

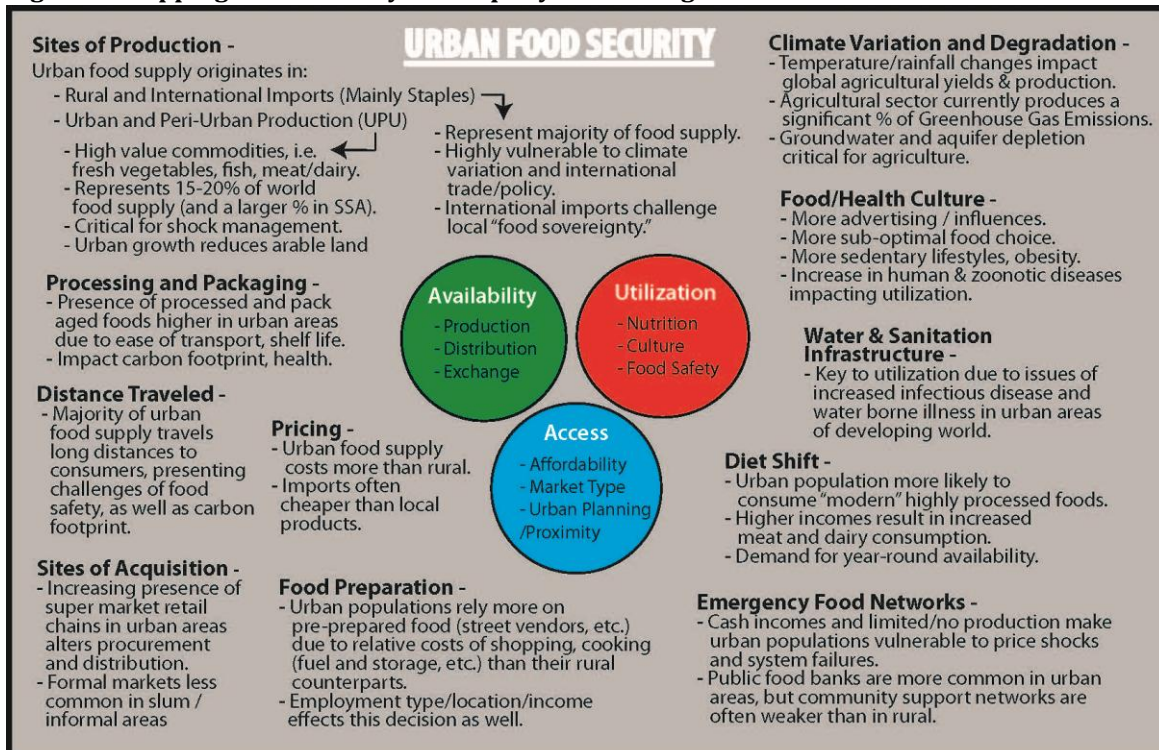
Food Security 101

FOOD SECURITY AND URBANIZATION: AN OVERVIEW

Spikes in the price of food in 2008 and again in 2010 and 2011 added approximately 200 million people to the ranks of the hungry and malnourished in the world. The spikes contributed to urban food riots, political unrest, and awakened society to the reality that the current trajectory in food production and distribution is likely unsustainable. Urbanization and growth of the global middle class, primarily in countries like China and India, are among the most important contributors to the crisis. Other causes include climate change, growth of global markets, price speculation, export embargoes, and a two-decade long decline in investment in agriculture. Undeniably, the problem is partly manmade. Sustainably increasing the global food supply, while simultaneously prioritizing the accessibility and affordability of nutritious food at the local level, thus represents a defining challenge of the 21st century.

As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) World Food Summit in 1996, food security requires that *“all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.”* Figure 1 delineates the multiple dimensions of this topic, highlighting three key core concerns — food production, access, and utilization — and outlines their associated challenges. Thus, in focusing on the impact of urbanization on food security, one may look to a truly broad range of critical issues, ranging from the economic, including questions of supply and demand; the environmental, including questions of the location (e.g. food sheds) and natural systems (e.g. climate, water, soil); to the social, including health (e.g. diet), food access (price and distribution centers) and governance, including global, national, and local policies affecting food security.

Figure 1: Mapping Food Security in a Rapidly Urbanizing World



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Food for the Cities](#) discusses the link between food security, urbanization, and the particular burden this places on the urban poor, women and children.
- [Food and Agriculture: the Future of Sustainability](#) illustrates how leading thinkers imagine our future food and agriculture world, highlighting significant trends and the important priorities in the next 20 years to ensure sustainable food and agriculture systems.
- [Foreign Policy's Food Issue](#) details the global ramifications of a world with increasingly volatile food production.
- [Witness to Hunger](#) is a project about the participation and action of those who know firsthand the experience of raising a child on a limited income. The photographers of the project are mothers and caregivers of young children who used digital cameras to frame the issues most important to them and to their children.
- [Food studies at Penn](#) include events and other on-campus resources dedicated to exploring food issues.

¹ FAO World Food Summit, 2006. Accessed at: <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/>