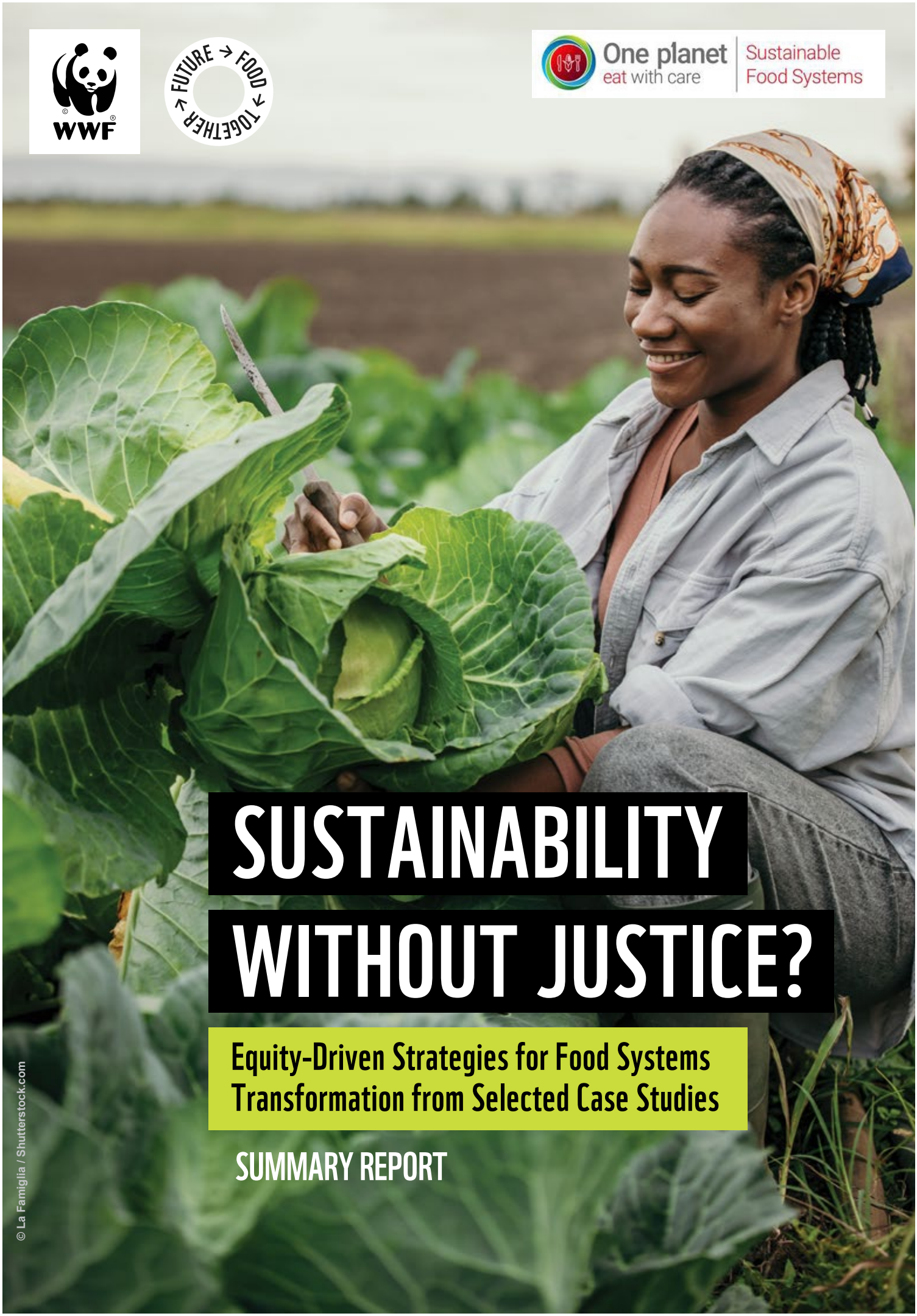

SUSTAINABILITY WITHOUT JUSTICE?

Equity-Driven Strategies for Food Systems Transformation from Selected Case Studies

SUMMARY REPORT

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About this study
This report was supported by WWF-Germany, the WWF Future Food Together initiative, and WWF International. This project is part of the German International Climate Initiative (IKI). The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) supports this initiative on the basis of a decision adopted by the Federal Parliament (Bundestag).
The WWF Future Food Together initiative is a response to the urgent change that is needed in the way we consume and produce food. Future Food Together is engaged in the One Planet Network (OPN providing support for WWF's role as Co-lead of the OPN's Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Programme and as a member of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC) of the OPN's Consumer Information Programme.
This report was conceived by members of the Community of Practice on Food Systems Approach on the Ground (CoP-FSAG) of the OPN's SFS Programme, in consultation with the SFS Programme's Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC). The SFS Programme's CoP-FSAG's goal is to connect different institutions that promote and implement sustainable food systems approaches on the ground. This study was conducted as a contribution to one of the CoP-FSAG's five working areas, which focuses on the promotion and sharing of knowledge, challenges, and solutions in the implementation of systems-based policies and initiatives. More generally, this publication contributes to the OPN's SFS Programme's goal to accelerate the shift toward sustainable food systems using a holistic approach.

The report also contributes to the vision and objectives of the OPN and its five-year Global Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Strategy[1], which encouraged a just transition to sustainability "supported by a renewed international cooperation that leaves no one behind, leads to strengthened scientific and technological advancement, as well as to the promotion of inclusive and equitable sustainable consumption and production in all countries, taking into account national priorities and circumstances." This report responds to the Global SCP Strategy's call to action on a set of key enablers, particularly "Social inclusion: addressing the social costs and inequalities that may result from unsustainable consumption and production patterns."

Finally, this publication contributes to WWF's vision to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature.

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About WWF and the WWF Food and Agriculture Practice

WWF is an independent conservation organization, with more than 35 million followers and a global network active through local leadership in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. WWF's mission not only safeguards species but also strengthens the ecosystems that billions of people rely on for food security, clean water, and climate resilience.

The WWF Food and Agriculture Practice works to transform the global food system to support WWF's mission. The Food Practice's vision is a food system which provides nutritious food to all current and future generations while protecting our planet.

About WWF's Future Food Together initiative

WWF's Future Food Together initiative (FFT) is a response to the urgent change that is needed in the way we consume and produce food. FFT promotes a different vision for food systems, one on which humans are in harmony with nature and its food-providing ecosystems. FFT rallies stakeholders around the need for holistic transformative action, implementing collaborative projects that drive Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) approaches at all levels, from local to global.

About the One Planet network and its Sustainable Food Systems Programme

The OPN SFS Programme is a collaborative multi-actor partnership focused on catalyzing urgent transformation towards sustainable food systems, as a critical strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Through a shared vision of inclusive, diverse, resilient, healthy, and sustainable food systems, our partners collaborate on joint on-the-ground activities, research initiatives and advocacy efforts in support of more coherent and holistic policies to address complex food systems challenges.

The SFS Programme is one of six thematic programmes formed to implement the commitments made as part of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), a global framework agreed by the 193 member states of the United Nations in 2012[2]. The 10YFP is implemented by the One Planet network (OPN).

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica, the Federal Office for Agriculture of Switzerland, and WWF are the current co-leads of the SFS Programme. The programme is supported by a Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC) consisting of 20 members from five different stakeholder clusters, and by over 200 partners from around the globe. More information, and ways to participate, can be found at: https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-food-systems.

Endnotes

1 https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/global-strategy-sustainable-consumption-and-production

2 The 10YFP was adopted by heads of state and government at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Responding to the call of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, they thereby strengthened their commitment to accelerate the shift toward sustainable consumption and production patterns. Sustainable consumption and production has been included as a stand-alone goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 12), and Target 12.1 calls for the implementation of the 10YFP.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report provides insights into practical solutions for tackling the structural inequities in global food systems that are a key barrier to their urgently needed transformation. To support this objective, it offers a rigorous and multidimensional analysis of the structural drivers behind unequal outcomes in nutrition, health, and sustainability. Drawing on conceptual frameworks and real-world examples, it provides **actionable recommendations and clear pathways to enable transformative, equity-driven change**. The report is structured to support flexible engagement and is accessible to policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and advocates alike.

Although global food production has increased significantly, **current food systems remain misaligned with the principles of equity, public health, and environmental sustainability.** They continue to fuel environmental degradation, public health crises, environmental and socio-economic disparities. **These outcomes are not inevitable.** By addressing deeply rooted structural imbalances and historic injustices, it is possible to build food systems that are fairer, more resilient, and better aligned with sustainable development goals.

Why this report?

The challenges that our food systems face today are often directly linked to deep-seated inequities that have long shaped how our food is produced, accessed, and governed. **These inequities, whether they manifest as unequal access to resources, social exclusion or power imbalances in shaping systems and their outcomes, are not peripheral issues – rather, they are core drivers of the systemic failure we witness.**

Addressing them is crucial to unlocking currently entrenched dysfunctional systems and redirecting them toward a sustainable and just path. **Equity-sensitive strategies that prioritise people, the planet, and prosperity must be at the heart of this transformation.**

At the heart of food systems interrelated challenges and crises lies a dominant model that prioritises maximising excess profits for shareholders, insufficiently limited corporate concentration and extractive efficiency over the common good: social justice, public health, and ecological resilience.


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Modern food systems operate within a highly globalised and interconnected landscape. Over time, economic policy trends, such as trade liberalisation and market consolidation, have shaped the inequitable structure of these systems. Today, **a very small number of actors play an influential role across various stages of global food systems' domains,** holding concentrated power from production to consumption and governance. Such power imbalance is driving the array of interrelated issues and crises with catastrophic negative impacts to people and planet, including the undermining of human food security and health.

The report leverages, among other, the Commercial Determinants of Health (CDoH) innovative framework as it offers a useful lens to gauge how business actors' practices can impact equity and sustainability outcomes. For instance, how supply chain management can determine workers and producers' income and livelihood opportunities, as well as environmental impacts; how product marketing and scientific interference can determine consumers ability to exercise good choices; and how policy interference can determine whose voices are reflected in policies. **Understanding these dynamics is increasingly important as countries are in urgent need of advancing sustainable food systems transformation.**

When not adequately balanced, some of these practices may contribute to challenges such as rising burden of disease, food and nutrition insecurity, economic vulnerability, environmental destruction and degradation. These challenges are **particularly acute in contexts where regulatory systems struggle to keep pace with rapid market developments or unexpected events and shocks –** highlighting how outdated governance models and limited metrics of success have proven incapable of addressing the converging crises we now face.

Addressing the inequities that drive food systems current lock-ins is a complex challenge. However, **historical precedents show that systemic and rapid transformations often arise when societies confront the limits and contradictions of market-centred approaches, especially during periods of crisis. Some of these moments have catalysed a reimagining of essential services -** such as health and education - as public goods, requiring equity-based robust public investment and democratic governance. Moments of crises have often seen commercial actors capacity for delivering benefit to society significantly affected, **manifesting the critical role of public intervention in delivering basic human needs. Today's converging crises offer such a moment where windows of opportunity for transformative change can open.**

Encouragingly, many solutions are already emerging. Across sectors and regions, governments, businesses, and civil society actors are working together to create more resilient and sustainable food systems. **This report responds to the need to highlight valuable equity-driven solutions that can contribute to unlocking food systems transformation.**


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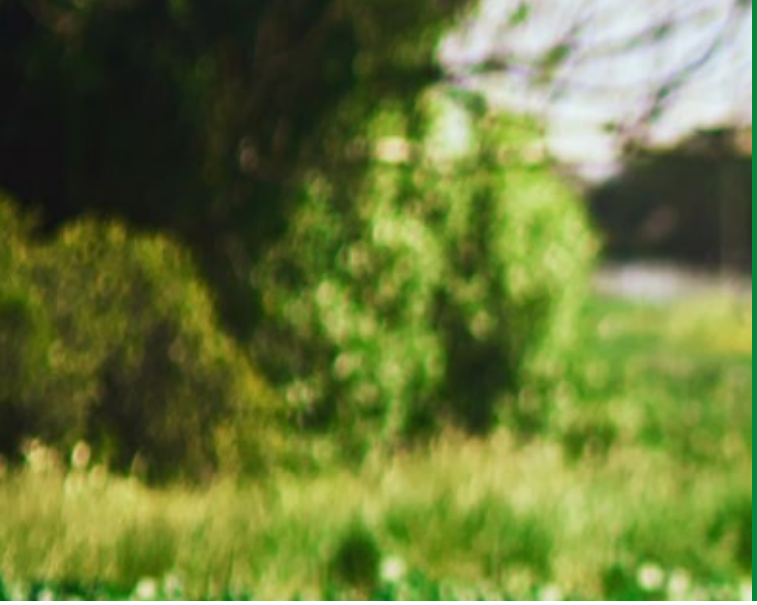


Precedents show that systemic transformations arise when societies confront the contradictions of **market-centred approaches.**

What does this report provide?

This report contends that equity must be at the core of food system transformation. Using systems-based analysis and drawing insights from diverse case studies, **the report illustrates how equity-sensitive strategies can serve as powerful levers for change. By confronting entrenched power dynamics and reimagining food as a public good, these strategies can strengthen accountability, redistribute power, and realign food systems with the public and planetary interest.**

An equity-sensitive transformation, the report argues, **is imperative and within reach, provided it is supported by inclusive policies and bold political leadership.**

A central contribution of this work is to advance the application of a now widely recognised equity framework comprising three, interrelated dimensions of equity - distributive, procedural, and recognitional - as guiding lenses for analysis and action.

By drawing out their implications for action, it takes forward the call for equity-sensitive action, policy and advocacy, as put forth by the 2023 report "Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition" by the Committee for World Food Security's High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (CFS-HLPE). An analysis guided by these dimensions helps identify how and why injustices are perpetuated through unfair access to resources and benefits, exclusionary decision-making processes, the invisibilisation of historical injustices and marginalisation of diverse knowledge systems.

Applying this equity lens across the domains of production, consumption, and governance, our report demonstrates how equity-sensitive strategies can act as powerful entry points to disrupt systemic lock-ins and identifies key leverage points to catalyse equitable transformation.

This report also provides a structured overview of the growing number of frameworks and international policy instruments that can be leveraged to support equity-sensitive strategies across food systems. These frameworks converge in supporting action across the three key dimensions of equity: recognition, representation and redistribution. International policy instruments also offer powerful pathways for integrating equity into national strategies, linking food systems to wider goals on climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development.

Key findings

The report underscores the need to reframe food as a human right and a public good, thus re-balancing its current treatment as a commodity governed by deregulated and financialized markets, which lack human rights-based principles in their design. This does not imply the elimination of markets but rather recognises that, in their current form, they deepen the inequalities that are driving unsustainable outcomes, harming people and planet. **A common message emerges from the report's analysis: transforming food systems sustainably requires redistributing power, resources, opportunities through equity-sensitive approaches.**

Transformative change must be guided by the principles of justice, sustainability, and the public good, replacing the current logics of excess profit extraction and power concentration with equitable benefit-sharing and increased agency of marginalised actors.

Guiding principles are especially important since food systems change is inherently complex and non-linear, requiring coordinated interventions through coherent "packages" across domains of production, consumption and governance. Findings show that equity-sensitive strategies are effective when combining grassroot mobilisation with institutional interventions, and rights-based frameworks with market-shaping tools**.**

Equity must be firmly embedded in how food systems are analysed, funded, regulated, monitored, and ultimately transformed, ensuring that marginalised actors have agency, their knowledge is validated, and they benefit meaningfully from transformation. This requires critically defining whose interests are prioritised, whose knowledge systems are validated, who participates meaningfully in decision-making processes, and who benefits from outcomes.

This approach requires binding commitments at all levels of governance to ensure accountability, transparency, and justice. Ultimately, **food systems transformation is a political choice:** one that must confront how markets are structured, how power is distributed, and how intersecting inequities are addressed.

Policy recommendations

Food systems transformation is a political choice that requires bold commitments to dismantle structural inequities and centre public interest at every stage of the transition. The report outlines nine equity-sensitive policy recommendations to guide governments, civil society, and communities. These are grouped into three categories: **Foundational enablers and structural levers (1–5),** Establish institutional and legal conditions for redistributing power and aligning policies with equity goals; **Sectoral interventions (6–8),** Address specific food system domains and community livelihoods to make equity operational; **Inclusive monitoring (9)** ensures transparency, accountability, and responsiveness through equity-focused evaluation. The following table (Table 1) maps the recommendations against the three equity dimensions explored in the report.

The report underscores the need to reframe **food as a human right and a public good,** thus re-balancing its current treatment as a commodity governed by deregulated and financialized markets

TABLE 1: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND EQUITY RELEVANCE

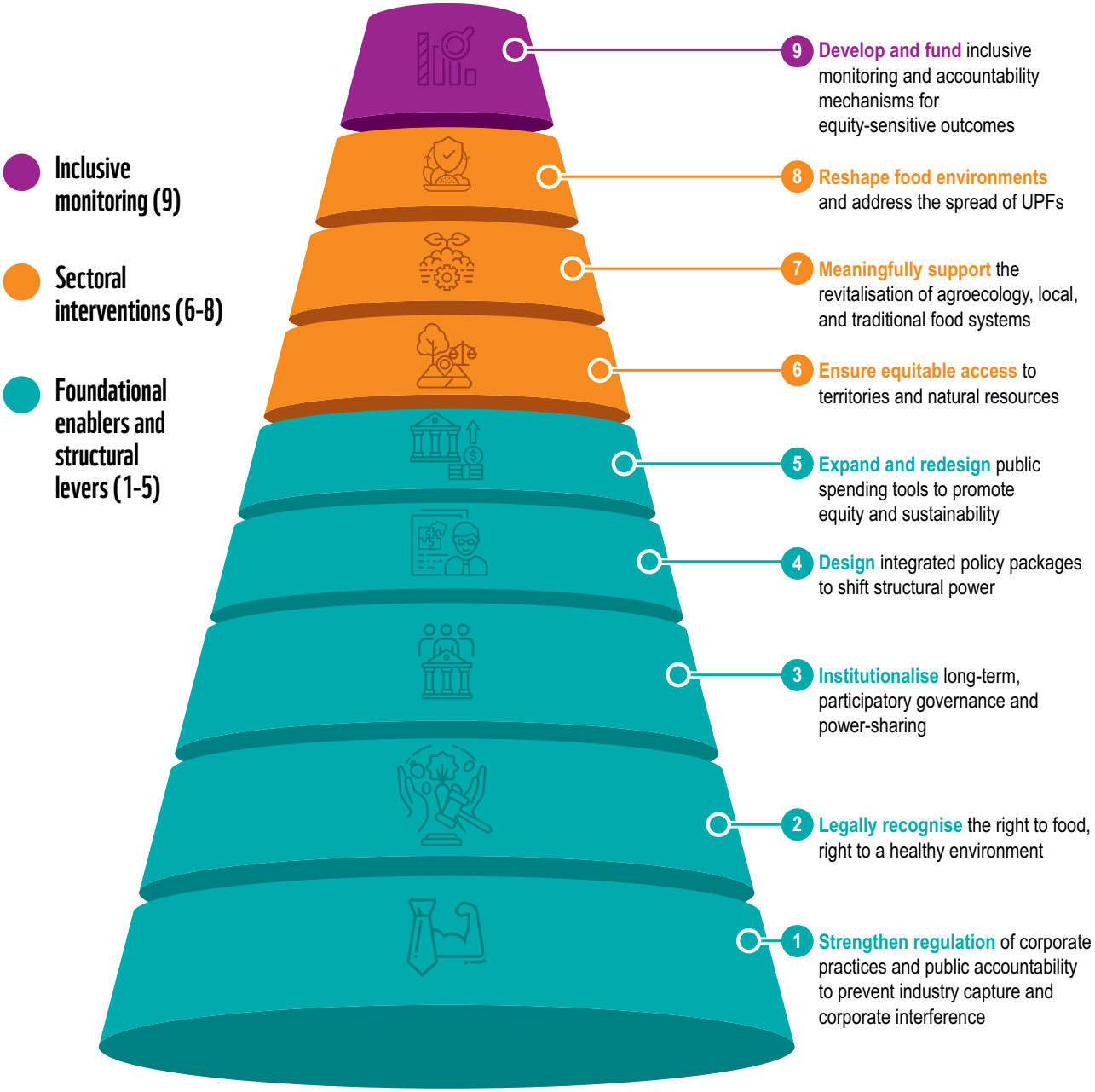
Recommendation - title	Recommendation - description	Distributive Equity	Procedural Equity	Recognitional Equity
Foundational enablers and structural levers				
1 - Strengthen regulation of corporate practices and public accountability to prevent industry capture and corporate interference	Curbing corporate influence and ensuring transparent, rights-based governance are essential to reclaim food systems in the public interest.	High — Helps correct imbalances in resource and harm distribution shaped by corporate power.	High — Public accountability requires participatory and transparent processes.	High — Protects non-commercial food systems, traditional knowledge, and collective models from marginalisation and appropriation.
2 - Legally recognise the Right to Food, Right to a Healthy Environment	Legal recognition of food and healthy environments as human rights is essential to shift power, protect community-defined food systems, and institutionalise accountability.	High — Legal rights frameworks help secure fair distribution of food, health, and environmental goods.	High — Rights-based governance embeds inclusive, accountable processes.	High — Recognitional equity affirms the legitimacy of local food systems, traditional knowledge, and non-market logics, challenging dominant narratives around food production and governance.
3 - Institutionalise long-term, participatory governance and power-sharing	Sustainable transformation depends on embedding community leadership and shared decision-making into the architecture of food system governance – both in public and private spheres.	Medium — Embedding community voice supports more equitable resource distribution.	High — Institutionalises inclusive and shared decision-making.	High — Affirms diverse knowledge systems, lived experiences, and culturally rooted foodways to advance recognitional equity.
4 - Design integrated policy packages to shift structural power	Transformative change requires coordinated strategies that align legal, fiscal, and regulatory tools across sectors and domains to tackle root causes of food system inequities.	Medium — Directs public resources toward historically excluded producers and communities.	High — Fosters alliances and institutions that enable inclusive policy development, litigation, and accountability.	Medium — Embeds plural food cultures, traditional knowledge, and marginalised voices in decision-making and public narratives.
5 - Expand and redesign public spending tools to promote equity and sustainability	Public procurement and subsidies must be reoriented to support diverse producers, reflect true costs and values, and enable equitable access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food.	High — Redirecting subsidies and procurement supports diverse producers and equitable food access to culturally relevant food.	High — Enables co-design, participation in oversight, and local governance by beneficiaries and producers.	Medium — Has strong potential to uplift marginalised producers, and validate traditional foodways if tailored accordingly.

Recommendation - title	Recommendation - description	Distributive Equity	Procedural Equity	Recognitional Equity
Sectoral interventions				
6 - Ensure equitable access to territories and natural resources	Secure and just access to land, water, and ecosystems is foundational for sustainable food systems and must be addressed through inclusive, pluralistic governance frameworks.	High — Determines who has access to valuable natural resources.	Medium — If tailored accordingly can foster inclusive governance of natural resources.	High — Explicitly redresses legacies of dispossession and supports culturally grounded land/resource stewardship.
7 – Meaningfully support the revitalisation of agroecology, local, and traditional food systems	Supporting agroecological and traditional systems is critical for cultural continuity, climate resilience, and equitable livelihoods—beyond technocratic or market-based green transitions.	High — Supports fairer livelihoods and food access rooted in community-defined systems.	Medium — Can contribute to advancing community-lead decision-making on research, certification, standards, and food system priorities.	High — Centres and validates traditional knowledge, practices, and cultural identities.
8 - Reshape food environments and address the spread of UPFs	Transforming food environments is key to advancing health and cultural equity by reducing the dominance of UPFs and restoring community control.	High — Improves availability, affordability, and desirability toward nutritious, sustainable, and culturally appropriate foods, and can reduce exposure to harms, especially for disadvantaged groups.	Medium — Can advance inclusive processes if affected communities lead decisions shaping local food environments, to avoid technocratic, top-down interventions.	High — Can directly address food apartheid, resource and protect local foodways and culinary identities and restore community agency over food environments.
Inclusive monitoring				
9 - Develop and fund inclusive monitoring and accountability mechanisms for equity-sensitive outcomes	Robust, community-led monitoring systems are vital to track progress, uphold rights, and ensure that equity commitments translate into real outcomes.	High — Advances three dimensions of equity when monitoring is community-led, legally anchored, and tied to accountability; otherwise, risks becoming symbolic and failing to challenge structural disparities.		

These recommendations are designed to **guide national and local governments, civil society organisations and community actors** in advancing equitable food systems transformation across diverse contexts. They provide a **clear, actionable blueprint to translate the report's insights into meaningful, transformative action**.

Figure 1 displays the Recommendations in a flowchart, from foundational enablers to sectoral interventions to monitoring. While solutions are always dependent on the political economy of a given context, one set of policies can help create the conditions for the next. **Section 5** includes a comprehensive list of stakeholder-specific actions under each of the nine recommendations.

FIGURE 1: NINE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ACROSS THREE CATEGORIES



Summary of enhancements to CFS policy recommendations

Most of this report's policy recommendations align broadly with the ***CFS Recommendations to address inequalities in food security and*** **nutrition**. However, this study's recommendations provide **a set of suggested enhancements that may improve the impact of the CFS Recommendations**. **Table 2** provides a summary display (see **section 5** for the more detailed analysis).

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF ENHANCEMENTS TO CFS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EQUITY-SENSITIVE FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Study's Recommendation Title	Identified Gaps in CFS Policy Recommendations	Proposed Enhancements / Concrete Actions to Overcome Gaps
Foundational Enablers & Structural Levers		
Strengthen regulation of corporate practices and public accountability	Fails to acknowledge the role of commercial determinants of health and corporate political activity. Lacks concrete safeguards to effectively tackle conflicts of interest (beyond general calls for transparency).	• Enact legally binding bans on corporate interference in public policy. • Mandate full transparency in lobbying (public registries, disclosures). • Ban corporate sponsorship of public health/food campaigns and research. • Establish independent food ombuds institutions with enforcement powers.
Legally recognise the right to food and the right to a healthy environment	Falls short in challenging food's status as a market commodity, a key barrier to materializing the right to food. Lacks concrete accountability measures for violations.	• Ban speculative trading of staple foods and financialization of essential land/water. • Delist food from commodity markets and ban derivatives trading. • Establish ombudsperson institutions with authority to investigate violations and mandate compliance.
Institutionalise long-term, participatory food governance and power-sharing	Provides general calls for participation but lacks concrete actions and guidance to materialize meaningful inclusiveness.	• Create food policy councils (or similar) with binding power-sharing mechanisms. • Mandate representation quotas (e.g., 50% grassroots) in governance bodies. • Allocate financial resources to enable meaningful civil society participation.
Design integrated policy packages to shift structural power	Calls for policy coherence but lacks specific measures to embed an equity lens into coherent policy packages.	• Mandate equity impact assessments for all policies affecting food systems. • Set time-bound targets for inequality reduction to guide and evaluate policy coherence.
Expand and redesign public spending tools	Emphasizes inclusive procurement but lacks actionable measures and binding targets.	• Establish specific binding quotas for sourcing from smallholders and agroecological producers (e.g., 30% within 6 years). • Invest in publicly owned food hubs or logistics platforms to break distributor dominance. • Institutionalize true cost accounting to align spending with long-term public interest.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Inequity reveals systemic injustices, such as Indigenous Peoples stewarding 80% of biodiversity but owning little land, or women comprising 60% of agricultural labour yet holding less than

15% of land titles

Study's Recommendation Title	Identified Gaps in CFS Policy Recommendations	Proposed Enhancements / Concrete Actions to Overcome Gaps
Sectoral Interventions		
Ensure equitable access to territories and natural resources	Only calls to prevent further land concentration, implying current distribution is acceptable. Lacks concrete redistributive actions and does not address drivers like speculation and financialization.	• Enact redistributive policies for land and natural resources where concentration is high. • Establish participatory land trusts or community trust frameworks. • Ban foreign or speculative acquisition of essential food-producing territories.
Meaningfully support the revitalisation of agroecology...	Pinpoints agroecology as key but remains general, lacking specific, actionable support mechanisms.	• Set mandates to increase public/private investment in agroecology. • Establish targets to train farmers in agroecological practices. • Legally protect seed sovereignty and revisit intellectual property laws. • Create national agroecology funds with grants (not just loans) for marginalized groups.
Reshape food environments and address the spread of UPFs	Aligns closely but can be strengthened with more proven, impactful regulatory measures.	• Apply special taxes ("health taxes") on unhealthy UPFs. • Ban child-targeted marketing of harmful products. • Mandate warning labels on UPFs, free from industry interference.
Inclusive Monitoring		
Develop inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms	While frequently mentioned, recommendations lack focus on the procedural and recognitional equity of the monitoring systems themselves.	• Create accountability mechanisms and institutions that allow for participation by civil society and communities in monitoring and oversight. • Fund community-led evaluation and research programs. • Tie public budgets to performance on equity-sensitive targets.

How to navigate this report

This report is structured modularly.
It is designed explicitly to accommodate various audiences and their distinct informational needs, allowing readers to navigate its contents flexibly based on their individual profiles, professional backgrounds, or specific interests.

The report is organised into the following core modules:

1 Introduction:

This section sets the foundation by highlighting the systemic dysfunctions of current food systems' design and framing the urgency for equity-driven transformation.

2 From crises to opportunities:

This part provides an overview of the key challenges that the current food systems are facing, and introduces key drivers like power asymmetries and profit driven ideologies. It identifies the opportunity to address these drivers lies in systemic and equity-driven approaches to food systems reform.

3 Mainstreaming equity in food systems transformation:

This section outlines the report's conceptual core by detailing the three dimensions of equity that shape its analytical framework: distributive, procedural, and recognitional. It also offers a selection of frameworks and guiding tools to translate these equity dimensions into actionable strategies across different policy and programmatic contexts.

4 Case Studies:

Here, readers will find summarised analyses of seven real-world examples that illustrate how equity-sensitive sustainable food systems transformation can be realised in practice. Rather than seeking specific initiatives that capture all dimensions of equity, the report intentionally examines a diverse set of case studies, each contributing partial but valuable insights across equity dimensions. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the structural, political, and community-led elements needed to institutionalise equity in food systems. The section delves into experiences from different geographies and levels, with the contributions of varied stakeholders, and looks at both successes and ongoing challenges in realising transformative change.

5 Conclusions and policy recommendations:

The report concludes with a synthesis of insights derived from the conceptual foundations and case studies. It outlines nine concrete policy recommendations aimed at institutionalising equity within food systems transformations, spanning legal reform, governance, public finance, agroecology, corporate accountability, and land access.

Table 3 serves as a **navigational aid** for readers, outlining how different stakeholder groups can engage with the report based on their specific interests, professional roles, and strategic priorities. Whether readers are policymakers seeking actionable reforms, advocates aiming to address structural injustices, professionals looking for practical tools and models, civil society organizations advancing grassroots efforts, or commercial actors aligning with sustainability and equity goals, this guide is designed to help them quickly identify the most pertinent insights and effectively navigate the report's modular content.

TABLE 3: NAVIGATIONAL AID FOR READERS

Policymakers	Equity experts	Food systems professionals	Civil society organizations	Commercial actors
Introduction				
Understand why this report is needed.				
From crises to opportunities				Page 24
Recognise how concentrated power, inequitable governance, and commodification limit policy impact in food systems.	Gain a foundational understanding of challenges, power and disparities in global food systems.	Contextualise professional practice within broader power asymmetries and systemic injustice.	Ground advocacy in systemic analysis of the barriers communities and policymakers face.	Gain insight into how business practices perpetuate or can help dismantle structural inequities.
Mainstreaming equity in food systems transformation				Page 36
Gain a foundational understanding of equity dimensions and frameworks to inform fair, inclusive, and context-sensitive policymaking.	Learn how the dimensions of equity and actionable frameworks are operationalised across domains to design just food systems.	Integrate equity principles and frameworks into operations, assessments, and engagement strategies.	Get familiar with equity-based frameworks to advocate for community needs and support inclusive, local actions across food system domains.	Align business governance, models and strategies with frameworks addressing justice, inclusivity, and sustainability.
Case Studies				Page 48
Learn from success and challenges in policy implementation across diverse settings to replicate or adapt.	Examine real-world models of equity-based food systems reform to identify practical insights, challenges, and opportunities for application or collaboration.		Discover successful grassroots initiatives and strategies for community empowerment.	Identify avenues for leading equitable business practices for food systems transformation.
Policy Recommendations				Page 60
Gain insights on pathways for innovative policy action to drive urgently needed systemic reform and guide legislative change.	Align practice with concrete, strategic and equity-centred directions.		Leverage actionable recommendations to foster inclusive governance, equity-sensitive policy reform and community mobilisation.	Understand how to align business practices and partner with policymakers and communities to advance shared sustainability and equity goals.

01

INTRODUCTION

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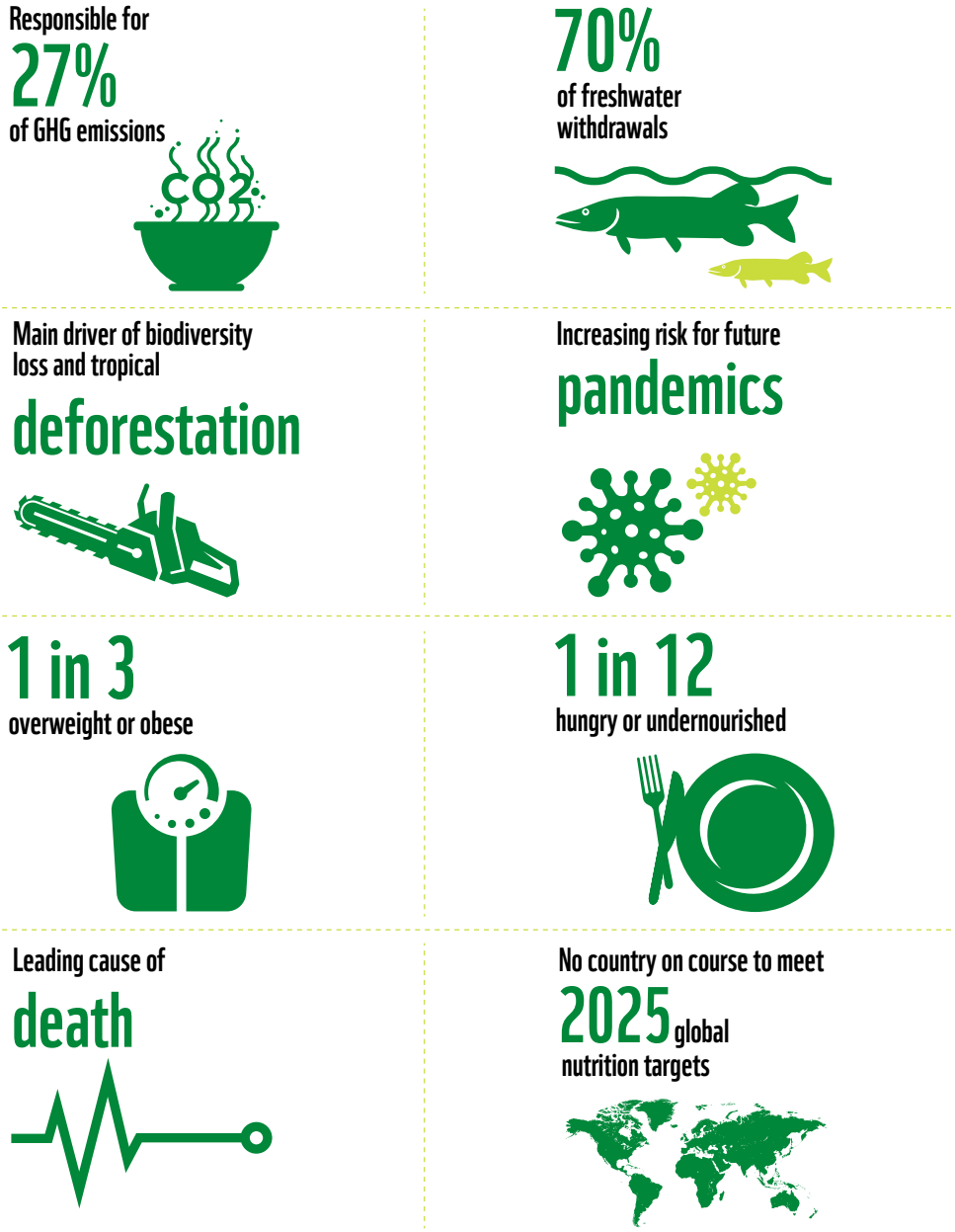
Food systems are complex, dynamic, non-linear, and interconnected networks that span the entire spectrum of food production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal, along with the socio-economic, institutional and environmental factors that both drive and result from them[3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. The significance of food systems in policy and research has surged in recent years, driven by growing concerns over their dysfunctionality. It has become apparent that, **while food systems have successfully increased food production to theoretically nourish the world's population, they are both drivers of and impacted by significant issues and crises**. Critically, food systems are struggling to ensure the fulfilment of the planetary right to health and the recently recognised human Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment[10]. They are also major drivers of environmental degradation, contributing to biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, and of the most significant public health challenges (see Figure 2)[11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16].

More than dysfunctional, the current shape of our globalised food systems can be described as a systemic failure: a design built on profound historical inequities, that reinforces weak governance structures and perpetuates socio-economic and environmental disparities[17, 18]. While there is growing consensus among scientists, civil society, and policymakers that our food systems are not delivering what is expected nor what is needed[19], agreement is harder to reach on how to achieve sustainable food systems[20]. Entrenched conceptual frameworks play a key role in this debate. **Dominant discourses are rooted in extractive, speculative, and "shareholder primacy" logics. These prioritize maximising excess profits for a small minority, favour corporate efficiency allowing excessive market concentration, and conceive solutions mostly as technological fixes – all while downplaying social and environmental externalities.** These logics are deeply embedded in policy, media and academic spaces, and limit consideration of transformative approaches that could more effectively deliver public goods. As a result, the potential for truly transformative change remains limited unless these ideological underpinnings are made explicit and open to critical scrutiny[21]. Additionally, competing priorities in agricultural, economic, fiscal, and social policy further complicate the path forward[22].

FIGURE 2: ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH IMPACTS DRIVEN BY FOOD SYSTEMS



Yet, this is not an irreversible trajectory. **A profound paradigm shift is needed to address food systems' challenges, and it can come within reach through bold policy action, informed by science and guided by urgent justice**, that can turn widespread inertia into momentum. Incremental action is insufficient, and thus systemic transformation is urgently imperative[23, 24, 25]. Inaction would be a moral failure and a grim prospect for both humanity and the planet; striving for change, instead, is a necessity and a powerful affirmation of responsibility to forge a more just, sustainable, and resilient future. While a one-size-fits-all strategy to achieve sustainable transformation of food systems remains elusive, the necessity for adaptable, context-specific approaches to sustainability is evident - and equity sensitivity should remain a core component of this vision, because achieving food security and sustainable food systems is improbable without addressing inequality and injustice[26, 27, 28].

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02

FROM CRISES TO OPPORTUNITIES


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Global food systems face interconnected crises—ecological decline, malnutrition, and inequitable access—demanding systemic reform. **Fragmented approaches that treat agricultural, environmental, health, and trade issues in isolation, in addition to a system that continues to operate under current market rules perpetuate systemic vulnerabilities**[29]. This chapter examines these overlapping challenges, defines inequality and inequity in food systems, and outlines pathways for transformation.

2.1 Dysfunctional food systems confronting multiple challenges

Food system outputs are shaped by multiple overlapping challenges[30]. **The globalised nature of food production has concentrated output in a handful of exporting nations**, contributing to the dependency of many countries - especially in Africa, Central America, and the Middle East - on imports, leaving them highly exposed to trade disruptions and price spikes[31]. **Geopolitical tensions and conflict further complicate this picture**, driving disruptions in supply chains, trade and global markets and intensifying competition over critical resources such as water and land[32]. **Price spikes –ultimately determined by powerful market players[33], – have strained food availability and accessibility for communities and also swayed political dynamics,** prompting influential agricultural lobbies to push back against environmental regulations. **Meanwhile, industrial agriculture has become a primary driver pushing planetary boundaries,** exacerbating climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution – creating feedback loops that threaten long-term viability and pose threat to humans[34], [35], [36], [37], [38]. **Adding to this fragile picture is the staggering one-third of all food that is wasted, which squanders resources and emits circa 10% of GHGs while 800 million people face chronic hunger[39], [40], [41].**

Health burdens are equally stark: half the global population suffers malnutrition, while rising obesity and diet-related diseases is strongly linked to the evolution of dietary patterns shaped by globalised, profit-driven food systems[42], [43], [44], [45]. These systems promote the widespread availability,


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affordability, and aggressive marketing of energy-dense, nutrient-poor ultra-processed foods (UPFs), especially among low-income and marginalised populations[46]. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and agrochemical pollution further highlight systemic failures[47, 48]. A complete overview of the stressors faced in the different dimensions of food systems globally is beyond the scope of this report and has been covered in other reliable sources[49, 50, 51, 52, 53].

These converging crises are inseparable from the socio-economic structures that underpin global food systems. They reveal the structural fragility of current food systems and the need to move beyond fragmented or technical solutions. **Addressing them is possible: it requires systemic approaches that grapple with the underlying political economy of food systems - especially the concentration of power, the commodification of food, and the disparities they perpetuate.** The next section explores how these dynamics manifest as both barriers and potential leverage points in the pursuit of equitable, sustainable transformation.

2.2 Inequities and power concentration: leverage points for change

Food system disparities are not accidental, but rooted in entrenched power asymmetries, enabled by the policy choice of mainstreaming deregulation and allowing corporate influence[54, 55]. Without confronting the challenges posed by unchecked power consolidation, corporate political activity and the "commodification" of food, in a system marred by deregulation and externalisation of the environmental and social costs[56, 57], any attempt at food systems transformation risk to remain superficial and insufficient[58, 59, 60]. **This systems-based assessment, fortunately, points to equity-sensitive strategies as a key leverage point to unlock the transformation of food systems towards sustainability.**

2.2.1 Understanding the basics: inequality and inequity in food systems

Inequalities and inequities are seen across the entire food system, from access to resources for production to participation in markets and access to nutritious food. **It is essential to distinguish between them to diagnose the root causes of dysfunction within global food systems**[61].

For the purpose of this report, it is important to differentiate between *inequalities* and *inequities* in food systems. Drawing on the work of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN), **inequalities refer to observable differences in the distribution of enabling factors and outcomes** - such as access to food production resources, food system services, and nutrition - **across individuals and groups**[62]. Analysing inequalities means measuring and quantifying **the "*what*"**, the tangible disparities in food systems, based on socio-economic status and geographical position.

One third of all food is wasted, squandering resources and causing around 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, while

800 million

people suffer from chronic hunger

For instance, disparities in access to healthy diets between income groups, provides insights into food system inequalities[63, 64].

Example: **Inequality** measures disparities as, for instance, the prevalence of undernourishment, which is 20% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 3% in Europe.

Inequalities also extend beyond food access and nutrition, encompassing environmental resources and exposures. In fact, **environmental inequalities in food systems are increasingly recognised as key contributors to both human and planetary health challenges**. Marginalised and low-income communities, particularly in the Global South but also in underserved regions of high-income countries, are disproportionately exposed to environmental harms driven by dominant agricultural and food industry practices[65]. These communities are also more vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as droughts, floods, or heatwaves, which threaten food production and livelihoods. At the same time, communities living near polluting food industry infrastructure, such as meatpacking plants, waste lagoons, or pesticide-intensive farms, face elevated risks of respiratory illness, waterborne diseases, and even cancer[66, 67].

An analysis of food systems' **inequities**, on the other hand, focuses on **understanding the underlying, avoidable, and unjust causes which become evident once we question the "*why*" behind disparities**. Looking at equity means questioning whether and how measurable differences are rooted in social, economic, political and historical processes that create systematic disadvantages for certain groups. They are inherently related to how power is distributed across social groups, both within and outside the food system[68, 69, 70].

Example: **Inequity** reveals systemic injustices, such as Indigenous Peoples stewarding 80% of biodiversity but owning little land, or women comprising 60% of agricultural labour yet holding less than 15% of land titles[71].

Environmental inequities emerge when these same power dynamics shape who bears the costs of environmental degradation and who benefits from environmental resources. The current food system externalises environmental costs onto those least responsible. Addressing inequities means recognising that these systems of exclusion are not accidental but constructed, shaped by histories of colonial expansion, capitalist extraction, racialised and gendered labour hierarchies and land rights, and exploitative trade regimes. **Recognising these structural drivers is the first step toward enacting systems that are equitable by design, rather than exclusionary by default**. **Box 1** delves into the historical processes that shaped food systems and determined the unequal distribution of one of their key resources: land.

BOX 1: POWER, INEQUITIES, AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES IN FOOD SYSTEMS

A historical process

Since the post-World War II era, the global shift toward export-oriented, industrial agriculture, intensified by neoliberal policies, has marginalised small-scale farmers and entrenched extractivist models that prioritise profit over people and planet. These systems have favoured agribusiness consolidation, foreign acquisitions of resources, and commercial monocultures, often at the expense of local food sovereignty and community resilience, particularly in the Global South. The focus on economies of scale and market expansion has driven resource dispossession, environmental degradation, and deepened socio-economic disparities[72].

Simultaneously, deregulation, trade liberalization, and corporate-friendly policies have enabled the financialization of food and unprecedented consolidation of control by a handful of transnational corporations. These actors dominate every stage of the food chain and shape regulations and policies in their favour, reducing consumer choice, and eroding democratic oversight. Flawed policy frameworks have prioritised efficiency and profit, consistently sidelining sustainability, equity, and the public interest[73, 74, 75, 76].

A closer look at land - who owns it, and why

One of the clearest manifestations of structural injustice in food systems is **land inequality**, the stark disparity in land ownership, access, and control across different social groups and geographies. Access to land remains one of the most significant determinants of power, food security, and socio-economic well-being. Yet globally, land continues to be unequally distributed, with smallholder and indigenous farmers systematically excluded of their rights and access, particularly in the Global South.

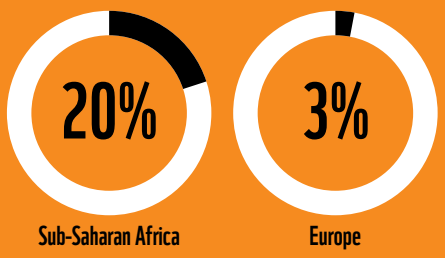
According to the International Land Coalition, the top 1% of farms globally operate more than 70% of the world's farmland, while over 80% of all farms are smaller than 2 hectares but control just 12% of agricultural land[77] .

These disparities reflect deep-seated **land inequities**: avoidable, unjust systems rooted in colonial and non-colonial land dispossession, discriminatory laws, patriarchal inheritance systems, and policy bias favouring large-scale, industrial agriculture[78]. Land inequities manifest in the systemic marginalization of local communities, who are often excluded from land titling processes, financing, and decision-making spaces.

The contemporary phenomenon of land grabbing, mostly exemplified by large-scale acquisitions by private corporations, governments, and financial actors, has intensified these inequities. Since the 2008 global food price crisis, transnational land deals have surged, often justified in the name of "food security," "green energy," or "development." In practice, these deals often lead to the displacement of local populations, erosion of customary land rights, and the loss of food sovereignty[79]. Fertile land is frequently redirected toward export-oriented monocultures, biofuels, or speculative capital, severing cultural and ecological ties between people and land, while reducing local resilience to market and climate shocks[80].

Without confronting the unequal distribution of land, wealth, and power, attempts to create just and sustainable food systems will risk reinforcing the very systems of exclusion they seek to dismantle[81]. For a detailed example of land reform in practice, see Case Study 7 on Scotland's recent initiatives.

Inequality measures disparities as, for instance, the prevalence of undernourishment, which is:



Efforts to redistribute power, re-value the social-ecological qualities of food, and centre justice in food systems governance are essential. Wealthier countries and societal groups, as major beneficiaries of these systemic arrangements, bear a *de facto* responsibility to support structural redress. For instance, there is a growing consensus on the need for high-income nations to financially and institutionally support low-income countries in overcoming both historical and present-day inequities[82, 83]. **This requires embedding food system solutions within a broader rethinking of the political economy centred around global justice**, and operationalised through the equitable leveraging of international financing mechanisms and multilateral governance.

The following section examines the forces that have driven these imbalances and considers alternative pathways for reform.

2.2.2 How profit-driven logic and power concentration entrench inequities

Power in food systems is concentrated in the hands of large transnational corporations, financial actors, and policy elites, under a profit-driven model that prioritizes economic liberalization, deregulation, rendering food into a globally traded commodity instead of the basic human necessity[84, 85]. This corporate food regime is characterised by dominant value chain actors - grown out of permissive mergers & acquisitions legislation – that pursue export-oriented, industrialized systems reliant on chemical-intensive agriculture, factory farming, and genetic technologies[86, 87, 88,] while marginalizing local economies, ecosystems, and communities[89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95]. The vision of food as a commodity has for long shaped policies, science, and market dynamics, while constraining producer and consumer choices, and failing to account for externalities produced by these dynamics[96]. **Such power is reinforced through institutional control, market dominance, and subtler means like shaping narratives and policy discourse,** as highlighted by recent analysis by UNDP, drawing on the "four arenas of power" framework[97, 98]. Through these practices, if unchecked, corporate actors can extend their influence across agricultural inputs and outputs, production and distribution, as well as the policy and scientific environments in which food systems are governed[99, 100, 101]. **Corporate influence—via lobbying, campaign funding, and regulatory capture—often obstructs reforms aimed at environmental, labour, or public health improvements**, exemplified by the $500 million spent by U.S. agribusiness on lobbying between 2019-2023, underscoring systemic resistance to transformative change[102]. Since the main mission of corporate entities is to continuously increase economic gains, it is unsurprising that they have been often found to actively block or weaken reforms that could hamper this mission[103, 104].

BOX 2: APPLYING THE COMMERCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH FRAMEWORK TO FOOD SYSTEMS

The Commercial Determinants of Health (CDoH) framework provides a valuable lens to expose how corporate practices can shape food system outcomes related to human and planetary health and equity. It draws attention to questions of power and to the broader political, economic, and social strategies used to maximise profit at the expense of public health and environmental sustainability[105].

The proliferation of UPFs is a case in point. Their high profitability, driven by low-cost ingredients, engineered hyper-palatability, extended shelf life, and global-scale distribution, makes them central to the strategies of food corporations focused on increasing shareholder returns. Market logic rewards volume and margin over nutritional value and sustainability. Heavily subsidised inputs such as refined grains, sugars, and oils make UPFs artificially cheap, while economies of scale and global supply chains further entrench their market dominance[106]. This exemplifies how, when food is treated as a speculative commodity, healthier, less processed and less environmentally harmful options are displaced, unsustainable production practices are entrenched, and socioeconomic inequalities deepened[107], [108].

The CDoH framework is crucial for understanding and tackling these dynamics. It highlights the systems, practices, and institutional mechanisms through which commercial actors, both large and small, influence human and planetary health and equity outcomes[109]. When applied to harmful products and practices, a CDoH analysis reveals how power asymmetries and systemic lock-ins maintain profit-maximising pattern while constraining healthier, more equitable and more sustainable alternatives, and highlights why systemic policy interventions are urgently needed[110, 111].

Importantly, these dynamics don't operate in isolation but are embedded in a global economic system that favours deregulation, trade liberalisation, and financialisation. Transnational corporations often deploy shared tactics to resist regulation and steer global food systems in their favour. Their influence is often reinforced by national geopolitical interests: governments frequently act to protect and promote "their" corporations on the global stage, treating them as strategic assets tied to economic growth, employment, and influence. Market concentration enables corporations to maintain oligopolistic control, manipulate pricing, and avoid responsibility for the externalities they create, undermining the legitimacy and capacity of public institutions to act in public interest[112]. This alignment of state and corporate interests contributes to the political inertia that makes it difficult to enact transformative change - even when it's clear that the same commercial systems that fuel the epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) also intensify climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution[113]. **Figure 3** visualizes the CDoH model.

The CDoH in Practice

The CDoH framework identifies a range of interlinked practices that systematically undermine health, equity, and sustainability:

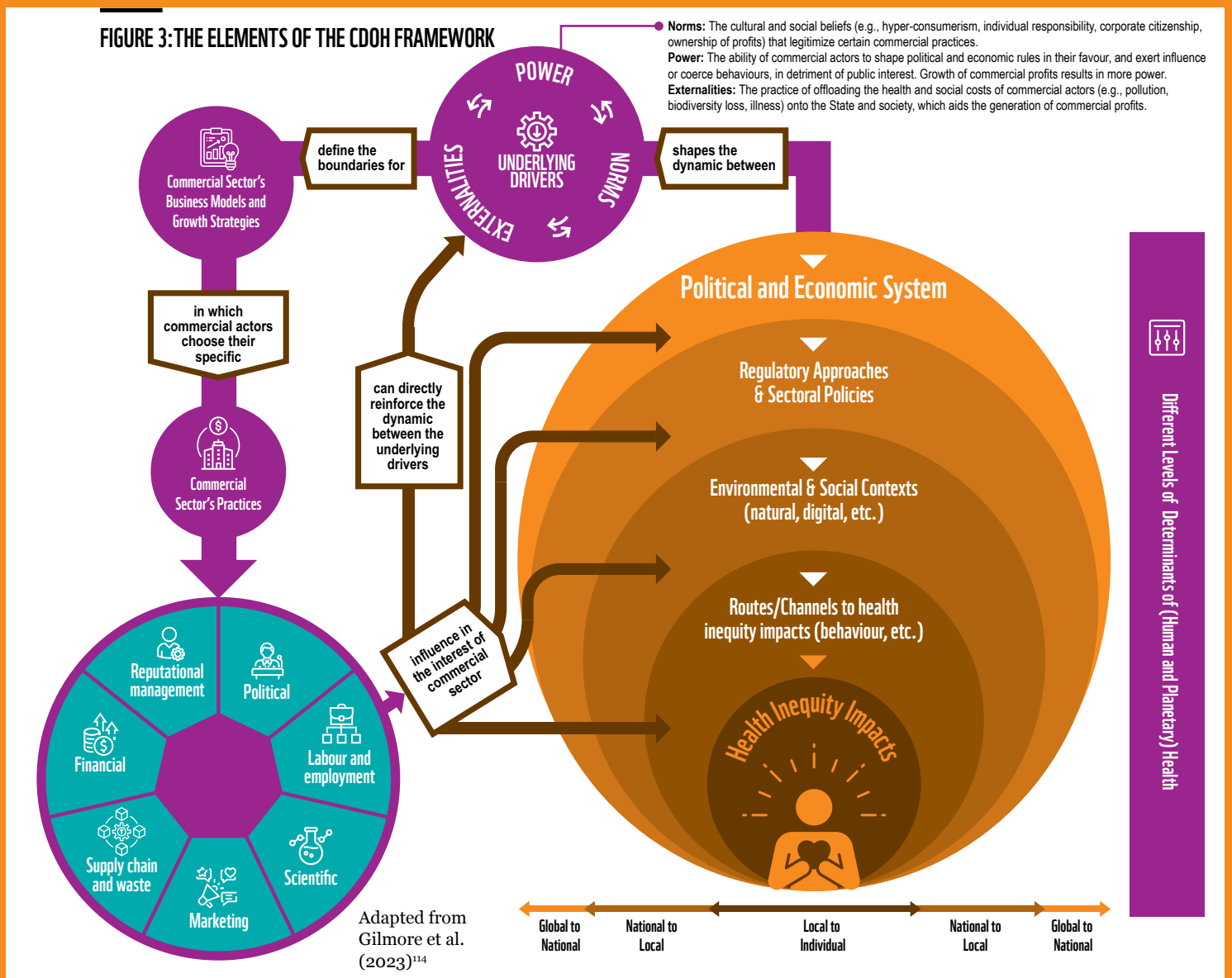
- **Political practices:** Lobbying, campaign financing, and legal action to block or dilute regulation, shape trade agreements, and undermine public health measures.
- **Scientific practices**: Manipulation or funding for research to generate favourable findings, create doubt about scientific consensus, or delay regulation.
- **Marketing practices**: Targeted advertising of harmful products, often aimed at children and low-income populations, that normalise unhealthy consumption.
- **Supply chain and waste practices**: Industrial production methods that prioritise volume and profit, often at the cost of environmental sustainability, labour rights, and food quality.
- **Labour and employment practices:** Exploitative working conditions in supply chains, including wage suppression, and weak or absent labour rights.

- **Financial practices:** Tax avoidance, transfer pricing, and speculative activity that reduces public revenue and increases disparities.
- **Reputational management practices:** Corporate social responsibility initiatives that obscure harmful practices and pre-empt regulatory scrutiny.

Figure 3. Diagram illustrating the elements of the CDoH framework. The norms, power dynamics, and externalities within a political-economic system define the boundaries for corporate business models and growth strategies. These generally define the balance between commercial and public interest. Within the possibilities that such boundaries allow, commercial actors choose a set of practices to achieve their interests, which shape the determinants of human and planetary health across all levels, from individual to increasingly structural. Based on Gilmore et al. (2023)[114]

Effectively addressing the CDoH requires a paradigm shift: away from voluntary self-regulation and corporate-first governance, and toward robust public regulation, democratic oversight, and equitable redistribution of power. This includes confronting the financialisation of food systems as a structural obstacle to sustainability and equity, and imagining alternatives grounded in human and planetary rights, social justice, and ecological integrity.

In parallel, strategic policy sequencing and the collective organization of movements opposing harmful practices can generate positive tipping points in public discourse and regulation. Early, persistent action and coalition-building are critical in reshaping both the political narrative and institutional frameworks.



Adapted from Gilmore et al. (2023)[114]

Governments worldwide are often constrained by entrenched path dependencies shaped by decades adopting neoliberal economic logic and framings, leading to deregulation, financialization and extractive, inequitable profit-maximization policies[115, 116, 117]**.** These frameworks have perpetuated power imbalances and privileged market-based solutions, inducing more resistance to needed structural reforms. The practices outlined in the CDoH framework shed light on how commercial actors frequently exert disproportionate influence over policy processes[118]. Additionally, food corporations use crises, whether climate shocks, pandemics, or supply chain disruptions, to further consolidate control, deflect scrutiny, and reinforce the narrative that industrial food production is the only viable way to "feed the world"[119].

2.2.3 What can be done differently?

Encouragingly, meaningful alternatives exist to currently dominant framings that prioritise shareholder dividends, particularly by reframing food as a human right[120]. **Just as healthcare and education are widely recognised as essential public goods central to human wellbeing, similarly, food possesses intrinsic value that surpasses its commodity status**. This shift demands governance grounded in justice, equity, and public accountability, emphasising food systems' foundational role in supporting human life, health, social and ecological integrity.

Examples like re-municipalization of water and energy services (including Paris and Berlin) [121], [122], [123], and housing rights movements (from Singapore to Vienna to Barcelona), challenging the speculative dynamics that have turned shelter into an investment vehicle rather than a right[124]. In tobacco control, sustained advocacy and political commitment has led to taxation, regulation, advertising bans, and ultimately the denormalisation of a health-harming industry, and similar dynamics are increasingly visible in relation to alcohol harms[125]. In the renewable energy sector, growth has been driven by State-owned companies given the resistance from fossil fuel companies interests, who have even lower incentives to transition due to the decline in costs of clean energy and storage, which reduces their profits[126]. These cases demonstrate that **reversing commodification is both politically possible and materially effective**.

Civil society plays a key role in driving this change through advocacy, litigation, and grassroots mobilization, while ethical businesses—such as cooperatives, agroecological enterprises, and values-based supply chains—demonstrate that market actors can align profit with sustainability and fairness[127].

The private sector also plays a key role in this transformation. There are promising examples of food businesses contributing to a number of sustainability and equity goals[128]. Social enterprises, B-Corps, and cooperatives that prioritise ethical sourcing, fair wages, and regenerative agriculture offer alternative models that align business with public and planetary good[129].For instance, values-based food chains (VBFCs) foster long-term, trust-based relationships between producers and buyers, redistributing value more fairly along the supply chain[130]. Similarly, agroecological startups, community-supported agriculture schemes, and urban food cooperatives are demonstrating that private actors - especially small- and medium-sized enterprises - can deliver nutritious, culturally appropriate food while supporting local economies and environmental resilience[131], [132]. These examples show that the private sector, when accountable and mission-driven, can be a vital ally in food systems transformation.

Ultimately, governments and public institutions at local, national, and transnational levels hold the authority, responsibility and mandate to foster these enabling environments. By supporting meaningful civil society participation and incentivising ethical business practices, public institutions can facilitate transformative shifts towards genuinely equitable, sustainable, and resilient food systems. **In this sense, in 2024, Member States in the UN Committee for World Food Security (CFS) – which, since its reform in 2009, is the first UN committee allowing inclusive participation of civil society – agreed on a set of *Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition*[133].** The recommendations were negotiated based on the set of comprehensive actions that had been listed by the CFS-HLPE's report "Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition", published a year earlier. These recommendations are a great achievement. However, they should be considered as a great starting point rather than as a final goal as there are several gaps. Furthermore, the CFS Recommendations are numerous: a total of 58 actions across 10 areas. The significant number of recommendations, and the absence of specific guidance on their implementation, could become overwhelming for policymakers, risking policy paralysis in such a critical area to overcome humanity's interconnected crises. **This report's own recommendations section (Section 5) aims to start bridging these gaps**. In this way, this report intends to become a guidance tool for policymakers to better understand vital aspects for the development of roadmaps and actions plans for equity-driven food systems transformations.

Reversing commodification is both politically possible and materially effective

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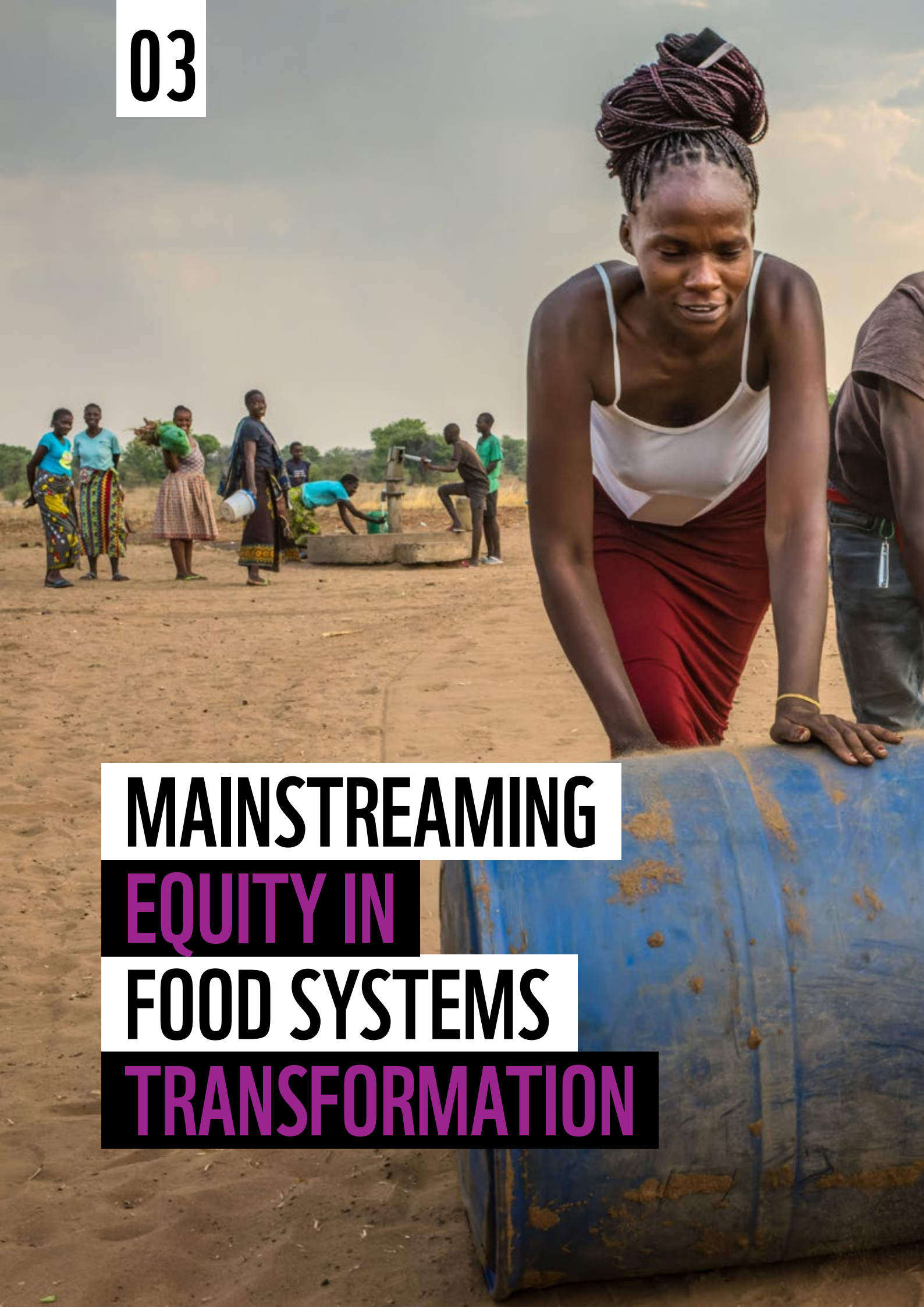


MAINSTREAMING EQUITY IN FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

3.1. Equity dimensions, frameworks and instruments for change

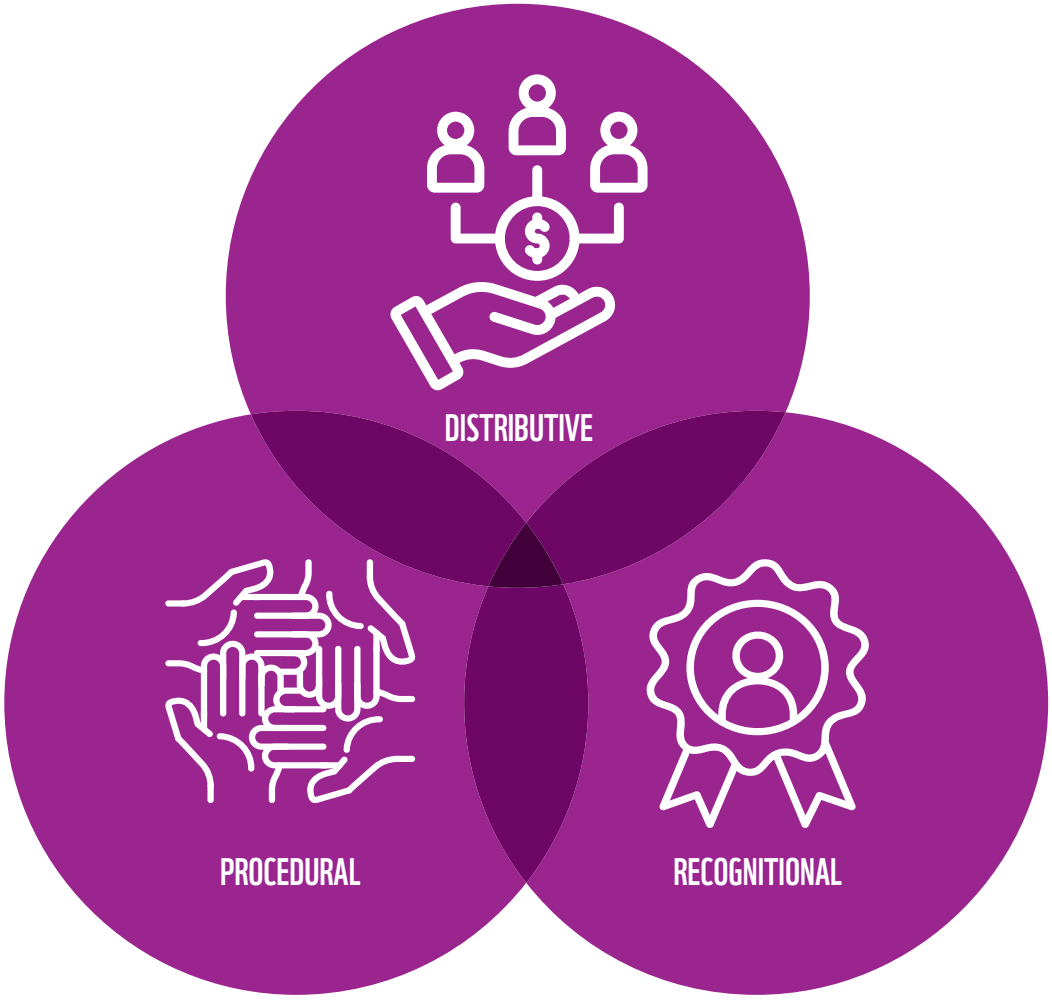
Equity is a powerful catalyst for change. An equity-sensitive approach to sustainable food systems transformation recognises that meaningful change must begin by addressing the structural disparities that marginalise communities and distort access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. This approach **unlocks proven solutions that emphasises fairness, sustainability and long-term effectiveness**, reimagining transformation not as a top-down, technocratic design but rather as a collective rebalancing of benefits and burdens in food systems[134].

To operationalise equity in food systems transformation, it is crucial to understand how it functions across different dimensions. A central contribution of this work is to promote **the application of a widely recognised equity framework that comprises three, interrelated dimensions of equity - distributive, procedural, and recognitional - as guiding lenses for analysis and action**[135], [136]**.** By drawing out their implications for action, it takes forward the call for equity-sensitive action. An analysis guided by these dimensions **helps identify how and why injustices are perpetuated through unfair access to resources and benefits, exclusionary decision-making processes, the invisibilisation of historical injustices and marginalisation of diverse knowledge systems.** Table 3 provides summary descriptions for the three dimensions of equity (for more details see the full report). Figure 4 visualises the three dimensions.

TABLE 4: THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY

Distributive Equity	Procedural Equity	Recognitional Equity
This dimension, often referred to as distributive justice, focuses on the fair allocation of resources, benefits and burdens derived from food systems. It addresses how societal goods, such as wealth, opportunities, and privileges, are distributed among individuals and groups - ensuring that all individuals and communities receive their fair share[137, 138, 139].	This aspect, also known as procedural justice, emphasises inclusive and fair decision-making processes, ensuring that all stakeholders - especially those from marginalised groups - have a genuine opportunity to participate and shape those decision-making processes that affect them. True procedural equity goes beyond superficial inclusion and "tokenistic" participation[140, 141, 142].	This dimension refers to the fair consideration of how historical processes of discrimination have influenced individuals' and communities' access to resources and opportunities. This dimension acknowledges that historical and systemic inequities have led to disparities in food access, health outcomes, and economic opportunities among different populations[143, 144].

FIGURE 4: THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY



Equity is a powerful catalyst for change

3.2 Frameworks for implementing equity-sensitive strategies

Over the past decade, numerous frameworks have emerged to guide the implementation of equity-sensitive strategies as core enablers of food systems transformation. These frameworks have been developed by civil society organizations, public health bodies, international institutions, and researchers. They adopt diverse approaches, focusing on areas such as rights-based governance, gender justice, commercial power dynamics, environmental sustainability, and structural economic reform. Some serve as formal conceptual tools, while others are practical models shaped by frontline advocacy or community-led initiatives. Collectively, **they provide a varied set of strategic approaches that centre equity in both the design and implementation of food systems' policies and interventions**[145].

Equity focus was appraised via directed content analysis of each framework's core documents: equity links were coded as 'direct' when equity was an explicit objective operationalised through redistributive, participatory, or recognition mechanisms, and 'indirect' when equity effects were ancillary to other aims; equity dimensions (distributive, procedural, recognitional) were assigned based on the presence of corresponding instruments (resource/benefit allocation; decision-making and accountability; acknowledgment of identities/rights/knowledge).

These frameworks collectively reflect a wide spectrum of entry points into food systems transformation – which in turn can be grouped across the three dimensions of production, consumption and governance. To better understand how they operationalise equity, **Table 5** below synthesises their core focuses, policy areas, their direct or indirect link to equity consideration, and the specific dimensions of equity they target (for a more extensive overview of the frameworks see the full report). This comparative view helps clarify where different frameworks converge or complement each other, offering practical guidance for governments, civil society, and institutions seeking to embed equity across production, consumption, and governance domains. As portrayed in the CFS-HLPE report[146], since food systems are interconnected with a range of systems (housing, water, education, etc.), interventions to redress inequities across the three dimensions can take place both within food systems and in other systems. Integrating insights across the frameworks summarised in Table 4, recurring action levers were distilled into a practical menu of equity-sensitive strategies. **Section 3.3** will present these strategies by domain (production, consumption, governance), clarifying the equity mechanisms (distributive, procedural, recognitional) they activate.

Table 5. Comparative view of how the listed frameworks operationalise equity (through their core focuses, policy areas, direct or indirect link to equity considerations, and the specific dimensions of equity they target)

TABLE 5: COMPARATIVE VIEW OF HOW THE LISTED FRAMEWORKS OPERATIONALISE

Framework	Abbreviation	Focus	Policy Area	Equity Link	Equity Dimension
Agri-food systems transformation protocol[147]	ASTP	Iterative system planning	Multi-stakeholder planning cycles; Local strategy development	Indirect Ensures inclusion and transparency in transformation processes.	D P R
CDoH Framework[148, 149]	CDoH	Corporate Accountability	Regulate marketing of harmful products; counter corporate influence	Indirect Critiques corporate power and influence undermining health and equity.	P
Conceptual framework for national and territorial food systems assessments[150]	CFNTFSA	Place-based diagnostics	Urban gardening initiatives; local food access planning	Direct Supports tailored, context-sensitive equity actions based on spatial analysis.	P R
Collaborative framework for food systems transformation[151]	CSFST	Multi-stakeholder governance	Local food policy councils; participatory policy design	Direct Ensures procedural equity and inclusive decision-making in policy processes.	P R
Equitable food systems resource guide[152]	EFSRG	Community co-governance	Production, processing, distribution, retail, recovering, recycling and waste	Direct Designed to operationalize food justice via local, community-led solutions.	D P R
Gender-sensitive value chain framework[153]	GBVC	Gender & intersectional justice	Equitable public procurement; nutrition-sensitive protection	Direct Addresses structural barriers for women and marginalised genders in food systems.	D P R

D Distributive P Procedural R Recognition

Framework	Abbreviation	Focus	Policy Area	Equity Link	Equity Dimension
Great food puzzle framework[154]	GFPF	Systemic transformation across multiple levers	Natural resource management; trade; land tenure; finance; public procurement	Indirect Integrates place-based, inclusive, and context-specific approaches, acknowledges historical injustices, and prioritises interventions relevant to marginalised groups	D P R
Nutrition equity framework[155]	NEF	Equity-focused Policy and Governance	Equity-focused data collection; redistributive policies (land reform, gender-positive performs); social accountability mechanisms	Direct Focuses on embedding principles of participation, non-discrimination, and legal accountability in food governance to tackle systemic inequities.	D P R
Planet-based diets retailer methodology[156]	PBDRM	Retailer-led dietary transition	Food environment; protein transition; product reformulation	Indirect Promotes healthy, low-impact diets that can contribute to mitigating environmental inequalities and reducing diet-related health disparities.	D
Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition[157]	RIFSN	Inequality reduction and right-based governance	Nutrition-sensitive protection; equity metrics & monitoring	Direct Explicitly identifies and addresses systemic inequality across food chains through a human rights approach.	D P R
SHIFT framework[158]	SHIFT	Healthy food environments	Sugar tax & subsidies; regulate marketing to children	Direct Targets social determinants of health, reshaping environments to reduce health disparities.	D P R

D Distributive P Procedural R Recognition

3.3 Key areas for equity-sensitive actions

Based on the equity-sensitive frameworks provided, a variety of **strategies** have been identified **across the main food system domains - production**, **consumption** and **governance** - for their **potential to promote equity**.

3.3.1 Production: reclaiming control over food systems

Reshaping the production sector's dynamics, particularly in relation to resource access, market structures, and agricultural practices, **is essential to building equitable and sustainable systems**. As outlined in the frameworks by the FAO, CFS and its HLPE-FSN, and a range of civil society initiatives - and further affirmed by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)* -, addressing structural inequities entrenched in food production requires specific strategies[159, 160, 161]. **Table 5** displays these production strategies, provides a summary of their main approaches and actions, and links them with the frameworks presented in the previous section of this report, highlighting key actions and relevant equity domains. These strategies, which align with UNDROP's principles of protecting peasants' equitable access to resources including land, seeds, and water, are useful for redistributing power and resources to historically marginalised communities and producers, promoting agroecological and culturally appropriate farming practices, and transforming markets to reward social and ecological value. For a more comprehensive overview of these strategies, see the full report.

TABLE 5: PRODUCTION LEVEL STRATEGIES, RELATED FRAMEWORKS, KEY ACTIONS AND EQUITY DIMENSIONS

Production Level Strategies	Related Frameworks	Summary of Approaches and Actions	Equity Dimensions
Equitable land and water rights	RIFSN, GFPF	Secure tenure, legal recognition, policy reforms enabling access and control by marginalised communities[162, 163]	D P R
Diversified agricultural systems	CFNTFSA, NEF, GFPF	Support for polycultures, agroforestry, and nutrition-sensitive crop production[164, 165]	D R
Agroecological transitions	ASTP	Community engagement, participatory farming systems, reduced chemical inputs[166, 167]	D P R
Recognition of traditional/ community knowledge	CSFST, GFPF	Policy and education support for Indigenous and local practices[168]	R
Values-Based Food Chains (VBFCs)	GBVC, EFSRG	Fair distribution of value, cooperative and transparent trading practices[169, 170]	D P
Equitable institutional purchasing	SHIFT, GBVC, PBDRM	Support local, sustainable producers through public procurement policies[171]	D P R

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3.3.2 Consumption: shaping equitable, healthier food environments

The prevalent trend towards homogeneous diets, heavily reliant on processed foods, undermines nutritional diversity, cultural food traditions, public health and environmental outcomes[172]. **Equity-sensitive strategies must therefore specifically tackle the power asymmetries that shape corporate-dominated food environments**, to expand access to diverse, nutritious, sustainably produced, and culturally appropriate diets. Achieving this objective necessitates coordinated approaches across public health, finance, urban planning, and community engagement sectors[173, 174].

Table 6 displays a range of consumption strategies, provides a summary of their main approaches and actions, and links them with the frameworks presented in the previous section of this report, highlighting key actions and relevant equity domains. For a more comprehensive overview of these strategies, see the full report.

TABLE 6: CONSUMPTION LEVEL STRATEGIES, RELATED FRAMEWORKS, KEY ACTIONS AND EQUITY DIMENSIONS

Consumption Level Strategies	Related Frameworks	Approach and Actions	Equity Dimensions
Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFI)	EFSRG, RIFSN	Invest in food retail in underserved areas; expand access to healthy, affordable foods; foster local economic development[175]	D R
Labeling and marketing regulation	SHIFT, CDoH	Implement clear nutrition labels; restrict unhealthy food marketing, especially to children[176, 177]	D P
Equity-oriented fiscal policies	SHIFT, NEF, CDoH, PBDRM	Tax unhealthy food products; subsidise fruits, vegetables, and whole foods to shift consumption patterns[178, 179, 180, 181]	D R
Urban farmers' markets	CFNTFSA, CSFST, GFPF	Promote direct-to-consumer produce sales; support urban farming; enhance food literacy[182]	D R
Food sovereignty movements	ASTP	Community-led food governance; support traditional diets; resist corporate influence[183, 184, 185, 186, 187]	P R

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3.3.3 Governance: balancing economic, social and environmental priorities

Governance structures serve as the backbone of food systems, influencing how resources are allocated, who holds decision-making authority, and how economic, social, and environmental priorities are balanced. When these structures are weak or disproportionately influenced by powerful actors, disparities intensify, and unsustainable practices continue unabated. **Transforming food governance requires a combination of strategies, institutional reforms, and multi-sectoral collaboration that is equity-sensitive at all levels, from local to global** (read more on international policy instruments in **Box 4**). **Table 7** displays these governance strategies, provides a summary of their main approaches and actions, and links them with the frameworks presented in the previous section of this report, highlighting key actions and relevant equity domains. For a more comprehensive overview of these strategies, see the full report.

TABLE 7: GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES, RELATED FRAMEWORKS, KEY ACTIONS AND EQUITY DIMENSIONS

Governance Strategies	Related Frameworks	Approach and Actions	Equity Dimensions
Inclusive decision-making	CSFST, GBVC, EFSRG	Establish participatory platforms; include marginalised groups (women, youth, Indigenous); co-create policies[188, 189]	P R
Human rights-based approach	RIFSN	Deploy human rights principles; apply obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the Right to Food; promote equitable governance and access to adequate nutrition[190, 191]	D P R
Limit corporate interference	CDoH, NEF	Regulate lobbying; enforce transparency; support civil society in monitoring and advocacy[192, 193, 194]	P
Redirecting public investment	ASTP, RIFSN, GFPF	Invest in community-led food initiatives; support agroecology and small-scale producers[195, 196]	D P R

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BOX 3: INTEGRATING EQUITY INTO INTERNATIONAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS

Governance for equitable and sustainable food systems benefits significantly from key **international policy instruments on climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution**, which drive the translation of global commitments into actionable national strategies. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which must raise ambition each 5 years as established by the Paris Agreement, are a key instrument through which countries can include critical food systems actions - from production to consumption and governance - into their climate strategy policy, while simultaneously reaping the co-benefits of enhancing resilience and food security[197]. Similarly, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), developed under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), offer essential guidelines for governments to integrate climate adaptation into food systems, promoting resilience against climatic disruptions[198]. Moreover, the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the Convention on Biological Diversity guide countries toward safeguarding biodiversity essential for resilient food production[199]. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), addresses land degradation and promotes sustainable land management critical for food security and climate resilience[200]. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), anchors the 10-

Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP)[201]. The 10YFP serves as the umbrella for initiatives like the Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Programme, promoting resource efficiency, circularity, and equity across food value chains[202]. Food Systems National Pathways, developed by over 100 countries as part of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit follow-up, provide an important framework for national policymakers to articulate their food system transformation strategies[203]. They set targets and incorporate strategies from sustainable farming practices and biodiversity conservation to ecosystem recovery, ensuring food systems operate within planetary boundaries[204, 205]. Integrating clear, measurable equity-related considerations in these targets is fundamental, as they could contribute to addressing power imbalances, reducing structural disparities, and fostering inclusive participation. This way, these policy frameworks could represent powerful entry points for embedding equity-sensitive approaches as a cross-cutting objective. Lastly, in 2024, Member States in the UN Committee for World Food Security (CFS) – which, since its reform in 2009, is the first and only UN committee with inclusive governance allowing participation of civil society and other actors – agreed on a set of "Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition" (see webpage **here;** English version **here**[206]).

Having identified key food system domains and strategies to promote equity-sensitive transformation, **the next essential step is understanding how action takes place on the ground**. Real-world applications bring invaluable insights and illustrate the practical viability, complexities, and impacts of these interventions.

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04

FROM VISION TO ACTION: EQUITY-SENSITIVE STRATEGIES ON THE GROUND

To ground these insights in lived experience, the report draws on **seven case studies** from:

It illustrates real-world applications of equity-sensitive interventions. These examples showcase community mobilization, public policy shifts, non-profit engagement, and food economies that promote fairness and sustainability.

What follows are very short summaries of such cases studies. For the complete version of these case studies, see the full report.

4.1. Summary case studies

Case Study 1

Reclaiming food sovereignty by the community, for the community: collective mobilisation seeking to transform the Philippines' food system

MASIPAG, a grassroots network of farmers, scientists, and NGOs founded in 1986, empowers smallholders to reclaim control over seeds and agricultural practices, and restore food sovereignty. The network promotes farmer-managed seed systems and agroecological techniques, having recovered over 700 traditional rice varieties and co-developed more than 2,000 farmer-bred lines, which are shared freely.

To support autonomy, MASIPAG introduced a Farmers' Guarantee System (FGS), a participatory certification process tailored to local markets. This model reduces barriers for smallholders by replacing expensive third-party systems with a community-based approach involving farmers, consumers, and local actors, bridging grassroots practice with national policy efforts. Yet, the case also reveals the limits of isolated reforms in policy environments shaped by profit-driven logic. Hard-won legal victories can be watered down by bureaucratic reinterpretation, elite capture, or conflicting regulations, especially in the absence of conflict-of-interest norms such as policymaker revolving door 'cooling-off' periods.

The experience of MASIPAG shows that farmer-led approaches rooted in sustainability build community-level governance capacity and strengthens farmers' collective voice in public debates, which can contribute to more equitable and resilient food systems. Scaling their impact requires policy frameworks that recognise community innovation, redistribute power, and respond to the realities of communities.

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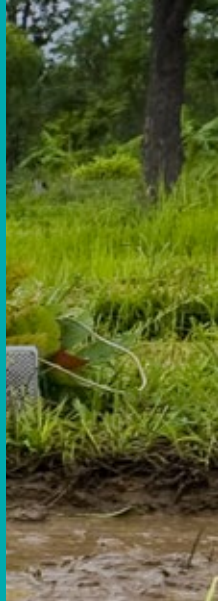
MASIPAG, a grassroots network in the Philippines has recovered over 700 traditional rice varieties and co-developed more than

2,000

farmer-bred lines, which are shared freely



Case Study 2

Equity-sensitivity in local strategies for sustainable food systems transformation: the case of Victoria, Australia

Despite Australia's high-income status, the risk of experiencing hunger, poor nutrition and preventable disease is rising across households in Victoria, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. This unequal distribution of risk has deep roots in structural inequities and has been magnified by recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted food supply chains and increased the cost of essential goods. Many areas, especially those facing socioeconomic disadvantage, report low intake of fruits and vegetables and rising consumption of UPFs. These patterns are reinforced by a food environment heavily shaped by income status and transport access. Market concentration and the dominance of industrial agriculture have also exposed the fragility of food supply chains, with pressures on land-use from industrial agriculture compounding these issues.

Local governments in Victoria, such as Cardinia Shire and Mornington Peninsula Shire, have emerged as key actors in food systems transformation. Cardinia developed its Community Food Strategy through deeply participatory "Kitchen Table Conversations" with over 500 residents, identifying priorities like increasing access to affordable, nutritious food and supporting local producers. Mornington Peninsula Shire created a Food Economy and Agroecology Strategy that reflects its unique peri-urban geography. The strategy promotes the relocalisation of food systems and regenerative agriculture, supporting initiatives like a local produce brand and the Future Farmers Pathway Program, which aims to support young people without intergenerational ties to farming by providing land access and training.

These initiatives hold significant promise for driving sustainable transformation. However, structural barriers and entrenched systems continue to constrain their full potential. With stronger policy backing and comprehensive systemic reform, local efforts can become powerful drivers of enduring, equity-focused change.

Case Study 3

Transforming Colombia's food system through fiscal incentives for healthy food and complementary public policies

Since the 1980s, a shift towards agro-exports has deepened the country's dependence on global commercial agendas, eroding food sovereignty and marginalising local food systems. The dominance of high-value crops like coffee, bananas, and sugar cane has fueled land concentration, displacing small-scale farmers and undermining local food production. In parallel, large-scale livestock production has accelerated deforestation and expanded over land formerly held by local and Indigenous communities. Government incentives favouring monocultures, tied to agro-industrial supply chains rather than local food and social needs, further entrench rural disempowerment and weaken food and territorial sovereignty. These dynamics have eroded domestic food production capacity, with micronutrient deficiencies and food insecurity affecting nearly one-third of Colombians. The consumption of UPFs is rising, driven by policies that fail to regulate aggressive advertising, and enable pricing structures that make UPFs more affordable than whole foods. This reality contributes to the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and to significant environmental harms.

Colombian civil society organizations, particularly Dejusticia and its allied coalition, have played a critical role in reshaping food policy through coherent packages. In a historic move, Colombia passed a constitutional reform recognising food as a fundamental right, obligating the government to ensure food access. A new public food procurement policy was approved that supports local, small-scale food producers by mandating that 30% of government food purchases are sourced from them. Alongside, a regulation that shifts to stricter front-of-pack warning labels for unhealthy foods was passed after challenging an initial, industry-friendly label version. Additionally, a progressive "healthy" tax on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and sugary beverages was enacted. These reforms faced substantial resistance from powerful industry stakeholders, including lobbying and legal challenges. One of the arguments put forward by the industry was that the tax would cause job losses and worsen affordability for low-income groups. However, these claims were swiftly debunked through evidence-based advocacy and strategic litigation.

Colombia's recent "junk food" policy and fiscal reforms, supported by strong civil society coalitions, show how equity-sensitive tools like ultra-processed foods (UPF) taxes, food labelling, constitutional reforms and public procurement, can challenge structural disparities in food systems. While these reforms face resistance from powerful industry actors, the Colombian experience demonstrates how coordinated, rights-based action can begin to realign food governance with public health, sustainability, and social justice.

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In 2023, food vouchers supported roughly

42 million

low-income individuals each month, with a budget of

$112.8 billion

Case Study 4

Exploring the role of the non-profit sector in advancing systemic equity to reshape the U.S. food system

Despite being a global food production leader, the U.S. suffers from widespread food insecurity and high prevalence of NCDs driven by a system historically structured around industrial-scale agriculture and policy choices that prioritize commodity crops (e.g. animal feed) over nutritional needs. This inequity is exacerbated by the enduring legacy of structural racism, creating "food apartheid" where low-income and minority communities have limited access to affordable, nutritious food, and by corporate consolidation that reduces options for consumers and producers alike. At federal level, the US Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) contributes to alleviating this situation to a certain degree. In 2023, SNAP supported roughly 42 million low-income individuals each month, with a budget of $112.8 billion.

To complement, the federal Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) enacted in 2018 supports projects that promote fruit and vegetable consumption among low-income individuals. A leading example is Fair Food Network's Double Up Food Bucks program, which provides a dollar-for-dollar match when SNAP participants purchase fresh produce, effectively doubling their buying power. This generates dual benefits: improving access to healthy food for low-income households while creating new market opportunities for small and mid-scale farmers, which has helped drive bi-partisan support, overcoming a polarized political economy landscape.

The non-profit also co-leads the Nutrition Incentive Hub, a national technical assistance centre that supports GusNIP program implementers. Beyond incentives, Fair Food Network runs mission-aligned financing programmes like the Fair Food Fund that provide grants and loans to food entrepreneurs historically excluded from dominant capital markets.

Yet, systemic challenges persist, including underfunding of federal nutrition programs, a lack of consideration for environmental justice, and a broader policy context that favors corporate consolidation. Despite these hurdles, the alignment of federal policies and programs with community-led innovations from non-profits like Fair Food Network demonstrates how equity-sensitive strategies can expand food access and economic inclusion.

Case Study 5

Transforming Brazil's food system: equity-sensitive public food procurement for sustainability

Despite constitutional guarantees of the Right to Food as well as its status as an agricultural export powerhouse, Brazil's food system is marked by deep inequities, driven by an agro-industrial model that prioritizes large-scale production for global markets. This focus has led to land concentration - with family farmers owning only 25% of the land -, environmental degradation, and the marginalization of small-scale farmers and Indigenous communities, resulting in widespread food insecurity and a public health crisis of both malnutrition and rising obesity. These challenges are fueled by social exclusion and a food environment increasingly dominated by unhealthy, ultra-processed products, while those practicing sustainable, agroecological farming struggle to access markets and support as policies favoring the profit-first system became disconnected from local needs and traditions.

In response, Brazil has emerged as a global leader in leveraging public food procurement to combat hunger and strengthen local food systems. Two flagship programs are the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), which integrates small-scale producers into institutional markets offering an alternative to industrial supply chains while promoting agroecological practices and food sovereignty, and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), which mandates that at least 30% of school meal purchases come from family farms. This dual mandate achieves multiple benefits, supporting small farmers and a significant reduction in adolescent obesity rates among students who frequently consume school meals, while seeing renewed interest in using the programme as a lever to promote agroecological and regenerative food systems.

Initiatives like Catrapovos have played a pivotal role in integrating the needs of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities into public procurement frameworks. It functions as a dialogue platform, conflict mediator, and strategy incubator, and builds on participatory governance learnings from innovative platforms such as Brazil's National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA). It convenes federal public agencies, civil society, and traditional food commissions to collectively identify and resolve systemic barriers preventing traditional producers from accessing markets and public programs, facilitating regulatory advances like simplified documentation requirements, enabling the inclusion of traditional biodiversity-rich foods in school meals across more than ten Brazilian states.

Case Study 6

Building cooperative food systems from below: collective consumer action for equity and sustainability in Japan

Japan's food system is defined by a critical contradiction: it is heavily import-dependent with a low food self-sufficiency rate, yet its large, concentrated agribusinesses dominate processing and distribution. These dynamics contribute to significant social and environmental externalities. The consumption of UPFs has increased to 38% of daily energy intake among adults, marking a notable departure from Japan's traditional diet, while more than a third of Japan's food-related GHG emissions originate outside its borders. At the same time, Japan plays an active role in shaping the regional food regime through corporate expansion, official development assistance, and agro-food outsourcing. These developments have coincided with worsening public health and environmental indicators.

As environmental awareness grows, particularly among younger generations, grassroots actors are asserting a stronger presence. Recent price spikes and rice shortages have once more renewed interest in domestic food sovereignty and sustainability. The Seikatsu Club Consumers' Cooperative Union (SCCCU), established in 1965 as a collective milk-buying initiative by Tokyo housewives, has grown into a network of 32 cooperatives. The Club is part of a broader cooperative ecosystem that includes worker-owned collectives, renewable energy cooperatives, and community-based care systems, connecting efforts presenting viable alternatives for providing essential goods and services. It engages in wide-ranging activities that advance self-governance and promote environmental stewardship, operating on principles of transparency and fairness.

The Club insists on full transparency around food origins and production methods, implementing a sustainable sourcing approach and investing in returnable containers. Its efforts extend to policy advocacy, with the regular submission of formal proposals to government, pushing for reforms in food safety, labelling, and pricing. At the local level, Seikatsu Club cooperatives have built partnerships with municipalities to integrate local produce into school lunches and hospital meals. Club members elect their own representatives to local assemblies, where they have successfully advanced policies on food safety, waste separation, and environmental health. The Seikatsu Club shows how equity-driven cooperative initiatives can open space for more inclusive, locally rooted approaches, supporting fairer food economies, healthier diets, and greater public engagement in shaping food futures.

Case Study 7

Land reform as a foundation for food justice and community sovereignty in Scotland

Scotland's food system faces inter-related health, economic, and environmental crises driven by the dominance of inexpensive UPFs promoted by a small number of dominant corporations, whose concentrated market power has stagnated farmers' incomes, and weakened local food networks. These challenges are deeply rooted in a history of notably unequal land distribution, originating with the Highland Clearances (c. 1750-1860), and driven by economic incentives for agricultural "improvement" and the wool trade, through which vast swathes of common and tenant-held land were converted into large-scale sheep pastures. These Clearances involved forced evictions and mass displacement. The Clearances also resulted in substantial loss of native woodland and biodiversity, reshaping Scotland's landscapes into predominantly moorland and grazing pastures. Scotland remains one of the most land-concentrated countries in the European region.

Scotland's efforts in land reform over the last two decades represents an evolving yet continually challenged framework aimed at democratising land access and ownership. The Land Reform Act 2003 introduced mechanisms for community ownership, while the Community Empowerment Act 2015 extended these rights and explicitly linked land reform with international human rights standards. The Land Reform Act 2016 introduced additional tools for enhancing transparency and established the Scottish Land Commission. While significant legislative milestones have sought to democratise land access and ownership, progress has been uneven, and longstanding power imbalances remain deeply rooted. The proposed 2024 Land Reform Bill introduces further structural changes, including mandatory Land Management Plans for large estates that must be developed in partnership with local communities to ensure alignment with goals in biodiversity protection and climate mitigation, and a mechanism to assess whether breaking up large estates at the point of sale could foster more diverse and sustainable land use.

These land reform policies are in fact a structural prerequisite for meaningful food system transformation that expands sustainable practices and fair, localised food economies. Community rights to use and manage land, particularly where it has been underutilised or hoarded as a financial asset, create openings for new forms of stewardship. Yet to unlock its full potential, land and food policy must be more closely aligned, since land reform can contribute to address consumption-level health and nutrition inequities by reconnecting communities to local food sources. Linking land justice with equitable food system transformation can accelerate climate action, rural regeneration, and public health outcomes.

4.2. Common guiding principles and cautions for adoption in other contexts

As can be seen in the full report, the analysis of each case study included a set of both "Transferable Principles" and "Cautions for Other Contexts". We have extracted the common threads, to produce the following list of *key common guiding principles and cautions for adoption of the case studies' equity-driven strategies in other contexts*.

1. **Power redistribution is fundamental**: Lasting equity requires dismantling structural barriers (e.g., land concentration, corporate lobbying) and redistributing control over resources and decision-making.

2. **Equity must be operationalized, not just invoked**: Policies must explicitly embed **distributive**, **procedural**, and **recognitional** dimensions to avoid tokenism. This underscores the need to **reframe food as a human right and public good**, not merely a market commodity. Market systems, in their current form, often externalise social and environmental costs, failing to support equitable and sustainable outcomes.

3. **Systemic change demands integrated policy packages**: Isolated solutions (e.g., taxes without procurement reforms) falter; synergistic strategies (e.g., agroecology + land reform + inclusive governance) create resilient feedback loops. Food systems change is inherently complex and non-linear, requiring **coherent and coordinated interventions across production, consumption, and governance**.

4. **Grassroots innovation needs policy backing**: Community-led models (e.g., cooperatives, agroecology) require aligned fiscal, legal, and institutional support to scale without dilution. Effective strategies combine grassroots mobilisation with institutional reforms and align rights-based approaches with market-shaping tools.

5. **Global principles and lessons, local adaptations**: While principles are transferable (e.g., participatory governance, rights-based frameworks), context-specific barriers (e.g., Japan's consumer norms, Scotland's land laws) demand tailored strategies. Equity must be embedded in how food systems are **analysed, governed, funded, and monitored**, ensuring that marginalised actors have agency, their knowledge is validated, and they benefit meaningfully from transformation.

These land reform policies are in fact a structural prerequisite for meaningful food system transformation

05

FINAL REFLECTIONS AND PATHWAYS FOR POLICY ACTION

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5.1 Key takeaways

The report underscores the need to reframe food as a human right and a public good, thus re-balancing its current treatment as a commodity governed by deregulated and financialized markets, which lack human rights-based principles in their design. This does not imply eliminating markets, but regulating them, removing those harmful elements (e.g., permissive corporate concentration) that deepen inequalities and drive unsustainable outcomes that harm people and the planet. **A common message emerges: transformation towards sustainable food systems requires redistributing power, resources, opportunities through equity-sensitive approaches**.

Transformative change must be guided by the principles of justice, sustainability, and the public good, replacing the current logics of excess profit extraction and power concentration with equitable benefit-sharing and increased agency of marginalised actors.

Guiding principles are critical because **food systems change is inherently complex and non-linear, requiring coordinated interventions through coherent "packages" across domains of production, consumption and governance**. Findings show that equity-sensitive strategies are effective when combining grassroot mobilisation with institutional interventions, and rights-based frameworks with market-shaping tools.

Equity must be firmly embedded in how food systems are analysed, funded, regulated, monitored, and ultimately transformed, ensuring that marginalised actors have agency, their knowledge is validated, and they benefit meaningfully from transformation. This requires asking critical questions: Whose interests are prioritised? Whose knowledge is validated? Who participates meaningfully? Who benefits?

This approach requires **binding commitments at all levels of governance to ensure accountability, transparency, and justice**. Ultimately, **food systems transformation is a political choice**: one that must confront how markets are structured, how power is distributed, and how intersecting inequities are addressed.

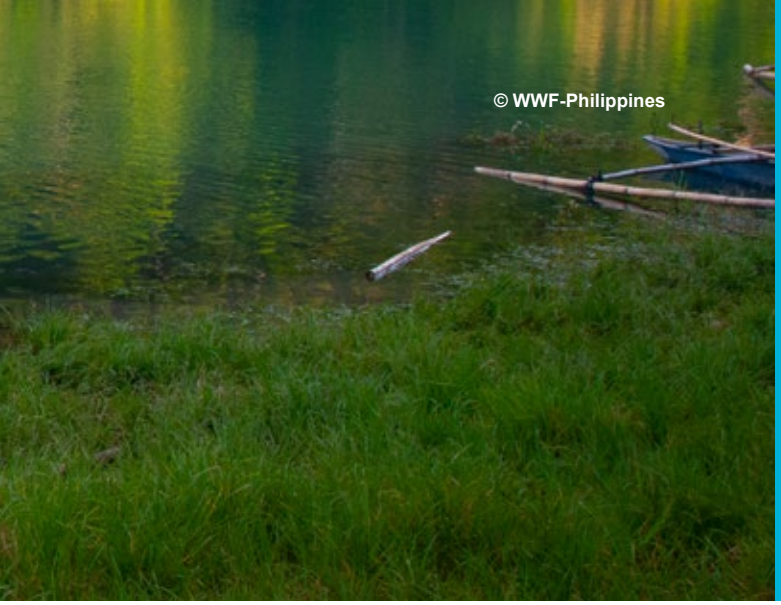
5.2. Policy recommendations

In conclusion, **transforming food systems to avert catastrophic crises requires structural policies that explicitly redistribute power, resources, and opportunities across food system actors**, prioritising the interests and rights of communities, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups. Embedding equity as a foundation for sustainable food systems transformation requires deliberate, structured, and ongoing commitment.

Based on a critical review of relevant frameworks and key areas for equity-sensitive action, hand in hand with insights from diverse real-world case studies, this report has developed cross-cutting policy recommendations and stakeholder-specific actions to guide the effective implementation of equity-sensitive food systems transformation. **The following nine recommendations provide targeted guidance for national and local governments, civil society, communities, and other stakeholders to design, advocate for, and implement equity-sensitive strategies that drive lasting change**. The recommendations are structured to reflect a logical flow or critical path for advancing equity-centred food systems transformation: Foundational enablers and structural levers (recommendations 1 to 5), creating the institutional and legal conditions necessary for deeper structural change and to redistribute power and resources through aligned policies and public investment. **Sectoral interventions (recommendations 6 to 8)** target specific policy domains to make equity visible in across food systems' domains and in communities' livelihoods. Finally, **inclusive monitoring (recommendation 9)** ensures that progress is transparent and accountable.

Policy recommendations menu.
Click to navigate to a specific recommendation

Foundational enablers and structural levers:



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Food systems transformation is a political choice: one that must confront how markets are structured, how power is distributed, and how intersecting inequities are addressed

Sectoral interventions:

- **Recommendation 6:** Ensure equitable access to territories and natural resources
- **Recommendation 7:** Meaningfully support the revitalisation of agroecology, local, and traditional food systems
- **Recommendation 8:** Reshape food environments and address the spread of UPFs

Inclusive monitoring:

- **Recommendation 9:** Develop and fund inclusive monitoring and accountability mechanisms for equity-sensitive outcomes

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In addition, each of the nine recommendations is followed by reflections on the contrast with the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition", approved by UN Member States in 2024. We trust that these reflections will help indicate the compatibility, overlap or room for improvement between both sets of recommendations, providing useful guidance to policymakers looking to develop policies based on the CFS policy agreement.

These recommendations are designed to **guide national and local governments, civil society organisations and community actors** in advancing equitable food systems transformation across diverse contexts. They provide a **clear, actionable blueprint to translate the report's insights into meaningful, transformative action**.

5.2.1.1

Recommendation 1:

STRENGTHEN REGULATION OF CORPORATE PRACTICES AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY TO PREVENT INDUSTRY CAPTURE AND CORPORATE INTERFERENCE

The power imbalance between corporate actors and communities remains one of the most entrenched barriers to equity and democracy in food systems. From oligopolies over input and outputs, to food advertising and lobbying, commercial actors often shape food environments, policy agendas, and public discourse. When this powerful position does not promote public health, environmental sustainability, and social justice, harmful outcomes and crises in food systems arise.

Preventing this requires robust political commitment, legal safeguards, enforcement capacity, and civic oversight. The CDoH framework provides a useful lens for analysing how corporate practices affect governance outcomes and for developing strategies that hold industry actors accountable. A range of tools can be deployed to curtail undue influence and redirect power toward democratic governance that fosters sustainability and advances public good:

Across case studies, civil society repeatedly had to push back against interference from harmful corporate actors. In Colombia, landmark policies such as the UPF tax and front-of-pack labelling were fiercely contested. Public interest coalitions responded with strategic litigation, independent data production, and sustained advocacy, but the struggle for full implementation remains ongoing. In the Philippines, MASIPAG's community-driven seed systems and participatory certification models were diluted by state-sanctioned corporate frameworks. Meanwhile, in the U.S., path dependencies that prioritise market-driven logic over public interest continue to limit equity-oriented reforms.

These examples reinforce that **equity-sensitive governance must proactively redistribute power, limit corporate control over decision-making spaces, and build institutional cultures of transparency, independence, and accountability**. **Distributive equity** is served when public policy restricts commercial practices that harm marginalised communities and the planet and redirects resources toward public goods. **Procedural equity** requires policymaking processes that are free from industry interference and open to community scrutiny. **Recognitional equity** is advanced when non-commercial food systems, traditional knowledge, and collective models are protected from marginalisation or appropriation.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

CFS Policy Recommendation number 39 also calls for related interventions, consisting of identifying and managing conflicts of interest "including in research and extension services, by developing and strengthening safeguards, policies and regulations, including those against power imbalances in agriculture and food systems and those that prioritize public interest, transparency and participatory decision-making." However, recommendations do not go beyond these limited actions, failing to acknowledge and address the role of commercial determinants of health such as corporate political activity. Additionally, no concrete safeguards or policies are detailed to effectively tackle conflicts of interest, although in another **recommendation, number 35, there is certain acknowledgement of the negative role that market concentration has on food systems**. It recommends to "monitor and address market concentration across scales" and the promotion of "diversification and competition in agriculture and food systems", which are indeed very important actions for addressing industry capture and corporate interference.

To build on CFS's general recommendations a set of more specific and comprehensive set of policies are recommended, including **legally binding bans on corporate interference in public policy**, which would importantly move beyond just voluntary transparency measures.

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The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of this study's Recommendation 1

National Governments:

1 Enact and enforce comprehensive conflict-of-interest laws, covering public officials, advisory committees, and scientific bodies in food, health, agricultural and industrial domains.

2 Mandate full transparency in lobbying, including public registries, funding disclosures, and legislative footprint tools to trace industry influence on policymaking.

3 Ban or severely restrict corporate sponsorship of public health, food and environmental campaigns, research, and education, especially by companies producing harmful.

4 Establish independent food ombuds institutions or regulatory watchdogs, with legal mandates for oversight, community participation, and enforcement powers.

5 Require that all regulatory decisions be grounded in independent, peer-reviewed evidence, excluding studies funded by commercial actors unless full conflict disclosure and public review are ensured.

Local Governments:

6 Conduct audits of procurement and service delivery contracts to assess undue industry influence, and publish findings transparently.

7 Adopt local food charters and participation protocols that clarify the boundaries of private sector engagement and promote democratic governance.

8 Establish mechanisms to partner with civil society actors in monitoring and reporting on local food policy processes, ensuring independence and integrity.

9 Exclude corporations with records of labour violations, environmental harm, or deceptive marketing from eligibility for public contracts or partnerships.

Communities and Civil Society:

10 Form independent watchdog platforms to track and contest harmful corporate interference.

11 Monitor and publicly document lobbying activities, misinformation campaigns, and financial links between regulators and industry actors.

12 Advance legislative proposals to insulate policymaking from corporate influence, including citizen-driven transparency laws and constitutional amendments where needed.


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5.2.1.2

Recommendation 2:

LEGALLY RECOGNISE THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Legal recognition of the Right to Adequate, Sufficient, and Healthy Food, and the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment is foundational to building equitable food systems through right-based governance, as it has the potential to shift what is usually a discretionary policy matter into legally enforceable human rights. Importantly, it can also affirm communities' collective authority to define, protect and transform their food systems, resist commodification of food, and reassert traditional and agroecological systems.

The Colombian case demonstrates the potential and limits of constitutional reform. The Right to Food was enshrined as a fundamental right, yet implementation remains vague and underfunded, unregulated, and vulnerable to reinterpretation, with civil society continuing to advocate for specific regulations and accountability mechanisms. In contrast, in the Philippines, MASIPAG exemplifies how de facto support for collective authority over food systems can be built and sustained even in the absence of formal legal protections, through seed sovereignty, participatory certification, and resistance to exclusionary property regimes.

This contrast suggests that **legal frameworks must not only exist on paper, but be grounded in lived practice, political accountability, and adequate budgeting**. Legal codification engages all three equity dimensions, but not automatically or equally. **Distributive equity** is advanced when legal mandates guarantee material access to nutritious, culturally appropriate, and environmentally sustainable food, especially through redistributive instruments such as public procurement, land access reform, or nutrition-sensitive subsidies. **Procedural equity** is supported when rights-based frameworks create formal avenues for participation, grievance redress, and accountability. **Recognitional equity** is especially central here: by affirming the legitimacy of localised food systems, traditional knowledge, and non-market logics, dominant narratives of what constitutes legitimate food production and governance can be challenged. However, legal frameworks without enforcement, resources, or meaningful participation risk becoming symbolic. The Philippines' experience with PGS, and Brazil's fluctuating commitment to public procurement, underscore how implementation is often constrained by technocratic dilution, elite pushback, budgetary fluctuations, or regulatory capture. To avoid falling into this pitfall, **equity-driven transformation requires that rights are translated into mechanisms for redistribution, enforcement, and community collaboration**. This means resourcing implementation, creating legal recourse mechanisms, and embedding equity criteria in food system planning.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

The CFS Recommendations call for several measures that would substantiate the Right to Food, including through "equitable tenure rights" (number 1), "protecting the rights of informal vendors given their role in food security and nutrition" (number 23), "Develop and strengthen programmes and partnerships, such as those that are state-led or community-led, including community kitchens and school meal programmes, that foster the progressive realization of the right to adequate food" (number 26), "leverage fiscal space, including through measures such as progressive taxation to prioritize basic public services and use the available resources to equitably support those most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition" (number 30), "address the structural causes of racial or ethnic discrimination" (number 44), or "Promote access to decent work and living income for all in agriculture and food systems [...] by strengthening and enforcing regulatory frameworks and laws to enable wages that provide an adequate standard of living" (number 46), inter alia.

However, **CFS Recommendations fall short in challenging food's status as a market commodity**, **which *de facto* represents a key barrier to materializing the Right to Food** even when complementary and synergistic actions are implemented. Commodification enables speculation on food, leading to price volatility and inefficient access, which in turn causes hunger.

To overcome such gaps, decision-makers can ban speculative trading of staple foods and financialization of land/water essential for food production. To fulfil CFS's goal, states must **legally delist food from commodity markets** and ban derivatives trading.

Alongside, decision-makers can establish institutions, **tools and resources to render states, commercial actors and other stakeholders accountable for infringement on the Human Right to Food**. This can be done through more concrete, effective accountability measures such as **establishing ombudsperson institutions or legal recourse pathways with authority to investigate violations, mandate compliance, and compel corrective action**.

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of this study's Recommendation 2

Transformation towards sustainable food systems requires redistributing power, resources and opportunities through equity-sensitive approaches

National Governments:

13 Enshrine the Right to Food and the Right to a Healthy Environment, as justiciable in constitutions and legal frameworks, aligned with international human rights obligations.

14 Integrate land-use planning, public procurement, and food access programs under a unified right-based framework.

15 Where contextually feasible, mandate independent equity impact assessments for all national policies impacting food systems to evaluate how they affect access, participation, and recognition of historically excluded groups.

16 Establish ombudsperson institutions or legal recourse pathways with authority to investigate violations, mandate compliance, and compel corrective action.

17 Allocate sustained public funding for implementation, with special emphasis on historically marginalised groups.

18 Promote institutional and policy innovation by embedding equity-driven design and equity goals into national policy.

Local Governments:

19 Translate national commitments into local policy frameworks with clear accountability measures and co-ownership by community stakeholders.

20 Integrate the Right to Food into service delivery (e.g., school meals, social welfare, food access programs), ensuring these services reflect cultural relevance, dietary diversity, and equity goals.

21 Establish local grievance redress and participatory planning forums to democratise enforcement, linking them to legally binding outcomes and budget allocations.

Communities and Civil Society:

22 Build community food declarations, advocate for meaningful implementation pathways, and develop innovative metrics that reflect lived realities and cultural values.

23 Use the legal framework to initiate strategic litigation, participatory audits and participatory budgeting, holding governments accountable to rights-based food obligations.

24 Demand mechanisms for meaningful co-governance, ensuring community-defined indicators and frameworks are used to evaluate and steer implementation.

5.2.1.3

Recommendation 3:

INSTITUTIONALISE LONG-TERM, PARTICIPATORY FOOD GOVERNANCE AND POWER-SHARING

Lasting food systems transformation depends on embedding equity and power redistribution into the very architecture of decision-making. Sporadic consultations, ad hoc advisory groups, or technocratic "stakeholder inclusion" processes are insufficient. **Participatory governance must be institutionalised through permanent structures that grant real authority over agenda-setting, budgeting, and monitoring to communities**. This includes - but it is not limited to - the voices, knowledge, and priorities of those most affected by food system injustices.

Across all case studies, participatory governance has emerged as a linchpin of equity-sensitive transformation. In the Philippines, MASIPAG's farmer-led certification systems and rights-based organising embedded community control into food systems. Brazil's Catrapovos platform helped Indigenous producers navigate and shape public procurement frameworks. Australia's Cardinia Kitchen Table Conversations created entry points for resident-led food strategy design. In Japan, the Seikatsu Club exemplifies sustained, bottom-up governance through member-led purchasing, advocacy and electoral engagement, demonstrating how power-sharing can be embedded in food systems through cooperative infrastructures. However, the limits of partial inclusion were also clear: when engagement remains symbolic or fails to address structural barriers, it may deepen mistrust or reinforce inequities. As seen in Brazil and the Philippines, hard-won participatory gains, like simplified procurement access or PGS recognition, can be rolled back or hollowed out when governance is not protected by legal mandates and structural accountability.

Participation must be about power, not about tokenistic, "equity-washing" processes of extractive engagement. When designed with safeguards and legal teeth, participatory governance can strengthen **procedural equity** by embedding inclusive, transparent, and accountable co-governance – which can in turn positively contribute to **distributive equity** outcomes, supporting fairer resource distribution and control over public investments, procurement, resource tenure and use. It can advance **recognitional equity** by affirming the legitimacy of diverse knowledge systems, lived experiences, and culturally rooted foodways.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

CFS Recommendations also establish inclusive participation as a key area of equity action, with number 8 calling to "Facilitate participation of people facing inequalities [...] in decision-making" and number 29 "promoting the participation of local and community-based organizations and actors in the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection policies and programs". However, **there is space to build on these recommendations by providing more concrete actions as well as guidance to develop participatory measures that could materialize inclusiveness. Such detailed actions could be** the creation of food policy councils (or similar multi-actor mechanisms) or other binding power-sharing mechanisms; mandate 50% grassroots organization representation in food policy councils or similar mechanisms, and mandate a minimum number of council civil society participants that cover a specific number of relevant food systems dimensions or issues (health, trade, food environments, labour, environmental defence, etc.); and allocate financial resources to enable the participation of representatives from civil society organizations.

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 3

National Governments:

25 Strengthen existing or introduce new statutory national food councils, observatories, or commissions with binding powers to propose, review, and co-develop equity-sensitive food policies, including authority over budget lines and public procurement priorities.

26 Set up an integrated, multi-level food governance architecture by formally linking these national structures to local and regional food policy councils.

27 Mandate representation quotas or reserved seats in all national food governance structures for small-scale producers, Indigenous communities, youth, gender minorities, workers, and marginalised urban and rural constituencies.

28 Guarantee multi-year, publicly funded budgets for community participation to ensure meaningful and accessible engagement beyond tokenistic formats.

29 Embed participatory governance mandates across sectors to ensure legal continuity and intersectoral application.

Local Governments:

30 Legally formalise or create local food policy councils, food assemblies, or multi-stakeholder platforms, with clear mandates and decision-making power over planning, procurement, zoning, and investment. Link local food policy councils to regional and national governance structures through formal mechanisms.

31 Invest in capacity-building programs for local officials on inclusive facilitation, equity-centred governance tools, co-design practices, and participatory monitoring and evaluation, to shift from extractive to transformative participation.

32 Require public reporting on governance equity outcomes, with disaggregated data on who is involved, who benefits, and who holds decision-making power.

Communities and Civil Society:

33 Build and scale autonomous food assemblies, citizen juries, or producer networks with the capacity to set agendas, assess planned investments, projects, policies and interventions, negotiate with governments to protect and advance community interests.

34 Develop, test, and demand formal recognition of community-led governance mechanisms, such as participatory certification schemes, cooperative procurement platforms, or community food councils.

35 Monitor, document, and publicly expose extractive or performative participation practices. Use legal frameworks and media to hold institutions accountable to power-sharing commitments.

5.2.1.4

Recommendation 4:

DESIGN INTEGRATED POLICY PACKAGES TO SHIFT STRUCTURAL POWER

Single-policy interventions or reforms, however progressive, are often insufficient to address the complex and interrelated structural barriers that shape food system disparities. **Equity-sensitive transformation hinges on policy coherence, institutional convergence, and strategic redistribution of power, using a multi-lever approach that aligns legal, fiscal, regulatory, and governance tools across sectors and levels**. While governments rarely implement fully packaged equity strategies, civil society actors have demonstrated the strategic and innovative potential of what could be called "de facto policy packaging": the convergence of advocacy, litigation, community mobilisation, and grassroots innovation into coordinated actions that challenge structural injustice and institutional inertia. These actions have effectively secured policy reform across traditionally siloed areas, all under the shared goal of advancing sustainable food systems transformation.

In Colombia, civil society coalitions helped secure a landmark tax on UPFs, improve front-of-pack labelling, and pass a new food procurement law, that collectively targeted both consumption inequities and producer exclusion, and confronted corporate interference head-on. Similarly, MASIPAG in the Philippines combines farmer-led certification, seed sovereignty advocacy, and agroecological training into a synergistic model of system transformation that advances environmental and socio-economic objectives, as mutually reinforcing pillars of transformation. In Japan, the Seikatsu Club's coordinated action across food access, ecological farming, healthcare, and local energy systems reveals how grassroots-driven policy ecosystems can emerge through cooperation, self-governance, and value-based organising.

Such integrated strategies, especially when spearheaded by governments, can support **distributive equity** by directing public resources toward historically and structurally excluded producers and communities; **procedural equity**, by fostering alliances and institutions that enable inclusive policy development, litigation, and accountability; and **recognitional equity** by embedding plural food cultures, traditional knowledge, and marginalised voices in decision-making frameworks and public policy narratives. However, packaging without bottom-up control risks technocratic and elite capture, with diluted impact. As seen in the Philippines with the bureaucratisation of PGS or in Australia's local food strategies, equity goals can be diluted if market logics or economic development mandates remain prominent. **To be truly transformative, integration must be structured to distribute not just resources but also decision-making power.** Packaged strategies must also include mechanisms to guard against regulatory rollback, industry interference, and superficial alignment across sectors.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

The CFS Recommendation number 38 calls to enhance policy coherence and coordination at all levels across sectors through mechanisms such as interministerial platforms, and invites to do so "with a strong focus on reducing inequalities". Again, more concrete measures are needed to help decision-makers embed an equity lens into policy packages. In this sense, measures such as mandating equity impact assessments for all policies can help build the needed policy coherence. Alongside, setting time-bound targets for inequality reduction can contribute to rendering coherent policies more effective.

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 4

National Governments:

36 Strengthen existing or introduce new bodies and institutions, such as high-level inter-ministerial taskforces or permanent councils, to coordinate equity-sensitive food systems action across health, agriculture, education, environment, social protection, and finance portfolios.

37 Use national development strategies, climate plans, and food systems pathways to mandate and institutionalise packaged approaches that explicitly address structural inequities.

38 Integrate equity-sensitive policy packages into legislation, with binding goals, cross-sectoral performance indicators, and accountability mechanisms.

39 Provide incentives, technical assistance, and co-financing for subnational authorities to adopt and adapt packaged approaches tailored to territorial needs.

40 Establish regulatory coherence checks (e.g., prohibiting subsidies that contradict equity goals in health, nutrition, or food sovereignty).

Local Governments:

41 Develop local food and equity action plans that align with national frameworks but are grounded in local needs, knowledge, and food environments.

42 Set up cross-departmental structures (e.g., food policy councils, agroecology transition taskforces) to link planning and implementation across departments (e.g., health, land use, education, economic development).

43 Pilot territorially packaged strategies (e.g., pairing land access reform with school meals and producer subsidies) and document impacts to inform scaling.

44 Ensure that community-led monitoring and budget-tracking tools are embedded in local planning cycles to assess whether packages deliver on their equity objectives.

Communities and Civil Society:

45 Build cross-sectoral alliances that unite health advocates, farmers, educators, Indigenous groups, gender minorities, youth, and climate actors around shared equity-sensitive demands.

46 Develop community-defined policy packages, integrating lived experiences across domains, and use them to push for integrated governance.

47 Map contradictions in existing policy environments and advocate for realignment.

48 Conduct community-led policy audits and equity impact assessments to expose gaps, monitor implementation, and hold institutions accountable.

5.2.1.5

Recommendation 5:

EXPAND AND REDESIGN PUBLIC SPENDING TOOLS TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Public spending, especially through procurement and fiscal incentive tools, **is one of the most powerful instruments available to governments for reshaping food systems in service of equity, sustainability, and justice**. If intentionally designed, it can create stable demand for nutritious, culturally appropriate, and ecologically sound food for beneficiaries of public programs, while enabling (i.e. redistributing) market access to those typically excluded from dominant, profit-driven supply chains.

Case studies reveal that public food procurement can act as a systemic equaliser, especially when tied to strong mandates and participatory governance. In Brazil, the PNAE and PAA demonstrate how legally binding quotas for family farmers, when paired with platforms that recognise and work to address the needs of Indigenous producers, can channel public money into marginalised territories, support biodiversity, and strengthen local food cultures. Successes are amplified when procurement is integrated into broader social justice and food sovereignty agendas. In Colombia, the introduction of quotas in national food procurement law shows promise, but exposes a critical weakness: legal mandates without robust implementation frameworks, monitoring systems, or disaggregated data can fall flat.

In Japan, the Seikatsu Club offers a compelling example of how civic-led cooperatives can complement - and sometimes outperform - formal procurement mandates through equity-oriented partnerships. Though not state-run, the Club partners with municipalities to supply school and hospital meals using locally sourced, agroecological products, anchored in transparency, local economies, and gender-equitable governance. Similarly, in the U.S., programs like GusNIP and Double Up Food Bucks show that incentives targeting low-income consumers and local producers can advance distributive justice and expand market participation when designed inclusively. These models bypass traditional procurement systems yet achieve similar ends by aligning subsidies with community needs, smallholder viability, and healthy food access. These experiences illustrate how **public institutions can collaborate with trusted intermediaries to strengthen local supply chains, support small producers, and uphold democratic governance in food provisioning**. At the same time, it signals that **higher procurement standards grounded in equity, justice, and sustainability are not inherently incompatible with efficient delivery or economic viability**, offering a pathway that even private supply chains could align with, while continuing to generate value.


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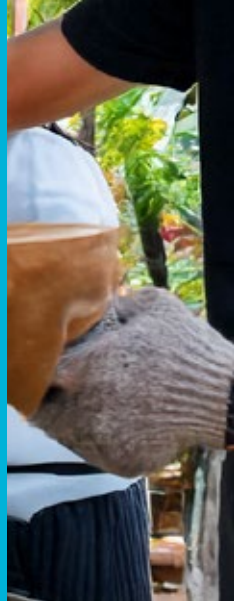
Participatory governance must give communities real power over decisions and resources



Across these examples, **public spending tools** - both direct (e.g. contracts) and indirect (e.g. subsidies, vouchers) - **prove transformational when they explicitly confront structural exclusion and work across all equity domains**. **Distributive equity** is advanced when public contracts and subsidies explicitly prioritise small-scale and marginalised producers, culturally relevant food, and food access to underserved communities, rather than prioritizing procurement standards that value cost or volume efficiency. **Procedural equity** is enhanced when beneficiaries and producers co-design procurement rules, participate in oversight, and shape local food governance, while **recognitional equity** is deepened when procurement rules validate traditional foodways, non-standard production practices, and local economies often excluded from mainstream interventions.

Nonetheless, **without clear equity mandates, administrative simplification, and participatory design, even well-meaning spending programs risk becoming technocratic, inaccessible, or co-opted by industrial actors**. In some cases, governments may fully outsource procurement to corporations under the guise of efficiency, undermining public accountability and displacing local food systems. Yet public procurement holds transformative potential not only within public institutions, but also in shaping broader market dynamics. **By extending equity-sensitive and sustainability-focused standards to supply chains and market behaviour, governments can use procurement as a powerful lever to realign incentives, support diverse producers, and embed public values in food economies**. Achieving this requires strong political commitment, administrative simplification, and continuous community engagement.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

CFS Recommendations also strongly emphasize public spending tools as a key area for correcting inequalities, as exemplified by recommendation number 5 calling to "Foster inclusive public procurement, food-based safety nets" that prioritize sustainable food "while implementing policies that prioritize peasants, smallholders, family farmers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities."

This recommendation can benefit from more actionable measures on food public procurement and public spending tools such as specific binding targets or quotas (e.g., reserving X% of procured food from smallholders, as well as X% of procured food produced under agroecological and other sustainable approaches). Targets should ideally include a stepwise approach, defining milestones (e.g. 10% within first 3 years; 30% within 6 years; 50% within 8 years).

CFS Policy Recommendations also call for prioritizing basic public services (CFS Recommendation number 30). A specific measure that can complement this action is to invest in publicly owned markets, supermarkets, food hubs or logistics platforms to reduce reliance on dominant distributors.

The following section lists this as well as other detailed and stakeholder-specific actions that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 5

National Governments:

49 Establish a national equity framework for public food procurement with clear targets, enforcement mechanisms, and budget allocations, integrated into food sovereignty and social protection legislation.

50 Institutionalise public spending tools that reflect the full costs and benefits of food systems, including environmental, health, and social impacts. By institutionalising approaches such as true cost accounting, governments can align procurement decisions with long-term public interest.

51 Leverage public procurement as a strategic entry point for market transformation, using institutional food purchasing to pilot and refine inclusive, sustainability-focused standards. Once proven effective, these practices can be progressively extended beyond public contracts to influence broader food markets and supply chain norms.

52 Mandate minimum quotas for public institutions to source from agroecological, smallholder, Indigenous, and community-based producers.

53 Create flexible eligibility systems, recognising cooperative membership, community certification, and customary and informal tenure systems.

54 Launch public food subsidy schemes designed with multiple goals: equitable access to healthy and sustainable food for low-income consumers, and market support for historically marginalised and environmentally friendly producers.

55 Invest in publicly owned markets, supermarkets, food hubs or logistics platforms to reduce reliance on dominant distributors and expand community access to procurement channels.

Local Governments:

56 Co-develop inclusive procurement frameworks with producer cooperatives, grassroots food actors, and civil society, ensuring low barriers to entry and multi-year contract options.

57 Set up public provisioning partnerships that connect local farmers with schools, hospitals, and food assistance programs via community-based aggregators or procurement platforms. Keep food from going to waste by promoting facilitating food waste prevention and/or redistribution.

58 Establish community oversight bodies - with binding influence - to review procurement performance, resolve grievances, and guide reinvestment.

59 Package public spending tools with other local strategies (e.g., land access, training, food entrepreneurship) to build a territorially grounded food economy, not isolated contracts.

Communities and Civil Society:

60 Organise multi-stakeholder alliances among farmers, consumer groups, and public service workers to collectively advocate for equitable procurement policies and oversight rights.

61 Build community-led provisioning models, such as cooperatives, mutual aid kitchens, and school canteens, that can partner with public institutions, especially in territories underserved by mainstream distributors.

62 Map local food systems and maintain producer registries to improve visibility and readiness of local actors for public contracting.

63 Monitor and expose public spending practices that favour industrial suppliers or ignore equity commitments; push for enforcement of quotas, transparency, and public reporting.

5.2.2.1

Recommendation 6:

ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TERRITORIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Secure and equitable access to natural resources, including land, water and forests, is foundational to sustainable food systems, climate resilience, and just livelihoods. Yet globally, these resources continue to be systematically contested and unequally distributed, governed by legal and economic systems that entrench exclusion, commodification, and marginalise communities, vulnerable producers, consumers and workers.

Despite its centrality to equity-sensitive food system transformation, reform of natural resource governance is often politically unpopular, technocratically diluted, or co-opted by vested interests, which perpetuate structural injustice. Case studies illustrate this tension in the area of land tenure. In both Colombia and Brazil, traditional and Indigenous producers are often at risk of dispossession and exclusion from land ownership, despite some constitutional protections may be in place. In Australia, Victoria's Future Farmers Pathway shows how governments can support land access innovation, but without addressing land consolidation or unaffordable land prices, the systemic impact of such programs risk remaining limited.

Globally, speculative real estate, land and water grabbing, carbon offset schemes, and greenwashing disguised as conservation, are locking in unsustainable patterns of access and governance. Distributive equity is tested by who has access to valuable natural resources. **Procedural equity** is undermined when governance bodies exclude grassroots voices from tenure decisions. **Recognitional equity** suffers when community rights over the natural resources in their territories are denied legal status or appropriated without consent.

If food systems transformation is to be meaningful, a just access to natural resources must be restored to the centre of political agendas. This entails reclaiming equitable access and governance of natural resources as collective rights.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

CFS Policy Recommendations also emphasize more equitable access to land and other resources as an indispensable measure, such as with recommendation number 3 calling to "Prevent concentration of land ownership". However, as phrased it implies that current distribution is acceptable from an equity perspective, with only prevention of further concentration recommended. This is far from true. **Redistributive measures are essential where land and resources are already excessively concentrated.** Additionally, recommending (in coherence with recommendations on "participatory measures") participatory land trusts or other mechanisms to administer and manage the redistributed land, would be beneficial**.** Further, the CFS recommendation does little more than invoke this goal, **lacking any concrete equity actions to prevent concentration of land ownership**. Lastly, the CFS recommendation **does not deal with one of the drivers of land concentration: speculation and financialization.**

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 6

National Governments:

64 Enact redistributive policies for access to natural resources, prioritising equitable governance of land, water, and other natural resources underpinning food systems.

65 Legally recognise and protect communal and traditional tenure systems, ensuring inclusive, pluralistic legal frameworks that uphold collective rights.

66 Integrate secure and equitable access and ownership of natural resources into national food systems, biodiversity, and climate adaptation strategies, recognising tenure rights as a critical enabler of sustainable food systems and resilience.

67 Establish public resource banks and community trust frameworks, shielding natural resources from speculation and enabling equitable redistribution.

68 Ban foreign or speculative resource acquisition in territories designated essential for food sovereignty and environmental protection.

69 Strengthen, build capacity, and support civil society organizations, including consumer associations to defend rights and enable access to natural resources.

Local Governments:

70 Develop local governance frameworks and spatial planning tools that prioritise equitable access to territories and prevent conversion or privatisation of essential resources.

71 Facilitate participatory mapping and recognition of informal or collective use rights in rural, peri-urban, and coastal areas, supporting local and traditional land and water users.

72 Collaborate with civil society and producer networks to develop local incubators for agroecological and low-impact livelihoods, combining access to land or water with training, infrastructure, and community support.

73 Expand public access schemes for territories and natural resources, such as public leasing of land or fisheries, targeting historically marginalised users.

Communities and Civil Society:

74 Organise to document, defend and formalise customary rights over land, waters, and other natural resources through legal advocacy.

75 Monitor and expose resource grabs, speculative pressures, and greenwashing schemes that displace food producers or restrict community rights under the guise of sustainability or climate action.

76 Build solidarity economies, food commons, and collective stewardship models that challenge resource commodification and demonstrate alternatives to private ownership.

77 Forge transnational alliances for agrarian and resource justice, sharing strategies and legal tools to resist displacement, assert sovereignty, and defend territorial rights.

5.2.2.2

Recommendation 7:

MEANINGFULLY SUPPORT THE REVITALISATION OF AGROECOLOGY, LOCAL AND TRADITIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

"Agroecology, local and traditional food systems offer cultural, political, and ecological solutions to the problemas caused by the dominance of industrial agriculture. Rooted in place-based knowledge, cultural identity, biodiversity stewardship, and collective care, they offer transformational pathways to address climate breakdown, socio-economic disparities, and structural exclusion. Yet these systems have been systematically undermined by colonial legacies, state neglect, and corporate consolidation. **To revitalise, and not merely preserve them, is critical to realising meaningful food systems transformation and to advancing all three dimensions of equity**.

Case studies reviewed in this report illustrate vividly the transformative potential and the systemic barriers facing agroecological and traditional food systems. MASIPAG in the Philippines demonstrates how farmer-led seed breeding, agroecological experimentation, and knowledge sharing build sustainable food systems while enhancing climate resilience and biodiversity. Their model actively resists privatization, regulatory exclusion, and dependency cycles fostered by corporate agribusiness. In Brazil, the Catrapovos platform has reduced legal and technical barriers for Indigenous producers to access institutional markets, embedding their food production practices and consumption preferences in public policy. Yet, the need for continual regulatory vigilance and dedicated infrastructure remains acute. In Japan, the Seikatsu Club has redefined consumer-producer relations through cooperation rooted in environmental integrity and shared values. The Club has had long-standing partnerships with agroecological producers, and exemplifies how cooperatives can contribute to revitalising localised food systems that contribute to socio-economic and environmental objectives. In Scotland, land reform provides a crucial entry point to re-territorialise food production and empower community growers, but agroecology has yet to be fully anchored in agricultural and land use policy.

However, **without structural and legal support, agroecology and traditional food systems risk remaining marginalised or being co-opted by technocratic "green" transitions that reduce them to a depoliticised toolkit.** Sustained investment, legal protection of traditional foodways, and redistribution of power and resources to communities historically excluded from dominant food regimes are necessary to centre and support the revitalisation of both approaches, which have a strong potential for equity-sensitive transformation. **Distributive equity** is strengthened when traditional and agroecological producers gain access to land, infrastructure, finance, and markets; recognitional equity is advanced by legitimising and investing in traditional and local knowledge systems through embedded governance and budgetary commitments. **Procedural equity** is fulfilled when these communities lead decision-making

on research, certification, safety standards, and food system priorities. **Recognitional equity** is strengthened when research and development, legal and policy instruments formally affirm the legitimacy of Indigenous and local knowledge systems, non-market foodways, and culturally specific agricultural practices.

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

Several of the CFS Policy Recommendations (5, 18, 19, 36) also pinpoint agroecology and other innovative approaches as well as traditional and local knowledge as key strategies to equitably transform food systems. Here again the CFS recommendations have a lot of room for improvement by moving from the general to the specific. More detailed responses include setting mandates to increase public and private investment in agroecology and other innovative approaches; Establishing targets to train farmers in agroecology and other innovative approaches; Develop policies that de-risk and fiscally incentivise private capital to finance agroecological transitions; Create national and or regional/local agroecology funds, prioritizing grants (not just loans) for smallholders Indigenous groups; Call for legally protecting seed sovereignty, and thus revisit intellectual property laws. Require public universities to collaborate with Indigenous knowledge holders; Replace yield-only metrics with biodiversity, soil health, and equity indicators.

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 7

National Governments:

78 Codify agroecology principles as both a right and a governance principle, ensuring protections for culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable diets, and community-defined, localised food systems.

79 Allocate public funding to agroecological and farmer-to-farmer training, community seed banks, and culturally rooted food infrastructures. Prioritise support for territories where traditional foodways remain under threat. To enable this effectively, set mandates to increase public and private investment in agroecology and other innovative approaches. Create national and or regional/local agroecology funds, prioritizing grants (not just loans) for smallholders and Indigenous groups, and women-led small and medium businesses and cooperatives.

80 Provide fiscal incentives to businesses that source from agroecological producers.

81 Establish publicly backed loan guarantees to de-risk private lending to agroecology transitions. Establish impact investment vehicles with patient capital (Slow Money with 10+ year returns).

82 Establish land access programs for Indigenous and smallholder farmers.

83 Establish ambitious time-bound targets to train farmers in agroecology and other innovative approaches.

84 Prioritise farmer-led research and community-based knowledge in public research and development programs. Embed agroecology in national development plans, climate strategies, and biodiversity policies with clear financial commitments.

85 Legally recognise traditional food systems and seed commons. Protect farmer-managed seed exchanges and remove legal barriers tied to exclusionary intellectual property regimes.

86 Revise food safety laws to accommodate traditional food practices. Establish funding streams for food sovereignty initiatives that revitalise traditional and local food systems, including land protection, knowledge transfer, and seed preservation.

Local Governments:

87 Launch extension programs co-created with traditional and smallholder producers. Provide support for demonstration sites, collective food hubs, and peer-to-peer learning.

88 Integrate cultural food assessments into local planning. Use land-use and zoning tools to safeguard sites and agro-biodiversity from industrial encroachment.

89 Institutionalise cultural food assessments in urban and rural planning to ensure traditional diets and foodways are reflected in school meal programs, public procurement, and local food infrastructure.

90 Facilitate cross-generational knowledge exchange on local food practices.

Communities and Civil Society:

91 Lead participatory research and archive traditional practices through community-led activities and networks.

92 Campaign for sovereignty over agricultural inputs and outputs, legislative protection of traditional and local food systems.

93 Scale values-based, farmer-led certification models that align with local food cultures and bypass exclusionary market norms. Forge alliances that bridge food justice, food sovereignty, and environmental movements.

94 Expand cross-sector alliances beyond food-focused movements, building alliances with environmental, Indigenous, feminist, and labour justice movements. Proactively position agroecology as a socio-political project and bring environmental actors into agroecological spaces.

5.2.2.3

Recommendation 8:

RESHAPE FOOD ENVIRONMENTS AND ADDRESS THE SPREAD OF ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS (UPFs)

Food environments are key determinants of dietary patterns, health outcomes, and cultural continuity. However, they are not neutral but rather shaped by decades of deregulation, corporate influence, and marketing strategies. Across geographies, UPFs have become disproportionately accessible, affordable, and aggressively marketed, particularly to low-income and racialised populations - not as the result of consumer preference, but of policy choices, market structures, and power asymmetries. They are a tangible, stark representation of how food environments drive the global rise in NCDs while eroding cultural foodways and contributing to accelerating environmental harm.

Case studies showed both innovative reforms and systemic challenges in addressing UPFs and corporate-determined food environments. Rebalancing public and private power emerged as a key prerequisite to ensuring the creation of food environments rooted in equity, cultural dignity, and environmental sustainability. In Colombia, recent nutrition labelling and UPF taxes represent key regulatory breakthroughs, supported by civil society litigation and mass mobilisation. Yet they are continuously undermined by industry lobbying, disinformation campaigns, and legal loopholes that weaken implementation and public trust. Civil society watchdogs and grassroots coalitions remain crucial actors in defending these reforms. Brazil's PNAE illustrates that state-driven food environments cannot just improve nutrition but also safeguard cultural foodways and support small-scale producers, if policies integrate an equity approach and support local, traditional procurement. In the U.S., the aggressive marketing and availability of UPFs in economically disadvantaged and racialised neighbourhoods reflect the intersections of commercial exploitation and systemic inequality. Even where subsidy programs exist, they often operate in parallel to, rather than in replacement of, predatory food supply chains. Japan's Seikatsu Club offers a transformative alternative in its long-term, values-based cooperation between consumers and producers that has created community-governed supply chains, actively excluding UPFs and rejecting industrial standards.

Transforming food environments through equity-sensitive strategies supports **distributive equity** when policies shift availability, affordability, and desirability toward nutritious, sustainable and culturally appropriate foods, especially in underserved communities; **procedural equity** when affected communities lead decisions about local food landscapes; and **recognitional equity** when local and traditional foodways and culinary identities are publicly resourced and institutionally protected. However, **piecemeal reforms and voluntary commitments will not suffice**. Binding legal and fiscal measures, structural reallocation of resources, and long-term support for community-led models that contest corporate food environments are needed.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Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

Here too the CFS Policy Recommendations align closely with this study's own recommendations. CFS Recommendations 21 to 26 deal with food environments, including Proactive Planning for Healthy Food Environments, Clear Consumer Information (Front-of-Package Labelling), Support for Informal Food Vendors, and include also prevention of child labour and of food loss and waste in this category.

Proven measures can complement these recommendations, such as the adoption of special taxes or marketing bans. Apply a special "health tax" to unhealthy UPFs has been proven beneficial as complement to front-of-package labelling. Alongside, banning child-targeted marketing of harmful UPFs as well as mandating warning labels on harmful products - much like the measures that have been applied to tobacco in recent years - are also impactful to drive equity.

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 8

National Governments:

95 Implement progressive taxes on UPFs and use the revenues to fund local food systems, cultural food education, and subsidies for fresh, traditional foods.

96 Ban misleading and aggressive food marketing, especially those targeting children and marginalised communities.

97 Mandate front-of-pack warning labels, free from industry interference, backed by public health evidence.

98 Integrate food environment reform into national health, biodiversity, and education plans, with binding equity indicators and community participation mandates.

Local Governments:

99 Use zoning laws to limit fast food outlets near schools and underserved neighbourhoods.

100 Support school meals and public food provision that prioritise fresh, local, and culturally rooted foods.

101 Invest in local food infrastructure (e.g., markets, mobile grocers, community kitchens) co-designed with and co-governed by communities.

Communities and Civil Society:

102 Expose and resist the normalization of UPFs through public campaigns, community-based research and mobilisation, and strategic litigation.

103 Create cooperative food environments that prioritise sustainable food, social solidarity, and cultural continuity.

104 Promote public education and behaviour change to reduce food waste and support sustainable, healthy diets. Launch intergenerational programs to reclaim and transmit traditional food knowledge and preparation skills.

105 Build cross-sector coalitions that connect public health, racial justice, environmental movements, and consumer groups, to demand systemic regulation of harmful food environments.


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5.2.3.1

Recommendation 9:

DEVELOP AND FUND INCLUSIVE MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS FOR EQUITY-SENSITIVE OUTCOMES

Outcomes across equity dimensions must be measured and monitored. Throughout case studies, persistent gaps in data availability, lack of disaggregation, and weak or inaccessible accountability frameworks have made it difficult to assess whether food systems reforms are actually reducing structural inequities. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems, co-designed with communities and grounded in the objective of advancing justice, are essential to avoid technocratic drift and to ensure that equity is embedded in both process and outcomes.

Colombia's civil society response illustrates the power of grassroots accountability infrastructures: organisations have built independent platforms to track policy implementation, monitor corporate interference, and mobilise data for litigation and advocacy. Effective monitoring of equity outcomes can advance procedural equity when it centres the participation of historically excluded and routinely marginalised actors in defining what is measured and how. It can support distributive equity when tracking reveals and helps correct disparities in public investment, access, or outcomes. Moreover, it can promote recognitional equity when monitoring tools validate traditional knowledge systems and community-defined priorities. However, **without legal anchoring, sustained funding, and feedback loops for accountability, even participatory monitoring of equity outcomes risks becoming symbolic.**

Enhancing the "CFS Policy Recommendations on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"

Monitoring, evaluation and accountability measures appear across up to 12 of CFS's Policy Recommendations – 3, 4, 8, 12, 29, 35, and the entire section D, which spans from 53-58. While this is positive overall, there is room to improve recommendations in terms of the procedural and recognitional dimensions of equity. For instance, creating accountability mechanisms and institutions which allow for civil society organisations' and communities' participation, which would improve the equity of such systems.

The following section lists the range of stakeholder-specific action that would render CFS Policy Recommendations more actionable, concrete, and effective.

Stakeholder-specific actions for the implementation of the study's Recommendation 9

National Governments:

106 Develop national equity dashboards for food systems, with indicators across all food system domains and disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, class, age, and geography.

107 Fund community-led evaluation and research programs, ensuring traditional and marginalised communities shape methods and metrics.

108 Tie public budgets and program renewals to performance on equity-sensitive targets, including redistribution, inclusion, and recognition metrics.

Local Governments:

109 Build capacity for equity audits, establishing participatory monitoring and regular public reporting mechanisms on food systems transformation - including rights-holders in oversight roles with decision-making power.

110 Co-design monitoring and evaluation frameworks with community stakeholders that reflect local knowledge, needs, and food cultures.

Communities and Civil Society:

111 Organise and lead community scorecards, social audits, and participatory action research linked to food access, procurement, and governance, documenting implementation gaps and structural barriers.

112 Advocate for grievance mechanisms and ombudsperson offices that offer legal pathways for redress and citizen oversight, especially for marginalised groups.

5.3. Summary of enhancements to CFS policy recommendations

Most of this report's policy recommendations align broadly with the ***CFS Recommendations to address inequalities in food security and* nutrition**[207], particularly on **rights-based approaches, agroecology, corporate accountability, and participatory governance**. However, this study's recommendations aimed to provide **more specific institutional mechanisms** (e.g., food ombudsperson institutions, procurement exclusions, public procurement quotas, etc.) **as well as actions to trigger structural power shifts** (e.g., decommodification, anti-speculative policies, land redistribution through communal land trusts, etc.) that are either implied or not explicitly detailed in the CFS Policy Recommendations. **Table 8** aims to provide a simplified comparison to visualize these differences by summarising the main gaps and the study's proposed action to overcome them.

TABLE 8. SUMMARY OF ENHANCEMENTS TO CFS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EQUITY-SENSITIVE FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Study's Recommendation Title	Identified Gaps in CFS Policy Recommendations	Proposed Enhancements / Concrete Actions to Overcome Gaps
Foundational Enablers and Structural Levers		
1. Strengthen regulation of corporate practices and public accountability	Fails to acknowledge the role of commercial determinants of health and corporate political activity. Lacks concrete safeguards to effectively tackle conflicts of interest (beyond general calls for transparency).	• Enact legally binding bans on corporate interference in public policy. • Mandate full transparency in lobbying (public registries, disclosures). • Ban corporate sponsorship of public health/food campaigns and research. • Establish independent food ombuds institutions with enforcement powers.
2. Legally recognise the Right to Food and the Right to a Healthy environment	Falls short in challenging food's status as a market commodity, a key barrier to materializing the Right to Food. Lacks concrete accountability measures for violations.	• Ban speculative trading of staple foods and financialization of essential land/water. • Delist food from commodity markets and ban derivatives trading. • Establish ombudsperson institutions with authority to investigate violations and mandate compliance.
3. Institutionalise long-term, participatory food governance and power-sharing	Provides general calls for participation but lacks concrete actions and guidance to materialize meaningful inclusiveness.	• Create food policy councils (or similar) with binding power-sharing mechanisms. • Mandate representation quotas (e.g., 50% grassroots) in governance bodies. • Allocate financial resources to enable meaningful civil society participation.
4. Design integrated policy packages to shift structural power	Calls for policy coherence but lacks specific measures to embed an equity lens into coherent policy packages.	• Mandate equity impact assessments for all policies affecting food systems. • Set time-bound targets for inequality reduction to guide and evaluate policy coherence.
5. Expand and redesign public spending tools	Emphasizes inclusive procurement but lacks actionable measures and binding targets.	• Establish specific binding quotas for sourcing from smallholders and agroecological producers (e.g., 30% within 6 years). • Invest in publicly owned food hubs or logistics platforms to break distributor dominance. • Institutionalize true cost accounting to align spending with long-term public interest.

Transformative change must replace the current logics of excess profit extraction with equitable benefit-sharing and increased agency of marginalised actors

Study's Recommendation Title	Identified Gaps in CFS Policy Recommendations	Proposed Enhancements / Concrete Actions to Overcome Gaps
Sectoral Interventions		
6. Ensure equitable access to territories and natural resources	Only calls to prevent further land concentration, implying current distribution is acceptable. Lacks concrete redistributive actions and does not address drivers like speculation and financialization.	• Enact redistributive policies for land and natural resources where concentration is high. • Establish participatory land trusts or community trust frameworks. • Ban foreign or speculative acquisition of essential food-producing territories.
7. Meaningfully support the revitalisation of agroecology	Pinpoints agroecology as key but remains general, lacking specific, actionable support mechanisms.	• Set mandates to increase public/private investment in agroecology. • Establish targets to train farmers in agroecological practices. • Legally protect seed sovereignty and revisit intellectual property laws. • Create national agroecology funds with grants (not just loans) for marginalized groups.
8. Reshape food environments and address the spread of UPFs	Aligns closely but can be strengthened with more proven, impactful regulatory measures.	• Apply special taxes ("health taxes") on unhealthy UPFs. • Ban child-targeted marketing of harmful products. • Mandate warning labels on UPFs, free from industry interference.
Inclusive Monitoring		
9. Develop inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms	While frequently mentioned, recommendations lack focus on the procedural and recognitional equity of the monitoring systems themselves.	• Create accountability mechanisms and institutions that allow for participation by civil society and communities in monitoring and oversight. • Fund community-led evaluation and research programs. • Tie public budgets to performance on equity-sensitive targets.

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Why we are here
To stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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