

# Bridging inequalities in food systems for sustainability and multidimensional poverty alleviation

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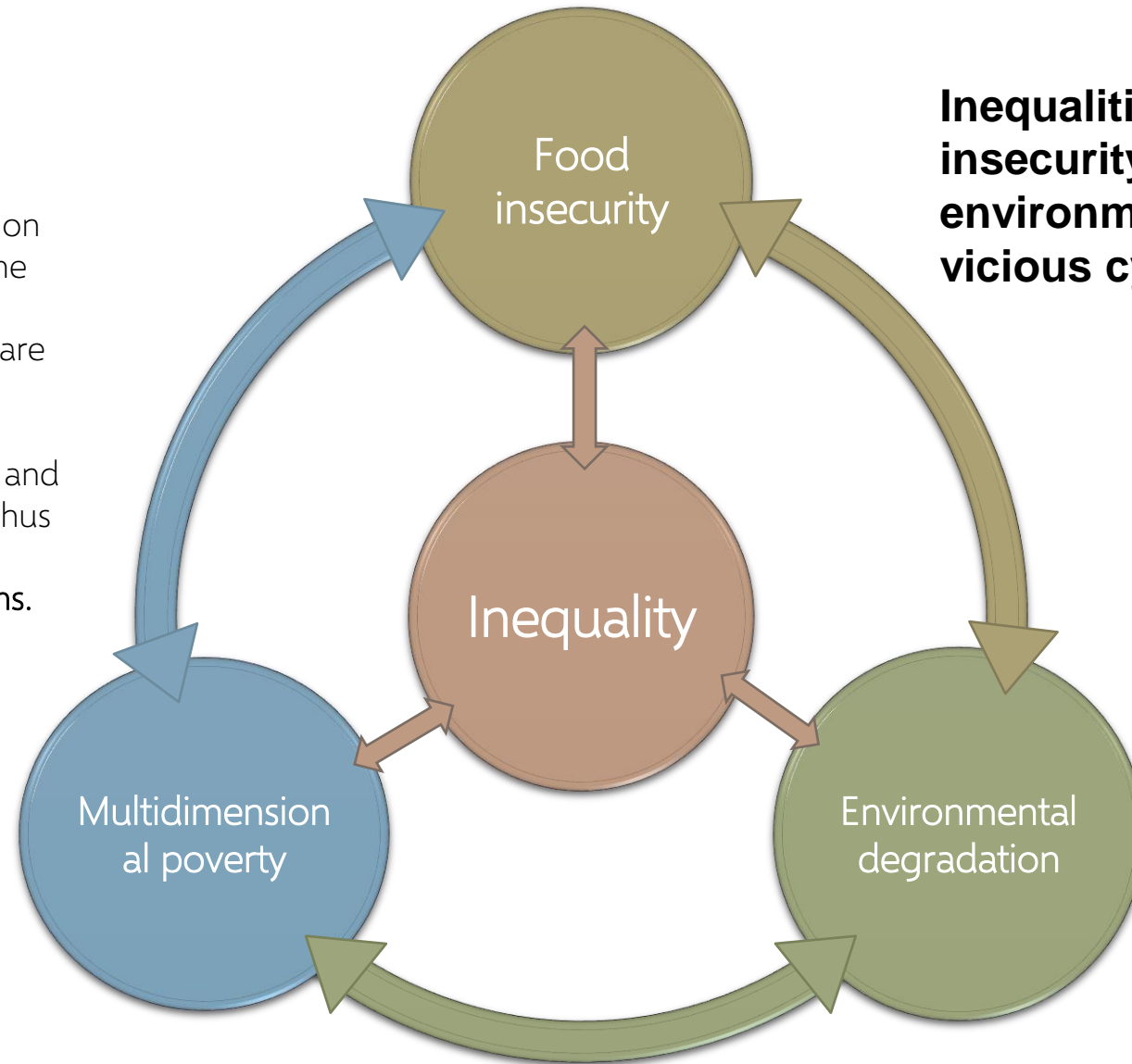


Food systems in the Arab region are failing to meet food security, poverty reduction, and sustainability goals

## Arab

Indicator		World	Arab			Trend	
		Latest	2010	2015	Latest		
Code	Description	Value	Value	Value	Value	Year	latest vs 2015
<b>CORE INDICATORS</b>							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) - %	9.2	10.5	n.a.	12.3	2021	
CO2	Food insecurity (R) - %	29.6	n.a.	n.a.	38.1	2021	
CO3	Obesity (R) - %	13.1	24.6	24.9	28.4	2016	●
CO4	Child stunting (R) - %	22.3	23.6	20.5	19.0	2022	●
<b>AVAILABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
AV1	Yield gap - %	n.a.	59.5	52.7	56.7	2021	●
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	0.5	0.23	0.23	n.a.		
AV3	Dietary energy supply - %	124.0	126.5	127.6	126.7	2021	●
AV4	Import dependency (R) - %	-1.7	61.1	55.2	n.a.		
<b>ACCESS INDICATORS</b>							
AC1	Poverty (R) - %	26.2	33.0	29.8	32.0	2022	●
AC2	Food expenditure (R) - %	n.a.	37.1	n.a.	31.5	2021	
AC3	Logistics - index	3.0	2.6	n.a.	2.7	2022	
AC4	Inflation (R) - %	8.3	6.8	5.1	25.4	2022	●
<b>UTILIZATION INDICATORS</b>							
UT1	Water &/or sanitation access - %	84.0	81.8	84.6	86.3	2020	●
UT2	Starchy food (R) - (kcal/cap/day)	51.0	47.7	56.8	56.7	2019	●
UT3	Healthy diet (R) - %	3.7	n.a.	n.a.	3.6	2021	
UT4	Women anaemia (R) - %	29.9	34.0	33.0	33.3	2019	●
<b>STABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
ST1	Food stock - (1000t)	50016.0	-260.1	306.9	-1850.2	2021	●
ST2	Political stability - ranking	n.a.	20.0	16.9	15.8	2021	●
ST3	Production variability (R) - 1000\$/capita	2.6	13.9	10.0	13.2	2020	●
ST4	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	3.0	33.3	49.5	36.6	2021	●
<b>AGENCY INDICATORS</b>							
AG1	Income inequality (R) - %	n.a.	3.7	3.7	3.7	2021	●
AG2	Gender inequality (R) - %	0.5	0.52	0.47	0.47	2021	●
AG3	Inequality in education (R) - index	21.7	25.8	27.6	33.3	2021	●
AG4	Voice & accountability - ranking	n.a.	14.8	16.5	14.6	2021	●
<b>SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
SU1	Agriculture water (%) (R)	n.a.	173.9	223.3	n.a.		
SU2	Land cover - index	100.0	80.6	100.0	n.a.		
SU3	Agroecological footprint (R) - bio ha	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.3	2022	●
SU4	Food waste (R) - index	121.0	n.a.	n.a.	140.9	2021	

- Poverty is one of the highest predictors of food insecurity.
- Poor mother and child nutrition have long-lasting effects in the lives of the poor. Children experiencing food insecurity are more likely to suffer from cognitive and health issues leading to lower educational and professional outcomes, and thus **perpetuating poverty and inequalities across generations.**



## **Inequalities perpetuate food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation vicious cycles**

- Lack of access to resources, (including water and land) can hinder sustainable agricultural practices and excludes vulnerable communities.
- Lack of income can force people to resort to unsustainable practices like overfishing or deforestation.
- Vulnerable communities often have less resources for climate change adaptation.
- Environmental degradation leads to loss of rural livelihoods and lower food production.

# Relationship between food security and inequality

4 pillars of food security	Existing inequalities	Indicators	Level of analysis	Outcomes
Availability	Unequal per capita calorie supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dietary energy supply</li> <li>• Food losses and waste [%]</li> <li>• Wheat yields [%]</li> <li>• Water used in agriculture [%]</li> <li>• Government's investment in agriculture</li> <li>• Wheat import dependency [%]</li> </ul>	Region Country	Inequality in undernourishment, obesity and food insecurity
	Unequal ability to produce food			
	Unequal ability to import food			
Access	Unequal capacity to acquire food due to economic constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty rates [%]</li> <li>• Unemployment rates [%]</li> <li>• Share of food consumption expenditure in total household consumption expenditure [%]</li> <li>• Inflation [%]</li> <li>• Logistics performance index</li> </ul>	Household	
	Unequal capacity to acquire food due to physical constraints			
Utilization	Unequal access to sanitation and clean water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to sanitation [%]</li> <li>• Access to drinking water [%]</li> <li>• Women's anaemia [%]</li> <li>• Stunted children [%]</li> <li>• Wasted children [%]</li> </ul>	Household Intrahousehold	
	Unequal consumption of sufficient and nutritious food			
Stability	Unequal vulnerability to shocks and ability to recover	Climate risk	Region Country Household Intrahousehold	
		Economic risk		
		Political risk		



# Inequalities producing and importing food

- The Arab region produces less than half of the food it consumes. Due to physical and environmental constraints, most countries are and will likely remain **dependent on global food markets**.
- **Agriculture** represents a higher share of GDP in poorer countries, and they are often less able to invest in **climate change** mitigation measures and less able to compensate reduced agricultural production by increasing imports.
  - The share of people employed in agriculture: Somalia (80%), Sudan (38%), compared to UAE (1%) and Bahrain (1%).
  - Ratio of food imports over total merchandise exports: Somalia (409%), Yemen (225%); Qatar (4%) and UAE (5%).
- The Arab region has one of the most unequal farm size distributions in the world: 10% of farms holds 60% of agricultural area.
- There are big gender inequalities in land ownership, with low proportions of female landholders.

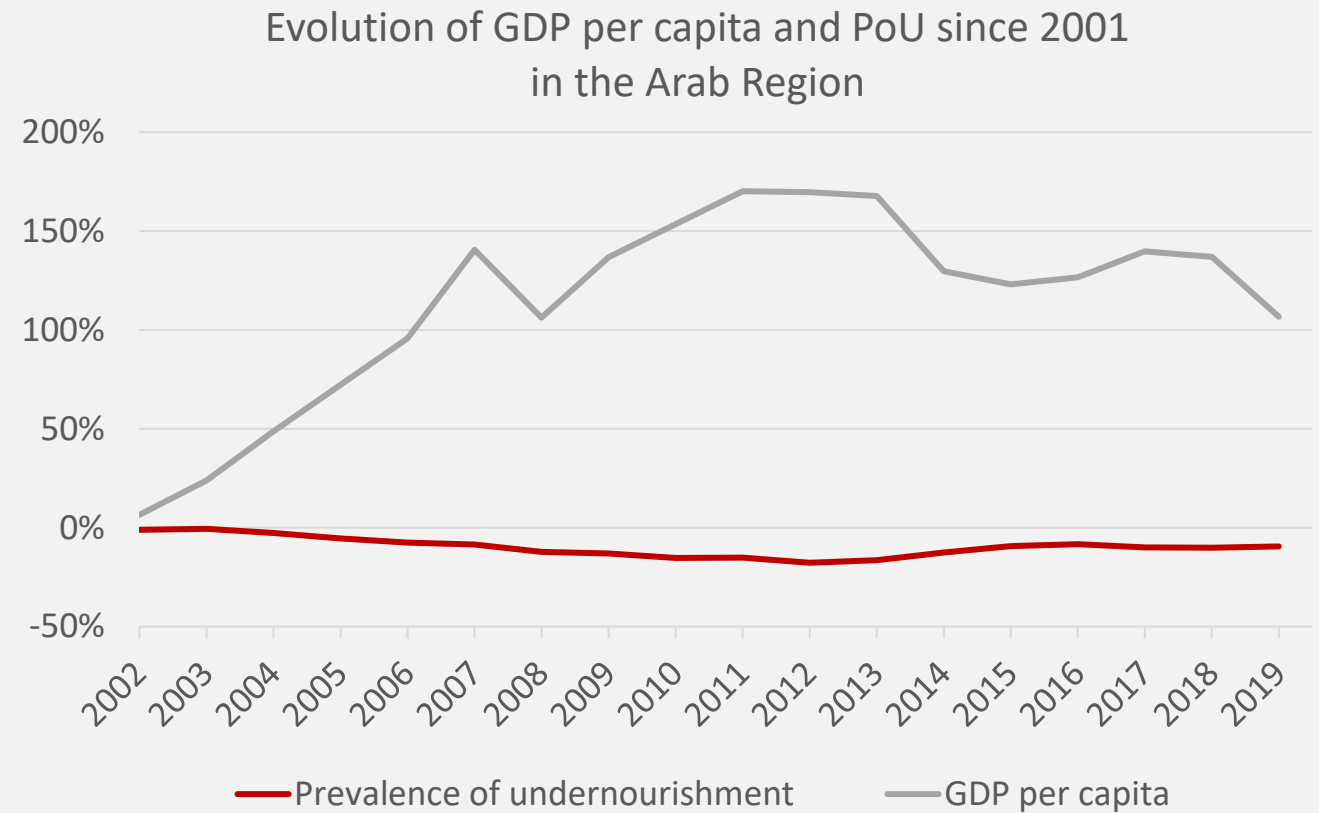


# Inequalities accessing to food

Within countries, poorer populations spend less on food in absolute terms, but food represents a higher share of their income than for the wealthy. In Egypt in 2020:

- Food expenditures represented 40.55% of the poor's budget, compared with 13.37% for the rich.
- Meat expenditures by the wealthy were higher than poor households' total expenditure, including healthcare, education, and rent.

Increases in wealth in the last decades have not translated into reductions of undernourishment. Inequality dynamics can result in economic benefits not reaching the lower deciles of the population, keeping undernourishment levels stagnant.



# Inequal ability to recover from shocks

**Vulnerable populations are more susceptible to shocks, experience more damage when the shock happens, and have fewer resources to recover. This process exacerbates existing inequalities, making the poorer countries and households poorer as a result of shocks.**

- **CLIMATE SHOCKS:** The Arab region is one of the most affected areas by climate change. This disproportionately affects poorer countries with lower resources to adapt their agricultural systems and to poorer farmers, who depend mainly on rainfall. Shocks from extreme weather events are being experienced and are likely to worsen in the upcoming years.
- **ECONOMIC SHOCKS:** The increase in food and oil prices following the war in Ukraine led to currency devaluations and depletion of foreign reserves in food importing countries. Higher food prices disproportionately impact the poor, who spend a higher share of their income on food.
- **POLITICAL SHOCKS AND CONFLICT.** The Arab region is one of the most fragile and crisis-affected regions in the world. Food insecurity and conflict are in a mutually reinforcing cycle, putting poor households and displaced populations at particular risk of food insecurity.



## Reducing inequalities in food systems can have important effects at alleviating poverty and improving environmental sustainability.

### Potential actions:

- Adopt a food systems approach to understand drivers and vulnerabilities and enable the development of resilient food systems at national and household levels.
- Empower small-holder farmers: ensure access to agricultural inputs, financing and training; support inclusive value chains promoting fair prices for farmers; empower females in agriculture.
- Ensure equitable access to natural resources, including land.
- Implement agroecological farming practices.
- Targeted interventions for vulnerable populations: school meals for low-income children; targeted cash transfers or food assistance following a crisis; promote maternal, infant and young child nutrition.
- Promote regional solidarity and exchange of good practices.