a strong focus on reducing inequalities.

- iv. Identify and manage conflicts of interest between more powerful and less powerful groups in food systems, including where private sector interests and public policy goals conflict; and protect research against undue influence, bias and corruption.
 - v. Strengthen inclusive spaces for dialogue, participation and coordinated action at global, national and local levels that centre on building equity, including within negotiations on climate, trade and investment agreements and related policy fora.
8. Based on a human rights approach, states and intergovernmental organizations should **embed equity principles into policy**.
- i. Identify policies and interventions that can support individuals and groups to break out of intergenerational food insecurity and malnutrition.
 - ii. Leverage existing human rights instruments such as UNDROP, UNDRIP, the Right to Food, the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and various CFS guidance documents to strengthen equity-sensitivity of policies.
 - iii. Strengthen national institutions to understand and apply human rights conventions to harmonize policies relating to food systems, agriculture and nutrition from an equity perspective.
 - iv. Make redressal mechanisms available to marginalized communities when cases of inequities are identified.
9. States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society **should take into account the context of climate, ecological, political and economic crises** in all FSN-related actions.
- i. Ensure adequate prioritization of populations most affected by climate change, conflict and other contemporary global crises in targeting policy and allocating resources.
 - ii. Work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus to address the multiple drivers and manifestations of FSN inequalities in fragile states.
 - iii. Explore the option of establishing a fund, for example using the country-level funding for the follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), to support transformation towards more equitable food systems.

D. Strengthen data and knowledge systems to enable improved understanding and monitoring of equity in FSN-relevant domains

- i. Fill data gaps (particularly related to diets, micronutrient status, food composition) by systematically collecting information to identify which groups have the poorest FSN outcomes and food system opportunities in different contexts, paying special attention to historically marginalized groups, women and disadvantaged regions.
- ii. Improve major routine public data collection and analysis efforts, sampling adequately along the major axes of inequality within each context, to enable a full understanding of inequality; and apply a more equity-sensitive approach to reporting data in global reports such as SOFI and GNR.
- iii. Integrate equity-sensitivity and incorporate diverse knowledges in FSN research.
- iv. Boost public agricultural and food systems research with strong consideration for equity-sensitivity of the research portfolio, including research tailored to marginal environments and climate-resilient technologies for small producers. Mainstream gender, equity and intersectionality considerations into all aspects of research. Ensure all research applies the precautionary principle to ensure no groups are exposed to harm as a result of the research, and ensure individuals and communities retain the right to decline participation.
- v. Enable a richer understanding of the root causes and systemic drivers of FSN inequalities by encouraging and funding qualitative research to capture the lived experiences of actors in food systems. This includes facilitating the understanding and inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous and local communities in policymaking.

TABLE 3

HOW RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESS THE DIMENSIONS OF RECOGNITION, REPRESENTATION AND REDISTRIBUTION

	RECOGNITION	REPRESENTATION	REDISTRIBUTION
A. TACKLE INEQUALITIES WITHIN FOOD SYSTEMS			
1. States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society should work across sectors to enable more equitable access to resources, applying rights-based approaches.			
i. Bolster the land and resource rights of women, peasants, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups and protect communal and collective tenure rights to resources.			
ii. Design regulations to improve the functioning of markets for land, inputs, services, and water, while protecting the vulnerable and preventing the concentration of resources.			
iii. Strengthen accountability, monitoring and the requirement for local consent with respect to resource acquisitions.			
iv. Design and implement asset-building and livelihood programmes for disadvantaged groups.			
v. Monitor and limit concentration of ownership in food systems.			
2. States, intergovernmental organizations, private sector and civil society should facilitate the organization of disadvantaged stakeholders and build inclusive institutions and partnerships to improve representation.			
i. Build and support inclusive producer and labour organizations throughout food systems.			
ii. Leverage the benefits of collective action to improve access to inputs, finance, information and market opportunities, as well as decent work, safe working conditions and a living income, based on careful consideration of, and with a clear plan to address, local contexts and power asymmetries.			
3. States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society should make equity-sensitive investments in supply chains and in disadvantaged areas.			
i. Invest in territorial approaches in food systems and regional development planning.			
ii. Ensure that supply chains are enabled to provide improved access to nutrient-dense foods for all consumers at affordable prices.			
iii. Invest in rural transport, market infrastructure, nutrient-preserving food processing and food storage, with special consideration for disadvantaged groups and places.			
iv. Invest in filling the gaps in demand for financing among MSMs along the value chain.			

RECOMMENDATIONS

	RECOGNITION	REPRESENTATION	REDISTRIBUTION
v. Invest in information systems across food systems, leveraging digital technologies to spread knowledge and opportunity equitably, with consideration for upholding data privacy and data ownership.			
vi. Invest in expanding rural, non-farm employment opportunities.			
vii. Invest in civil society and government staff working more closely with marginalized communities.			
4. States, intergovernmental organizations, private sector and civil society should plan and govern food trade, retail, processing and food environments with an equity focus.			
i. Undertake proactive planning of food environments in areas of rapid demographic growths.			
ii. Recognize the role of informal vendors in meeting the FSN needs of marginalized populations.			
iii. Undertake targeted interventions in food retail environments to mitigate unequal FSN outcomes.			
iv. Implement specific measures aimed at limiting processing and marketing of unhealthy food, with the aim to promote healthy eating.			

B. TACKLE INEQUALITIES IN RELATED SYSTEMS

5. States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society should ensure universal access to services and resources that have a direct impact on FSN.			
i. Ensure universal access to FSN-relevant services, including primary healthcare, immunization, nutrition education, sanitation and safe drinking water.			
ii. Ensure universal access to social protection to enhance access to FSN and to enhance access to productive assets.			
iii. Maximize the fiscal space available to improve basic public services.			
iv. Contribute to ensuring access to decent work for all, including in food systems, as a key condition for a living wage and access to food.			
6. States and international organizations should embed an equity focus into trade, investment and debt governance related to FSN.			
i. Monitor and regulate, as appropriate, corporate power asymmetries in food systems governance and decision-making.			
ii. Ensure that multilateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements do not negatively impact food environments and diets, including a redressal process available to marginalized group representatives when complaints arise.			
iii. Ensure greater transparency in the preparation of international and bilateral trade and investment negotiations and develop systems to support domestic decision-making and inclusive participation.			

	RECOGNITION	REPRESENTATION	REDISTRIBUTION
iv. Take action toward restructuring or cancelling the debt of countries where FSN is constrained by debt.			
v. Continue efforts to decrease subsidies on agricultural production in high-income and emerging countries, except those aiming to enhance the nutritional or environmental qualities of food production and to reduce inequalities, so as to level the playing field for LMICs.			

C. TACKLE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DRIVERS OF INEQUALITY

7. States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society should **leverage SDG 10**, Reduce inequalities.

i. Ensure policies target the most marginalized people and strive to remove barriers and not impose burdens on the most vulnerable. Create interministerial platforms on FSN and charge and equip the platforms to have a strong focus on reducing inequalities.



ii. Ensure that social policy pays specific attention to women’s role, time burdens and other existing burdens in ensuring FSN, as well as care workers and community health workers and envisages men taking on a greater role in ensuring FSN.



iii. Create interministerial platforms on FSN to enable the convergence of ministerial actions in FSN policy, and charge and equip the platforms to have a strong focus on reducing inequalities.



iv. Identify and manage conflicts of interest between more powerful and less powerful groups in food systems.



v. Strengthen inclusive spaces for dialogue, participation and coordinated action at global, national and local levels that centre on building equity.



8. Based on a human rights approach, states and intergovernmental organizations should **embed equity principles into policy**.

i. Identify policies and interventions that can support individuals and groups to break out of intergenerational food insecurity and malnutrition.



ii. Leverage existing human rights instruments to strengthen equity-sensitivity of policies.



iii. Strengthen national institutions to understand and apply human rights conventions to harmonize policies relating to food systems, agriculture and nutrition from an equity perspective.



iv. Make redressal mechanisms available to marginalized communities when cases of inequities are identified.



RECOMMENDATIONS

	RECOGNITION	REPRESENTATION	REDISTRIBUTION
9. States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society should take into account the context of climate, ecological, political and economic crises in all FSN-related actions.			
i. Ensure adequate prioritization of populations most affected by climate change, conflict and other contemporary global crises in targeting policy and allocating resources.			
ii. Work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus to address the multiple drivers and manifestations of FSN inequalities in fragile states.			
iii. Explore the option of establishing a fund to support transformation towards more equitable food systems.			
D. STRENGTHEN DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS TO ENABLE IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING AND MONITORING OF EQUITY IN FSN-RELEVANT DOMAINS			
i. Fill data gaps (particularly related to diets, micronutrient status, food composition) by systematically collecting information to identify which groups have the poorest FSN outcomes and food system opportunities in different contexts, paying special attention to historically marginalized groups, women and disadvantaged regions.			
ii. Improve major routine public data collection and analysis efforts and apply a more equity-sensitive approach to reporting data in global reports.			
iii. Integrate equity-sensitivity and incorporate diverse knowledges in FSN research.			
iv. Boost public agricultural and food systems research with strong consideration for equity-sensitivity of the research portfolio. Mainstream gender, equity and intersectionality considerations into all aspects of research. Ensure participants retain the right to decide on participation in the research.			
v. Enable a richer understanding of the root causes and systemic drivers of FSN inequalities by encouraging and funding qualitative research to capture the lived experiences of actors in food systems.			

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

Note: the three dimensions of equity interact and are interdependent. Actions therefore relate to multiple equity dimensions; the tabl highlight the primary areas to aid decision makers in ensuring actions have a broad influence.

3. A ROADMAP TO EQUITY-SENSITIVE POLICY TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES

While actions cannot be specified for each Member State and need to be deeply aligned to context, all policies across governments must be equity-sensitive, considering distribution, recognition and representation (across the board, including policies affecting FSN) (Nisbett et al., 2022). This requires a specific commitment to equity, which in turn requires a whole-of-government process.

Figure 13 provides a roadmap to equity-sensitive policymaking, based on the framework presented in Chapter 1, particularly on the principles of recognition, representation and redistribution that form the “engine of equity”. Although it is recommended that this be a government-led effort, not all governments may be willing or able to undertake such a detailed approach. In these contexts, assessments may be conducted outside of government, for example by civil society organizations, as an important advocacy tool for FSN change, or by intergovernmental organizations directly in support of government capacity in this area.

FIGURE 13
ROADMAP TO EQUITY-SENSITIVE POLICYMAKING



Notes: FSN: Food security and nutrition. MEL: Monitoring, evaluation and learning.

CONCLUSION

Inequality in FSN outcomes is evident between individuals, groups and countries across the world: this is clear in the data presented in this report, but also in the experiences and observations of those most affected. Inequality - leaving some people behind - is slowing progress on achieving global goals and national policy promises. Inequality in FSN is an injustice and an infringement of human rights. Such inequality in outcomes is rooted in inequitable systems - whether social, economic or political - that systematically limit the opportunities of marginalized population groups to participate in or benefit from food systems. But this is not a reason for inaction: as this report demonstrates, there is a shared understanding and significant evidence not only on the issues but also on the **ways in which both the inequalities in food systems and the fundamental inequities driving these can be addressed.**

Taking the recommendations above - which address recognition, representation and redistribution to tackle inequality and inequity in food systems - and contextualizing them for the different contexts is the next step towards a transformation in food systems and ensuring food security and good nutrition for all.

Inequalities in food security and nutrition (FSN), between countries and regions and within countries, communities and households, exist throughout the world, exacerbating already alarming conditions of hunger and malnutrition.

This report provides a conceptual framework for assessing inequalities in FSN, the inequalities within and outside food systems that underpin them, and the systemic drivers of such inequalities. The report highlights the ethical, socioeconomic, legal and practical imperatives for addressing these inequalities. It emphasizes that food is a fundamental human right and that inequalities in FSN undermine this right, as well as undermining social and political stability. In addition, by applying an intersectional understanding of inequalities – that is, considering the cumulative effects of multiple interacting inequalities on marginalized peoples – the report contributes to a more inclusive understanding and sustainable action to reduce FSN inequalities.

The report proposes a set of measures to reduce inequalities, both within and beyond food systems. It emphasizes the need for a transformative agenda, aiming for structural change towards equity. By providing actionable recommendations addressing the systemic drivers of FSN and advocating for actions in favour of equity and equality, the report contributes to global efforts towards achieving food security and improving overall well-being, leaving no one behind.