

I. CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

I.1. DEFINITION OF FOOD SECURITY

The numerous attempts to define food security in research and policy usage demonstrate how malleable the idea is. Around 50 years ago, during the early 1970s worldwide food problems, the idea of food security was first proposed. There were over 200 published definitions of food security even twenty years ago, demonstrating the definition's contextually sensitive characteristics.

The current widely accepted definition of food security came from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) annual report on food security “The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001” : Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2002). The last revision to this definition happened at the 2009 World Summit on Food Security which added a fourth dimension – stability – as the short-term time indicator of the ability of food systems to withstand shocks, whether natural or man-made (FAO, 2009).

I.2. EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

Due to the severe volatility of agricultural commodity prices and the turbulence in the currency and energy markets at the time, the concept of food security was first centered on guaranteeing food availability and the price stability of staple foods in the early 1970s, a period of global food crises. Famine, hunger, and food crises necessitated a definition of food security that took into account the vital needs and actions of those who may be impacted and at risk. "The availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices" was the definition of food security given at the World Food Conference in 1974 (United Nations, 1975). This definition stressed understandably the need for increased production since protein-energy deficiency in 1970 was believed to affect more than 25% of the global population.

Later, as awareness of the food security crisis improved, the focus shifted from food availability to a broader strategy. The FAO definition of food security was expanded to include ensuring

vulnerable individuals have access to accessible supplies as a result of a better understanding of how agricultural markets operate under stress and how at-risk populations end up without food. The idea of food security evolved from economic access to food. Then, "ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need" became the new definition of food security.

The next development came in 1986 when the World Bank published its seminal report *Poverty and Hunger*. This introduced a time scale for food security by distinguishing between chronic food insecurity, associated with poverty, and acute, transient food insecurity, caused by natural or man-made disasters. These were reflected in a further extension of the concept of food security to include: "access of all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life". The next concept evolution happened in 1994 following the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report considering the requirements for human security. At this time, food security, which was within the larger framework of social security, entered the discussion of human rights. Since the studies on food security are often context specific, depending on which of the many technical perspectives and policy issues, this multidimensional and multifaceted operational construct had no coherent definition then. In an attempt to bring more unity to such complexity, a redefinition of food security was conducted through international consultations in preparation for the World Food Summit held in 1996, reflecting the complex interaction among, and between, individual, household, even to the global level. Food security, at all different levels, is achieved "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". In the mid-1990s, as the term "food security" evolved, the terms "nutrition security" and "food and nutrition security" also emerged. Food security is then considered as a subset of "food security and nutrition".

The next development of definition of food security was redefined further in the "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001" by adding the social emphasis as cited above. It was recognized that addressing poverty is necessary but not alone sufficient to achieve this goal. Then at the 2009 World Summit on Food Security, the last official revision, which added the fourth dimension of stability to the concept of food security (FAO, 2009). More recently it has been suggested that sustainability be added as a fifth dimension to encompass the long-term time dimension.

I.3. FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SECURITY

The definition of FS that has been in place for over three decades has made it clear that FS is a multidimensional construct that includes the following dimensions: *Quantity*, enough calories; *Dietary Quality*, nutritional value of foods; *Food Safety*, foods free of harmful microorganisms or other environmental contaminants; *Suitability*, culturally acceptable; *Psycho-emotional*, anxiety and feelings of deprivation; and *Social Acceptability*, socially acceptable methods for acquiring foods.

These definitions of FS were strongly informed by the development of FS experience-based scales based on mixed-methods research conducted with people in the US experiencing FI and hunger (the most extreme form of FI), and led to the development, validation, and launch of the US Household Food Security Survey (USHFSSM) module in 1995 and its subsequent dissemination, adaptation, and validation globally.

Nutrition status has been defined as “the assimilation and utilization of nutrients by the body plus interactions of environmental factors such as those that affect food consumption and food security”. Hence, it is a construct that needs to be assessed and understood by researchers, program evaluators, and policymakers at the level of the individual’s organism. Indeed, Smith presented a clear food and nutrition security multilevel framework adapted from Frankenberger and UNICEF, ranging from the global to the individual level to understand the strong relationship between FS and nutrition security and their distinct characteristics (Figure 1).

Extensive research involving experience-based FS scales has shown that in human societies, FS needs to be understood at the household level, and that it is a Social Determinant Of Health « SDOH » that, in turn, is strongly determined by socio-economic status and social class. FS relies on stable economic, physical, and social access to diverse, healthy, and nutritious foods that are culturally acceptable in the communities where the households are located. This access, in turn, depends on regional, national, and global availability of such foods. Currently, the global availability of these foods is constantly threatened by climate change and armed conflicts across the globe.

Nutrition security among individuals is determined by FS in combination with other SDOH, including healthcare access, housing, and other basic human needs such as water security.

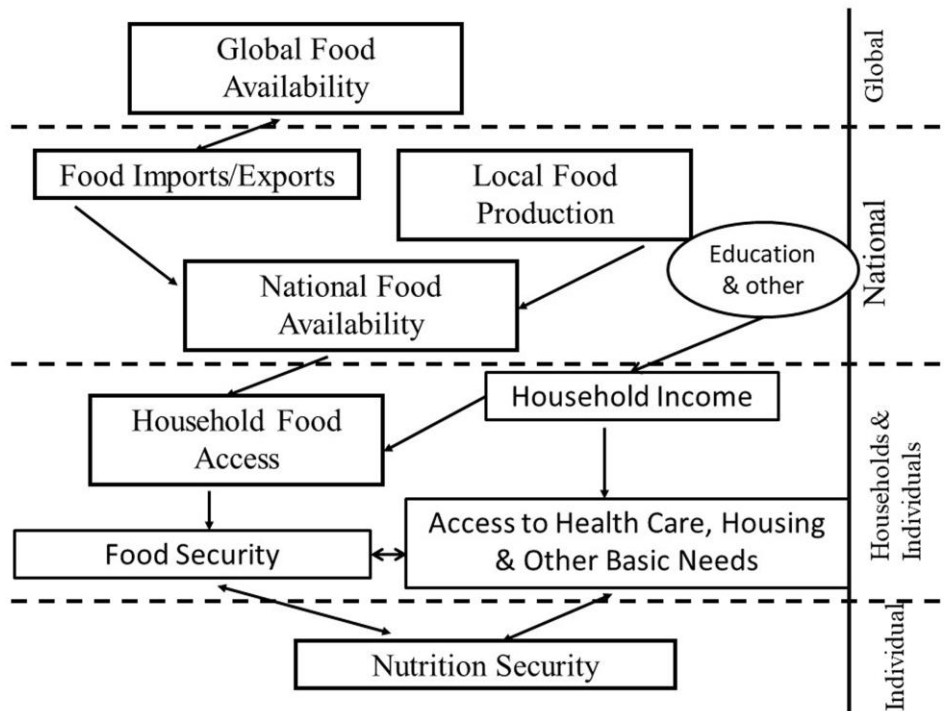


Figure 1 : The relationships between global food security, household food security, and nutrition security. Adapted with permission from Smith, Frankenberger et al., and UNICEF.

Food and nutrition security sits right at the intersection of public health and human rights, as reflected in articles from the United Nations Charter on the Right to Adequate Food. For instance, *Articles 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)* along with children’s rights to food, health, care, survival, and development; *Articles 6, 24, and 27 of the Convention on the Civil Rights of the Child (CRC)* detailing the rights of mothers to adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation; and *Article 12.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* highlight this intersection. These articles reflect the universal, indivisible, interrelated, and interdependence of the human right to food.