

Redefining Food Security in the Asia-Pacific

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Key Messages

- ◆ **Redefine food security by connecting to climate security discussions** – To address the interconnectedness of food security and climate security, we argue that the food security definition should integrate and emphasize the importance of sustainability, agency of farmers/fishers, and resilience in food systems.
- ◆ **Emphasize the importance of considering food security at subnational and national levels** – Small-scale producers, who supply the majority of food in the Asia-Pacific, are affected by climate change, land insecurity, and resource imbalances. National and subnational policies must prioritize their by ensuring equitable access to land, water, financial resources, and technology.

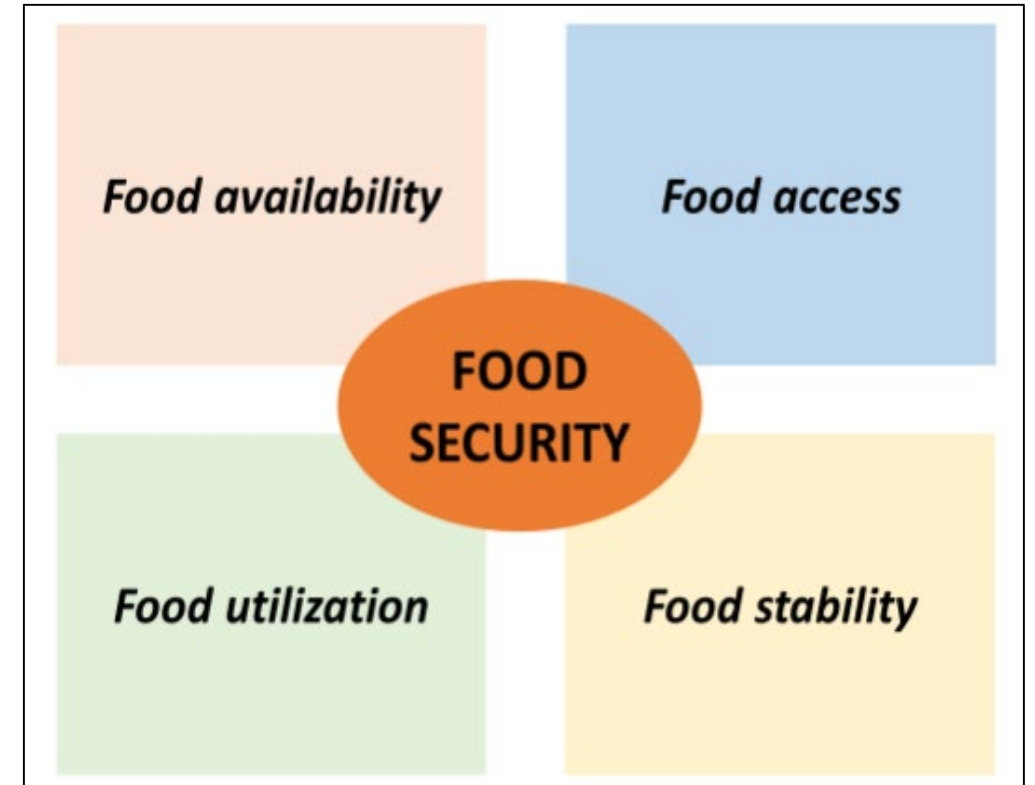
What is food security?

- ◆ *Food security exists 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.*

-1996 World Food Summit, FAO 2008

- ◆ *People are "food secure" when they have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.*

-WFP 2021



Facts on food security in the Asia-Pacific...

- **The Asia and the Pacific region represent half of the world's undernourished people.** South Asia accounts for almost 314 million of the region's undernourished people (85 % in the region).
- There were 1.9 billion people who could not afford a healthy diet in 2021. This is an improvement of 80.4 million people compared to 2020.

Source: FAO. Asia and the Pacific - Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023

- The Asia-Pacific region, home to over 60% of the global population, **relies heavily on small-scale producers, who make up 70% of food producers and supply 80% of the region's food.**
- The Asia-Pacific region is the largest producer of agricultural and fish products and is expected to make up **53% of global production by 2030.**

Source: FAO (2019)

Climate change is affecting the Food Security



- Climate change is already affecting food security through increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and greater frequency of some extreme events (IPCC, 2019).
- The influence on agricultural production is especially evident. In Japan, for instance, elevated temperatures have impacted the cultivation of rice paddies and fruit trees, leading to stunted growth and other issues.
- Small-scale farmers, who constitute the majority in the Asia-Pacific region, are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which also creates a negative cycle of poverty.

Redefining Food Security in the Asia-Pacific: Integrating Sustainability, Agency, and Resilience in the Context of Climate Change and Development

We argue to broaden the traditional definition of food security to include sustainability, agency of farmers, and resilience to ensure the integration of climate security and issues at the nexus of conflicts and development.

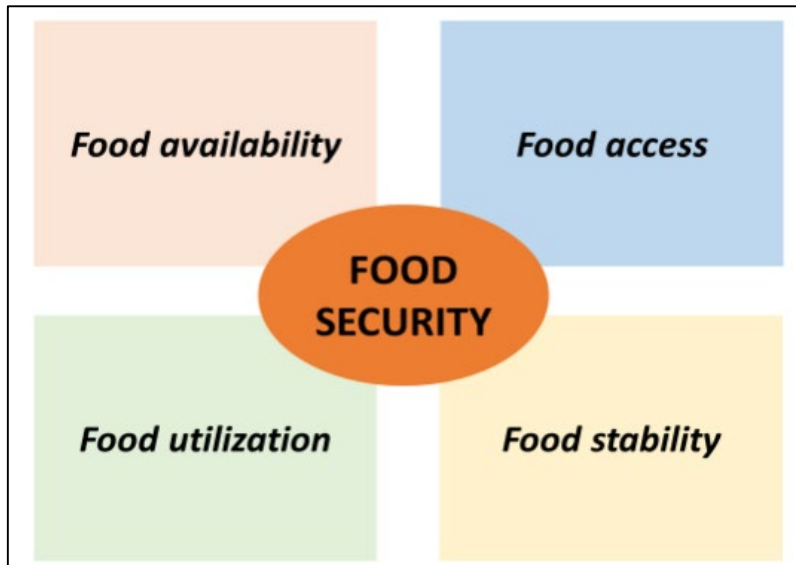
◆ **Approach:** We adopt a human security approach, prioritizing people-centered solutions with a focus on regional, national and sub-national food security.

- Structural inequalities and power imbalance regarding access to land and water resulting in grievances, inequities, and potential conflicts at sub-national and national levels.

◆ **Policy relevance:**

- Consider Japan's role as a development actor in enhancing food security in the Asia-Pacific.
- Examine strategies to strengthen regional cooperation for sustainable and resilient food systems

How can we integrate climate change and nexus of conflict and development in food security?



Sustainability

the ability of food systems to meet present needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to produce and access food, ensuring environmental, social, and economic balance

Agency

the capacity of food producers, to make informed decisions that affect their well-being and that of their communities, shaping food systems through choices and actions

Resilience

the ability of food systems to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from shocks such as climate change, conflicts, and economic disruptions, ensuring long-term stability

Integration of “Food sovereignty”: Approach to solve **structural inequalities and vulnerabilities** with people-centered approach

Food sovereignty is “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, Mali)

Understand food security as an outcome of food system: address mechanisms shaped by climate risks and the **complexity of dynamic social-ecological processes**

Food systems are defined as a coming together of “all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions etc.) and activities that relate to production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes” (HLPE 2014, p.12)

Contribution to climate security conversations

The link between climate security and food security can be understood through the impact of climate change on food production and the conflicts that arise as a result.

Sustainability: Develop a long-term, sustainable food system.

Agency: Reduce conflicts at sub-national level by addressing power imbalances of smallholders.

Resilience: Strengthen the ability to adapt to risks, including climate change.



We redefine food security to include addressing the impacts of climate change and other environmental factors on food systems and redressing the power imbalances faced by smallholders.

Analysis of Regional Policy Frameworks on Food Security

Purpose and methodology: Examined existing initiatives and frameworks on food security in Japan, ASEAN, SAARC, PIF to evaluate how food security is being addressed and its alignment with the three concepts we proposed.

	Traditional four pillars	Sustainability	Agency	Resilience
ASEAN	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SAARC	Yes	Yes	Partially yes	Partially yes
PIF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Japan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors

ASEAN

- Integrated food security and climate change into its policies, recognizing their impact on regional stability and agricultural production through the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises (2023).
- These efforts emphasize sustainability, resilience, and inclusion, particularly highlighting the role of small-scale farmers and indigenous communities in ensuring long-term food security and stability in the region.

SAARC

- Recognized food insecurity and under-nutrition as key regional challenges, implementing initiatives like the SAARC Food Bank and the Regional Action Framework for Nutrition to ensure food availability, access, stability, and utilization.
- While its Agriculture Vision 2020 emphasizes sustainability and aspects of agency and resilience, the lack of recent regionally agreed frameworks limits comprehensive policy development, highlighting the need for renewed focus on food security amid climate challenges.

PIF

- Pacific countries recognize food security as a critical regional security issue, with key frameworks like the Boe Declaration and the Pacific Security Outlook Report linking food insecurity to climate change.
- Recent policies, including the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, emphasize sustainability, resilience, and agency by integrating food security within climate, disaster, and ocean management strategies, while also promoting inclusive participation in resource management.

JAPAN

- Food security policies, including the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas and the MIDORI Strategy, emphasize sustainability, resilience, and agency alongside the traditional four pillars, extending these priorities to international cooperation efforts in the Asia-Pacific.
- Through initiatives like the ASEAN-Japan MIDORI Cooperation Plan, Japan focuses on technology dissemination, capacity building, and inclusive food value chains, aiming to empower small-scale farmers and enhance long-term food security.

Significance of broadening the definition

1. Address the interconnectedness of climate security and food security

Climate security and food security are closely linked, as climate change disrupts agriculture and food supply chains, causing scarcity, power imbalances, rising prices, displacement, and conflicts.

2. Approach to solve structural inequalities and vulnerabilities

Examining structural inequities and entitlement systems in food production reveals social, political, and economic vulnerabilities that shape agency, governance responses to climate stress, and power dynamics, ultimately impacting sustainability and resilience.

3. Taking people-centered approach for food security

Incorporating agency, sustainability, and resilience allows for a focus on individual and group behaviors within climate-society interactions, helping identify decision-making mechanisms shaped by climate risks and the complexity of dynamic social-ecological processes.

Connecting concepts to real-world issues

Findings from field survey in Iloilo and Palawan, Philippines:

- Climate change is severely impacting agriculture and fisheries, exacerbating disparities between those who can access government support and those who cannot.
- Additionally, socio-economic challenges such as unequal land ownership, limited irrigation infrastructure, and restricted access to fishing grounds further disadvantage small-scale producers, increasing their vulnerability to climate change—challenges that government policies often fail to resolve.

National policies to empower small-scale holders toward climate-resilient agriculture/fishery practices are essential. These policies should include addressing structural inequalities and imbalances in the distribution of resources.



Thank you very much for your attention!

