

FERTILE GROUND

Tools for imagining a shared food future



LONG
FOOD
PROJECT

WEAVERS

CONTENTS

01

INTRODUCTION

02

HOW TO USE THESE TOOLS

03

USING A “PREDICTABLE SURPRISES” PERSPECTIVE

- Workshop 01
Looking Back: Our Past is Our Fertile Ground
- Workshop 02
Looking Ahead: Applying Hindsight
- Workshop 03
Preparation as Praxis: Preparing While in Action

04

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

05

THE COMMUNITY WEAVER’S GUIDE

- Community Weaver Responsibilities
- Checklist
- Facilitation Tools
- Ice-breaking Activities
- Workshop Resources

INTRODUCTION

The world is at a critical moment. The climate crisis is accelerating, with ecosystems reaching irreversible tipping points, and corporations are tightening their grip over every aspect of the industrial food system, including food production, processing, manufacturing, distribution, retail, delivery, and consumption, while food insecurity continues to rise.

Meanwhile, major global shocks continue to devastate food systems. Seven years into the global promise to end hunger by 2030, the situation is instead only getting worse. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that in 2020 alone, 924 million people were severely food insecure – a rise in one (pandemic) year that was larger than the previous five years combined.¹ In the same year, approximately 1 in 3 people – 2.37 billion – did not have regular access to adequate food.² The mismanagement and consolidation of resources among a few corporations, and the fragility of globalised supply chains – as evidenced during the pandemic – continue to push millions more to the brink of hunger and have put an estimated one-third of food and farming livelihoods at risk.³ Compounding this are record-breaking global food prices and a debt crisis. All of this is taking place in the context of non-stop environmental emergencies and extreme levels of inequality.

As our global supply chain crumbles underneath the weight of its inability to deliver food and justice, we currently find ourselves at a crossroads.

1 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. (2022). "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World".

2 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. (2022). "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World".

3 IPES Food and ETC Group. (2021). "A long food movement, transforming food systems by 2045".

Two pathways diverge before us.

The first is the "Agribusiness as Usual" pathway – where the roadmap is determined by profit, not people. Where agribusiness decides not only what's on the table, but who occupies it, and who doesn't. In this pathway, corporations invest all their resources and exert all their influence to realise a future characterised by a fully-automated food chain, where all nature is subject to privatisation, commodification, and genetic modification. Under the guise of "climate-smart" and "nature-based" solutions, agribusiness aims to consolidate even more resources, and further reinforce its grip over food systems. They have clear and calculated blueprints drawn out, targets set, and pockets deep enough to enforce their vision of a future of farming without farmers. To them, we the people are simply passive recipients/beneficiaries of their grand plan.

However, there is another way.

One where we reclaim our collective power to re-root our food systems in diversity, agroecology, and human rights. This pathway draws inspiration from what civil society organisations have already been doing remarkably well for decades. It helps us imagine a future where we tap into our collective power to shape food systems that nourish our communities and the living environment. Where we combine our knowledge and our might by forging deeper, wider, and more effective collaborations than ever before, to collectively lead food systems transformation in the next 25 years.

This pathway serves both as an invitation and a call to join hands, gently reminding us that no system, no matter how seemingly big or powerful, can withstand the force of our collective power.

HOW TO USE THESE TOOLS

PURPOSE

We are hoping that these tools serve as a conversation starter – because only through the radical act of dialogue can we begin to strengthen our roots and build a shared vision for the future we want.

We have designed these tools to help facilitate critical reflection. Whether it's guided by a Community Weaver, or organised in a collective manner is up to you.

PREPARING FOR WORKSHOP

We recommend:

- These workshops are done collectively and in order
- Two or more Community Weavers are selected to guide each workshop
- The Community Weavers selected familiarise themselves with the contents of these tools beforehand and facilitate the sessions in a manner that holds space for all participants to reflect and share their insights
- We embrace the unknown, the in-between, and the uncomfortable
- We have fun and not stress ourselves out

WORKSHOP DESIGN

We have divided the perspectives offered in these tools into three interdependent workshops of around 2 hours each, that can be conducted both online, as well as in-person. We recommend that you honour the space between these conversations as much as the conversations themselves. Give yourselves time to breathe and think, and plan these workshops over a span of days rather than hours.

The first workshop will focus on “Looking Back”, where we learn from the past, which will become our fertile ground for navigating the present.

The second will focus on “Looking Ahead”, where we apply our hindsight from the past to enhance our understanding of the present, to anticipate and collaboratively respond to challenges in the future.

And the third and final workshop is centred around “Preparation as Praxis”, where we root ourselves in a constant process of critical reflection, long-term strategic thinking, and collaboration, to actualise the world we want.

A “PREDICTABLE SURPRISES” PERSPECTIVE



Most of the gravest disruptions in our food systems, such as the accelerating loss of global soil fertility, political upheavals, massive storms or floods, pandemics, economic bubbles, supply system failures, technological disasters, crop failures, or mass extinctions of species, were predicted by civil society actors far in advance. We refer to these events as “Predictable Surprises”, as they arise from foreseeable patterns and come with relatively predictable risks.

However, amidst increasing climate and food security shocks, the diversion of funding in favour of agribusiness, and the growing hostility from governments turning more and more authoritarian, many movements today are forced to adopt a more reactive approach, as they contend with constraints regarding time, resources, and capacity. Using a long-term strategic lens and collaborating deeply between movements is crucial for civil society to effectively anticipate and respond to future disruptions and lead food systems transformation.

The Predictable Surprises perspective offers a possible framework for movements to collaborate in developing response systems that can improve their ability to recognise and collectively prepare for predictable and potentially disruptive events.

This set of tools will collectively serve as a practical resource to help movements use the Predictable Surprises framework to collectively engage in the process of reflection and action and embed these practices in their day-to-day operations, as well as their long-term planning. This process critically involves learning from disruptive events in the past, applying hindsight of the past to see what disruptive events may be on the horizon, and distilling these lessons to develop response systems to prepare for Predictable Surprises in the future.

WORKSHOP 01

LOOKING BACK: OUR PAST IS OUR FERTILE GROUND



EXERCISE 01

ICE BREAKER

15 MINUTES
GROUP ACTIVITY

The Community Weavers will start the session with an ice-breaking activity.

The Weaver is free to choose one of the icebreaking activities mentioned in the Community Weavers Guide or come up with one that is more relevant to the group and setting of the workshop.

EXERCISE 02

WHAT THE PAST CAN TEACH US ABOUT THE FUTURE

25 MINUTES
CONTEXT SETTING



The Community Weavers will set the context of the exercise and introduce the Predictable Surprises Perspective. They will also introduce essential terminology including Predictable Surprises, Disruptions, Early Warning Signals, and Vulnerabilities, as indicated in the Glossary List.

Weavers will note participants' responses on a physical or digital board.

QUESTION 01

WHAT EVENTS IN THE PAST HAVE DISRUPTED THE FOOD SYSTEMS IN YOUR REGION?

Share an example of a disruption provided in the Community Weavers Guide of “Predictable Surprises of the Past” to give the participants a sense of what they might look like. Note down all the disruptions posed by the participants on the board.

QUESTION 02

COLLECTIVELY DECIDE TO FOCUS ON A SINGLE DISRUPTIVE EVENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS EXERCISE

Help the group narrow down on an event, propose one of the case studies provided in the Community Weavers Guide, or prepare a case study more relevant to the context of the meeting.

QUESTION 03

HOW HAS THIS EVENT IMPACTED: A) YOUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM? B) YOUR ORGANISATION'S ACTIVITIES IN YOUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM?

Gather insights shared by participants and create a broad overview of the disruption – when the disruption occurred, how it affected the local food system, and how it affected the work the organisation is trying to advance in the food system.

The Weavers will introduce the concept of Early Warning Signals as defined in the Glossary List. They may provide a few examples of what these signs could look like, referring to the Community Weavers Resource Guide on “Predictable Surprises of the Past”.

Encourage participants to reflect on how these disruptive events didn't happen all at once and how they weren't and how they weren't entirely unforeseen. What were the patterns in the food system and the economy that suggested that a disruption was likely to happen at some stage?

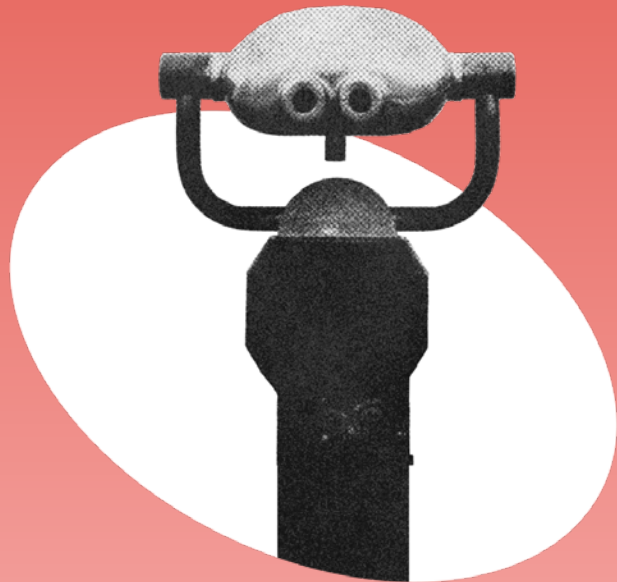
With this, the Weavers set the context for the next exercise, which is a group discussion to unpack the Early Warning Signals related to the chosen disruption and reflect on how the organisation could have responded to them better.

EXERCISE 03

READING SIGNALS AND IDENTIFYING ALLIES

45 MINUTES

GROUP DISCUSSION



The Community Weavers will break the participants into random groups. They will be a part of the discussions, as well. (If the session is online, groups can be created through the “breakout rooms” feature on Zoom or Google Meet.)

Each group self-assigns a note-taker, a timekeeper, and a synthesiser. The timekeepers should ensure that the group distributes the time evenly so they can discuss all the questions.

QUESTION 01

WHAT WERE THE EARLY WARNING SIGNALS OR PATTERNS THAT INDICATED THAT THE FOOD SYSTEM WAS VULNERABLE TO THIS SORT OF DISRUPTION?

QUESTION 02

HOW AWARE WAS YOUR ORGANISATION OF THE EARLY WARNING SIGNALS OR PATTERNS IN FOOD SYSTEMS THAT LED TO THE DISRUPTION?

Were these signals formally discussed within the organisation and incorporated into your programmatic strategy?

Can you list a few reasons/constraints that helped/prevented your organisation from being prepared?

QUESTION 03

WHAT TYPES OF COLLABORATIONS, AT THE LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, COULD HAVE ENABLED YOUR ORGANISATION TO BETTER PREPARE FOR, AND RESPOND TO, THE DISRUPTION?

What are some other sectors that were closely tied to the issue that would be good to collaborate with?

EXERCISE 04

LESSONS FROM THE PAST: PREPARING THROUGH COLLABORATION

**35 MINUTES
REFLECTION**



All groups reconvene. The synthesiser selected by each group will share their discussions and learnings with other groups.

After each group presents, there will be a five-minute reflection window where anyone is free to ask questions or add to the discussion.

After all the groups have finished presenting, the Community Weavers will open up a discussion on the common patterns that emerged between all the groups, and pose these two questions:

QUESTION 01

HOW IS LEARNING FROM OUR PAST HELPFUL?

QUESTION 02

HOW CAN COLLABORATIONS HELP IN PREPARING FOR DISRUPTIONS?

The intention of this workshop is to understand the value of reflection.

In addition to the participants' insights, Weavers can put forth the following thoughts:

- o Reflecting on the past holds significant power and value in informing our present and future.
- o The benefits of hindsight can help us identify what could have been done to better prepare both organisations and civil society as a whole, thus aiding in the development of preventative mechanisms to avoid repeating similar patterns.
- o Collaborating with others is always a potent way to address issues that are larger than the organisation (and its limited reach by virtue of being a singular entity).

WORKSHOP 02

LOOKING AHEAD: APPLYING HINDSIGHT



EXERCISE 01

ICE BREAKER

15 MINUTES
GROUP ACTIVITY

The Community Weavers will start the session with an ice-breaking activity.

The Weaver is free to choose one of the icebreaking activities mentioned in the Community Weavers Guide or come up with one that is more relevant to the group and setting of the workshop.

EXERCISE 02

HORIZON SCANNING

25 MINUTES

CONTEXT SETTING



The Community Weavers will set the context of the exercise and introduce the Predictable Surprises Perspective. They will give a brief recap on the first workshop on “Looking Back” and re-introduce essential terminology including Predictable Surprises, Disruptions, Early Warning Signals, and Vulnerabilities, as indicated in the Glossary List.

Weavers will introduce the concept of Applied Hindsight and how the past can inform our future. While acknowledging that the future is unpredictable, they will highlight the existence of Early Warning Signals in our food systems that may give us information about disruptions in the future.

Weavers will note the participants' responses on a physical or digital board.

QUESTION 01

WHAT ARE SOME EARLY WARNING SIGNALS THAT ARE VISIBLE IN OUR FOOD SYSTEMS THAT COULD LEAD TO DISRUPTIVE EVENTS IN THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

What could the disruptions themselves look like?

Provide a recap on the Early Warning Signals that participants identified in Workshop 01 on “Looking Back” for reference.

Pose some of the case studies provided in The Community Weavers Guide on “Predictable Surprises we see on the horizon”. The Weaver is free to use a case study provided in the tools or map out or map out a new one with help from the group.

Note down participant responses on the board for everyone to see using a case study format, which contains:

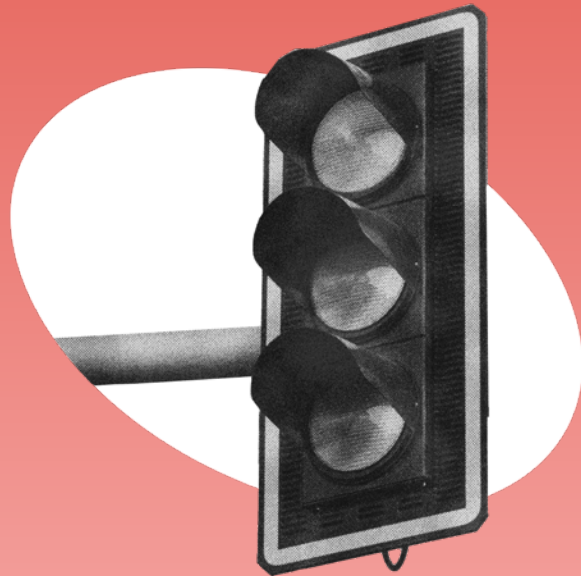
1. Brief background and context of the disruption.
2. 4-5 Early Warning Signals that are visible in the food system today.

EXERCISE 03

APPLIED HINDSIGHT

45 MINUTES

GROUP DISCUSSION



The Community Weavers will break the participants into random groups. They will be a part of the discussions, as well. (If the session is online, groups can be created through the “breakout rooms” feature on Zoom or Google Meet.) Each group self-assigns a note-taker, a timekeeper, and a synthesiser. The timekeepers should ensure that the group distributes the time evenly so they can discuss all the questions.

QUESTION 01

WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND RIGHTS-HOLDERS WHO HAVE THE POWER TO INFLUENCE YOUR FOOD SYSTEM?

Place a special emphasis on naming the key civil society actors in your organisation's ecosystem.

The note-takers will map out all the stakeholders either using or adapting the template provided by the Community Weavers.

Think about:

a. Stakeholders at local and national levels.

For example, municipal and state governments, international authorities, umbrella organisations etc.

b. Stakeholders in other sectors that are susceptible to the disruption.

For example, transportation, healthcare, food processing and manufacturing, and financial markets – sectors where you’re likely to find allies who are also likely to be impacted by the disruption.

c. Allied rights-holders and popular movements that are operating in the same landscape of struggle.

For instance, social justice, labour justice, gender equity, climate justice, etc. These aren’t necessarily movements directly fighting for your cause, but you share similar values and visions for the future.

QUESTION 02

WHAT ARE SOME MEASURES THAT WE AS CIVIL SOCIETY CAN COLLECTIVELY TAKE TO PREVENT/RESPOND TO THESE EARLY WARNING SIGNALS MORE EFFECTIVELY?

QUESTION 03

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES OF YOUR ORGANISATION THAT COULD BE LEVERAGED TO DEVELOP RESPONSE SYSTEMS?

QUESTION 04

WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND RIGHTS-HOLDERS YOU WOULD NEED TO COLLABORATE WITH TO DEVELOP THESE RESPONSE SYSTEMS?



EXERCISE 04

FROM HINDSIGHT TO FORESIGHT: PREPARING COLLECTIVELY

30 MINUTES
GROUP REFLECTION



All groups reconvene. The synthesiser selected by each group will share their discussions and learnings with each other.

After each group presents, there will be a five-minute reflection window where anyone is free to ask questions or add to the discussion.

After all the groups have finished presenting, the Community Weavers will open up a discussion by posing the following questions:

QUESTION 01

HOW CAN THINKING LONG-TERM HELP US BETTER PREPARE FOR DISRUPTIONS?

QUESTION 02

HOW CAN COLLABORATIONS HELP SECURE A MORE WELL-PLANNED FUTURE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY?

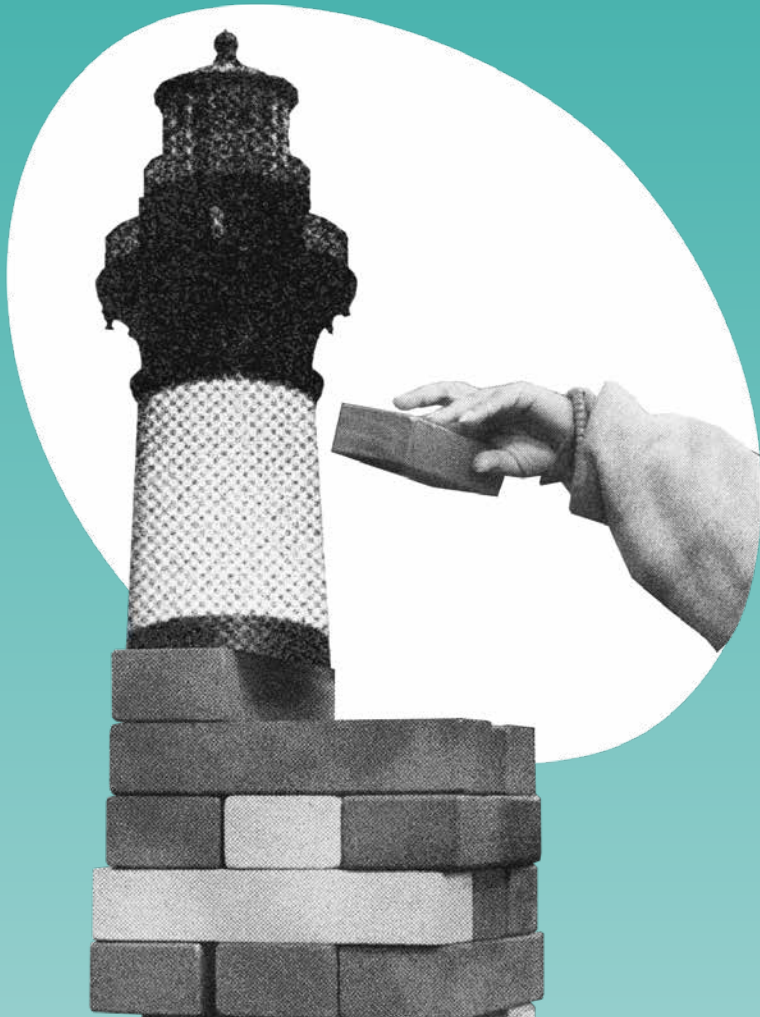
The intention of this workshop is to understand the value of reflection.

In addition to the participants' insights, Weavers can put forth the following thoughts:

- We have a lot in common with stakeholders who are working in allied areas of struggle. We must build deeper partnerships with people in those spaces to push our common vision forward.
- Anticipating future disruptions and reflecting on them can better help organisations integrate these into program strategy and planning. They can also help assess threats, and guide decisions regarding collaborations required, capacity, resources, etc.
- This is about the practice of thinking ahead, about preparedness, and about the benefit of having steadfast networks, collaborators, and strategies before (and not during or after) the disruption.

WORKSHOP 03

PREPARATION AS PRAXIS: PREPARING WHILE IN ACTION



EXERCISE 01

ICE BREAKER

15 MINUTES
GROUP ACTIVITY

The Community Weavers will start the session with an ice-breaking activity.


The Weaver is free to choose one of the icebreaking activities mentioned in the Community Weavers Guide or come up with one that is more relevant to the group and setting of the workshop.

EXERCISE 02

MAP OF POSSIBILITIES

30 MINUTES

CONTEXT SETTING

The Community Weavers will set the context of the exercise and introduce the Predictable Surprises Perspective. They will give a brief recap on the first workshop on “Looking Back”, and the second workshop on “Looking Ahead”, and re-introduce essential terminology including Predictable Surprises, Disruptions, Early Warning Signals, and Vulnerabilities, as indicated in the Glossary List. 

The Weavers will bring back the concept of Applied Hindsight and how it is important to continuously engage in the process of reflecting on the past and applying a long-term strategic lens in the present, to prepare for the future.

The Weavers will note the participants' responses on a digital or physical board. The Weavers will bring back the Social Ecology Map presented by participants in Workshop 02.

They will also collate the key insights of the participants from the previous workshop in the “Collaboration Plan” template provided in the Community Weavers Resource Guide, and share it with participants:

QUESTION 01

WHAT ARE EARLY WARNING SIGNALS VISIBLE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM?

QUESTION 02

WHAT ARE MEASURES THAT CIVIL SOCIETY CAN TAKE TO PREVENT/RESPOND TO THESE EARLY WARNING SIGNALS MORE EFFECTIVELY?

QUESTION 03

WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND RIGHTS HOLDERS WE WOULD NEED TO COLLABORATE WITH TO DEVELOP EARLY RESPONSE SYSTEMS?

EXERCISE 03

COLLABORATION AS ACTION

45 MINUTES

GROUP DISCUSSION



The Community Weavers will break the participants into small random groups. They will be a part of the discussions, as well. (If the session is online, groups can be created through the “breakout rooms” feature on Zoom or Google Meet.)

Each group self-assigns a note-taker, a timekeeper, and a synthesiser. The timekeepers should ensure that the group distributes the time evenly so they can discuss all the questions.

QUESTION 01

WHICH STAKEHOLDERS CAN WE WORK WITH, TO CO-STRATEGISE AND CO-DEVELOP RESPONSE SYSTEMS?

What are each stakeholder’s respective roles in the larger movement?

Don’t limit your responses to the collaborations and partnerships the organisation already has in place, but examine the larger stakeholder map and see what sorts of new relationships would help develop response systems.

QUESTION 02

WHAT STEPS DO WE NEED TO TAKE TO DEEPEN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OUR ORGANISATION AND THE STAKEHOLDERS WE’VE IDENTIFIED IN QUESTION 1?

QUESTION 03

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE NEED INTERNALLY AS AN ORGANISATION, IN ORDER TO COLLABORATE WITH THOSE STAKEHOLDERS AND RIGHTS HOLDERS TO DEVELOP RESPONSE SYSTEMS?

Don’t limit your inputs to the current resource constraints of the organisation, but be imaginative about what sorts of resources could help the organisation best address the Early Warning Signals in food systems.

Share the template of the “Collaboration Plan” provided in the Community Weavers Resources list, with the participants for their reference, and ask them to fill it out.

EXERCISE 04

BREAKING SILOS, EMBRACING COLLABORATION

30 MINUTES

GROUP REFLECTION



All groups reconvene. The synthesiser selected by each group will share their discussions and learnings with other groups.

After each group presents, there will be a five-minute reflection window where anyone is free to ask questions or add to the discussion.

After all the groups have finished presenting, the Community Weavers will open up a discussion on the common patterns that emerged between all the groups. It is up to the Weaver to pose any or all of the following questions:

QUESTION 01

HOW DO WE EMBED THE TIME AND SPACE FOR STRATEGIC LONG-TERM THINKING INTO OUR WORK ON A DEEPER LEVEL?

And how do we avoid losing sight of long-term goals while tackling daily difficulties?

QUESTION 02

WHY IS IT THAT CORPORATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ARE INCREASINGLY PUSHING CIVIL SOCIETY INTO SILOS AND MAKING US UNABLE TO COLLABORATE AND STRATEGISE FOR OUR FUTURES?

How do we resist the forces that wish to divide us?

The intention of this workshop is to understand the value of preparing and planning for the long term while grappling with daily difficulties. In addition to the participants' insights, Weavers can put forth the following thoughts:

- We can only work toward a shared food future if we break out of the practice of operating in silos and instead see ourselves as part of a larger civil society ecosystem.
- Developing effective response systems involves multiple actors at various levels working together. Collaboration is the world's most renewable resource.
- If the agribusiness pathway is founded on competition and consolidation, we must collaborate deeply and widely, combining our knowledge, resources, skillsets, and might in order to address systemic issues that are larger than our organisation and its limited reach.

GLOSSARY LIST

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil Society encompasses both formally and informally organised networks of non-state actors, such as social movements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), small-scale producers, trade unions, and community-based organisations. These diverse entities, along with their allies, collaborate towards the common goal of creating food systems that prioritise the public good and are firmly rooted in human rights while respecting the limitations of our planet's boundaries. The term "food movements" is often used interchangeably with "civil society" to emphasise their collective advocacy for positive change in food systems.

PREDICTABLE SURPRISES

Predictable Surprises are sudden and extraordinarily disruptive events that seem to come out of nowhere with the potential to change the fundamental dynamics of societies, whether locally, regionally, or globally. Such world-changing events seem to catch everyone by surprise, even though later analysis shows that we already understood and foresaw their roots and patterns. Our perspective for examining these "predictable surprises" offers the opportunity to better anticipate and strategise for future disruptions.

DISRUPTION

Disruption is the potential that events, coming seemingly out of nowhere, have to change the fundamental dynamics of societies, locally, regionally, or globally. Examples include political upheaval, massive storms or floods, pandemics, economic bubbles, supply system failures, technological disasters, and crop failures.

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

Early Warning Signals in food systems are indications of potential issues or vulnerabilities that could cause a disruption in the future. Identifying these signals can help civil society, policymakers, governments, and organisations develop responses to prevent future food crises. History provides many examples of early warnings: the rise of the far-right in politics, glyphosate poisoning of living systems, the ecocide caused by herbicide-resistant GMOs, zoonotic disease risk from intensive farming and the scaling up of corporate land grabs. In each case, civil society raised the issue but couldn't find an audience soon enough (often including civil society itself).

RESPONSE SYSTEMS

Response Systems, in the context of Predictable Surprises, refer to interconnected actions and plans developed by movements, civil society, institutions, and governments to address various challenges and crises in food systems. They are designed to respond to urgent issues and protect people while ensuring the long-term sustainability of food systems. Examples include: food emergency agreements that suspend trade rules in times of crisis, the establishment of platforms for the social assessment of agricultural technologies, as well as public policies that mandate agroecology, food sovereignty, and territorial markets. These actions are supported by food policy councils, deliberative dialogues, and active participation from social movements, Indigenous peoples, and a wide range of actors apart from food movements.

Effective response systems “think” long-term, encompassing multiple objectives and actions. They build on previous momentum (acknowledging past achievements of civil society), and incorporate cultural factors, from mutual aid networks to relocalised food provisioning. These systems also address historical legacies like slavery, colonisation, and structural racism in food systems.

INDUSTRIAL FOOD CHAIN

The Industrial Food Chain is a linear sequence from production to consumption. It begins with crop and livestock genomics, followed by inputs like pesticides and fertilisers, and ends with wholesaling, retailing, and delivery. It operates within the market economy, involving financial, political, and regulatory elements. Despite using 75 percent of agricultural land, using 90 percent of the available fossil fuel energy, and 80 percent of water, it feeds less than 30 percent of the world's population.

APPLIED HINDSIGHT

Applied Hindsight refers to the process of examining past events and using that knowledge to make informed decisions or judgments in the present, in order to prepare for the future. It goes beyond simply looking back at what happened; it is a proactive and intentional process of asking critical questions, reflecting on past events, decisions, and outcomes to understand what worked well and what could be improved, and taking actionable steps to respond better in the future. Drawing from past experiences and knowledge not only helps us avoid repeating the same mistakes, but also enhances our understanding of the present and allows us to anticipate and address potential future disruptions in food systems.

PEASANT

According to La Vía Campesina, “A peasant is a man or woman of the land, who has a direct and special relationship with the land and nature through the production of food and/or other agricultural products. Peasants work the land themselves, relying above all on family labour and other small-scale forms of organising labour. Peasants are traditionally embedded in their local communities and they take care of local landscapes and agro-ecological systems. The term peasant can apply to any person engaged in agriculture, cattle-raising, pastoralism, handicrafts related to agriculture, or a related occupation in rural areas. This includes Indigenous Peoples working on the land”.

FOOD SYSTEM

Food Systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal, and natural environments in which they are embedded. Food systems are composed of sub-systems (e.g. farming system, waste management system, input supply system, etc.) and interacts with other key systems (e.g. energy system, trade system, health system). A sustainable food system is one that delivers healthy and culturally appropriate food for all in such a way that the economic, social, and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.

PEASANT FOOD WEB

The Peasant Food Web comprises intricate webs of over 2.5 billion small-scale farmers, peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists, and Indigenous peoples. Today, these communities operate on small patches of just 25 percent of the world's agricultural land, to feed 70 percent of its population. The myriad food systems that make up the food web, although diverse and unique to their respective local cultures and environments, coexist with each other in an imperfect synchrony, to sustain themselves, feed the majority of us, and preserve the world's biodiversity.

Peasants play a crucial role in providing food to over 70% of the global population, doing so with significantly fewer resources, such as land, water, and fossil fuels, compared to the industrialised food system. With their wealth of knowledge, innovative spirit, and strong networks, peasants are well-equipped to address climate change. They possess the operational capacity and proximity to effectively respond to the needs of the hungry and malnourished.

THE COMMUNITY WEAVERS GUIDE



We use the term “Weaver” because, much like artisans who intricately interlace threads of different forms and colours to craft beautiful fabrics, Community Weavers connect diverse perspectives, experiences, and visions to create a vibrant tapestry of collaboration. Weavers bridge gaps, build bridges, and mend rifts, fostering a sense of unity and belonging among community members. They are instrumental in creating supportive and inclusive spaces where individuals feel encouraged and comfortable to actively participate and engage with one another.

Community Weavers play a crucial role in guiding participants through uncharted territories, navigating the unknown, the in-between, and the uncomfortable. By facilitating open and authentic dialogue, Community Weavers enable critical reflection, share insights, and contribute new information to the collective knowledge and understanding of the community.

Anybody who is willing to listen and hold space can be a weaver.

COMMUNITY WEAVER RESPONSIBILITIES

ENCOURAGING CO-OWNERSHIP

The Community Weaver should encourage participants to lead the collective learning process and to continue engaging with the community beyond the facilitated sessions.

SHARING INSIGHTS

The Community Weaver may contribute their own knowledge and insights but should do so in a way that encourages collaboration rather than dominating the discussion. The Weaver's role is not to educate the participants, but to learn with them, through the process of radical dialogue.

ASKING QUESTIONS

By asking thought-provoking questions, the Community Weaver stimulates deeper exploration of topics and encourages participants to think critically.

ENCOURAGING REFLECTION

The Community Weaver prompts participants to think deeply about the topics being discussed, encouraging them to analyse their own perspectives and assumptions critically.

MEDIATING CONFLICTS

If conflicts arise during discussions, the Community Weaver addresses them in a constructive manner, ensuring that, rather than hindering the learning process, disagreements actually strengthen the process of critical reflection.

SHARING RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE

The Community Weaver introduces relevant and valuable information to enrich the conversation and expand the group's understanding.

FOSTERING DIALOGUE

The Community Weaver creates space for conversation by setting a clear agenda, guiding the flow, and ensuring that all participants have an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY

Creating a safe and respectful space is crucial for inclusive discussions. The Community Weaver ensures that all voices are heard and that participants feel respected and valued. They also ensure that no participant is taking over the discussion in a manner that prevents others from contributing.

ACTIVE LISTENING

The Community Weaver actively listens to participants' contributions, valuing all their inputs, and encouraging further exploration of their ideas.

WEAVERS CHECKLIST

PLATFORM PREPARATION

Online: Ensure access to the chosen on-line collaboration platform (e.g., Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) and test its functionality in advance.

In-Person: Check and set up microphones, speakers, cameras, and projectors in advance.

PRESENTATION SLIDES

Online: Have the presentation slides ready to share with participants.

In-person: Ensure you have access to a projector and other necessary tools beforehand.

INCLUSIVITY MEASURES

Accessibility Considerations: Ensure all materials, presentations, and communication are accessible to participants with disabilities.

Language Support: If applicable, provide language support, such as interpretation services or bilingual facilitation.

ACCESSIBLE HANDOUTS

Prepare handouts of the templates and other materials provided in the facilitation guide, accessible in digital or printable formats, according to whether the workshop is being conducted online or in-person.

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Online: Use digital whiteboards, and other relevant tools, for collaborative brainstorming and idea mapping in on-line sessions.

In-Person: Use physical whiteboards, and other relevant tools, for collaborative brainstorming and idea mapping.

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Prepare a detailed schedule outlining the flow of activities, discussion topics, and time allocations for each segment.

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES

Prepare icebreaker exercises to foster connections among both in-person and remote attendees.

FACILITATION TOOLS

Here is a list of facilitation tools and styles that the Weavers can use if they feel it is appropriate to any of the activities in the workshop:

ROUND ROBIN

Giving every participant an opportunity to speak one after another.

VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

Using visual images to stimulate discussion and interpretation.

GALLERY WALK

Participants circulate around the room to view and provide feedback on posted materials.

SPEAKING OBJECT

People pass an object around, and only the person who has the object in hand can speak while the others remain silent.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Participants think individually, then discuss their thoughts in pairs before sharing with the larger group.

DOT VOTING

Participants place stickers or dots next to ideas or options they support.

APPRECIATION CIRCLE

Participants express gratitude and appreciation for one another.

TEMPERATURE CHECK

Gauge participants' feelings or comfort level on a scale, e.g. hot, warm, neutral, cool, cold.

SPIDER WEB

A physical activity where participants stand in a circle and throw a ball of yarn to make connections between ideas or contributions.

FISHBOWL DISCUSSION

Setting up an inner circle of participants actively discussing while the outer circle observes.

STACKING

Keep a list of who wants to speak, and call them when it is their turn.

HUMAN SPECTROGRAM

Participants physically arrange themselves along a spectrum to indicate their position on an issue.

MEMORY WALL

Participants contribute thoughts or ideas on sticky notes, which are then arranged on a wall for visual impact.

HAND SIGNS

Allow people to share their agreement/disagreement without interrupting the discussion and to skip the speaking line if they have a useful point to add to what is being said.

ICE-BREAKING ACTIVITIES

FUTURE FOOD VISION

Ask participants to imagine the future of the food system in their locality and share their vision.

RECIPE EXCHANGE

Have participants write down their favourite recipe on cards or digital notes and then exchange them with others.

FOOD-RELATED Pictionary

Each participant draws their favourite food on the board while others guess. To make it more interesting, consider doing this while blindfolded.

FOOD MEMORIES

Ask participants to share their strongest memories of food.

CULTURAL POTLUCK

Ask each participant coming in for the session to bring a dish that represents their culture.

COMMUNITY MOSAIC

Provide colourful craft materials and ask participants to create individual pieces that represent their unique identities. Then, collectively assemble the pieces into a community mosaic that symbolises unity in diversity.

CROP CHARADES

Write names of different crops on cards, and participants act out or make gestures for others to guess.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the best advice you have ever been given?
2. What question do you wish people asked about you?
3. What is your most used emoji?
4. What celebrity do people most say you look like?
5. What is a weird fact that you know?

WORKSHOP RESOURCES

WORKSHOP 1

CASE STUDIES: PREDICTABLE SURPRISES OF THE PAST

Below is a list of case studies that the Community Weaver can refer to, to provide participants with examples of past disruptions in the food system that displayed Early Warning Signals. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and there may be more Early Warning Signals that haven't been named here.

01

IRISH POTATO FAMINE



The Irish Potato Famine, also known as the Great Famine or the Great Hunger, was a devastating period in Ireland's history that occurred from 1845 to 1852.⁴ The famine was primarily caused by a deadly fungus that resulted in the failure of the potato crop, which was the main staple food for the majority of the Irish population at the time. As a result of the famine, over a million people – more than 10 percent of the Irish population – starved to death, and millions more left the country as refugees.

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that the Irish Potato Famine, however devastating, was predictable far in advance. There were many Early Warning Signals leading up to the event, and addressing them earlier could have made all the difference.

⁴ Póitair, Cathal. (1995). The Great Irish Famine. Mercier Press, Ireland.

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

01

Monoculture farming and overreliance on a single variety of potatoes: The Irish population heavily relied on a single genetic variant of potatoes, the Lumper potato variety, as their main source of sustenance. This dependence on a single crop, coupled with the lack of crop diversity due to monoculture farming, significantly increased the risk of a devastating impact if that particular crop failed.

02

Agricultural policies that favoured exports over local self-sustenance: The Irish agricultural economy was so dependent on exports that even after the famine unfolded, the economy was still prioritising exports of wheat and other valuable produce instead of sustaining its people. While the local population starved to death, Ireland continued to export thirty to fifty shiploads of food to England and Scotland.

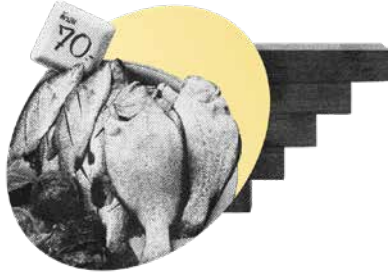
03

Increasing disease outbreaks: In the years leading up to the famine, Ireland experienced repeated outbreaks of potato blight, a disease caused by a fungus called *Phytophthora Infestans*. These earlier outbreaks served as warning signs of the vulnerability of the potato crop to disease.

04

Land tenure system: The prevailing land tenure system in Ireland, known as the landlord system, left many impoverished tenants with limited access to land and resources. This system exacerbated the effects of the famine as tenants lacked the means to grow alternative crops or access sufficient food sources.

2008 GLOBAL FOOD PRICE CRISIS



The 2008 global food price crisis was characterised by a sharp increase in food prices, which had wide-ranging impacts on food security, particularly in lower income countries. The crisis affected various food commodities, including staple crops such as rice, wheat, and corn, leading to food shortages and social unrest in several countries, especially in impoverished regions. The already grave situation of global hunger was further worsened by the 83 percent increase in global food prices between 2005 and 2008.⁵ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), higher prices pushed an additional 40 million people into hunger in 2008.⁶

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that the food price crisis was predictable far in advance. There were many Early Warning Signals leading up to the event, and addressing them earlier could've made all the difference.

5 Mittal, Anuradha. (2009). "G-24 Discussion Paper Series: The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies". *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*.

6 Mittal, Anuradha. (2009). "G-24 Discussion Paper Series: The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies". *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*.

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

01

Increased speculation in commodity markets: The emergence of financial speculation on food commodities, driven by market deregulation and increased investor interest, introduced additional volatility into the markets. Speculators traded in agricultural futures, pushing prices higher and exacerbating price fluctuations.

02

Increased demand for biofuels: Government policies promoting the use of biofuels led to increased demand for crops such as corn and soybeans for biofuel production. This diverted significant agricultural resources away from food production, contributing to reduced supplies and higher prices.

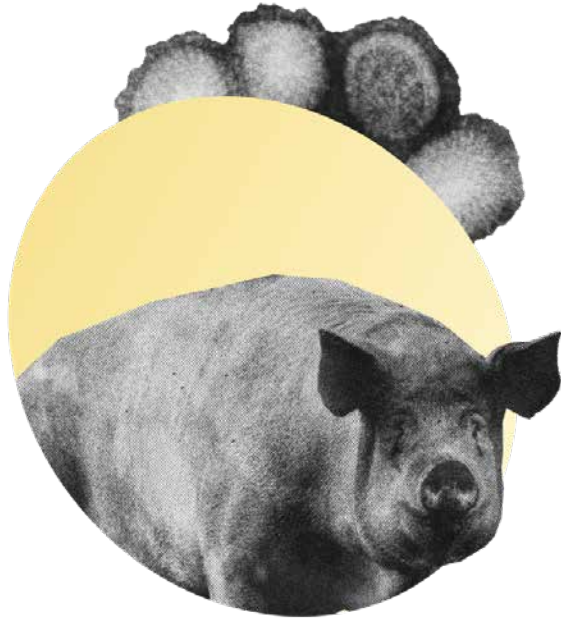
03

Inadequate agricultural investment: Agricultural deregulation in impoverished countries in the 1990s through neoliberal policies such as the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) led to the removal of subsidies and safety nets for small-scale farmers, reducing domestic food production, and increased vulnerability to external market forces.

04

Climate change and extreme weather events: Heightened frequency and intensity of droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events disrupted agricultural production and intensified food price fluctuations.

SWINE FLU



The swine flu outbreak in 2009 was a global health crisis that originated from a novel strain of the “influenza A virus subtype H1N1”, which was transmitted from pigs to humans.⁷ Although the specific origins of the outbreak were not fully understood at the time, there were Early Warning Signals and patterns that suggested the vulnerability of the system to such an event, and addressing them earlier could have made all the difference.

⁷ Davis, Mike. (2020).

The Monster Enters: COVID-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism.

Verso Books.

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

01

Increasing occurrence of zoonotic diseases: Several zoonotic diseases, such as avian influenza and SARS, had emerged and spread from animals to humans prior to the swine flu outbreak. These events served as alarming signals that similar zoonotic transmissions could occur with swine flu.

02

Concentrated Animal Feed Operations (CAFOs): Industrial feedlots, with their overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, facilitated the rapid spread of diseases among swine. The shift towards large-scale CAFOs led to close proximity and overcrowding of pigs, increasing the likelihood of viral transmission and mutations.

03

Antibiotic resistance: The intensive nature of industrial farming practices, including the widespread use of antibiotics to promote growth and prevent disease, further contributed to the emergence and spread of drug-resistant strains of viruses.

04

Globalised supply chains: Interconnected sourcing and distribution networks made swine flu outbreaks in one region impact multiple countries. Infected animals and contaminated goods crossing borders amplified the virus' reach. This complexity hindered containment efforts and had cascading effects on public health and economies, affecting related sectors like agriculture, food processing, and retail.



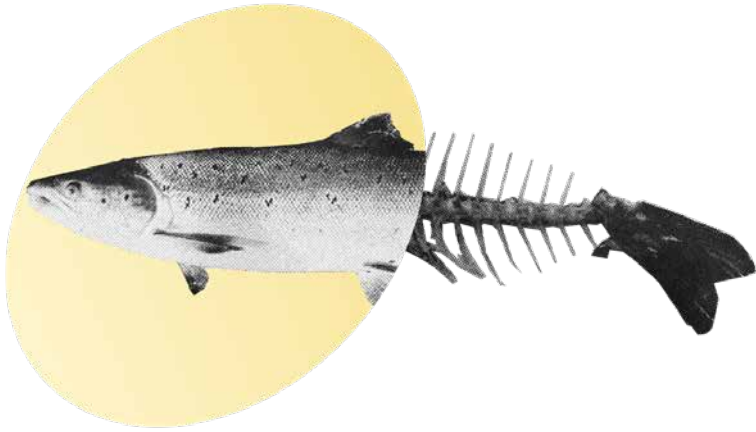
WORKSHOP 2

CASE STUDIES: PREDICTABLE SURPRISES ON THE HORIZON

Below is a list of examples that the Community Weaver can refer to, to provide participants with Early Warning Signals visible in our food system today, that predict potentially disruptive events in the future.

01

THE EXTINCTION OF WILD SALMON AND THE SUBSEQUENT COLLAPSE OF AQUATIC HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST



Salmon play a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance of aquatic ecosystems.⁸ The marine-derived nutrients from salmon have a ripple effect, nourishing streams and enriching the surrounding forests. This, in turn, sustains a diverse array of species through various interconnected foodways, fostering the flourishing of local biodiversity in the region. In the last two decades, the Pacific Northwest has witnessed a concerning decline in salmon populations, with some species now facing the threat of extinction. If the salmon go extinct, entire ecosystems could collapse along with them.

⁸ A Growing Culture. (2023). "Salmon Defense: How the Salmon People are restoring the habitats of their sacred relatives". Offshoot.

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

01

Industrialisation: Detrimental practices such as promoting commercial overfishing, unregulated development encroaching upon riverbanks, the construction of dams and bridges that impede the upstream migration of salmon, toxic chemicals use, and destructive land management practices have all been severely harming salmon habitats and causing their populations to decline.

02

Pinniped Mismanagement: The Marine Mammal Protection Act has exacerbated the situation by promoting the overpopulation of pinniped seals (the salmon's main predator), and making it illegal for local communities to maintain the predator-prey imbalance, which in turn has led to a significant decline in salmon populations.⁹

03

Industrial aquaculture and the rise of GE Salmon:

The concentrated cultivation of genetically modified fish in captivity (to replace wild salmon), has led to issues like habitat degradation, pollution, cross-breeding and disease transmission to wild salmon populations, weakening their habitats as well as their genetic integrity.

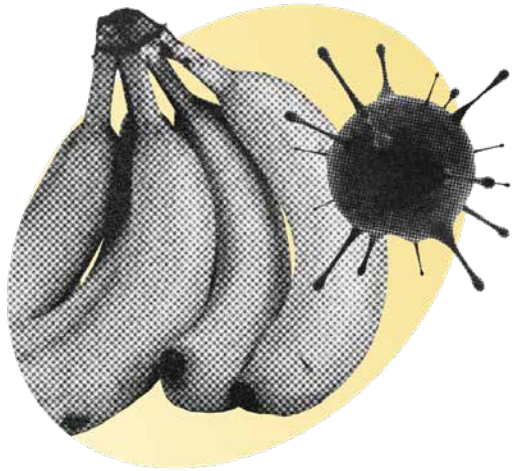
04

Regulation and ban of wild fishing: Because of the impact of large industrial trawlers disproportionately catching a single species that is profitable in the market, governments are increasing regulations on wild fishing practices, harming local communities that have been sustainably fishing salmon and managing their habitats for millennia.

⁹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. (2023). Marine Mammal Protection Act.

MASSIVE BANANA SHORTAGE

**DUE TO A DISEASE OUTBREAK
COULD SOON LEAD TO A FOOD
PRICE AND SUPPLY CRISIS**



Bananas are a staple crop for many regions, and one of the cheapest, most popular, and most traded fruits globally, providing a significant portion of daily nutrition for millions of people around the world. For millennia, farmers carefully selected and bred hundreds of different banana varieties, all locally adapted to their environments. But, in the past century, corporations have pushed farmers and consumers into reliance on fewer and fewer crop varieties that can be mass-produced and shipped around the world. Today, the banana industry is nearing a collapse that could resemble the Irish Potato Famine and spark a global food price crisis.¹⁰

¹⁰ BBC. (2022). "The pandemic destroying the world's favorite fruit".

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

01

Banana monocultures: The rich tapestry of banana varieties once cultivated by dedicated farmers has, in recent decades, been replaced by widespread monocultures dominated by a few selected varieties. This consolidation and lack of crop diversity increases the risk of catastrophic consequences if the crop fails, as we have seen in historical events like the Irish Potato Famine.

02

Increased vulnerability to disease: The concentration of banana production has made the industry highly vulnerable to disease outbreaks. Monoculture environments provide a fertile ground for pathogens to spread rapidly, targeting the genetically uniform banana crops.

03

Globalised supply chain: The vulnerability of disease is exacerbated by the extensive international trade and transportation of bananas, enabling the swift spread of diseases across continents. This has happened before. In the early 1900s a deadly soil fungus called "Panama 1" spread throughout commercial banana plantations across the world, almost wiping out an entire commercial banana species called Gros Michel.

04

Climate change exacerbating the creation and spread of disease: Currently, another related deadly fungus named "Panama 4" is spreading fast, aided by higher temperatures and stronger tropical storms as a result of global warming, meaning that a major disruption in the banana industry is very likely in the near future.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IRON-FORTIFIED RICE IN INDIA COULD HAVE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT



Rice is one of the main staple foods in India, and ensuring its nutritional value is vital for the health of millions. In recent years, corporations have been marketing iron-fortified rice as a miracle cure to the widespread problem of anaemia – a condition from which over 57% of women (from 15 - 49) and 67% of children (0-5) in India suffer. The potential impact of fortified rice on those with other health and nutritional deficiencies has raised alarms.¹¹ Despite farmer networks around the world warning governments of the devastating consequences of mass implementation of fortified rice, the Indian government, through its Mandatory Food Fortification Program has instructed that all rice supplies in India must be fortified with iron (among other supplements) by 2024.

¹¹ Kurpad, Anura. (2021). "Why rice fortification is not just unnecessary but potentially risky". The Times of India.

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

01

Corporate consolidation: Rice fortification essentially removing the nutrients already present in rice grains by stripping the bran layer rich in minerals, and then reintroducing those nutrients downstream. This program will involve more industrial rice millers who will soon have greater control over India's staple.

02

Health risks: The food created from this program will go directly into the various programs including the public distribution system and mid-day meals for school children. Excess iron could be fatal to children with thalassemia, certain stages of malaria and tuberculosis, diabetes, or sickle cell anaemia (a condition very common in Indigenous peoples). There are already numerous reports of children falling sick soon after consuming fortified rice, in the states of Odisha and Bihar.

03

Erosion of genetic diversity: The promotion of fortified rice will encourage farmers to plant specific commercial varieties of rice while shifting away from traditional heirloom varieties that have proven, in many cases, to have far more iron and other nutritional benefits than the claims made by fortified rice.

04

Misplaced focus on rice: Fortifying rice as a solution to malnutrition overlooks the fact that rice was not a widespread staple in India until recently due to the Green Revolution and other government programs. The root cause of malnutrition and hunger lies in the lack of dietary diversity, primarily relying on a single carbohydrate source for essential nutrients – a condition which will be further exacerbated by the implementation of this program.

COLLABORATION PLAN 1/2

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

RESPONSIVE MEASURES

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

	1	2	3
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			
31			
32			
33			
34			
35			
36			
37			
38			
39			
40			
41			
42			
43			
44			
45			
46			
47			
48			
49			
50			
51			
52			
53			
54			
55			
56			
57			
58			
59			
60			
61			
62			
63			
64			
65			
66			
67			
68			
69			
70			
71			
72			
73			
74			
75			
76			
77			
78			
79			
80			
81			
82			
83			
84			
85			
86			
87			
88			
89			
90			
91			
92			
93			
94			
95			
96			
97			
98			
99			
100			

COLLABORATION PLAN 2/2

STAKEHOLDER ROLES	STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP PLAN	RESOURCES REQUIRED

COLLABORATION PLAN

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS	RESPONSIVE MEASURES	KEY STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDER ROLES	STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP PLAN	RESOURCES REQUIRED

SOCIAL ECOLOGY MAP

STAKEHOLDERS
AT LOCAL LEVEL

STAKEHOLDERS
AT NATIONAL LEVEL

STAKEHOLDERS
IN OTHER SECTORS

ALLIED RIGHTS-HOLDER &
MOVEMENTS



