

Food Systems Sustainability in Southeast Asia

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Key messages and questions

1. There are various representations of food systems in the region.
2. Population growth, urbanization, rising incomes are drivers of the Southeast Asian food system transformation
3. Current food system is not delivering sustainable and healthy diets in low income countries
4. Food system is not resilient to climate change and the current pandemic
5. Why is the current food system failing to support nutrition in Asia?
6. How can current food systems be transformed to sustainable systems to realize desired nutritional outcomes?

1. Representations of Food Systems

Sustainable food systems consist of:

- 1) activities related to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food,
- 2) the market and institutional networks for their governance, and
- 3) the socio-economic and environmental outcomes of these activities.

Supply chain (Fig 1); waste efficient model (Fig 2)



Figure 1. Linear food supply system.

Food systems is a circular model that takes account of waste recovery and nutrient recycling



Figure 2. Circular food system.

Food system is a linear representation of the linkages between food supply and demand activities.

Food environment matters

- Food systems is a recognition that food choices and dietary outcomes are embedded in household/family dynamics and village/regional conditions.

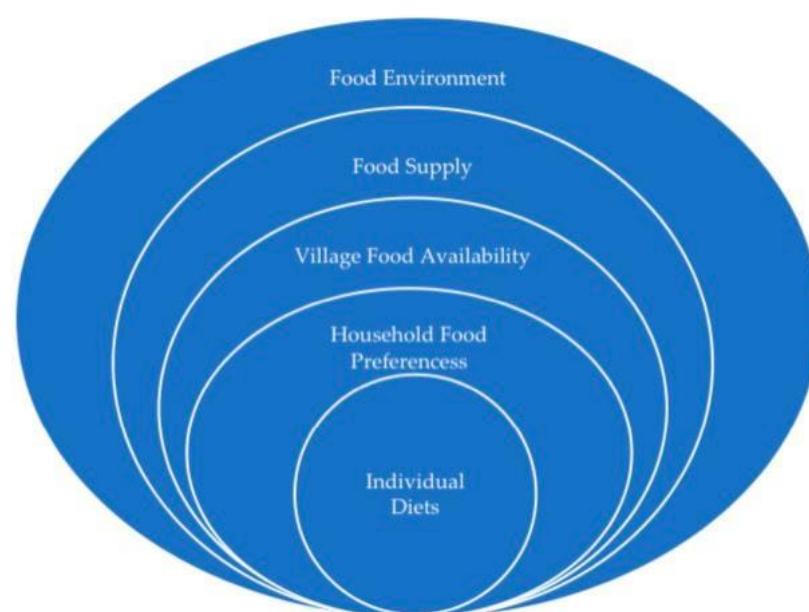


Figure 3. Nested food system.

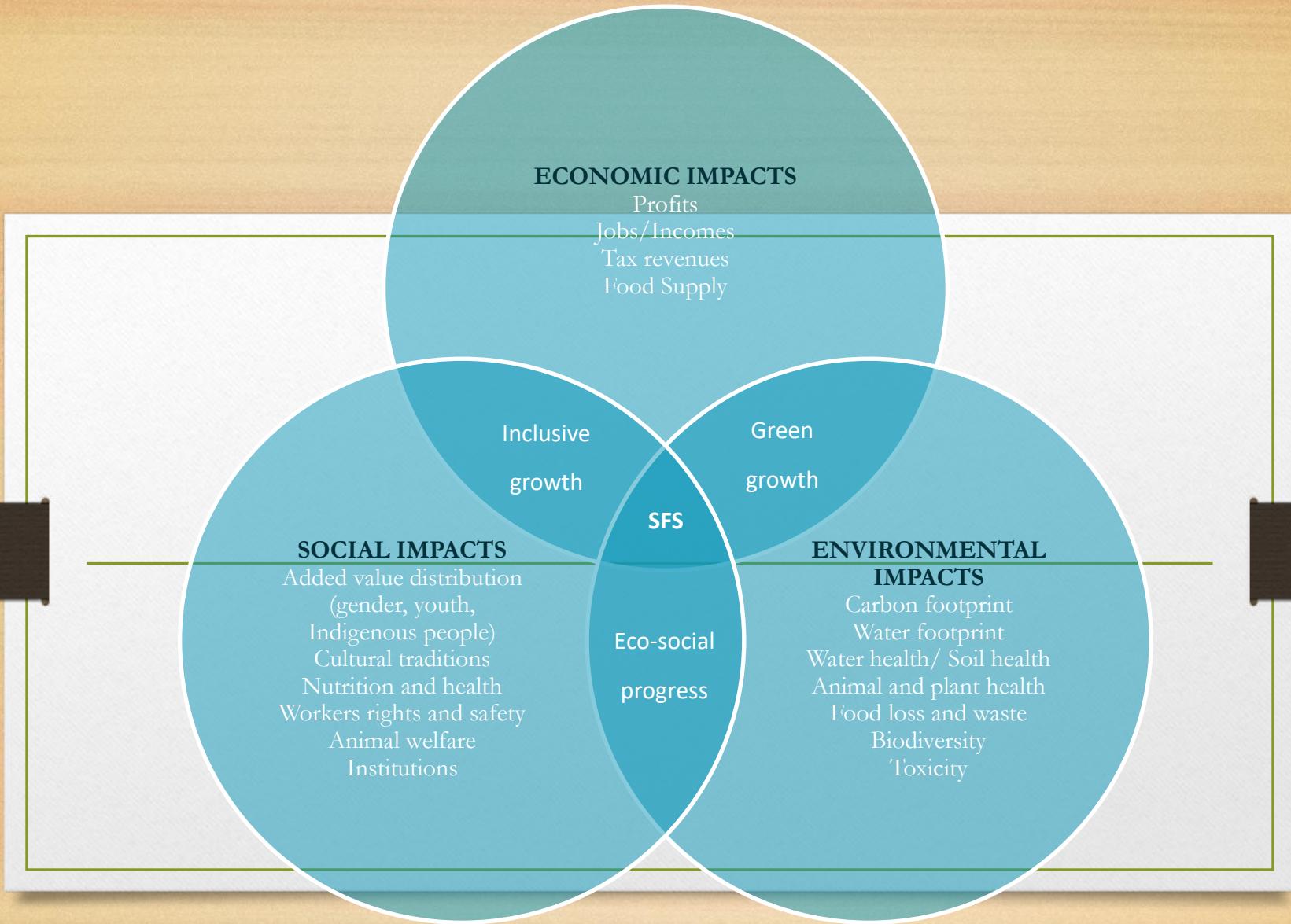


Figure 4 . Sustainability in food systems

Source: FAO. 2018 adapted from FAO, 2014. Sustainable Food System - Concept and Framework.
[<http://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>]

2. Southeast Asian food system transformation

- From cropping system to farming systems
- From small hold to commercial production
- From traditional to modern retail markets
- From production centric to market driven food systems

3. Current food system is not delivering sustainable and healthy diets

- More than 320 million people in Asia live in extreme poverty.
- Around 90% of the 36 million people in Southeast Asia living below the international poverty line are Filipinos and Indonesians.
- 2018 FAO estimates showed that some 486 million people remain undernourished in Asia and the Pacific.
- It is also home to the fastest growing prevalence of childhood obesity in the world.

4. Food system is not resilient to climate change and the current pandemic

- Increasing frequency of climate-related disasters negatively affect food security and nutrition. Malnutrition occurs in evacuation centers.
- Impact of COVID-Unemployment rate in July 2020 was estimated at 10.0 percent, lower than the record high 17.7 percent during April 2020, 5.4 % in July 2019.(Philippines)
- Jobs in the informal sector, the micro, small and medium enterprises were the most adversely affected.
- An estimated 7.6 million Filipino households were hungry due to lack of food at least once during the height of the coronavirus pandemic

5. But why is the current food system failing to support nutrition in Southeast Asia?

- There is high transactions cost across the supply chain.
- Lack of institutional mechanisms for integrative programs
- Lack employment opportunities that can reduce inequality
- Lack of social protection policies to ensure resilient food system.

6. Transformation to sustainable food systems:

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- Transdisciplinary approach to improving food systems -engage academe, private sector- civil society partnerships, government
 - Strengthen food system governance at the national level
 - Mainstream disaster and climate risk management in agriculture for resilient food systems- local actions

Vision to 2050 and beyond

Sustainable food system, healthy
diet, happy people, bountiful world.