

Proceedings of the Roundtable Discussion on Bridging Gaps in Food and Nutrition Security

21 October 2024

ICOPED Auditorium, UP Los Baños

Prepared by Maria Angeles O. Catelo, PhD

Documented by Paul Edrine Mapoy

*With contributions from Allysa Mae Gargarino, Alma Katrina Blesilda Gonzales,
Darlene Pearl Ramos, and Lady Litz M. Aquino*



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
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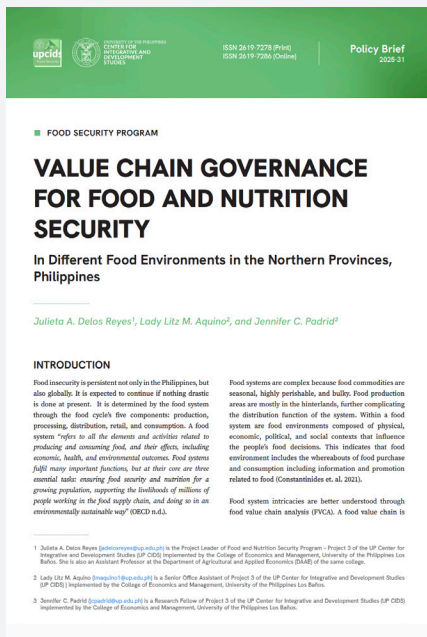
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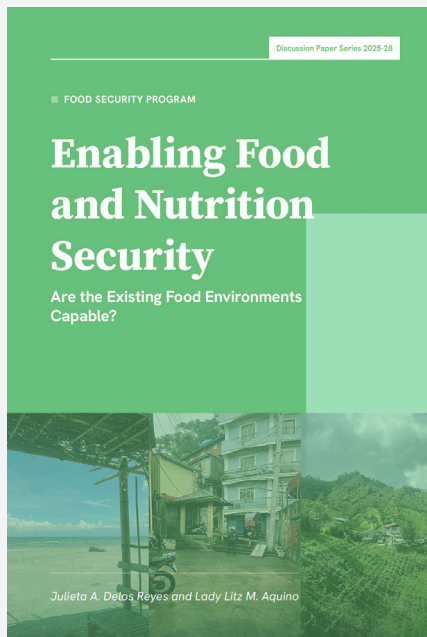
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About the Proceedings

This first Roundtable Discussion on Bridging Gaps in Food and Nutrition Security was held on October 21, 2024 at the University of the Philippines - Los Baños. The RTD was a preliminary activity to the main roundtable on November 15, 2024. The discussions in these proceedings explored the critical topic of policy coherence and the pivotal role of cooperatives and value chains in advancing food and nutrition security. It aimed to share and elicit insights on the interconnectedness of policies that shape our food systems and the essential contributions of cooperatives in fostering resilience, sustainability, and equitable access to nutrition.

Dr. Maria Angeles Catelo, Program Convenor of the Food and Nutrition Security Program (FNSP) from the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies delivered the opening remarks. She emphasized the importance of the topic because as we face growing challenges such as climate change, economic disparities, and global health crises, the need for coherent and inclusive policies has never been more urgent. Cooperatives stand as vital agents of change, promoting collaboration among farmers, producers, and consumers. Their emphasis on collective action not only strengthens local economies but also enhances food security by ensuring that nutritious food reaches those who need it most. Meanwhile, value chains play a crucial role in connecting agricultural production to consumption, ensuring that every link is optimized for efficiency and equity. She urged participants to share insights, experiences, and innovative solutions that can guide all toward a more cohesive policy framework. Together, the power of cooperatives and value chains to build resilient food systems that prioritize nutrition and sustainability for all can be harnessed.

Participants included faculty members, researchers, and graduate students from the UPLB College of Human Ecology (CHE), the College of Economics and Management (CEM), and the College of Agriculture and Food Science (CAFS). Other participants in the forum included representatives from the Philippine Stakeholders for Nutrition and Dietetics, Inc. and the Laguna Prime Multipurpose Cooperative (LPMPC) Business Development and Investment Committee, the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer of Los Banos, Laguna, UPLB – Interdisciplinary Studies Center for Food and Nutrition Security, and

Socio-Economic Division of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development- Department of Science and Technology.



A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
**BRIDGING GAPS IN FOOD
AND NUTRITION SECURITY**




21 OCTOBER, 2024
8:00 AM TO 12:00 NN
ICOPED Auditorium, CEM
UPLB, College, Laguna



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UPLB FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY PROGRAM (FNSP)

■ Pubmat of 21 October 2024 FNSP RTD



- Dr. Maria Angeles O. Catelo, FNSP Convenor giving the Welcome Remarks and introducing UP CIDS



- Dr. Rosalie Hall introducing the FNS Program and Project Leaders



- Asst. Prof. Ma. Theresa Castro, emcee and moderator

Organizers

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10. Lady Litz M. Aquino (lmaquino1@up.edu.ph), Project 3 Senior Office Assistant, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, College of Economics and Management, UPLB

Project Presentations

Examining the Policy Coherence of Food and Nutrition Security along the Food Systems Framework in the Philippines

Study Area: Victoria, Oriental Mindoro

Dr. Jennifer Marie S. Amparo

Project 1 Leader and Dean, College of Human Ecology, UPLB



■ **Figure 1.** Presentation by Dr. Jennifer Marie S. Amparo, Project 1 Leader

Dr. Jennifer Marie S. Amparo's study aimed to analyze the alignment of Philippine food and nutrition security policies with the food systems framework in terms of objectives, interventions, and indicators. In her

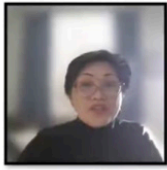
analysis, she found that a significant number of policies (including 2 Republic Acts, 44 Executive Orders, 1 Memorandum Circular, 211 ordinances) were issued from 2014 to 2019, most of which originated from Luzon. According to her findings, the Philippines has a broad spectrum of food and nutrition policies, predominantly focused on health and agriculture sectors. Most policies align vertically with national laws, though horizontal alignment remains a challenge. Dr. Amparo's research also sought to examine stakeholder perspectives on the interrelationships within food and nutrition security across food system sectors. Results highlighted how a localized Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) definition emphasizes marginalized groups, including smallholder farmers, fishers, and indigenous communities. Furthermore, Dr. Amparo pointed out that policies primarily address production and target mothers, children, and schools as focal points. However, FNS policies are often fragmented and limited. These put emphasis on process, place, and people, while focusing on high-value commodities. She concluded her presentation by stressing that the challenge of implementing coherent initiatives is especially evident in island provinces like Oriental Mindoro.

REACTION

Ms. Ma. Cristina B. Sison

President, Philippine Stakeholders for Nutrition and Dietetics, Inc.

In her reaction. Ms. Ma. Cristina Sison discussed how food and nutrition security are distinct issues that must be tackled together, but addressed separately. Food security centers on access and availability, while nutrition security is more complex, influenced by individual preferences, consumer behavior, and environmental factors. According to her, farmers are among the most food-insecure groups. Agricultural policies, such as the Food Staple Sufficiency Program (FSSP) and rice tariffication, have not always benefited farmers or consumers, indicating a need for policy harmonization. This emphasized the importance of a whole-of-government approach in harmonizing policies for coherence and effectiveness, particularly regarding implementation challenges in Oriental Mindoro. Ms. Sison ended her reaction stressing the limited consumption support despite various food production programs and the need for policies to stimulate local demand for produce.



Ma. Cristina B. Sison, RND, MSc

Food and Nutrition Security

Round Table Discussion



October 21, 2024



ICOPED Auditorium, CEM
UPLB, College, Laguna

- **Figure 2.** Ms. Ma. Cristina Sison, discussant/reactor of Project 1

Leveraging Cooperatives to Improve Household Food Security in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines

Study Area: Oriental Mindoro

Dr. Karen Q. Custodio

Project 2 Leader and Director, Institute of Cooperatives and Bio-enterprise Development (ICOPED), College of Economics and Management, UPLB



■ **Figure 3.** Presentation by Dr. Karen Q. Custodio, Project 2 Leader

The key findings of Dr. Karen Custodio's research indicated the vital roles played by cooperatives across the food system, supporting food security pillars such as production, processing, and distribution, among others. They facilitate development of hybrid governance arrangements or partnerships between communities and government to improve food and nutrition security (FNS). Dr. Custodio highlighted how cooperatives can also give individual producers a collective identity, which allows them to articulate their concerns effectively as a group. Furthermore, according to her, cooperatives contribute to inclusive governance and participation of farmers and fisherfolk in FNS programs and

policies. She noted that it is a growing sector in Oriental Mindoro, where 211 cooperatives are primarily agricultural and credit cooperatives as of December 2023.

Moreover, Dr. Custodio claimed the importance of cooperatives in continuing to serve as a mechanism to help more individuals. Such functions include helping people to gain better access to resources, social capital, market, government support, and capacity-building activities. Dr. Custodio's research also emphasized the various potentials of cooperatives to contribute to a specific component of the food systems and commodity sector and address particular FNS issues, either holistically or in isolation. She then proceeded to highlight the role of community-based cooperatives in facilitating equitable and participatory approaches to FNS, particularly given their small-scale and inclusive structures.

Based on the key findings, Dr. Custodio's research had the following recommendations: 1) the promotion of community-based collaborative actions for integrated responses to food security challenges; 2) the enhancement of capacity-building activities to improve cooperatives' access to resources and align government support with cooperative development plans; 3) the encouragement of collaboration among cooperatives to enable access to larger funding opportunities and greater impact; 4) government support from various agencies must be harmonized and aligned with cooperative development plans to effectively support the cooperatives' FNS initiatives; and 5) wide policies on trade to address overexportation of local commodities of Oriental Mindoro.

REACTION

Dr. Virgilio T. Villancio

Associate Professor, College of Agriculture and Food Science

Chair, Laguna Prime Multipurpose Cooperative (LPMPC) Business Development and Investment Committee

In his reaction, Dr. Villancio noted that multipurpose cooperatives are more popular than agricultural cooperatives. Additionally, while the government provides support grants, such as farm equipment, processing facilities,

workshops, field demonstrations, and credit to farmers who are members of associations or cooperatives, farmers who are not part of any association are ineligible for government support. He further stressed the pressing issue of market accessibility. In the case of Oriental Mindoro, there is a production surplus of rice, but much is exported outside the region, leaving a limited local supply. He stressed how cooperatives could benefit from strategies that prioritize local consumption and reduce dependency on external markets. This, according to him, necessitates a comprehensive government plan for Mindoro's food security.

However, Dr. Villancio also highlighted several challenges faced by agricultural cooperatives including an aging workforce, rural-to-urban migration, limited access to resources, digitalization, managerial and technical skills gaps, restricted market access, government and leadership issues, low participation and engagement, climate change and environmental risks, and various socio-economic barriers. In conclusion, to address these challenges, he recommended key strategies for cooperatives to include education, learning and information programs, and agripreneurship, which encompasses capacity building, agricultural challenges, capital access, and mentorship. Another strategy is agricultural insurance, which involves incentive programs, public-private partnerships, and youth employment initiatives.



■ Figure 4. Dr. Gil Villancio, discussant/reactor of Project 2

Analyzing Value Chains for Food and Nutrition Security within the Context of Pinggang Pinoy and in Various Communities in Northern Philippines

Study Area: Brgy. Laois, Labrador, Pangasinan; Brgy. Topdac, Atok, Benguet; Brgy. Balsigan, Baguio City, Benguet

Dr. Julieta A. Delos Reyes

Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, College of Economics and Management, UPLB



■ **Figure 5.** Presentation by Dr. Julieta Delos Reyes, Project 3 Leader

In Dr. Delos Reyes, presentation, she highlighted that the same value chain can be observed across different ecosystems, though there are slight variations in the actors and operators involved. The food security elements—availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability—vary by environment (coastal, urban, and upland). These differences in ecosystem and community type influence household food security levels. Dr. Delos Reyes provided recommendations. The first includes utilizing educational campaigns and the popularization of

the Pinggang Pinoy Meal model among the residents of the areas. Second, to address the differences in factors affecting food security, response and courses of action should be kept attuned to the actual food environment per area focusing on food security dimensions that they are most vulnerable to. She stressed that addressing existing issues (e.g., inadequate access to nutrition and health services and diverse food sources especially in the upland setting) would require close coordination between Local Government Units (LGUs) and food and service providers. Lastly, for further research, she recommended studying the possibility of promoting food sovereignty in Laois, Labrador, Pangasinan and Topdac, Atok, Benguet.

REACTION

Dr. Angelina R. Bustos

*Associate Professor, Institute of Human Nutrition and Food (IHNF),
College of Human Ecology, UPLB*

Dr. Bustos commended the scope of the research for being diverse, encompassing three distinct community types: coastal, urban, and upland. For future research, it would be beneficial to adopt a 'ridge-to-reef' approach, examining interactions from upland areas down to urban zones. However, she noted the need to put more emphasis on nutrition security as the program has focused on food security. Dr. Bustos also praised the methodology, including FIES, Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS), and radar charts for being effective and accessible for academics and LGUs. To further understand the roles of agencies and actors, Dr. Bustos recommended that they should be highlighted/added for their impact on food and nutrition security. Additionally highlighted in the reaction was the importance of sustainability considerations due to environmental risks in upland and coastal areas.

Dr. Bustos further suggested to consider revisiting the discussion on the Pinggang Pinoy framework in the study. According to her, the current focus is on expenditure, yet we recognize that food expenditure does not always directly translate to food consumption—for example, households may purchase products that are not fully consumed. The Pinggang Pinoy model assumes all food items are consumed and is structured on a per-meal basis. She proposed that it may be worth evaluating whether Pinggang Pinoy remains appropriate

for this project or if economic measures, such as the food poverty threshold or household economic activity, would provide a more accurate framework.

Dr. Bustos also opined that low rice consumption in upland areas may reflect production practices rather than purchase, thus requiring further verification of food expenditure limitations. Furthermore, she emphasized that drinking water inclusion is valuable and suggested examining sources, safety, and use in food preparation. Dr. Bustos stressed assessing community food systems (traditional, modern, or mixed) to understand food environments. Lastly, Dr. Bustos suggested the following: add nutrition indicators (e.g., malnutrition rates) using secondary data for a complete nutritional perspective and consider revising or shortening the project title.



■ **Figure 6.** Dr. Angelina Bustos, discussant/reactor of Project 3

Open Forum

The open forum began with Dr. Angelina dR. Felix, Associate Professor from the Institute of Human Nutrition and Food-CHE-UPLB. She suggested more emphasis on nutrition security across all projects. For Project 1, she recommended to emphasize the importance of resilience indicators for food security in the Philippine context. Meanwhile, for Project 2, there is a need for clarification on food system definitions, and operational distinctions between food loss and food waste.

Following this, Dr. Geny Lapiña, chairperson of the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics (DAAE) from CEM, UPLB suggested that for Project 1, there should be definitions of vertical and horizontal alignment of food security and nutrition policies, and the criteria for determining when they are vertically or horizontally aligned. Dr. Lapiña also suggested to quantify the financial resources allocated to food security initiatives by both the government and private sector.



■ **Figure 7.** Associate Professor Dr. Angelina dR. Felix



■ **Figure 8.** Asst. Prof. Geny Lapiña

Closing Remarks

Dr. Amparo delivered the closing remarks and highlighted three Cs - main insights from the projects' presentations. The first C involved concepts. The different projects highlighted how concepts like policy coherence, Pinggang Pinoy, and food systems emphasized the value of looking into food and nutrition security as critical to resilience and sustainable development.

Next, is collaboration and convergence. The different presentations highlighted the role of the different agencies and stakeholders including smallholder food producers in promoting food and nutrition security. Projects 1 and 2, for instance, emphasized the need to maximize the contributions of cooperatives, and for different governance levels to work coherently through convergence across the food systems to promote FNS.

Lastly, is context and culture. Project 3, for instance, emphasized how human-environment interactions particularly in varying land- and foodscapes could affect food security. In Project 1, the indigenous peoples' issues on food and nutrition security were also shared as critical in the case site of Victoria, Oriental Mindoro.

PHOTOS



■ Awarding of certificates and tokens of appreciation to discussants



■ Group photo of FNSP RTD on 21 October 2024

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Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

THE PROGRAM

Like many developing countries in Southeast Asia, food security in the Philippines remains a tall order. Challenges continue to abound in food availability, access, utilization and their stability over time. The adverse weather condition, political instability and economic factors such as unemployment, eroding income levels and rising food prices have proven to impact negatively on food security. Interventions to improve the food systems' resilience and farm production of a more diverse mix of food, as well as attempts to increase farm income necessary for purchases of vital and wider array of food have generally fallen short of targets especially among vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The **Food Security Program** currently houses faculty and staff based in or affiliated with the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

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