

Answers to Guiding Questions – Jennifer Clapp

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What is the current status of the SDG2 Goal or target, in terms of actual measured progress and trends?

As outlined in the 15th report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) (HLPE 2020a), progress on SDG2 has been highly uneven, and the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the situation and driven more people into hunger. One third of humanity is currently experiencing one or more forms of hunger or malnutrition.

According to FAO et al. (2020) some 2 billion people face food insecurity at the moderate or severe level on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) (SDG Indicator 2.1.2) and the number of people who are chronically undernourished is at approximately 690 million (SDG Indicator 2.1). Although the number of people experiencing hunger declined steadily in the years up to 2014, that year was a turning point when the number of hungry people began to rise again, marking a trend in the wrong direction.

Other forms of malnutrition complicate the picture. Approximately 2 billion adults were overweight in 2016, and about one third of those people were obese (WHO 2020). Rates of overweight and obesity are rising among children and adolescents. These high levels of overweight and obesity contribute to approximately 4 million deaths per year worldwide (FAO et al. 2019). These trends reflect the fact that the quality of food environments has been highly uneven, and the proportion of diets that are comprised of ultraprocessed foods is on the rise in many countries, especially lower middle-income countries. At the same time, approximately 1.5 billion people suffer from at least one form of micronutrient deficiency, which can affect both those who are experiencing undernutrition as well as overweight.

Agriculture provides livelihoods for over 1 billion people worldwide, the majority of whom work on small-scale farms. Many of these small-scale producers and workers are vulnerable because their livelihoods are highly precarious, due in large part to uneven power relationships in food systems (IPES-Food, 2016).

Food systems have enormous ecological impacts and there remains much work to be done to make food systems more sustainable. Food systems account for a large proportion of greenhouse gases associated with climate change, and they put enormous stress on water, biodiversity, and soil resources that are vital for food systems to function into the long future (HLPE 2020a).

What has changed since the last time SDG2 was reviewed at the HLPF?

The COVID-19 pandemic that spread rapidly and extensively around the world since late 2019 has had profound implications for food security and nutrition (HLPE 2020b). Food systems faced shocks and people's access to food has been affected via multiple dynamics.

Supply chains were severely disrupted in the wake of lockdowns triggered by the global health crisis, including the initial imposition of export restrictions which affected food access for countries dependent on food imports. Closure of borders, restaurants, and shops led to disrupted movement of food supplies and resulted in massive waste of perishable food items in some locations combined with food shortages in other locations.

A major global economic slowdown, which resulted in -3.3% global growth (IMF 2021), led to massive loss of income and livelihoods that affected people's ability to access food. According to the International Labour Organization, some 255 million full time job equivalents were lost during 2020 (ILO 2021), while according to the World Bank an additional 119-124 million additional people fell into extreme poverty in 2020 with that number expected to rise to 143-163 million in 2021 (World Bank 2021a). The hardship felt by those who lost their livelihoods and incomes has affected people's ability to access food.

Food prices have also risen as the pandemic spread and intensified over the past year. The FAO food price index rose by some 35% between January 2020 and May 2021, while food prices rose in many countries, albeit at an uneven pace in different locations (FAO 2021; FAO Data Lab 2021). The result has been that food was put out of reach for many and undermining the right to food and stalling efforts toward meeting SDG2.

Approximately 111 million *additional* people experienced food insecurity between April 2020 and April 2021 due to the pandemic (World Bank 2021b). The impacts of the COVID-19 induced food crisis have affected vulnerable populations the most. This includes small-scale food producers in developing countries, many of whom lost export markets due to lockdowns, resulting in lost income and food waste. Food system workers were also affected by job losses in many cases or by unsafe, cramped working conditions in other cases, the latter making them more susceptible to becoming ill with COVID-19. The pandemic has also exacerbated gender inequities, especially as women face additional burdens due to COVID-19, including as frontline workers, in unpaid care work, and community work (HLPE 2020b).

What are promising strategies to accelerate action (by UN and partners) and to mobilize other stakeholders to advance implementation?

As outlined in the HLPE's 15th report (HLPE 2020), there is an urgent need to strengthen both conceptual thinking and policy approaches to food security and nutrition if we hope to make progress on SDG2.

In conceptual terms, we need to think about food security as an output of *food systems*. Sustainable food systems that deliver both food security and sustainability need to incorporate not just activities from production to consumption but also build in human rights and the right to food as well as a deeper understanding of the interconnections between food and other systems such as ecological, economic, and social systems. Thinking about food security as a product of sustainable food systems forces us to recognize the importance of **agency** (the capacity of individual and groups to make their own decisions about how they relate to food systems) and **sustainability** (the long-term ability of food systems to provide food security and nutrition in ways that do not undermine the economic, social and environmental bases that generate food security for future generations). These dimensions of food security should be recognized alongside the more established pillars of food security of **availability, access, utilization, and stability**.

As HLPE (2020) maps out, **four interlocking policy shifts** are necessary to support all six dimensions of food security. These are:

- i) Policies that support **radical transformations of food systems** to make them more empowering, equitable, sustainable, and productive. This includes measures to **promote equity and the right to food**, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society. It also includes measure to promote **more sustainable food system practices**, including agroecology, to address climate change and ecosystem degradation, as well as more territorial markets, to address uneven trade, concentrated markets, and persistent inequalities facing food systems.
- ii) Policies that appreciate **food system complexity** and interactions with other sectors and systems to ensure food systems are made more productive and resilient, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to perturbations in food systems. This includes measures to improve coordination across sectors and systems, for example to ensure economic, ecological, and health systems work in ways that support food systems.
- iii) Policies that address **all forms of hunger and malnutrition** which require food systems that deliver healthy and sustainable food choices in an equitable and empowering manner. This includes measures to promote nutrition-driven food production and food environments to encourage healthy diets.
- iv) Policies that develop **context-specific solutions** that take local conditions and knowledge into account are necessary to build more resilient and empowering food systems. This includes measures that tackle distinct challenges that arise in diverse types of rural and urban contexts and appreciate the unique challenges posed by conflict situations.

Policy shifts along these lines help to support all six dimensions of food security, which are vital for making progress on SDG2.

How would one monitor action for implementing these strategies?

The incorporation of agency and sustainability can be monitored using existing and emerging metrics. For example, agency can be assessed utilizing metrics such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. The existing FIES could incorporate additional questions to assess participants' agency in food access and consumption. Agency can also be tracked through closer monitoring of states' implementation of the Right to Food, which captures important aspects of agency, including the exercise of the right to culturally appropriate foods and voice in the governance of food systems (see HLPE 2020a). The incorporation of sustainability into food security policy can be assessed using composite indices tracking climate change, biodiversity, and soil health. Some aspects of sustainable agriculture are already tracked by SDG2 indicators, including indicators 2.4.1 (Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture), 2.5.1 (Number of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium-or long-term conservation facilities) and 2.5.2 (Proportion of local breeds classified as being at risk of extinction). These additional metrics can be utilized alongside other metrics employed for monitoring progress on SDG2.

Regarding policy shifts, member governments of CFS, for example, could be asked to report on policy implementation along these four types of policies on an annual or biannual basis. Such reporting would also help to track uptake of broader recommendations of the CFS in member countries.

The above methods of monitoring are important as a first step toward implementing these strategies, although more work could be done in this area to facilitate their adoption and to monitor progress

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