Transitioning to sustainable food security—A focus on rung 2 interventions

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We have never been food secure...

Socially just food security enables all people in all places to have the food they need to live their best life and does so without shame, stigma, and stress.

The current commercialised and industrialised food system:

- evens out some vulnerabilities

- replaces this insecurity with new forms of vulnerability while maintaining and deepening others:

  - Diet-related poor health, market dependence and financial barriers, loss of food skills and knowledge, reduced diet diversity

  - Social inequalities linked to prejudice, policy inequalities, and physical and mental abilities

And there are additional secondary harms: Social isolation, fractured communities, environmental degradation, escalating crime

Adult Food Insecurity in England
Food and You 2: Wave 6 (Autumn 2023)

Gender, Ethnicity, Age
- 24% of adults
- 26% of women and 22% of men
- 36% of BAME, 22% of White
- 50% of age under 29, 29% 3-44, 21% 45-64, 27% over 65

Geography
- 27% urban, 15% rural
- 40% of IMD1, 26% IMD2, 28% IMD3, 18% IMD4, 11% IMD5

Marriage and children
- 15% married/partnership, 33% not married/partnership
- 37% of people with children, 19% no children

Employment
- 25% of working people, 45% non-working, 7% retired
- 40% income <£32K, 18% £32-64K

Diet and Health
- 26% non-meat eaters, 23% of meat eaters
- 25% with a food hypersensitivity, 24% w/no FH
- 31% with LTHC, 20% no LTHC

Food Insecurity: Compounding effects

Effect	New Barriers
Lack of local availability	Increases *cost* of food access though transport cost and/or purchase from small shops.
	Reduces diet diversity, what can be carried home easily, what is available in the small shops, leading to poor diet and diet related ill health
Poverty Entrenchment	poor physical and cognitive function arising from inadequate nutrition, low productivity.
Lack of social networks	Reliance on commercial services to access food increases cost
	Reduces desire to cook and eat healthy meals→ malnutrition (e.g. older people living alone).
	Loneliness
Lack of community	Reduced social cohesion, fear of crime, vulnerability to crime, reduced political participation. Inability to participate in shared social values of thrift and environmental sustainability.
Loss of food knowledges	Reduced diet →environmental impact
	Reduced uptake of fruit and vegetables→Diet related disease.
	Reduced food literacy → reduced capability, Narrow diets (microbiome threat)
Complex needs	Poor physical and mental health, reduced mobility, reduced physical capability
Social exclusion	Food insecurity disproportionately impacts certain groups.

Increasing capabilities for household food security through interventions

- Not all food support activity is the same
- All use food, but the doing of these interventions involves different forms of organisation involving:
  - Objects including different foods
  - People, their situations, roles and the interactions between them
  - Places and what else is in those places
  - Narratives
- How the activity is organised matters to the outcomes and what kind of transitions can be achieved.
- Must also be matched to people's current situations but move them onward

Food Ladders:

Local-scale interventions work alongside national policy shifts.
*Three rungs on each ladder.
*Mobilise the more than nutrient and calorie aspects of food
*Multiple ladders, each addressing a different resource domain (Food skills and knowledge, health, economic, social)
*Places need complete ladders that join up activity and move people on

Rung 1: Catching—Crisis support enables ability to cope (does for).

Rung 2: Capacity building—Vulnerable to crisis, enables adapting through education, and sharing. Lower stigma (does with), accessible choices.

Rung 3: Self-organising for community change—Transformation from a recipient or content user to a content provider (does by). Can be a commercial product or a social good.

#FoodLadders @GeoFoodieOrg

Where activity sits on the Food Ladders

	Catching (do for)	Capacity building (do with)	Transforming (do by)
Food	Emergency support: Food parcel, soup kitchen	Activities that expand food literacy. E.g., cooking lessons, pantry schemes that expose people to new food items, and children's food literacy.	Activities that diversify the foodscape to meet all local food needs and/or create positive relationships with food. Sustainability.
Social	Mental health support, befriending groups,	Regular activities that bring people together to develop meaningful social networks. Breakfast clubs, afterschool clubs, craft sessions, social eating, and pantry schemes.	Self-organized activity, Social ties that look out for each other.
Economic	Free food to meet basic needs, crisis support. Signposting to services e.g., housing, welfare, Cash to pay for food/bills	Interventions that: stretch budgets, enable the practice of thrift, build financial literacy, improve credit (e.g., micro-loans), and increase employability and business skills development. Subsidy to help markets get established. Business incubators and start-up grants. Micro-enterprise incubators.	Local procurement and community agriculture, managed marketplaces markets, living wage jobs, reinvestment in place., cooperative buying clubs, fair distribution of costs and benefits.
Health	Medication/Medical intervention. Vouchers for fruit and vegetables. Prescription fruit and veg.	Interventions that provide health information, exercise and or movement, and social prescribing activities, such as gardening. Nutritional literacy. Interventions with retailers to shift toward healthier food.	School food procurement to achieve health and welfare standards. Use of planning and council tax levers to enhance foodscapes.

Different approaches utilise resources differently and have different outcomes

Food bank

- Charity-free food

- Sharp division between volunteers and recipients, does for

- Tinned food to meet immediate hunger needs, narrow food offer

- Referrals to other services

- Deficit-based, demonstrate lack or neediness

- Stigma

- Meets an immediate calorific need with low skills, financial or infrastructure needs

Larder, pantry, social supermarket, food club

- Not-for-profit exchange relationship

- Community: boundaries are blurred, does with

- Longer-term support, with curated food offers to stretch budgets, improve diets and provide access to a diversity of foods

- Access to other services, training, and development

- Promotes self-efficacy and recognises assets

- Place-based, catching and preventing

- Acceptable

- Increases access to the resources needed to be food secure in the longer term

Pantry model: Uses food as a multi-faceted resource...

Food: Nutrition and Diversity

Social: commensality, engagement, reciprocity, belonging

Mental and Physical: well-being, health

Values: Skills, Participation, Thrift, Sustainability

Problem	Direct outcome	Indirect outcome
Access to food in low-income communities (food deserts).	Majority of charities that receive food from FS are in LSOA's in the 20% most deprived (FS data); Food Deserts at MSOA level (CDRC 2020)	Improved food security via proximity to food, reduced need to travel (poverty premium, transport). (See also Corfe and Keohane 2018, Finney and Davies. 2020)
Narrow diets are more likely in low-income households (Food Standards Agency 2007)	Charities receive a wide range of foods including foods considered unusual in local contexts Cooking skills are being increased through cooking lessons, recipe sharing, demonstration.	People are trying new foods (Blake 2020); People are more confident to try new foods (Diet Diversity is a driver for addressing climate change (Khoury et al 2019). Address environmental problems (Maynard and Tweedle 2021). Improves capability and reduces social exclusion.
Isolation and eating alone, malnutrition	food to social eating projects, Pantry schemes	People who eat together are more likely to live longer and better lives (Dunbar 2017) and creates social connections (Marovelli 2019, Julier 2013) Health costs saved are about £6000 pp over 10 years (McDaid, Park and Fernandes 2017). Increase capacity to be food secure.
Lack of fruit and vegetables in diets	Evidence from Your local Pantry indicate improved diets and greater access to fruit and veg (Maynard and Tweedie 2021). Increase affordability of fruit and veg.	Holiday clubs improve food literacy and increase access to healthy food access (Stretsky et al 2020, Defeyter et al 2015). Remove financial barriers to a healthy diet (Food Foundation 2018, Morris et al 2014). Improves mental well-being and general health (White et al. 2013). Thereby increasing capacity to be food secure. Enables nutritional adequacy
Disconnected community	Provide food to community groups	Offer further services and act as brokers and are a site of social interaction (Small 2006, Blake 2019). Pantry and social eating projects enable practices of care (Smith et al. 2020).
Inability to afford food	Food to projects that stretch budgets	Are also struggling with other household necessities (Healey 2019). Food support provides a way to stretch budgets (Blake 2020, Maynard and Tweedie 2021) and demonstrate thrift (Miller 1998). Increases affordability and social inclusion.
Lack of opportunities to be involved in community life	Providing food to community organizations enables their ability to exist (Blake 2019; Natsen). Many provide volunteering opportunities.	Volunteering has several positive benefits regarding community cohesion, addressing isolation, and improving participation in democratic processes and decision-making (DDCMS, 2020).
Lack of ability to engage reciprocally	Provide food to community projects that would not otherwise exist	Reciprocity is a human need and attribute and is a defining aspect of social life (Molm 2010). As such it is an important contributor to wellbeing.
Poverty	Provide food to breakfast clubs, increase access to food	Improved engagement with school, ability to perform at school and work because of better concentration, socialization, reduces likelihood of poverty. (FAO 2008, White et al 2013, Blake 2019).

Food banks and Food Pantries in England
Food and You 2: Wave 6 (Autumn 2023)

Knowledge and use of food clubs:

- 86% of all adults know what a food club is
- 32% of those with no knowledge are food insecure
- 87% of people who are food secure know about food clubs, 80% who are not know about food clubs
- 14% of food insecure adults use a food club, 13% use a food bank

		No services	Pantry Only	Foodbank only	Both
Variations among food insecure users and strategy:	All Food Insecure	80%	7%	6%	7%
	BAME	69%	9%	7%	16%
	Working	84%	7%	5%	4%
	Not Working	69%	8%	10%	12%
Less likely to use strategy	Income <£32K	77%	8%	7%	9%
Similar to the food-insecure population	LTHC	67%	8%	11%	12%
More likely to use strategy	No Meat Diet	84%	8%	4%	3%
	Food allergy	81%	10%	2%	7%
	IMD1	69%	13%	7%	11%

Still some gaps...

- There are still many questions about food insecure people's food strategies. Also, it needs to be clarified if those who use both are doing so simultaneously or if they are switching from one to the other.

- While pantries are increasingly common, and some indications that they are more acceptable for some groups, we don't know where they are, so it is not clear if use would be higher if coverage were more excellent.

- Pantries are variable, and understanding how or if these differences matter is needed—some qualitative research indicates some additional activities are more useful/acceptable than others.

- It is great that there is now a pantry question in Food and You 2, but the survey sample is small (approx. 6K adults across England, Wales, NI), so it is difficult to look within groups. Cannot determine sub-national LA geographies.

To learn more:

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Film: https://timeforgeography.co.uk/videos_list/resource-management/food-surplus-security/

Blog and links to publications, recorded presentations, and media appearances: http://Geofoodie.org

Link to Food and You 2 research on food insecurity Autumn 2021: http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25425.81766