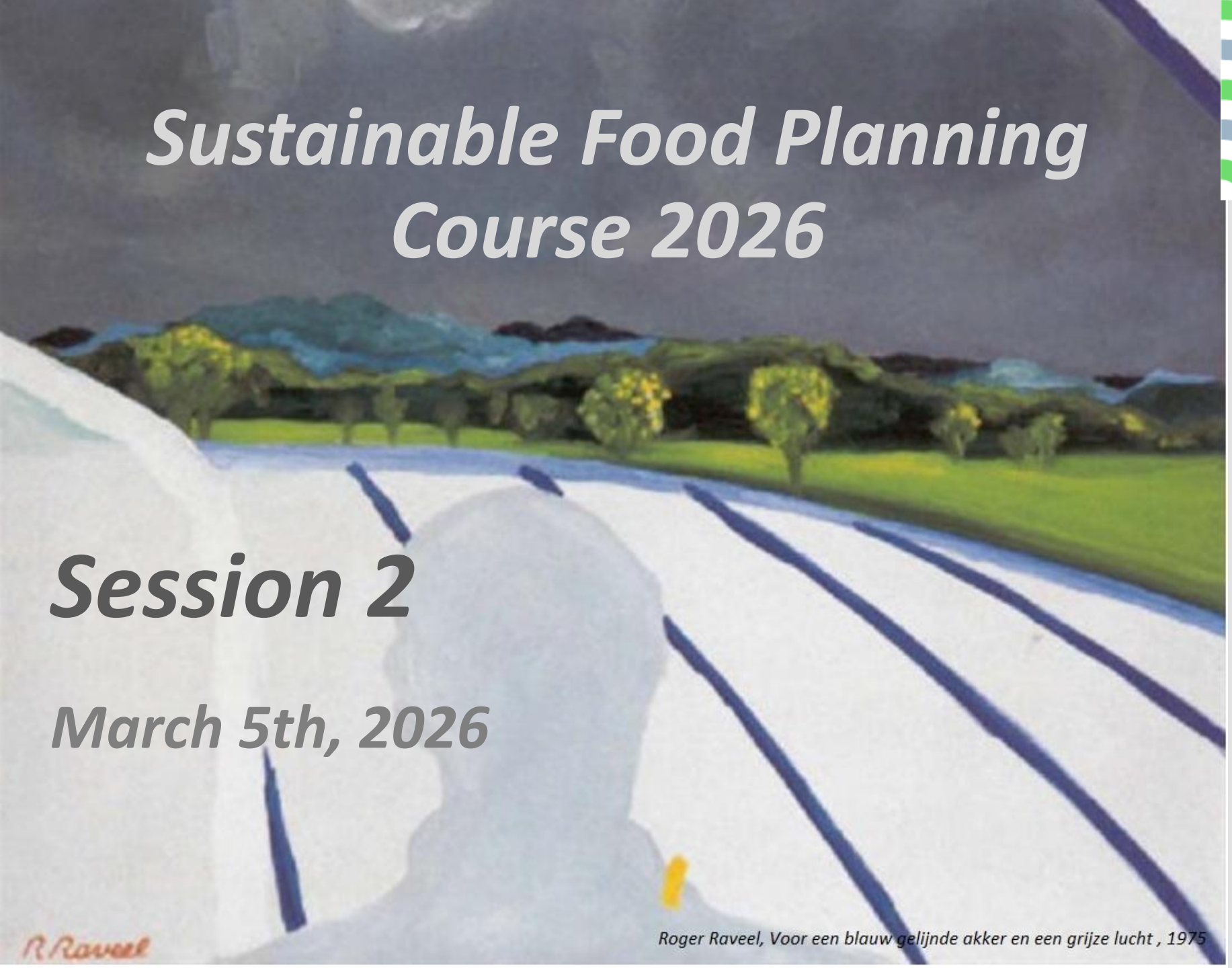
Sustainable Food Planning Course 2026

Session 2

March 5th, 2026



Roger Raveel, Voor een blauw gelijnde akker en een grijze lucht , 1975

AESOP4FOOD
Action for Education Spatial Organisation and Planning For Sustainable Food

Part of the lecture will be recorded, so if you do not want to be seen turn your camera off during the recording.

Dr. Roxana TRIBOI
LE:NOTRE Institute,

1952

Unsustainability of the food system

Dr. Roxana Triboi

LE:NOTRE Institute

1999

2019

From Unsustainable Food Systems to Just Transitions *Insights from Recent Global Reports*

Latest reports on:

- Ultra-processed foods and health
- Food system and planetary boundaries
- Doughnut Economics framework
- Corporate power in food systems
- Integrated systems approach and hidden costs of FS
- Fossil fuel dependency
- UK food insecurity
- Power imbalance in the FS

From Unsustainable Food Systems to Just Transitions: Insights from Recent Global Reports

1. Diagnosing the Crisis: Inequality, Health & Corporate Power

- **GAIN (2025)** – *Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs): Industrial products dominate diets and worsen health inequalities*.
- **IPES–Food (2023)** – *Who's Tipping the Scales? Addressing Power Imbalances in Food Systems Transformation*.
- **Mooney, P., Guttal, S. & Monsalve Suarez, S. (2025)** – *"The Global Food System is Broken — and Fixing It Will Take More Than Good Intentions."* Food Tank, 10 Oct 2025.

2. Ecological Boundaries & Planetary Frameworks

- **EAT–Lancet Commission (2025)** – *Planetary Health Diet: Food systems breaching planetary limits and deepening inequality*.
- **Raworth, K. (2025)** – *Doughnut Economics: Linking social needs and planetary boundaries*.
- **IPES–Food (2025)** – *Fossil Fuel Addiction: Food's dependency on fossil energy and the need for just transitions*.

3. Governance & Systemic Solutions

- **FAO (2025)** – *Integrated Systems Approach for Inclusive and Resilient Food Systems*.
- **The New Institute (2025)** – *The Elephant at the Table: Power and Food Systems*.
- **The Food Foundation (2025)** – *Roadmap to Reducing Food Insecurity in the UK*.

4. True Costs & Accounting for Externalities

- **FAO (2023)** – *The State of Food and Agriculture: The Hidden Costs of Food Systems*.

What does an unsustainable food system mean to you?

TAKE OUTS

- “Unsustainability" is not only environmental, but also political and economic
- Consolidation in agricultural inputs shapes prices, innovation and farmer autonomy
- Ultra-processed foods are connected to health inequalities and policy choices
- "true cost" and "leverage points" as key factors for planning interventions

What recent global reports converge on unsustainability of the Food Systems (2019–2026)

- Food systems drive climate, biodiversity loss, and inequality.
- Diet-related disease is now a core system outcome, not a side issue.
- The bottleneck is not knowledge: it is power, incentives, and lock-ins.
- Today: 4 lenses + planning levers (UPF, boundaries, power, fossil/true cost).

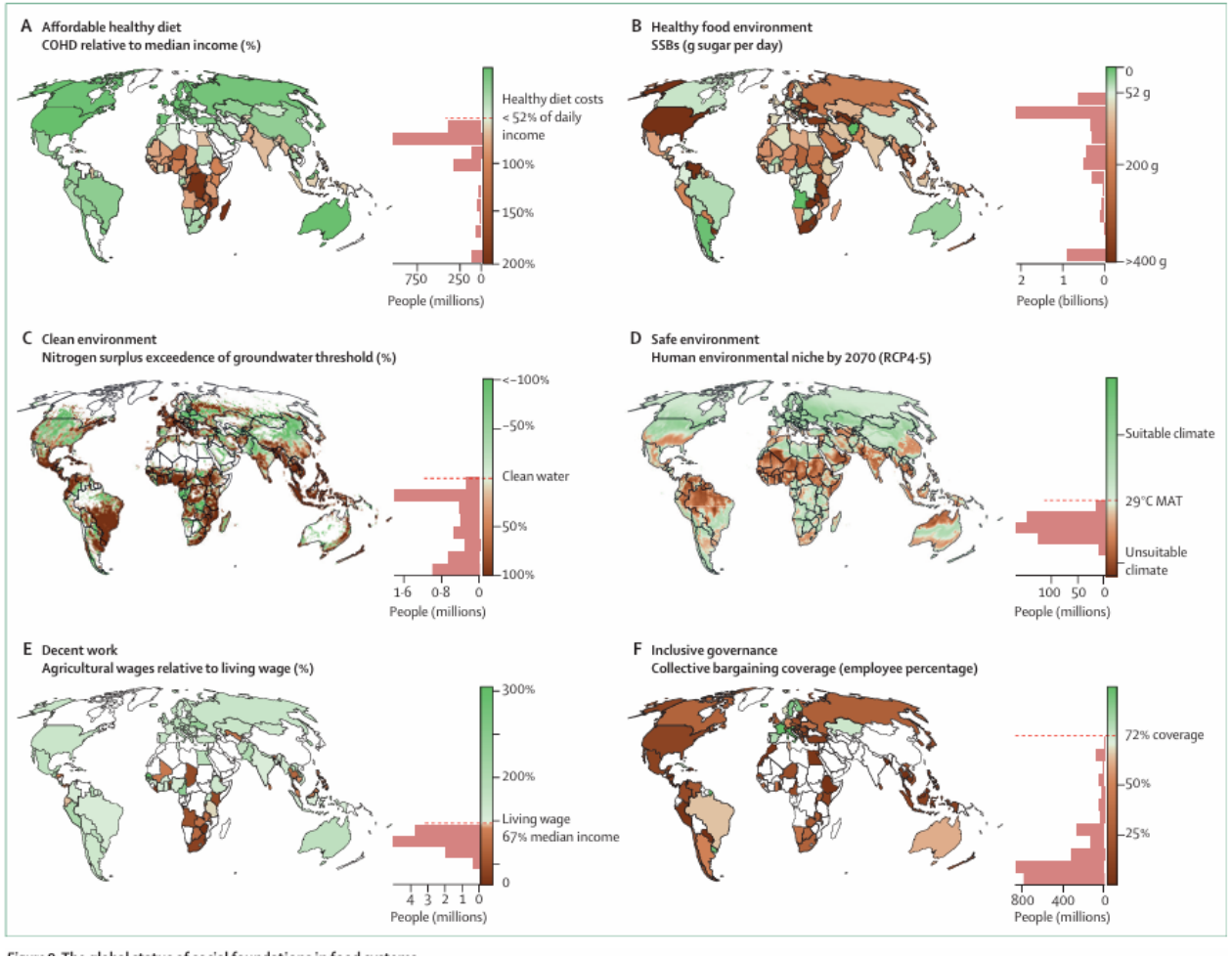
The global food system is broken

- Hunger and NCDs coexist with ecological collapse.
- Governance is fragmented; accountability is weak.
- Corporate capture blocks binding regulation and reditributive reform.
- Civil society and Indigenous peoples must co-lead, not be “consulted”.
- Real transition = redistribution of power + democratic accountability.

What Is the EAT–Lancet Commission?

The **EAT–Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health** is a collaboration between the medical journal *The Lancet* and the non-profit organisation **EAT**.
•It brings together **37 leading scientists** from **16 countries**, working across health, nutrition, agriculture, environmental science, and policy.

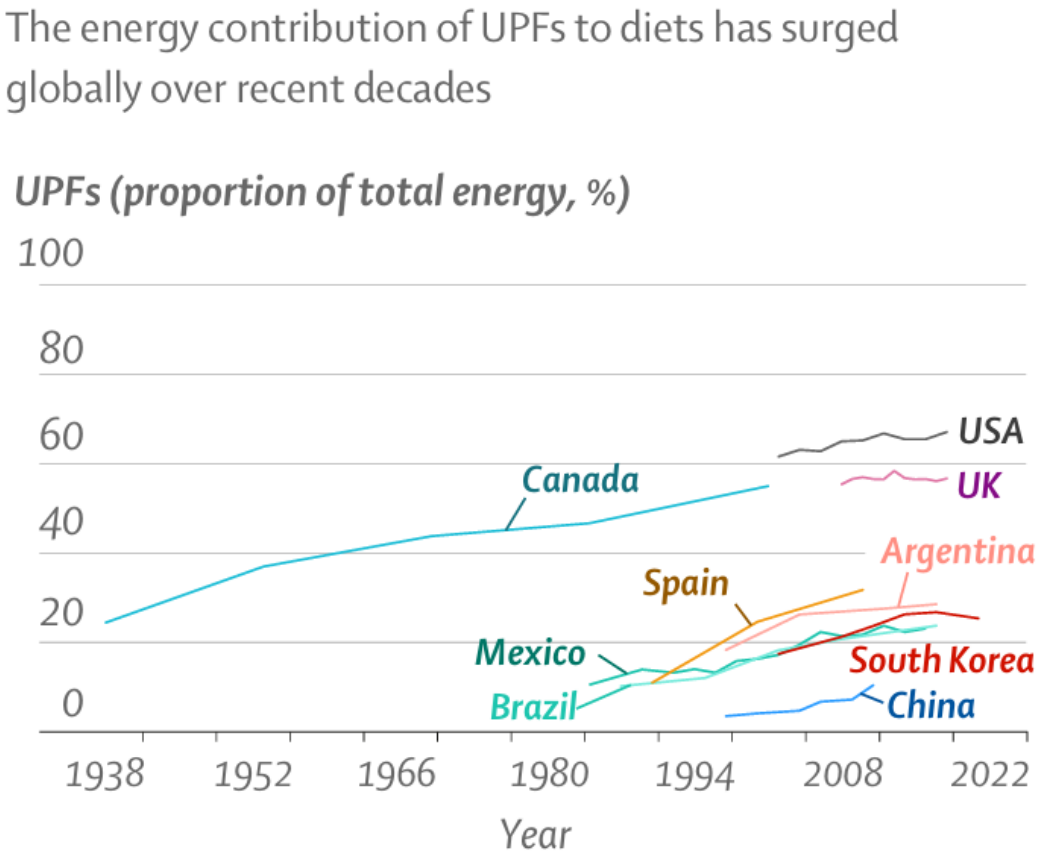
Purpose: to define a **"Planetary Health Diet"** – one that ensures both **human health** and the **sustainability of the planet**.
•The first report (2019) and its update (EAT–Lancet 2.0, 2024) respond to a growing crisis:
→ unhealthy diets are now the **leading cause of disease and early death**,
→ while food production is a **major driver of climate change, biodiversity loss, and water pollution**.



Ultra-processed food: health evidence from The Lancet

Source: The Lancet Series on Ultra-Processed Food (2025)

- The Lancet Series is the **largest scientific review to date** on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and health.
- A review of **104 long-term studies** found that **92** reported higher risks of at least one chronic disease or all-cause mortality among people consuming more UPFs.
- Diets high in UPFs are linked to harm **across all major organ systems**, and to obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression and other conditions.
- In the UK, US and Australia, **more than half of the average diet** now consists of UPFs; for some younger and disadvantaged groups, UPFs can reach **around 80%** of daily intake.
- Authors argue that current evidence is strong enough to justify **immediate public health action**, even while some mechanisms and classifications (e.g. NOVA) continue to be debated.



Beyond the Lancet Series: captured science

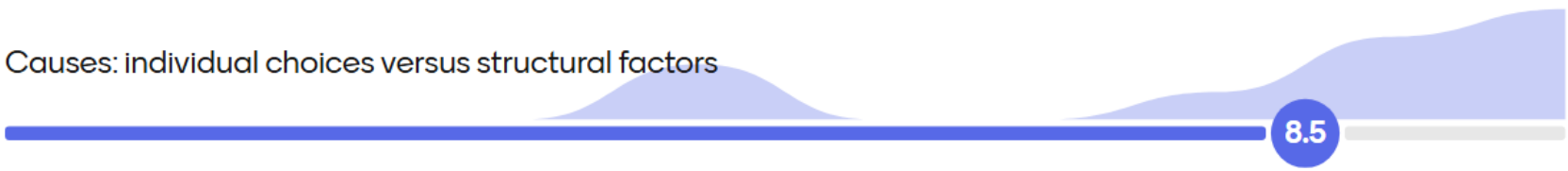
Captured science at industrial scale
•2008–2023: about **3,800 studies** disclose funding or interests from UPF manufacturers – roughly **one industry-funded paper every working day for 15 years**.
•Around **one-third** focus on “energy balance / physical activity” – a deliberate strategy to **shift blame from products to individual behaviour**.

Concrete case: Nestlé’s ‘double standards’
•Baby cereals (Cerelac) in many African countries contain **added sugar**, while equivalent products in high-income countries **do not**.
•At the same time, Nestlé sponsors prizes, funds research centres and co-funds **astroturf groups** lobbying against UPF regulation in schools.

Challenging multistakeholder myths & building counter-power
•Gillespie calls out **public–private partnerships and multistakeholder governance** as high-risk for corporate capture, with little evidence of real effectiveness.
•He supports a **Global UPF Action Network (UPF-RAN)** to coordinate advocacy, research, legal action and communications to **reduce corporate power and support a just transition** away from UPFs.

Source : Gillespie, S. (2025). “Ultra-processed power: The damage and the fightback.” Food Fight Files newsletter, 24 November 2025 (reflecting on The Lancet Series on Ultra-Processed Food and Human Health).

How much is food system unsustainability driven by structural factors rather than individual choice?



mostly individual choices

mostly structural factors

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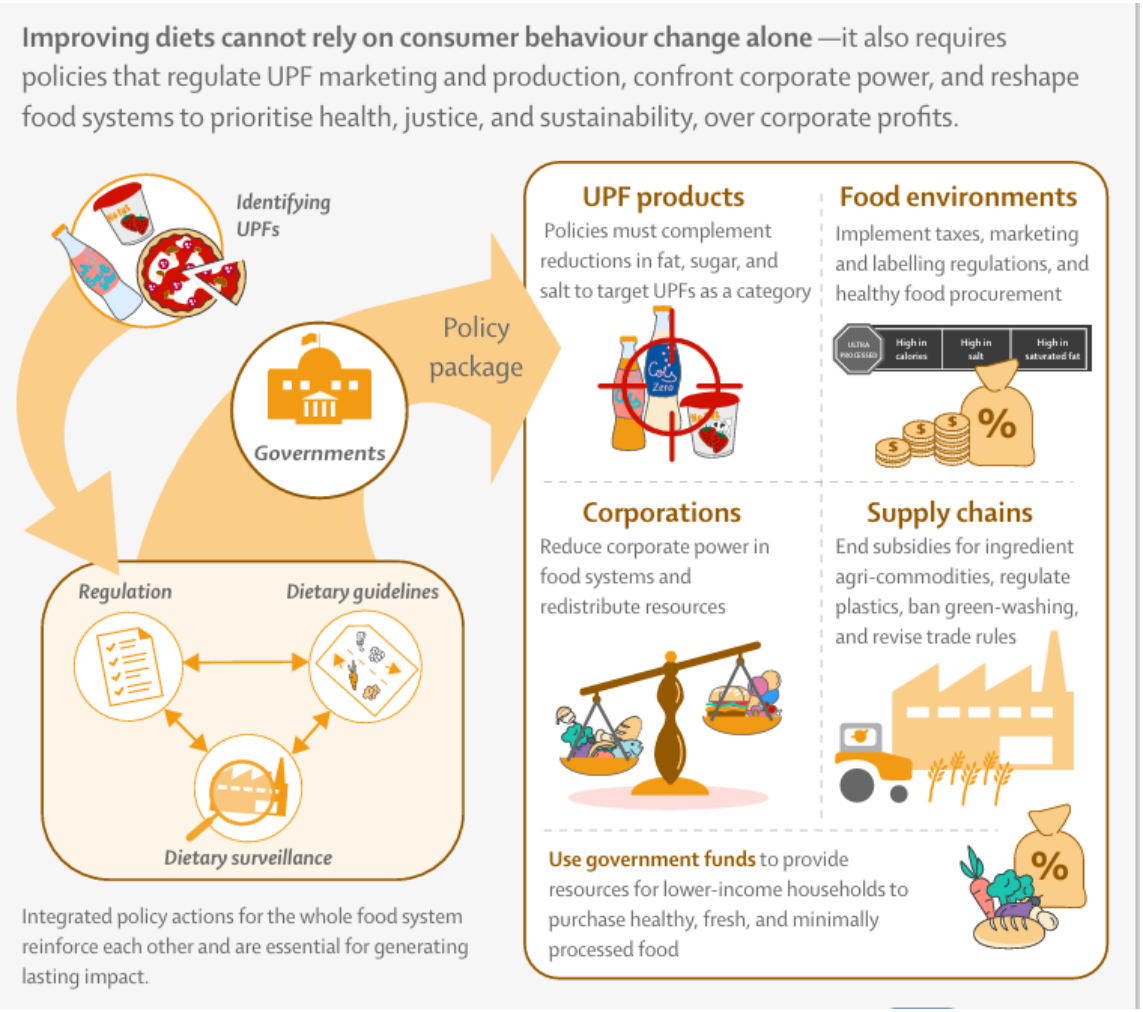
UPFs are not a “consumer choice” issue

- UPFs are formulated industrial products, typically high in salt/sugar/fats and additives, designed for convenience and profit
- They dominate food environments via price, retail, marketing, time pressure.
- Exposure is unequal: low-income groups face higher UPF density.
- Planning focus: reshape environments, not blame individuals.



Why UPFs dominate diets

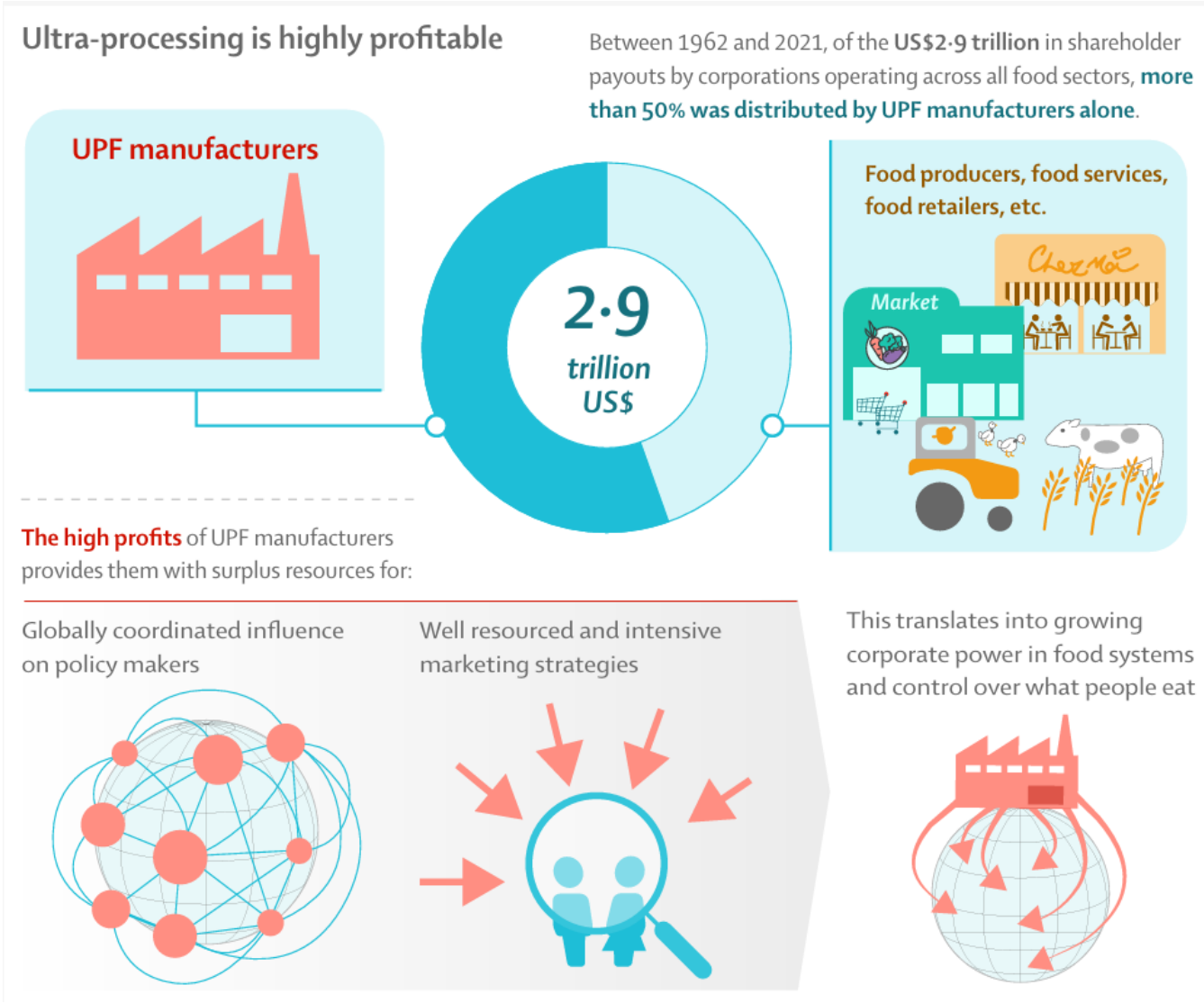
UPFs are **rapidly displacing traditional diets** based on whole or minimally processed foods, reshaping eating habits across all continents.

This shift is driven less by individual choice than by **global corporations** that:

- design hyper-palatable, long-shelf-life products;
- use extensive **marketing, branding and pricing strategies**;
- deploy **political lobbying and front groups** to weaken or block regulation.

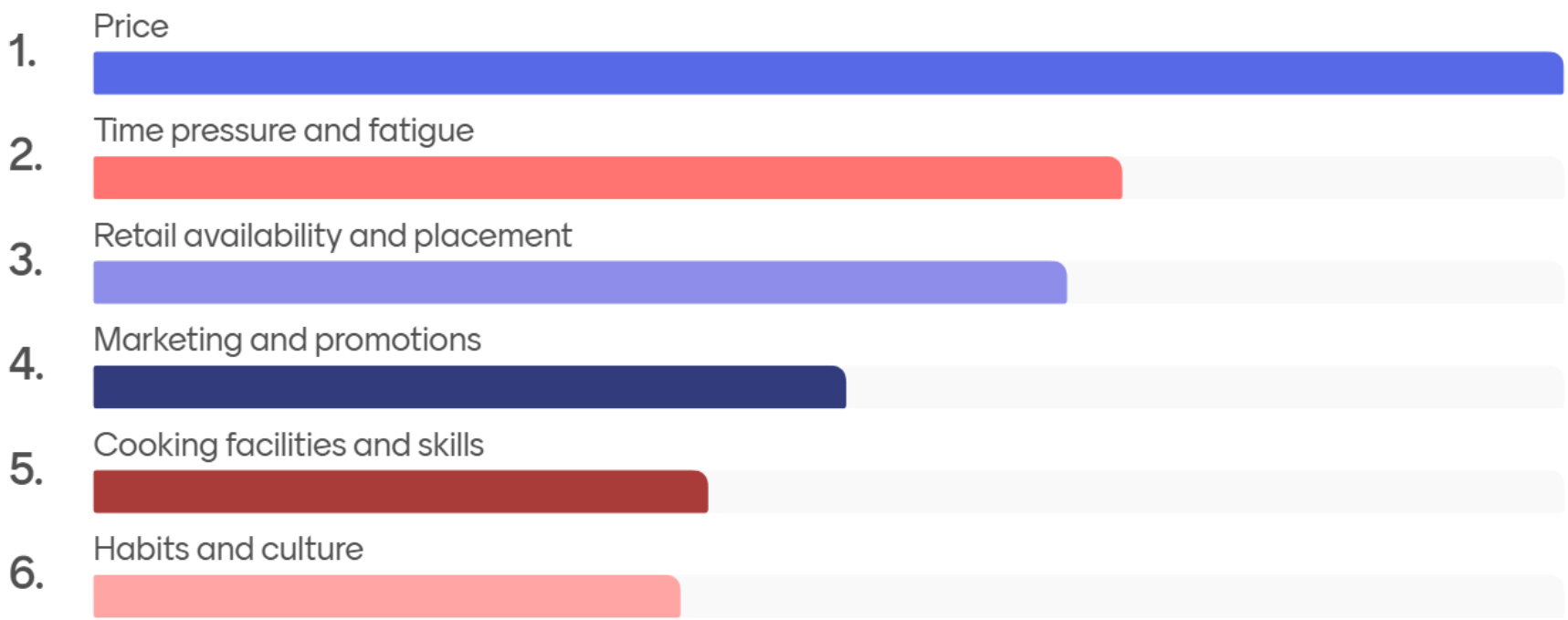
The authors describe UPFs as a **core driver of the current "chronic disease pandemic"** and argue that the public health response is still **where tobacco control was decades ago**.

Expert reactions highlight that most evidence is observational and that causal mechanisms are still being clarified – but agree that UPFs are likely important contributors to poor health and demand **transparent, system-level solutions**.



Source: Monteiro C.A. et al., *Ultra-processed foods and human health: the main thesis and the evidence*, The Lancet

What drives UPF intake most in everyday life?



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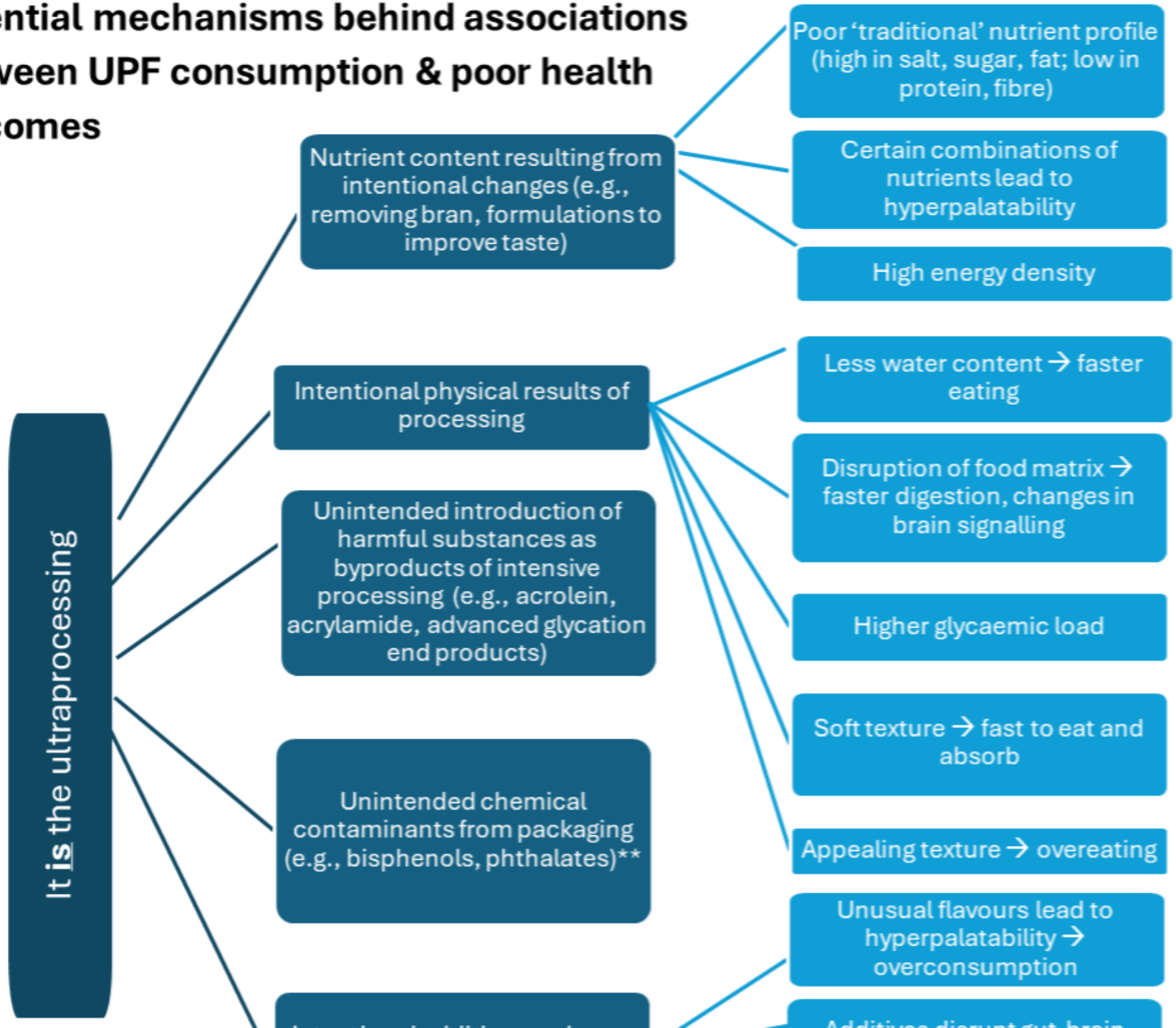
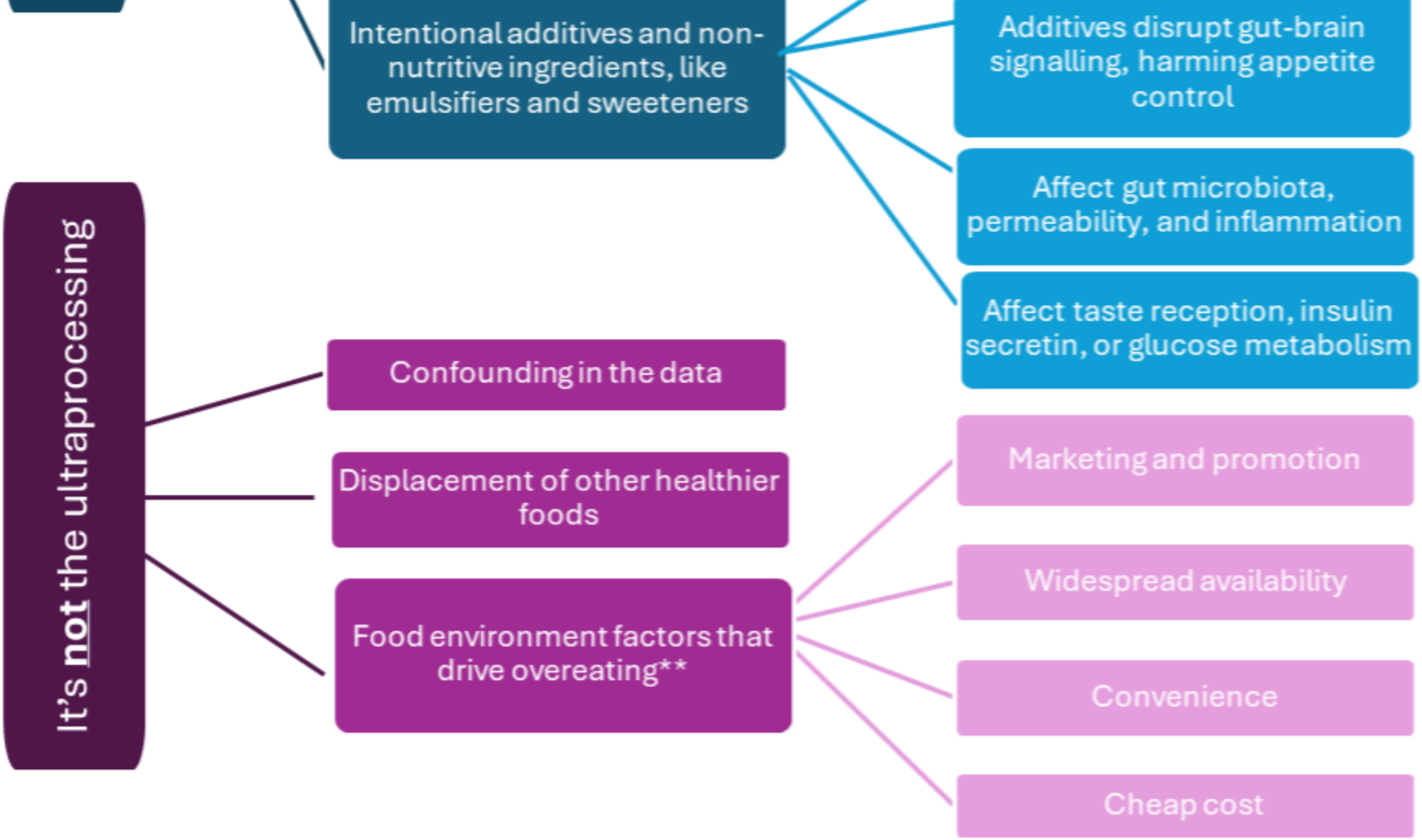
Potential mechanisms behind associations between UPF consumption & poor health outcomes



Stella Nordhagen
Senior Technical Specialist

gain
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition


Intentional additives and non-nutritive ingredients, like emulsifiers and sweeteners
Additives disrupt gut-brain signalling, harming appetite control
Affect gut microbiota, permeability, and inflammation
Affect taste reception, insulin secretin, or glucose metabolism
It's not the ultraprocessing
Confounding in the data
Displacement of other healthier foods
Food environment factors that drive overeating**
Marketing and promotion
Widespread availability
Convenience
Cheap cost

Towards a More Nuanced Food Planning Approach

- UPFs raise questions not only about **nutrition**, but about **how food systems are designed**.
- Some UPFs contribute to **accessibility, food safety, and sustainability** (e.g. plant-based analogues, shelf-stable foods).
- Need to **differentiate subcategories**, understand mechanisms, and move **beyond "good vs bad" labels**.
- For food planners: focus on
  → **food environments**,
  → **production and processing systems**,
  → and **policies** that promote **healthy, just, and sustainable diets**.

A global health response is urgent and feasible

- **Prioritise UPFs as a global health issue**
  Political action on UPFs has low priority despite the chronic disease burden; viewing them as commercially driven, like tobacco, shifts blame to corporate accountability.
- **Multilevel coalition-building**
  Build coalitions globally and nationally, uniting civil society, experts, government officials, UN agencies, and media to drive policy change and counter corporate power.
- **Ensure a just transition to low-UPFs diets**
  Policies should integrate participatory governance, economic inclusion, and household support while ensuring food security and gender equity, and avoiding stigma.
- **The recipe for collective action**
  Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa show how to scale: mobilise civil society, recruit political champions, and use advocacy, media, and research to drive policy change.

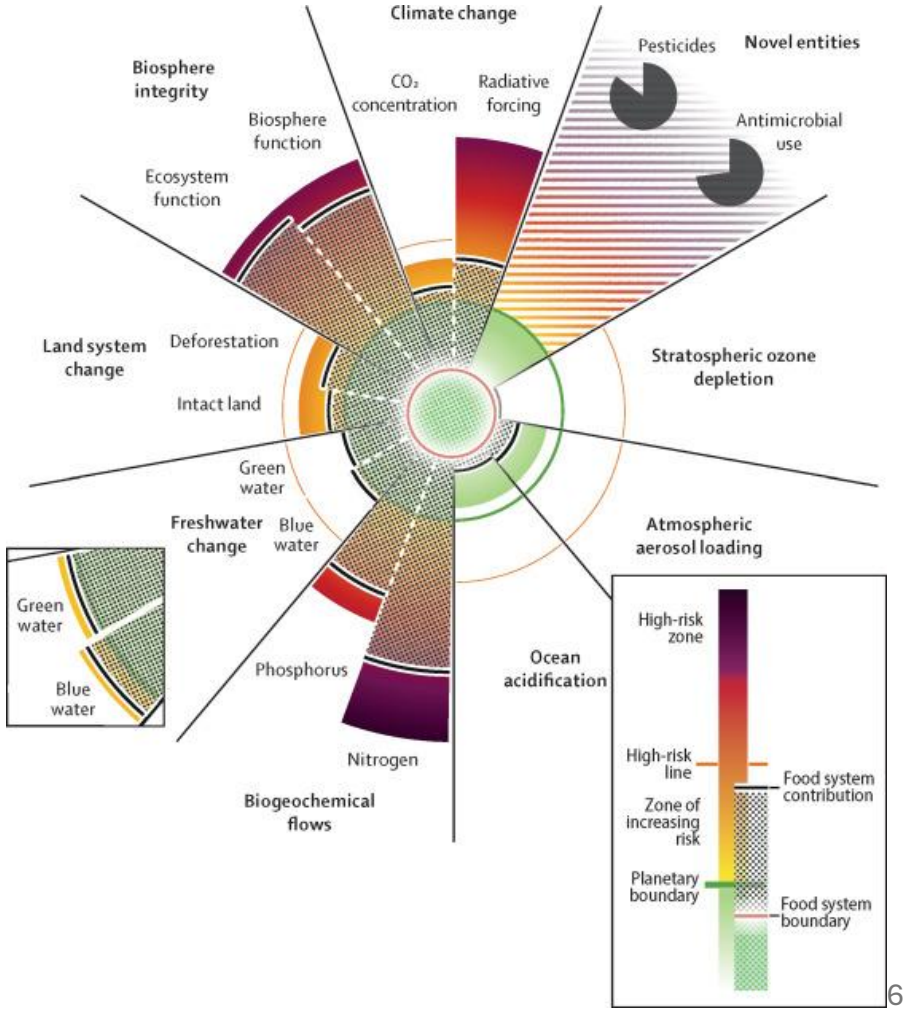
The Lancet Series on Ultra-Processed Foods and Human Health
The Lancet 2025; published online November 18. https://www.thelancet.com/series-do/ultra-processed-food.

Policy package to curb ultra-processed food

- A global **policy package** is needed to halt and reverse the rise of UPFs, including:
  - **Front-of-pack labels** that clearly signal ultra-processed products and "marker" ingredients, not just sugar, salt and fat.
  - **Strict marketing restrictions**, especially on advertising to children and on digital platforms.
  - **Excluding UPFs from public procurement**: schools, hospitals and other public institutions should serve mainly fresh or minimally processed foods.
  - **Retail regulations** that limit shelf space, discounts and promotions for UPFs, while favouring healthier options.
  - **Fiscal and trade measures** (taxes, subsidies, competition and trade rules) that shift profits and market access towards minimally processed foods and diverse local producers.
- Example: national school food policies can require that the **vast majority of school meals are prepared from fresh or minimally processed foods**, with only a very small share of UPFs allowed.
- Overall message: **reducing UPFs is not about individual willpower**, but about reshaping food environments, market incentives and corporate power.

EAT Lancet 2.0 on health, sustainable and just food systems

- The **2025 EAT–Lancet Commission** presents the **most comprehensive scientific assessment of global food systems** to date.
- Food systems are now the *single* **largest contributor to the transgression of five planetary boundaries** (climate, biodiversity, land, freshwater, nutrient pollution) *of the six breached boundaries*.“
- Even if fossil fuels were phased out entirely, **current food systems alone could still push global warming above 1.5°C**.
- Less than **1% of the world’s population** currently lives in the “**safe and just space**” — where everyone’s food needs and rights are met within planetary limits.
- **The richest 30%** of the global population drive **over 70% of food-related environmental impacts**.



Key Findings

- **Dietary transformation** could prevent up to **15 million premature deaths per year**.
- Food systems contribute around **30% of global greenhouse gas emissions** — transformation could **cut this by half**.
- Around **32% of food system workers earn below a living wage**, showing that inequity is embedded across the system.
- Global diets still **lack fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and whole grains**, while containing **too much meat, dairy, sugar, and ultra-processed food**.
- The updated **Planetary Health Diet** is **plant-rich**, **culturally adaptable**, and **emphasises equity and justice**, not only calories or nutrients.

A Just and Sustainable Transformation

- Transformation must address both **planetary boundaries** and **social foundations** — ensuring that:
  → Everyone has the **right to food**,
  → Food system workers have **decent livelihoods**,
  → Environmental burdens are **shared fairly**.
- Even small dietary shifts combined with **better production, reduced waste, and fair labour practices** could yield an annual **return of $5 trillion**, far exceeding the investment needed.
- Food is recognised as **central to human and planetary well-being**, not only as a commodity.

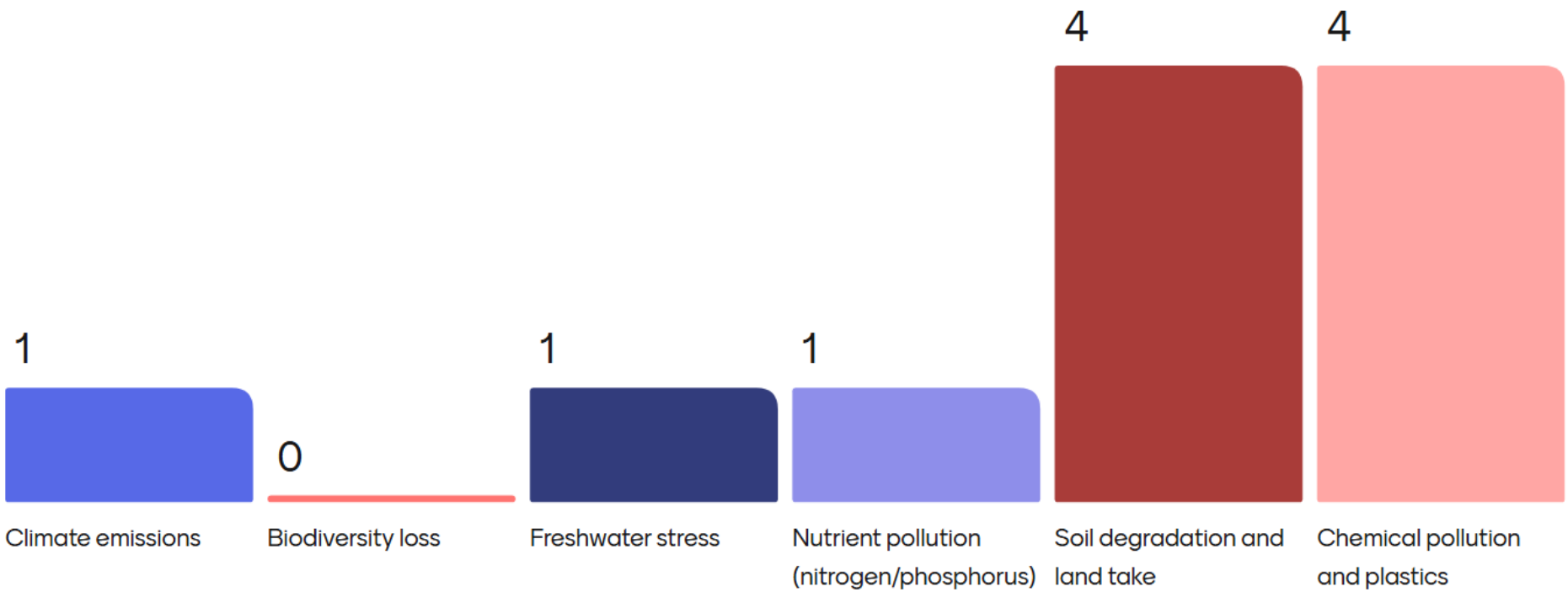
8 Pathways for Action

1. **Protect and promote traditional healthy diets**.
2. **Create accessible and affordable food environments** that encourage healthy eating.
3. **Implement sustainable production practices** – carbon storage, biodiversity, and water protection.
4. **Halt agricultural expansion** into intact ecosystems.
5. **Reduce food loss and waste** at every stage.
6. **Ensure decent working conditions** across the food chain.
7. **Give voice and representation** to food system workers.
8. **Recognise and protect marginalised groups**.

Each of these is supported by **policy, economic, and cultural levers**:

- Integrating traditional foods into dietary guidelines.
- Supporting **local seed systems and agroecological practices**.
- Redirecting **subsidies** to make healthy foods more affordable.
- Building **coalitions and financing mechanisms** for transformation.

Which pressures from food systems are most visible in your city or region?



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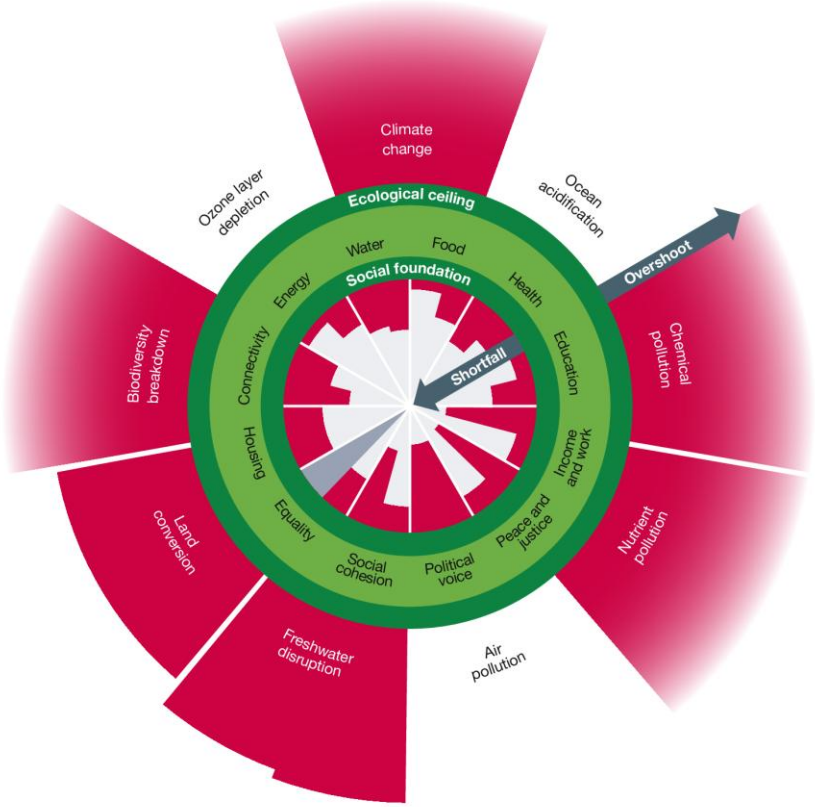
The Doughnut: A Compass for Human Prosperity

- Developed by **Kate Raworth**, the **Doughnut Economics framework** defines a **safe and just space for humanity**.
- It integrates **two concentric rings**:
  🟢 **Inner ring** – the **social foundation**, below which people face deprivation (food, health, housing, equality, education).
  🔴 **Outer ring** – the **planetary boundaries**, beyond which Earth's life-support systems are destabilised (climate, biodiversity, freshwater, pollution).
- Between these rings lies the **"safe and just space"** where **human well-being and ecological integrity** can coexist.
- The 2023 update by **Fanning & Raworth** provides the most detailed global monitoring of this balance.



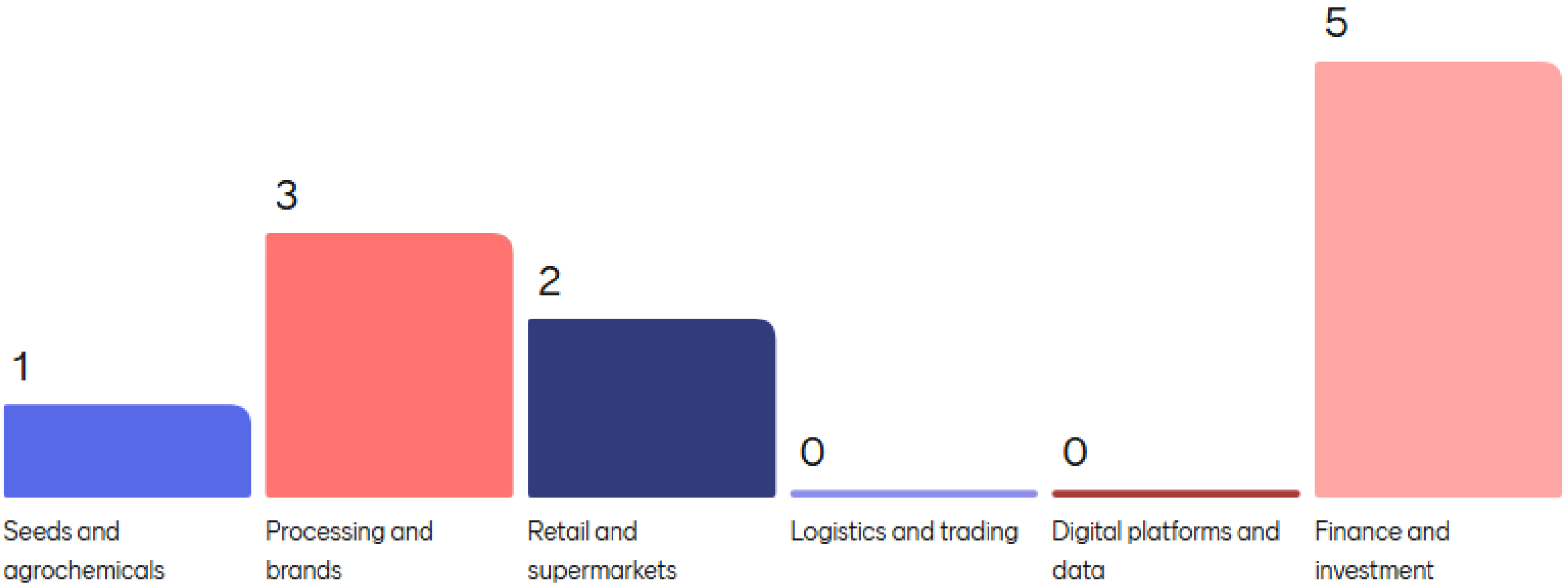
A World Out of Balance

- Latest data shows:
  • **6 of 9 planetary boundaries exceeded** (climate, biodiversity, land use, water, nitrogen, phosphorus).
  • **No country** currently meets all social needs **within planetary limits**.
  • The **Global North** overshoots ecological limits, while the **Global South** remains below the social foundation.
- This reflects a **double injustice**:
  → ecological degradation driven by high-income consumption,
  → social deprivation persisting in low-income regions.
- The Doughnut reveals how **economic growth models** fuel both inequality and environmental overshoot.

Implications for Food Planning and Policy

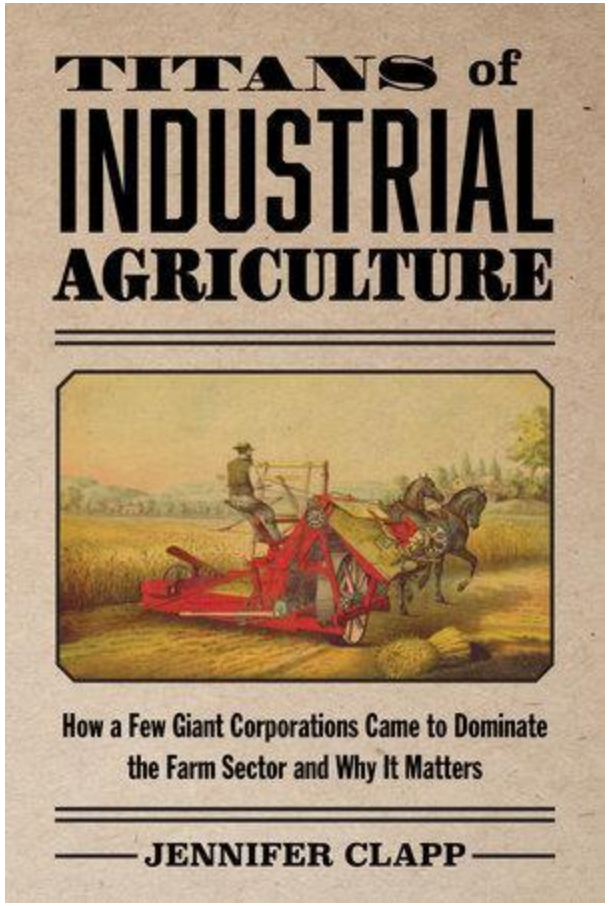
- Food systems sit **at the core of the Doughnut**, linking social and ecological domains.
- Applying the Doughnut lens means:
  Ensuring **food security and decent livelihoods** within local ecological boundaries.
  Reducing **agricultural emissions, waste, and land pressure**.
  Promoting **fair access to nutritious food** for all communities.
  Embedding **justice, regeneration, and circularity** in planning processes.
- For planners: the Doughnut as a **decision-making compass** to design **place-based food systems** that respect both **people's rights** and **planetary limits**.

Where do you think the strongest concentration of power sits in the food system?



“Titans” of Global Agriculture

•**Jennifer Clapp** (University of Waterloo, Canada) is a leading scholar on **global food politics and power structures**.
•In *Titans in Agriculture* she describes how **a handful of powerful corporations** dominate every link in the global food chain:
→ Seeds and agrochemicals
→ Grain trading and processing
→ Retail and food delivery
→ Finance and digital platforms
•These “titans” control flows of **capital, data, and knowledge**, shaping what, how, and for whom food is produced.
•The result: **highly concentrated corporate power** that undermines food sovereignty and environmental sustainability.



The Architecture of Power

4 interlocking dimensions of power in food systems:

1. **Structural power** – corporations set the terms of trade, finance, and technology.
2. **Instrumental power** – direct political influence through lobbying and partnerships.
3. **Discursive power** – shaping narratives about “innovation”, “efficiency”, and “feeding the world”.
4. **Material power** – control of land, inputs, logistics, and digital infrastructure.

- These powers reinforce one another, creating **path dependency** and **corporate capture** of sustainability agendas.

Rethinking Food System Transformation

Clapp warns that current transitions — "green", "digital", or "climate-smart" — risk **deepening concentration** rather than challenging it.

Real transformation requires:
- **Democratising governance** of food and agriculture.
- Supporting **diverse, territorial food systems** and **public goods**, not private monopolies.
- Re-embedding food in **social, ecological, and local economies**.
- **Accountability** for corporations profiting from environmental and social harm.

- For food planners: examine **who holds power**, **whose knowledge counts**, and **whose interests shape policy**.

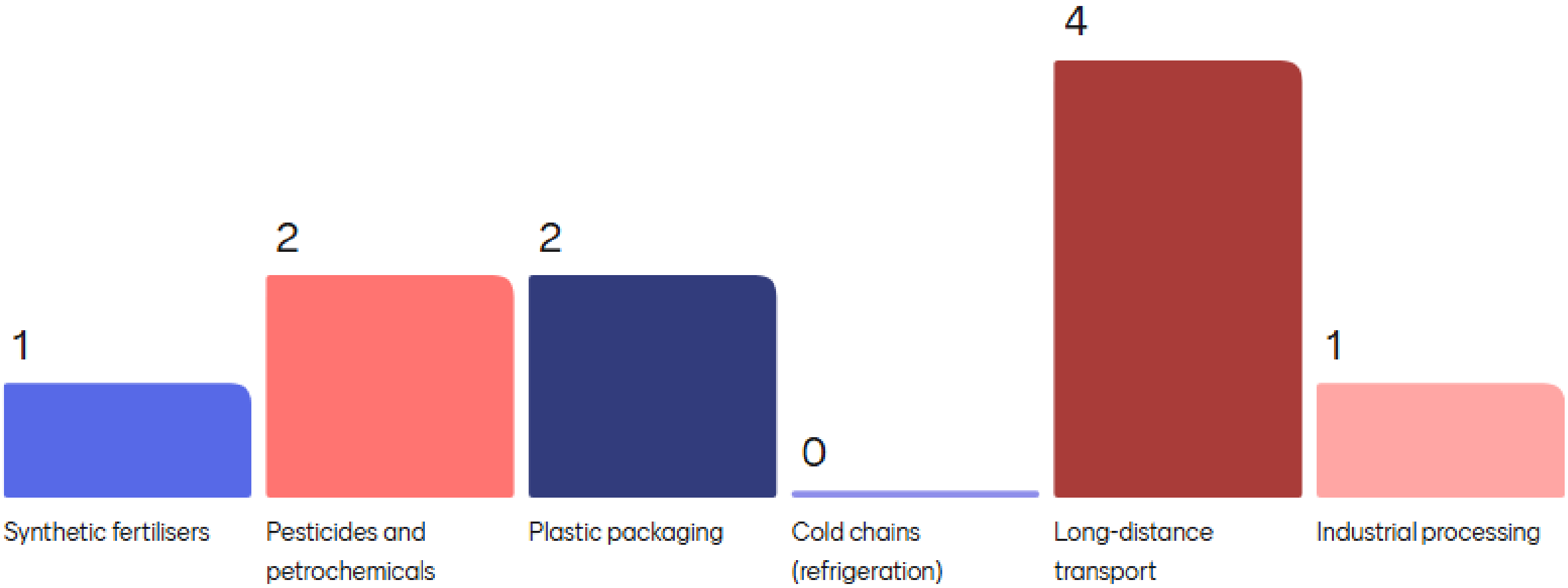
Concentration of Power in Food Systems

Source: IPES–Food (2023), *Who's Tipping the Scales?*

- The **four largest agrochemical firms** control **over 60%** of the global seed and pesticide market.
- **Ten food and beverage corporations** generate **over half of global retail sales** in packaged food.
- **Five supermarket chains** dominate **more than 70% of retail food sales** in the EU and North America.
- Corporate mergers have **tripled since 2008**, reinforcing market concentration and lobbying power.

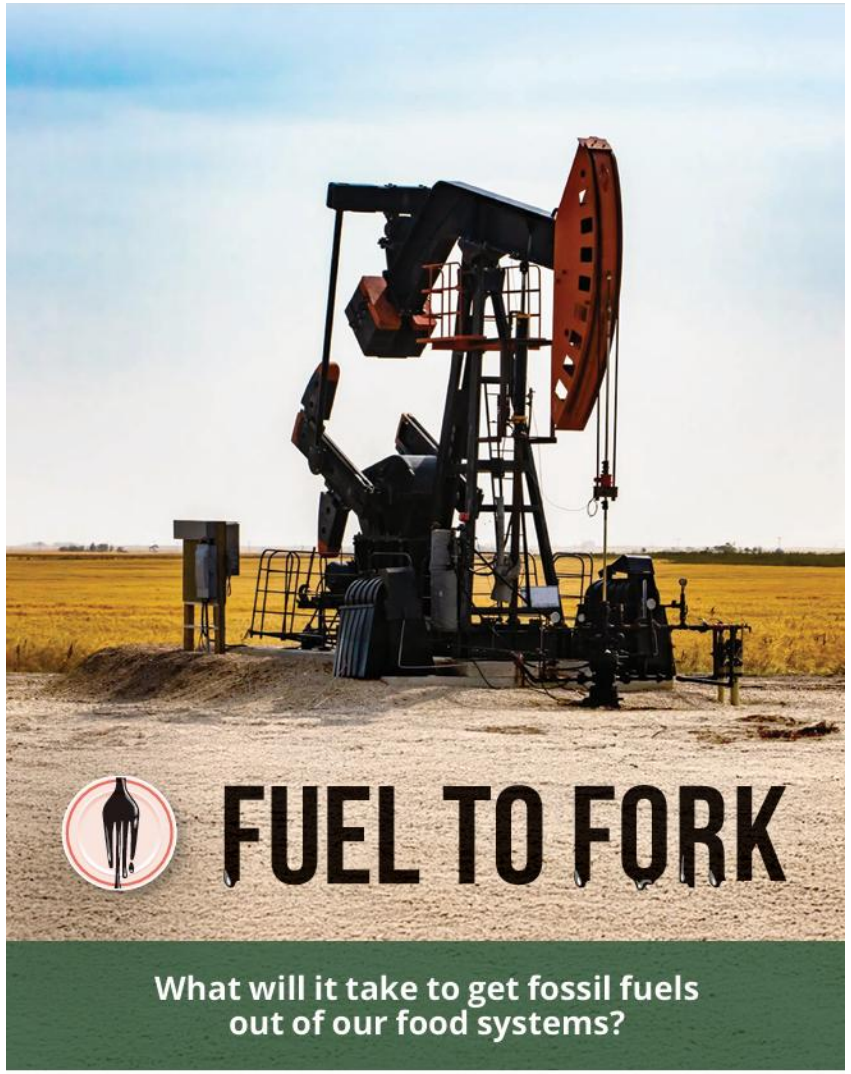
- **80% of global agricultural R&D** is funded or controlled by private corporations.
- Corporate actors spent **over €500 million/year** on EU-level lobbying in agriculture, trade, and food policy.
- "Multi-stakeholder" governance platforms often **grant industry actors up to 70% of decision-making seats**, marginalising civil society and small producers.
- Result: **Policy capture** — sustainability frameworks shaped by the very actors driving ecological degradation.

Where are fossil fuels embedded in the food system?



IPES-food: The Fossil Fuel Addiction in Food Systems

•The industrial food system now **consumes ~40 % of petrochemicals** and **15 % of fossil fuels** globally.
•Fossil fuels are embedded at every stage:
  • Fertilisers & pesticides (nearly all derived from oil/gas)
  • Plastic packaging, ultra-processed foods
  • Cold storage, transport, long supply chains
This deep dependency locks food systems into **carbon-intensive, fragile, and inequitable pathways**.



FOOD SYSTEMS CONSUME 15% OF GLOBAL FOSSIL FUELS

42%
Food processing & packaging

20%
Farming & agrochemical inputs

38%
Retail & kitchens

15%
Of the world's fossil fuels are used in food systems

Source: Global Alliance for the Future of Food. (2023). Power shift: Why we need to wean industrial food systems off fossil fuel.

FIGURE 2

FOOD SYSTEMS EAT UP 40% OF GLOBAL PETROCHEMICALS

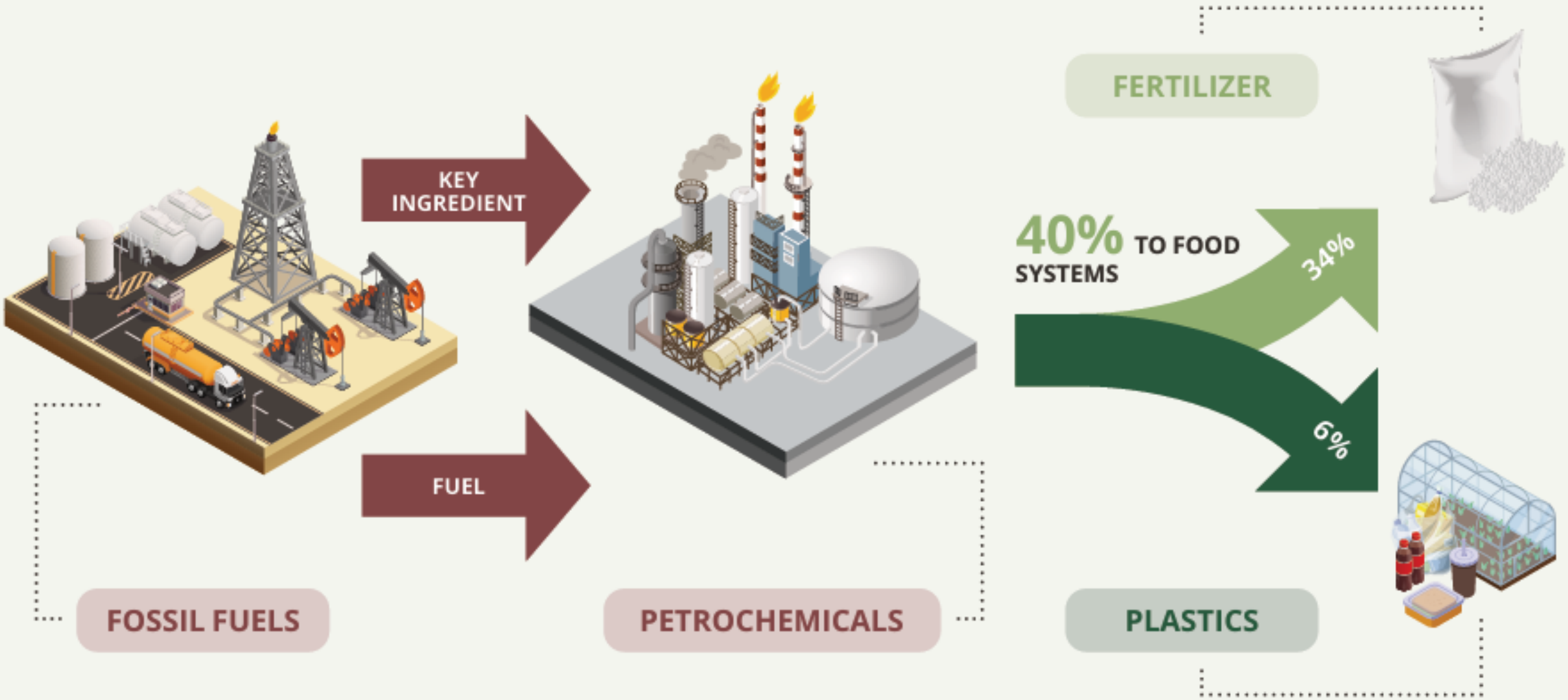
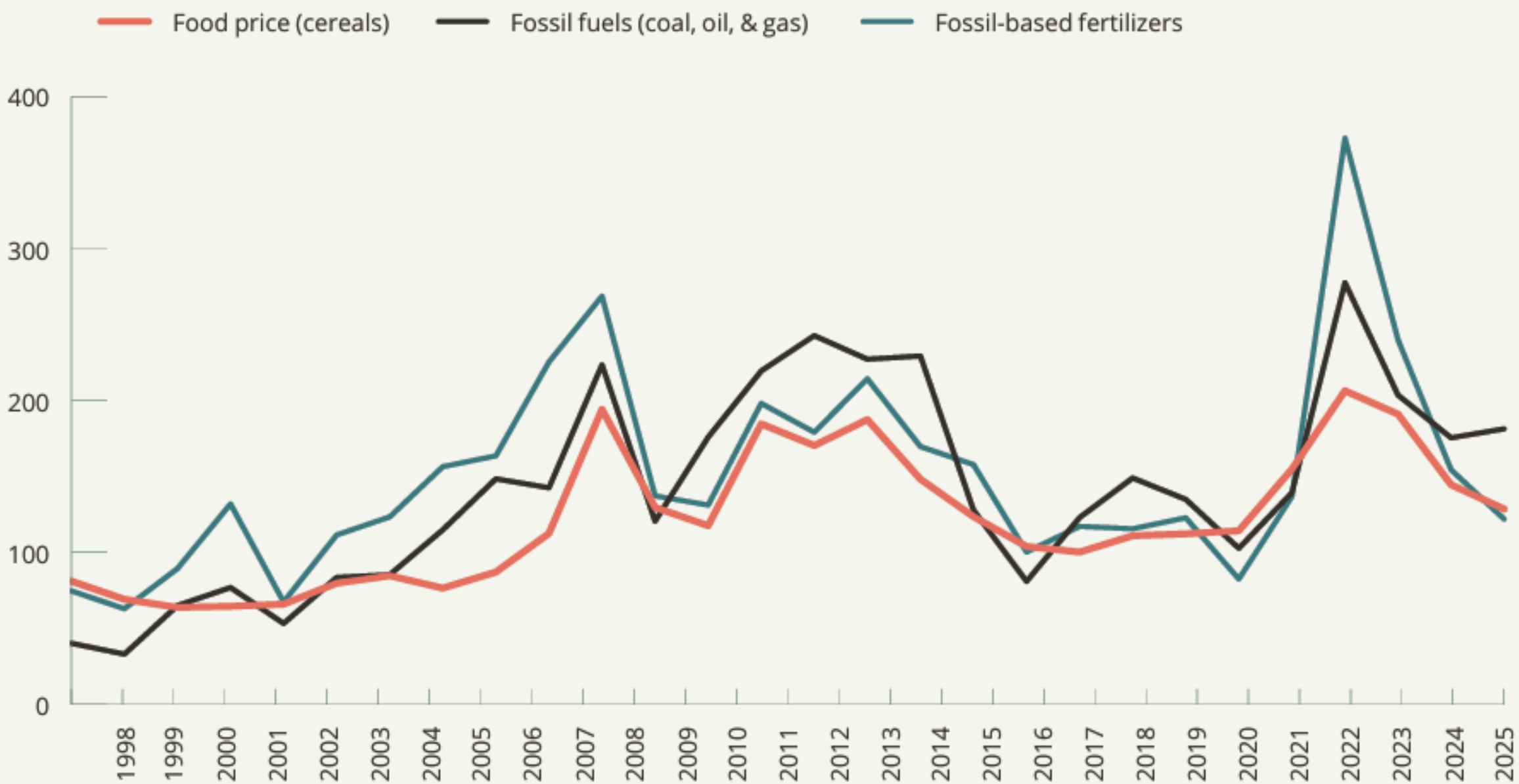


FIGURE 3

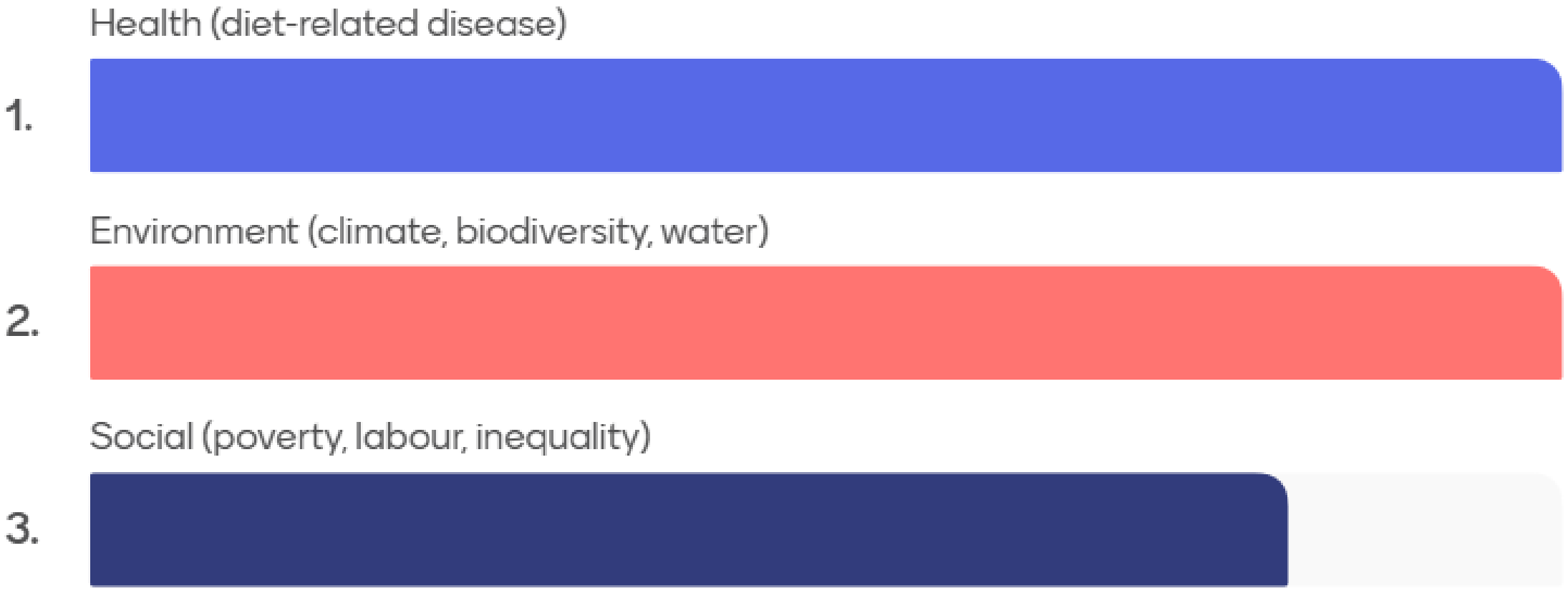
FOOD, FERTILIZER, AND FOSSIL ENERGY PRICES ARE DEEPLY INTERLINKED



Pathways to Decarbonise Food Systems

- **Reject false fixes** – e.g. “blue ammonia”, digital intensification, or carbon capture schemes that deepen fossil reliance.
- **Promote agroecology and regenerative farming** – rebuild biological cycles, reduce synthetic inputs.
- **Shorten supply chains and relocalise** – support territorial food systems to cut transport emissions and dependence.
- **Reform policy and economics**:
  - Phase out fossil fuel subsidies in agriculture.
  - Regulate plastics, packaging, and fossil-based inputs.
  - Support just transitions for farmers and food workers.
- **Vision**: a food system where **production, diets, and governance** are decoupled from fossil fuels — **sustainable, equitable, and resilient**.

Where you think the biggest hidden costs sit?



Hidden Costs of Agrifood Systems

Source: FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2024*.

•Global agrifood systems generate approximately **US$ 12 trillion annually** in hidden costs (health + environment + social).

•Of that total, about **70% (~US$ 8.1 trillion)** are driven by **unhealthy dietary patterns** (high ultra-processed foods, poor nutrition) leading to non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

•Environment-related hidden costs (GHG emissions, nitrogen, land-use change, water) form a significant share, and social costs (poverty, under-nutrition, low productivity) though smaller, vary widely by income leve

Implications & Opportunity for Change

Source: FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2024*.

- These hidden costs represent roughly **10% of global GDP**.

- The highest burden of hidden costs is in **industrial and diversifying agrifood systems** (estimated at ~US$ 5.9 trillion) driven primarily by health costs.

- True Cost Accounting (TCA) is presented as a crucial tool: measuring the full costs (visible + hidden) of food systems is the first step toward designing policies that align with sustainability, equity and health.

- Key policy levers: reform of subsidies/taxes, regulatory frameworks for production & consumption, inclusive governance that addresses power imbalances in the food system.

Regional Variation and Who Pays the Cost

Source: FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2024*.

•Hidden costs differ greatly by region and system type:
•In fragile or crisis-affected systems, **environmental costs can reach 20% of GDP**.
•In low-income countries, **social costs (poverty and under-nutrition)** can account for **8–18% of GDP**.
•**High-income countries** bear large absolute costs due to diet-related diseases, while **low-income countries** bear higher relative costs from under-nutrition and environmental degradation.
•This imbalance shows that **policy solutions must be regional and context-specific** — a one-size-fits-all model cannot address the uneven burdens of the global food system.

OCTOBER 2025

The Food Foundation

ROADMAP TO REDUCING FOOD INSECURITY IN THE UK

The Scale of Food Insecurity in the UK

"Food insecurity is a mirror of inequality — and a test of how societies value the right to food."

Source: The Food Foundation (2023), *Roadmap to Reducing Food Insecurity in the UK*

Key Facts

- **9 million adults** and **4 million children** in the UK experienced food insecurity in 2023 – around **1 in 5 households**.
- - Food insecurity rates have **doubled since 2019**, driven by the cost-of-living crisis, rising food and energy prices.
- - Households with children, single parents, disabled people, and minority ethnic communities are **disproportionately affected**.

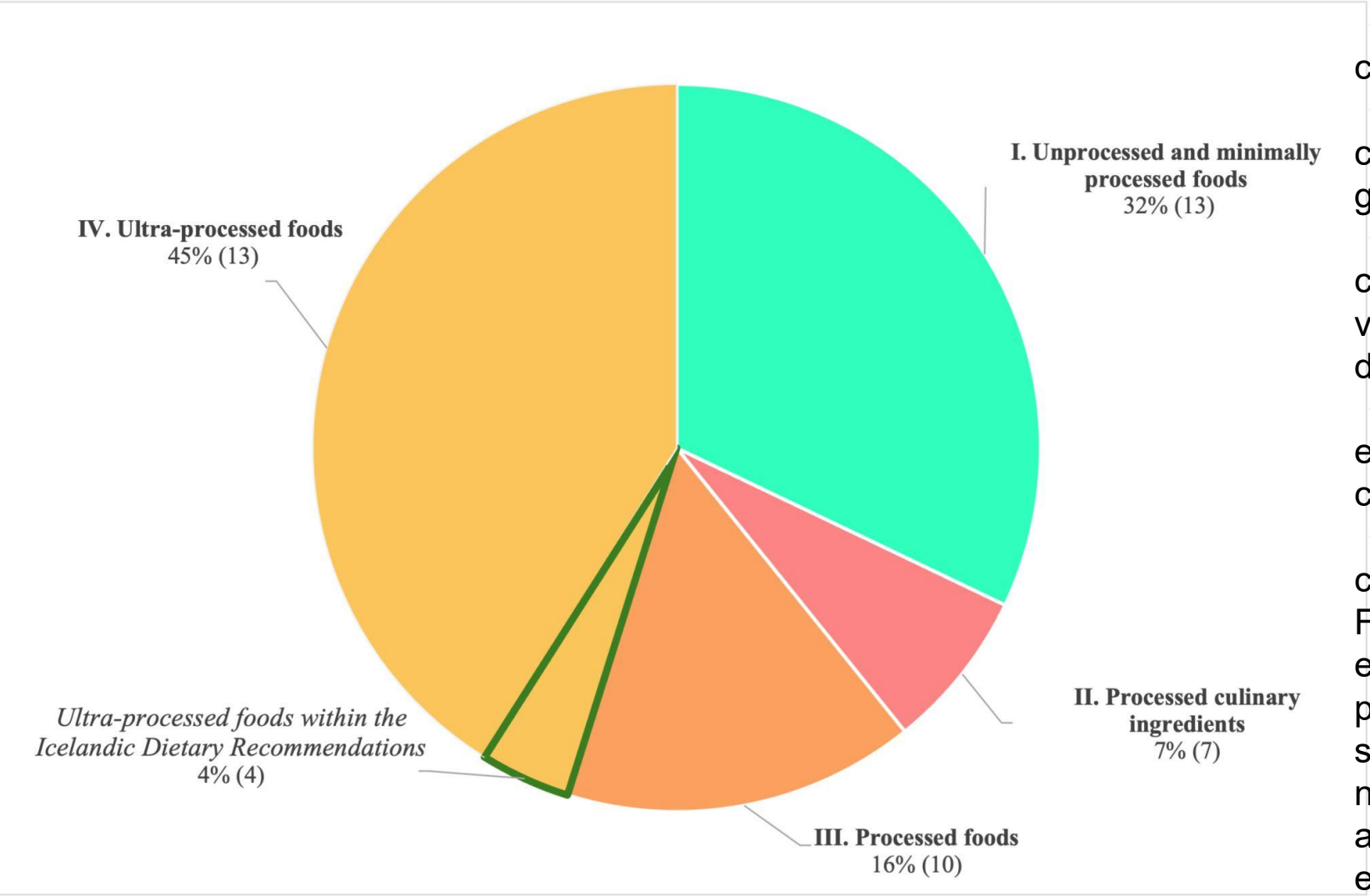
"Food insecurity is not simply about hunger; it reflects a systemic failure in ensuring access to affordable, nutritious food."

Root Causes and Systemic Gaps

- **Economic and Structural Drivers**
- Low income, insecure work, and inadequate social protection remain the **primary causes**.
- **Food prices increased by 19%** in 2023, while household incomes stagnated.
- Access to healthy food varies sharply by region – the poorest areas have **up to 3x fewer outlets** selling affordable fruit and vegetables.

"*A healthy diet costs more than double the price of an unhealthy one, locking low-income families into food poverty*."

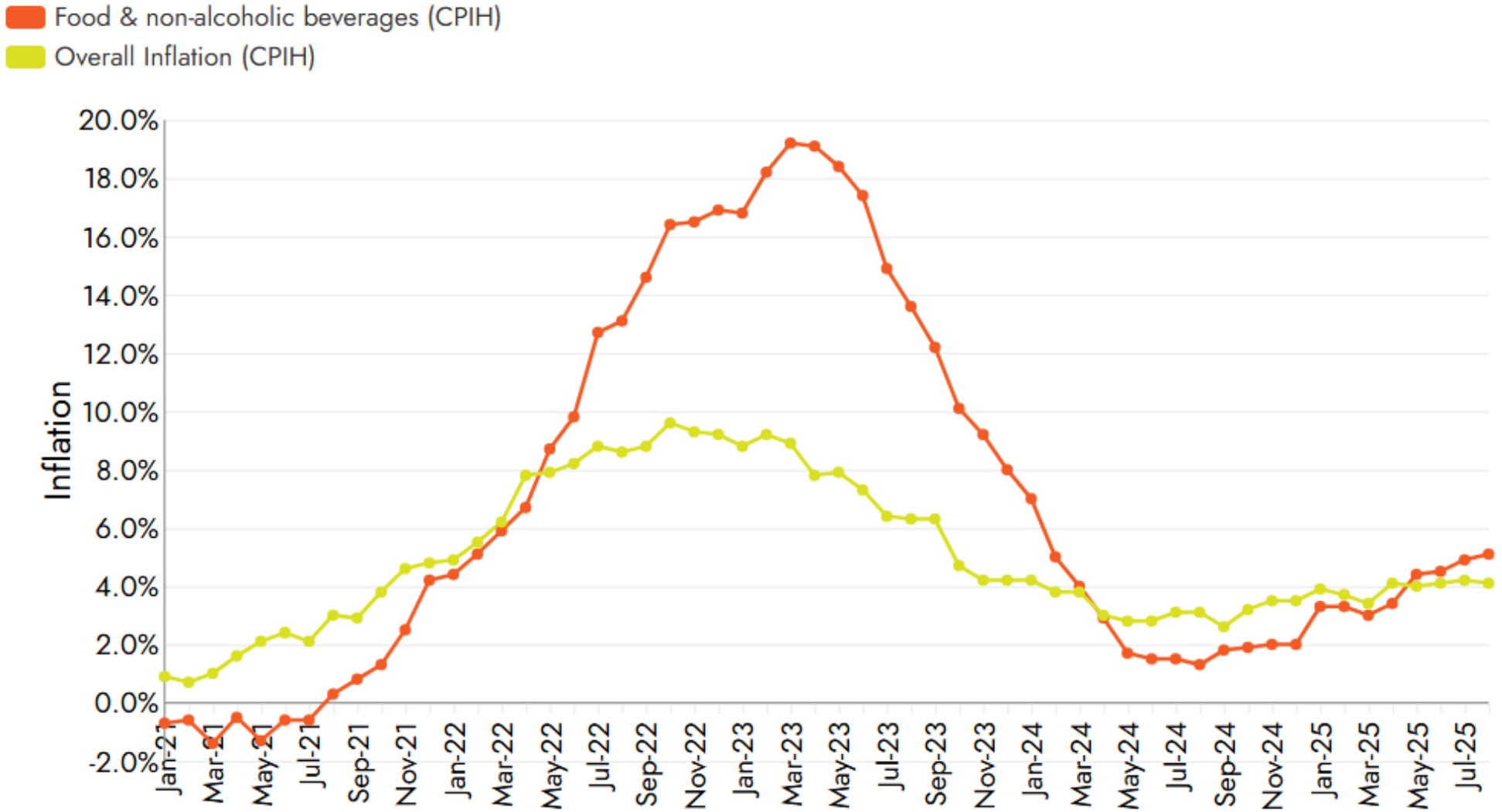
Exploring Ultra-Processed Food Consumption



- On average, **45% of the total calories** came from **UPFs** (ranging from 24% to 64%)
- The energy contribution of UPFs, considered to fall within the Icelandic dietary guidelines, was 4%
- Those in the lowest quartile of UPF consumption consumed more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains with higher diet quality overall.
- The median share of **dietary GHG** emissions from UPFs was **21%,** despite contributing 45% of total energy intake.
- Only 1% of total dietary GHG emissions came from UPFs aligning with the Icelandic FBDG, suggesting that most UPF derived emissions come from producing foods like processed meats, ice cream, sweet and savoury snacks, and soft drinks, which are not only detrimental to human health in high amounts but also cause avoidable environmental impacts.

Gunnarsdóttir S, Ögmundarson Ó, Thorgeirsdóttir H, et al. Exploring Ultra-Processed Food Consumption: Adherence to Food-Based Dietary Guidelines, Nutrient Intake and the Associated Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Iceland. *British Journal of Nutrition*. Published online 2025:1-36. doi:10.1017/S0007114525105552

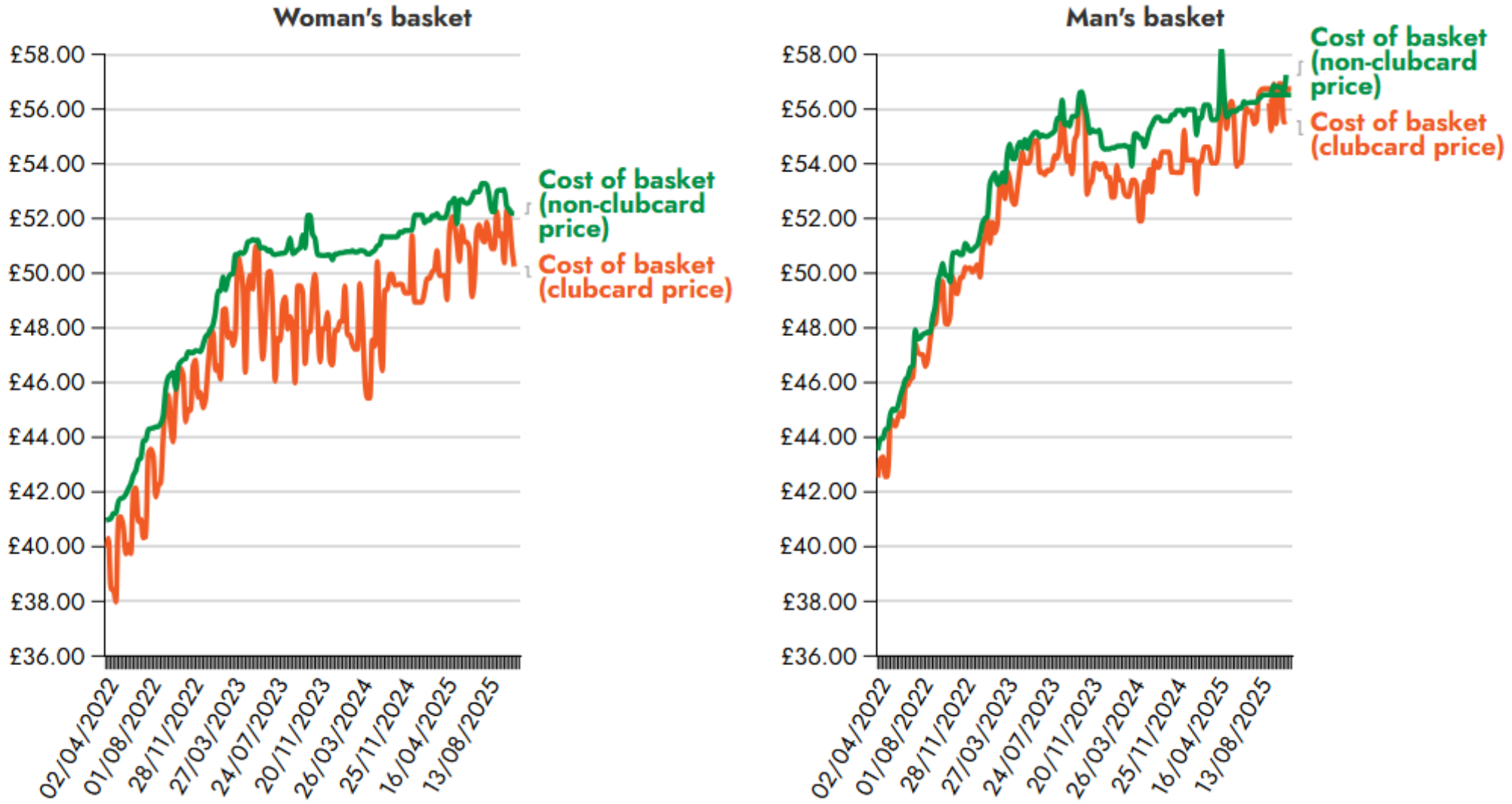
Overall Inflation vs Food Inflation



Source: ONS, Consumer price inflation tables

The Food Foundation

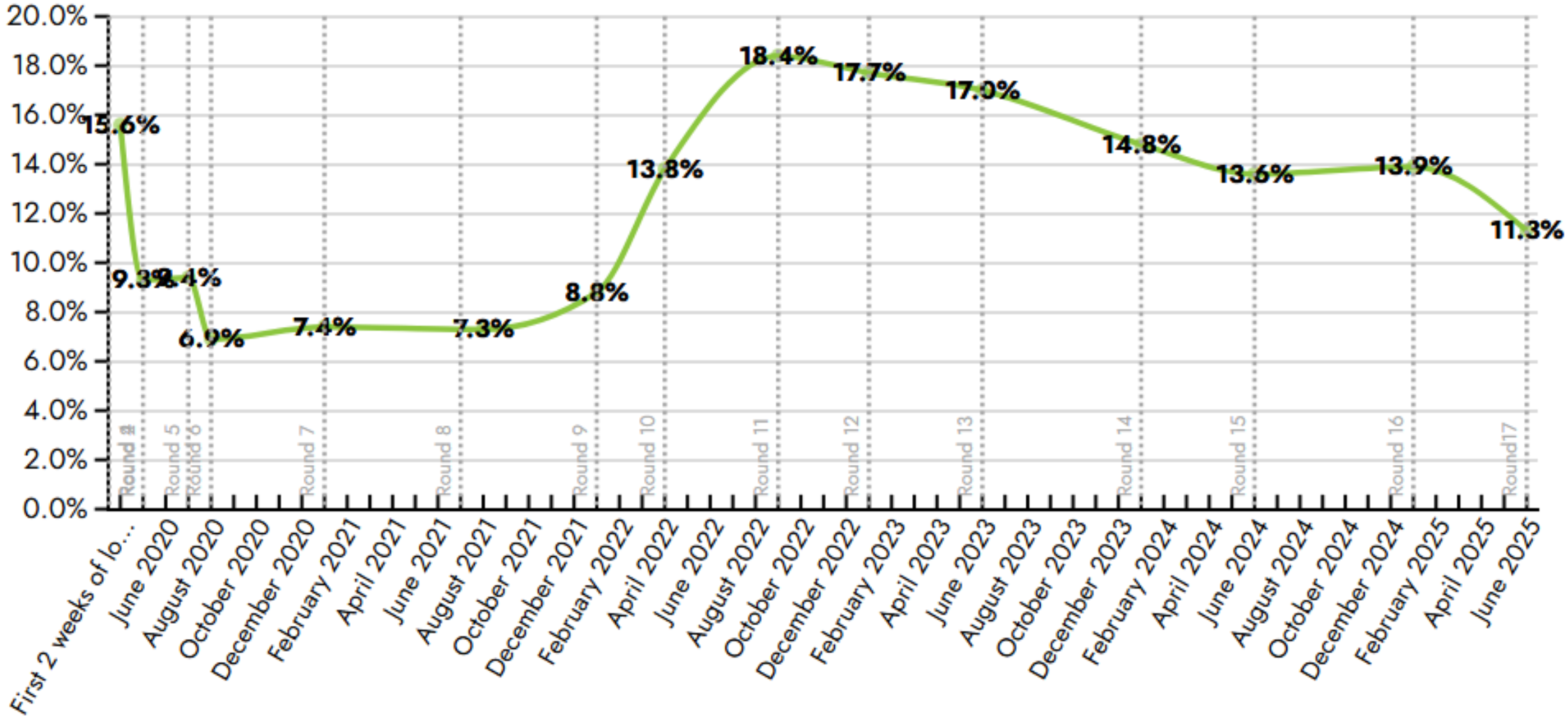
Both | Cost of basket (clubcard price) | Cost of basket (non-clubcard price)



*does not include multibuy promotions or meal deals

The price of the woman's basket (non-clubcard price) has increased by 25.7% and the price of the man's basket (non-clubcard price) has increased by 31.5% since April 2022

The Food Foundation



Moderate or severe food insecurity

* 1-month recall period

The Food Foundation

State of play of food insecurity in the UK

- **Food insecurity is affecting 1 in 10 households** (11.3%) – while levels have fallen slowly since the peak of the cost-of-living crisis, they remain incredibly high.
- Households with **children**, **disabled people** and those in **receipt of benefits** are consistently at even **greater risk of food insecurity** than the general population.
- Analysis of the past five years shows policy interventions to support low-income families have resulted in **rapid improvements in food insecurity levels**. Equally, when support has been taken away, this has had **substantial negative impacts**.
- Food insecurity is not inevitable; it is **political choice**. The government's food strategy must set out a **long-term strategy** to minimise levels of food insecurity in the UK.

Roadmap to reduce food insecurity in the UK

1. Ensure wage and benefit levels factor in the cost of a healthy diet

2. Strengthen nutritional safety net schemes that support low-income children

3. Rebalance the cost of the food basket to make healthy food the more affordable option

4. Support local authorities to address food insecurity in their communities through monitoring and social infrastructure

5. Establish a threshold for levels of household food insecurity that triggers emergency measures when crossed

Roadmap to Reducing Food Insecurity in the UK

Key Insights and Strategic Pathways

Source: The Food Foundation (2023), *Roadmap to Reducing Food Insecurity in the UK*

Pathways and Policy Recommendations

1. Embed food security as a national policy goal, with regular reporting.

2. Reform social safety nets to reflect real living costs.

3. Invest in local food partnerships and school meal expansion.

4. Support **community-led and place-based solutions** connecting health, housing, and local economies.

"Ending food insecurity requires joined-up governance across welfare, health, and environmental policies – treating access to food as a right, not a privilege."

Reframing Food Access as a Right

- Food insecurity cannot be solved through charity alone — it requires **structural change** in welfare, labour, and food systems.
- **Right to Food** should guide UK and EU policy frameworks, embedding justice and sustainability.
- Strengthening **local food partnerships** and **community food infrastructure** can make systems more resilient and equitable.

"*Reducing food insecurity means transforming the system itself — from emergency responses to long-term food justice*."

The Elephant at the Table: Power and Food Systems

- Food systems will not transform through technology or efficiency alone — we must confront *power*.
- Power defines who controls **land, markets, labor, taste, and narratives**.
- The persistence of hunger, ecosystem degradation, and inequality reflects **structural power imbalances**, not technical failures.

"*We cannot accept claims of transformation when solutions are merely technocratic adjustments to the status quo*." *(Chicoma & Reynolds, 2025)*

Source: The New Institute – The Elephant at the Table, 2025

How Power Inequities Shape Food System Failures

Source: The New Institute – The Elephant at the Table, 2025

Corporate and institutional domination:

- A handful of firms dominate global value chains — *from seeds to supermarkets* — shaping what is grown, traded, and consumed.
- Policymakers and donors amplify privileged voices while marginalizing smallholders, women, and informal food workers.
- Food systems rely structurally on **cheap, precarious labor**, transferring value upward to corporations and consumers.

"***Profitability depends on the systematic use of cheap labor — a clear expression of power inequity***." *(IPES-Food, 2023; Patel & Moore, 2017)*

Pathways for change

Reclaiming Power for Systemic Transformation

Source: The New Institute – The Elephant at the Table, 2025

- **Redistribute** control and ownership of land, water, and seeds.
- **Democratize** governance and strengthen voice of social movements.
- **Recognize** traditional and informal food systems as central infrastructures of resilience.
- **Repoliticize** policy debates: transformation must be *political*, not technocratic.

"***Real transformation requires naming where power lies, challenging those who hold it, and redistributing it to make change possible***." *(Chicoma & Reynolds, 2025)*

Why Urban Food Governance Matters for Unsustainable Food Systems

Based on review of the last 10 years of research (36 articles) shows growing interest in **urban food policies, strategies and plans**, but also persistent gaps in how they are implemented and governed.

•Current food systems are the **single largest driver** of environmental degradation (land-use change, freshwater depletion, ecosystem pollution, climate instability).

•Rapid urbanisation is reshaping **production, supply chains, diets and social meanings of food**, making cities central arenas of food (un)sustainability.

•Cities are simultaneously **pressure points** (demand, inequality, vulnerability) and **innovation spaces** for more sustainable, just and resilient food systems.

Source: Rocha & Moreno Pires (2025), Innovating in food systems: challenges and opportunities in urban governance for sustainable transition, *Urban Governance.*

Emerging Governance Innovations in Urban Food Systems

Food Policy Councils (FPCs)

•Multi-actor platforms (civil society, government, private sector) that open spaces for **food democracy** and treat food as a **public/common good**.

•Can raise awareness, map food resources, and advise policy – but often face **fragile funding, limited institutionalisation and power asymmetries**.

Urban Food Strategies (UFS)

•City-level strategies and action plans linking food to **health, environment, social inclusion and planning**.

•Successful when backed by **intersectoral commitment, data and monitoring**, but vulnerable to political cycles and resource constraints.

City-Region Food Systems (CRFS)

•Territorial frameworks connecting **urban, peri-urban and rural** spaces and flows (production, distribution, waste).

•Help recognise short supply chains, agroecological practices and rural–urban links, but still lack robust regulatory typologies and cross-sector coordination.

Multilevel & translocal networks (e.g. Milan Urban Food Policy Pact)

•Support **knowledge exchange, peer learning and resource mobilisation**, rescaling city innovations – but with weak formal commitments and limited implementation tools.

Source: Rocha & Moreno Pires (2025), Innovating in food systems: challenges and opportunities in urban governance for sustainable transition, Urban Governance.

Gaps, Blocking Factors & Governance Directions

Key gaps & blocking factors

•Fragmented approaches: food treated in **isolated sectors** (health, waste, agriculture) rather than as a systemic field of power and inequality.
•Limited institutionalisation of FPCs, UFS, CRFS: **short-term projects**, unstable funding, symbolic participation.
•Unclear roles and weak engagement of **farmers, citizens, private sector**, and local governments in decision-making.
•Lack of **data, indicators and knowledge-sharing mechanisms** to map food flows, monitor impacts and support policy learning.

Directions & recommendations (for cities / policy discussion)

•**Institutionalise** food governance structures (FPCs, CRFS) with legal mandates, long-term funding and integration into urban plans.
•Use **flexible regulatory tools** like public procurement to link food to health, environment, social justice and rural development.
•Invest in **technical capacity** of urban actors and stable finance (including hybrid public–private mechanisms) for long-term initiatives.
•Build **systematic data systems** and indicators on urban food systems to support evidence-based, multi-level governance.

Source: Rocha & Moreno Pires (2025), Innovating in food systems: challenges and opportunities in urban governance for sustainable transition, *Urban Governance.*

COP 30: Industrial agriculture, emissions and land-use frontiers

•Industrial agriculture is responsible for **around 25–33% of global GHG emissions**. Without transforming how we produce and consume food, **1.5°C – even 2°C – becomes unreachable**, even if fossil fuels were phased out quickly.

•In the Brazilian Amazon, **cattle ranching** is the main driver of deforestation, followed by **soy monocultures** mostly used for animal feed.

•Scientists warn that **up to half of the Amazon rainforest** could reach a tipping point by 2050 because of land clearance, water stress and climate disruption.

•Most synthetic fertilisers are fossil-fuel-based and emit **nitrous oxide**, a gas **~300x more powerful than CO_2**, for which agriculture is the largest driver.

•Yet **food is not a formal focus** of Cop30 negotiations, while agriculture-linked sectors stand to benefit from decisions on **biofuels** and **climate finance**.

Cop30: Power, lobbying and climate justice

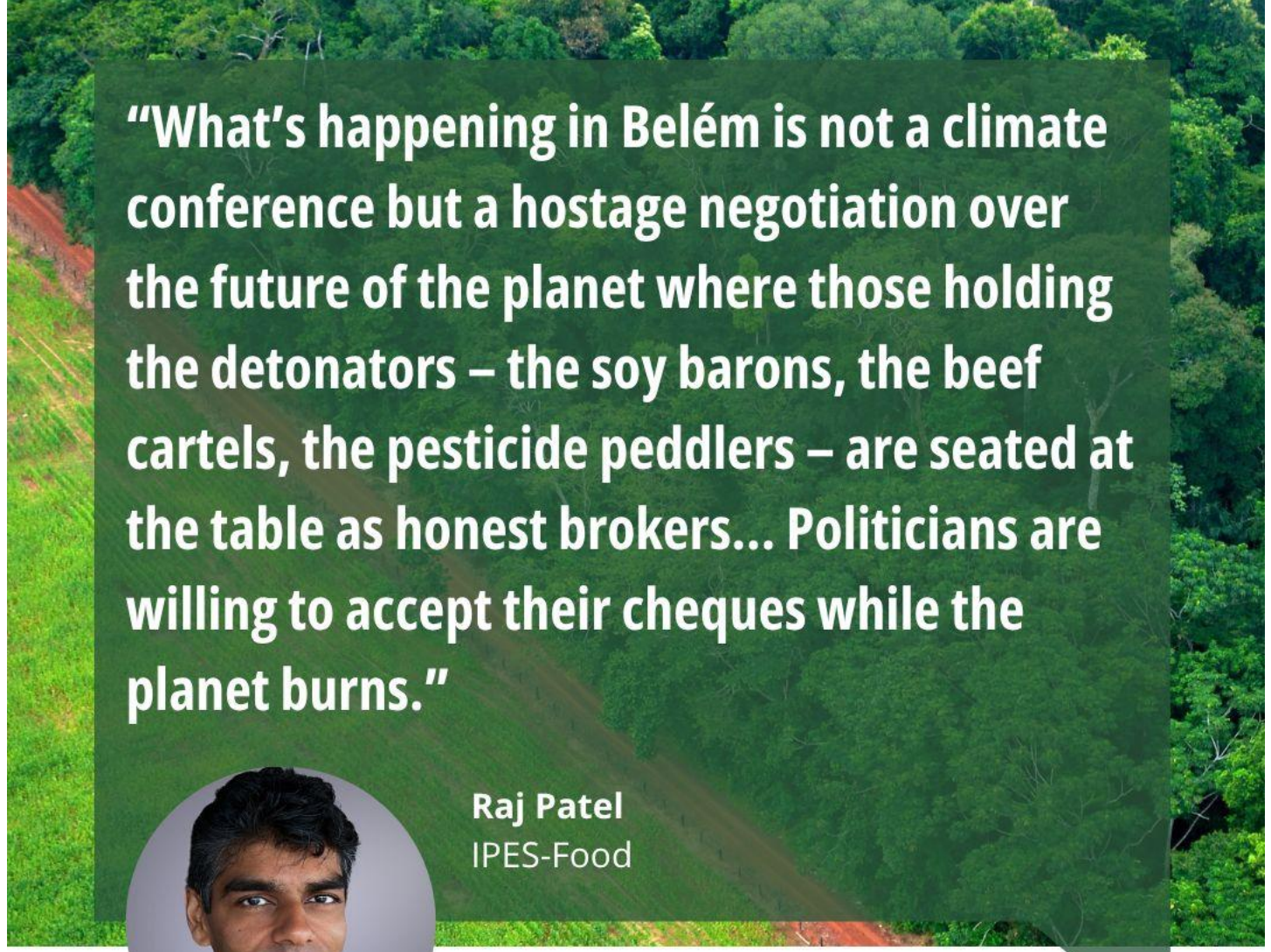
•Indigenous leaders denounce that agribusiness lobbyists are **occupying spaces that should belong to forest peoples**, while their territories face pollution, land grabs and river privatisation for soy and cattle.

•Activists argue this shows how **industrial agriculture has effectively captured the climate talks**, shaping rules while profiting from deforestation and fossil-based inputs.

•The summit is described as a kind of **“hostage negotiation”** over the planet’s future, with soy barons, beef cartels and pesticide firms treated as neutral “stakeholders”.

•In the US alone, agribusiness corporations and trade groups spent **well over $500 million** lobbying Congress between 2019–2023 for favourable legislation.

•Civil society groups draw a parallel with fossil fuel lobbying and call for **conflict-of-interest rules** and **limits on corporate lobbyists** as a precondition for fair, effective climate and food-system governance.



iPES FOOD

WHO'S TIPPING THE SCALES?

Next week: Thursday March 12

A session focused on participatory action research with processes and methods:

- organisation of living labs with its stages
- participatory action research with indicators and validation of research
- steps of Design Thinking for processes
- tools/methods for collaborative actions