COLUMBIA CLIMATE SCHOOL
Climate, Earth, and Society

Food Systems and Sustainability

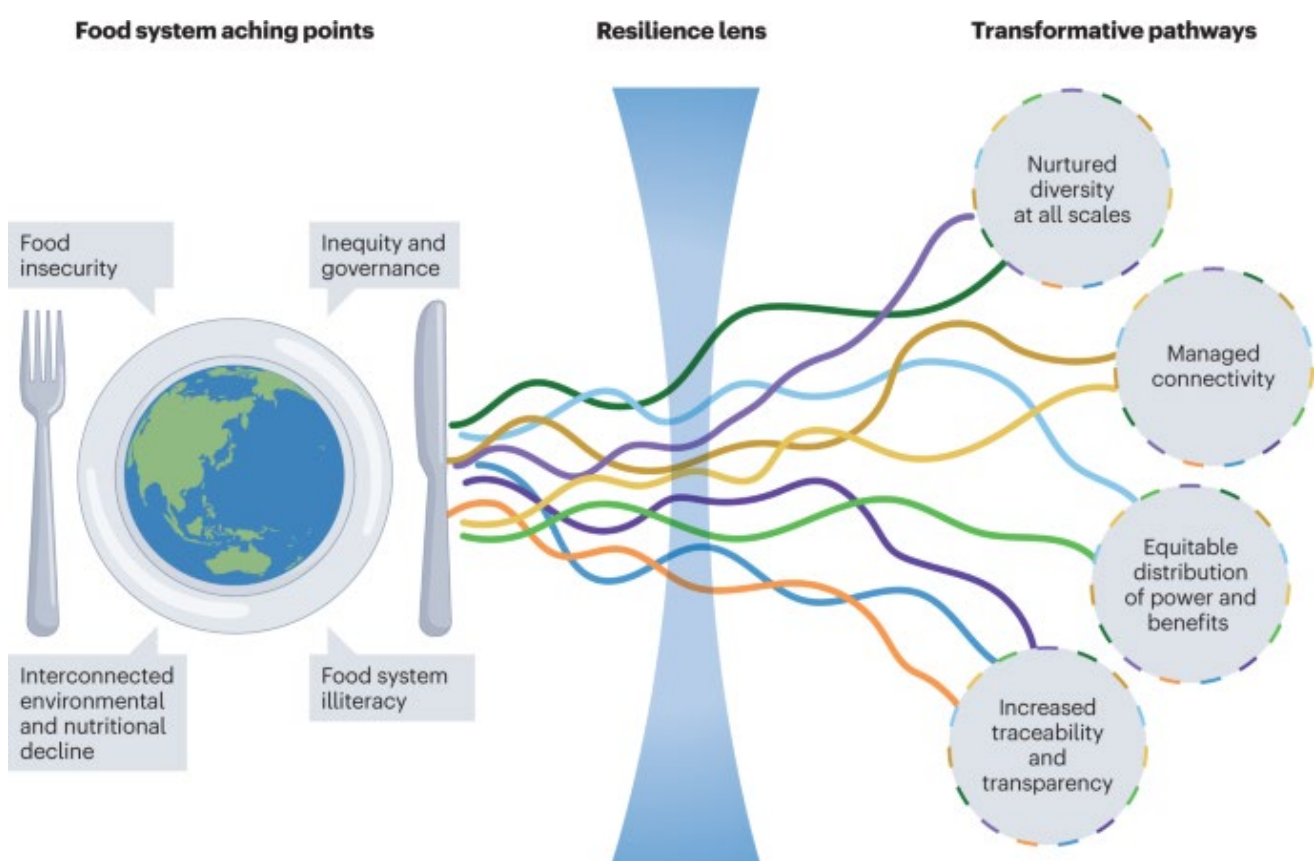
30th Anniversary of the Food Forum

Jessica Fanzo, PhD
Professor of Climate
Director, Food for Humanity Initiative
Interim Director, International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI)

- I have no conflicts of interest.

Biggest Advancements in the past 30 years in food systems

- **Alignment** on what is a healthy diet
- **Accounting** for those who are hungry and where there are inequities
- **Amount** of research and amplification of “food systems” research and action
- **Acceleration** of sound science influencing public health policy (e.g. trans fats)
- **Ability** to advance the field to new frontiers – microbiome, ultra-processed foods, alt-proteins
- **Acknowledgment** that human and planetary health starts with food systems



Wood, A., et al 2023. Reframing the local–global food systems debate through a resilience lens. *Nature Food*, *4*(1), pp.22-29.

“It’s easy to see the beginnings of things, and harder to see the ends.”

– Joan Didion, Slouching Towards Bethlehem

We have more knowledge than ever before

"The risks of making well intentioned but inappropriate policy choices are much smaller than the risks of using a lack of evidence as an argument for inaction."

--UN HLPE report on food systems and nutrition (2017)

NY Times -https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html

1. We need to sort ourselves out along with our messages

Different narratives about the failure of food systems.

The state of play	What is the failure about?	What is threatened and needs to be fixed?	Where do the priorities for action stand?
"our food system is failing us"	Inability of the system to feed the future world population	Food security	Closing the yield gap
	Inability of the system to deliver a healthy diet	Nutrition security and health	Closing the nutrient gap and ensuring the quality of diet
	Inability of the system to produce equal and equitable benefits	Social justice, democratic process, small-scale actors	Decentralization, grass-roots autonomy
	Unsustainability of the system and its impact on the environment	Natural resources, agrobiodiversity, energy-water-carbon efficiency	Reducing the food-print of the system on the environment

Béné, C., et al 2019. When food systems meet sustainability–Current narratives and implications for actions. *World Development*, *113*, pp.116-130.

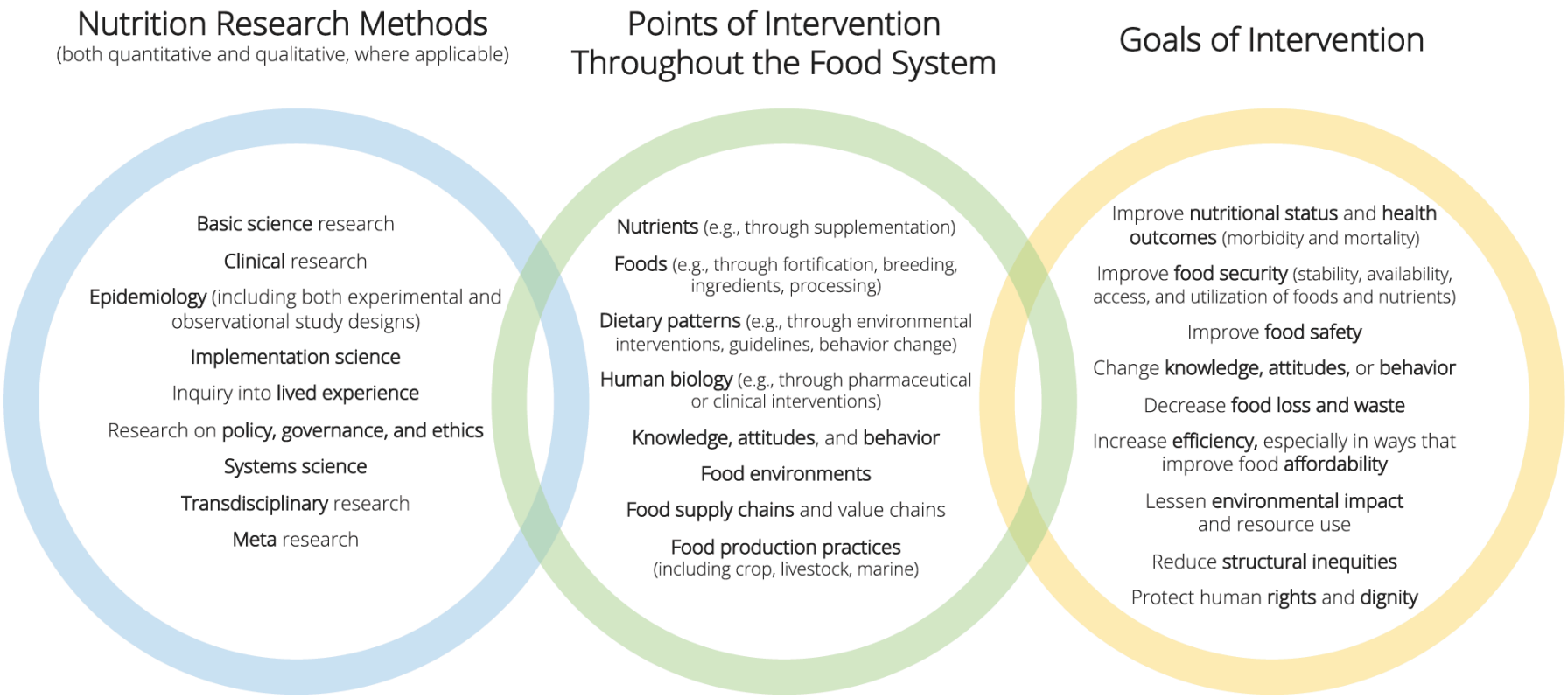
2. We need to fill gaps in knowledge

- Understand ***how*** food systems will impact diets, nutrition, and health outcomes in ***different contexts***, with ***different drivers***, with ***different political and societal transitions***, and the potential implications for environments and overall planetary health.
- Ensure the generation of evidence includes a "***nutrition lens***" and disentangles the ***bidirectional relationship*** between the environment and human diets, nutrition, and health.
- Go beyond just understanding associations and impacts to also understanding ***levers of change*** within food systems and how to operate them.

Fanzo, J, et al (2020) The Importance of Food Systems and the Environment for Nutrition. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. In Press

Roadmap for evidence at the intersection of food systems, the environment and nutrition

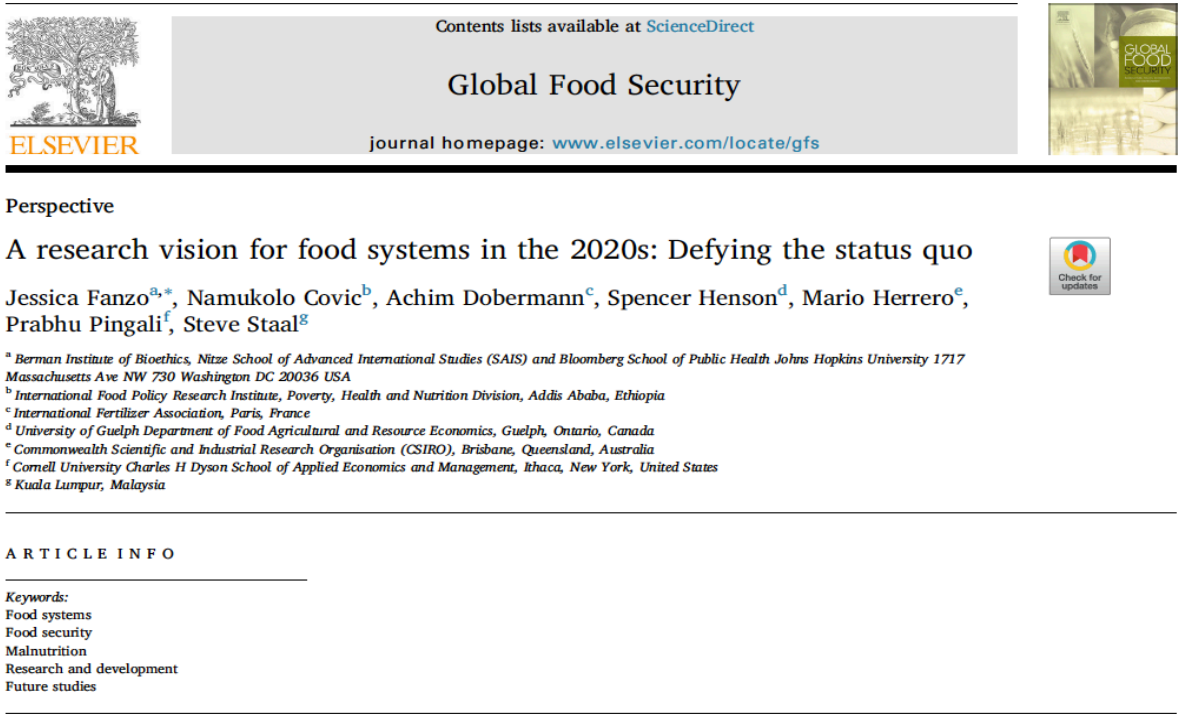
An innovative program of food systems research draws from a range of methods, intervenes on multiple points throughout the food system, and embraces a diversity of goals that support and complement the traditional goal of improving nutritional status and health outcomes.



Fanzo, J, et al (2020) The Importance of Food Systems and the Environment for Nutrition. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. In Press

3. We can’t give up on research and evidence

- At a time when facts and evidence are under ever greater scrutiny, and even openly disregarded as suspect by some political and business leaders, the rigors of science and evidence must be maintained.
- Research has a vital role in charting a positive and sustainable direction for global food security, nutrition, and health.
- Research can and does bring about wholesale changes in attitudes, political thought, and action.



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Perspective

A research vision for food systems in the 2020s: Defying the status quo

Jessica Fanzo[a,*], Namukolo Covic[b], Achim Dobermann[c], Spencer Henson[d], Mario Herrero[e], Prabhu Pingali[f], Steve Staal[g]

[a] Berman Institute of Bioethics, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and Bloomberg School of Public Health Johns Hopkins University 1717 Massachusetts Ave NW 730 Washington DC 20036 USA
[b] International Food Policy Research Institute, Poverty, Health and Nutrition Division, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[c] International Fertilizer Association, Paris, France
[d] University of Guelph Department of Food Agricultural and Resource Economics, Guelph, Ontario, Canada
[e] Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
[f] Cornell University Charles H Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Ithaca, New York, United States
[g] Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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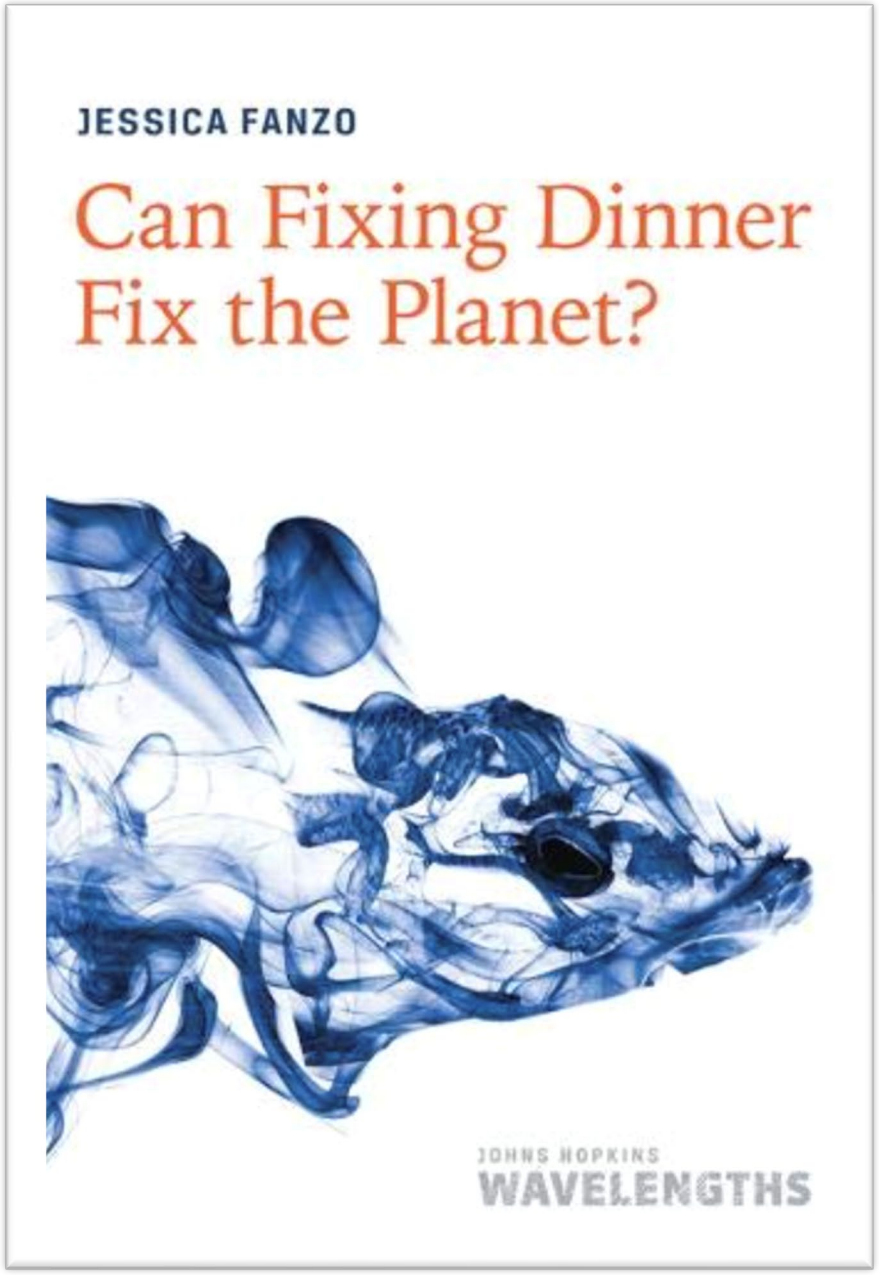
Is a change gonna come?

It DEPENDS!

- **D**ecision-making: prioritizing, cooperating, systems thinking
- **E**vidence: generating it, sharing it, using it, ensuring its useful
- **P**olitical will and action: being cautiously bold, learning from the past
- **E**mpowerment: of who, for who, and with balance
- **N**egotiation: providing room to move and incentives
- **D**on't: waste time ***tinkering*** around the edges
- **S**haring the planet: global citizenry and sustainability

Andrew Moore/Yancey Richardson Gallery



Thank you!

j.fanzo@columbia.edu