

## Transforming Food Systems for Climate-Resilient Food Security in Pakistan

The [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 2](#) sets ambitions to end hunger by 2030. Target SDG 2.4 states that by 2030 sustainable food production systems should be transformed using resilient agricultural practices to maintain local ecosystems, strengthen climate change adaptation while also increasing productivity and production. However, in 2024 Pakistan remains far behind in achieving these SDG targets. With [24%](#) of its population (or 8.6 million people) facing high levels of acute food insecurity, Pakistan stands out as one of the [most food insecure countries](#) in the South Asia. Additionally, climate change and extreme weather events continue to strain the populations' ability to afford and access nutritious foods. Significant policy reforms, strengthened advocacy on food systems, improved resilient agricultural practices across the value chain and integrated approaches remain essential to reducing food insecurity and progressing towards SDG targets.

Agriculture in Pakistan is foundational to livelihood needs, strengthening economic development and ensuring the availability and affordability of nutritious foods amongst the population. With an agrarian economy, [47%](#) of Pakistan's land is classified as agricultural across 12 agro-ecological zones with vast irrigation network growing more than [35 crop types](#) and livestock. Pakistan is the [8<sup>th</sup> largest producer of wheat](#) in the world and [4<sup>th</sup> largest exporter of rice](#) in the world. According to the [World Bank](#), agriculture accounts for 23% of GDP and 40% of all employment in Pakistan. Of the 15% of women in the workforce, 67% are employed in the agriculture sector.

However, according to the [Global Climate Risk Index](#) (2021), Pakistan is ranked the 8<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country to climate change. Climate change and frequent natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, storms, and heat waves have negatively impacted agricultural productivity and livestock in Pakistan. The 2022 floods, in particular, caused substantial loss and damages to Pakistan's economy, reversing progress by several years. Floods led to the destruction of about 9.4 million acres of cultivated land and 1.2 million livestock. Similarly, extreme heat waves also reduced overall crop production by [9%](#), leading to a significant reduction in food supply in markets, which also resulted in higher prices. The economic downturn and food inflation increased poverty levels across all sections of society.

These economic and climatic events have further challenged the majority of Pakistanis from accessing and affording a healthy diet. While the cost of a ['healthy diet'](#) is [USD 3.89 per person](#) per day, approximately [40% of people](#) (96 million) have a daily income below USD 3.65, making it impossible for them to consume a diet that adequately meets their dietary needs. Unaffordability of healthy food has created a state of nutritional and health crisis, particularly affecting the vulnerable population, i.e., women and children. In [2018-19](#), 18% of households were undernourished, with majority found in urban areas (23%) as compared to rural areas (16%). In 2024, undernourishment has now risen to [20% of households](#). This rising rate of malnutrition and food insecurity has adverse implications on health, education, infrastructure among other sectors which contribute to poor human development and lower productivity in all fields.

Pakistan's ['National Food Security Policy, 2018'](#) was developed with the aim to alleviate poverty, eradicate hunger and malnutrition by promoting sustainable food production system. The policy aimed to achieve a 4% annual growth in the agriculture sector. It focused on improving the quality and availability of agricultural inputs, promoting dietary diversity and food affordability, and enhancing post-harvest management and value addition. The strategy also focused on sustainable resource use, increasing women's participation in agriculture, and fostering innovative livelihood practices through Public-Private Partnerships. The Government of Pakistan's commitment to the UN Food System Summit and its development of core action

tracks towards a sustainable food system also promised action towards SDG target 2.4. However, the rising food insecurity, food inflation and continued threats of climate change indicate that serious policy reform and action is needed to strengthen Pakistan's progress towards a resilient food system.

Providing examples both from within Pakistan and within the regional context, this panel will be focusing on the following key questions to explore necessary actions towards strengthening Pakistan's food system:

- Why is it important to review and revise Pakistan's 'National Food Security Policy, 2018' in view of the changing realities and linking it to the 2021 Food System Summit recommendations and key pathways to ensure year-round availability of affordable, healthy and nutritious diet for all?
- What factors are hindering implementation of food security and related policies, and how can we address these challenges through effective implementation plans at both national and sub-national levels, along with solid financial and business strategies?
- How can stakeholders enhance upward advocacy for resilient food systems to address climate challenges and promote food security?
- What are some global best practices where integrated programmes lead to improved outcomes across multiple sectors, such as adaptive and nutrition-sensitive social safety nets, resilient livelihoods, school-based programmes, and food fortification?

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