



Review Article

Right to Food and Sustainable Food Systems in Nepal: Legal Frameworks, Achievements, and Challenges

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Keywords: Agrifood system; Food security; Food system; Malnutrition; Right to food.

Abstract

Food insecurity remains a persistent challenge in Nepal. The right to food is a fundamental human right recognized in various international conventions and national legal frameworks. The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation was drafted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Nepal, and approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2024. The introduction of legal frameworks to ensure food security and their effective implementation is one of the key action tracks identified in Nepal's National Food System Transformation Pathway. However, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of this regulation, including the availability of financial resources, technical manpower, the establishment of fair price shops, and the technical capacity of the implementing agency. Additionally, policy coherence across government tiers, the interests of external development partners, and certain cultural factors pose significant obstacles to the successful implementation of the regulation's provisions. A comprehensive approach is required, combining legal reforms, economic support, and social initiatives, to transform the right to food from a theoretical concept into a tangible reality for all Nepali citizens. This paper highlights the key provisions, the development process of the regulation, the roles of key stakeholders, and the challenges in its effective implementation.

Introduction

Food security is achieved when everyone, at all times, has physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for healthy life (Gibson, 2012; Maxwell, 1996; Roetter and Van Keulen, 2007). The phrase "all people at all times" underscores the importance of equitable and stable food distribution and extends to inter-generational equity, emphasizing the need for sustainability in food production. "Safe and nutritious food for a healthy life" highlights that food insecurity can arise from a lack of

nutrition, including overconsumption of calories, or from food safety issues, meaning the presence of harmful substances (Mbow *et al.*, 2020).

Although Nepal has made progress in improving food security in recent years, it remains insufficient. According to the NDHS (2016), 4.6 million people remain food-insecure, with 20 percent of households mildly food-insecure, 22 percent moderately food-insecure, and 10 percent severely food-insecure in Nepal. In the 1980s, Nepal was self-sufficient in food grains, but it now imports billions in food. In the 1960s, Nepal boasted some of the

highest cereal yields in South Asia, with yields 198% higher than Bangladesh and 212% higher than Sri Lanka. However, this trend has reversed, and Nepal now lags behind most of its South Asian neighbors in average yields of rice, wheat, and maize (Chemjong & Yadav, 2020).

According to the Global Food Security Index (GFSI), which assesses the fundamental factors of affordability, availability, quality, and safety in 113 countries worldwide, the overall food safety situation in Southeast Asia is comparatively poor when compared to other developed nations. The GFSI is a comprehensive, dynamic, and multidimensional model based on 34 distinct indicators that assess these food security drivers in both developed and developing countries (Joshi et al., 2023). India has the highest overall and category-ranked score in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, while Pakistan has the lowest. All scores are rated on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being the most desirable (GFSI, 2022).

Food insecurity is a primary driver of malnutrition in Nepal, as it restricts access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food essential for healthy growth and development. Inadequate food availability and affordability lead to dietary deficiencies, resulting in widespread under nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women. Furthermore, food insecurity exacerbates the consumption of low-quality, calorie-dense foods, contributing to both under nutrition and rising obesity rates. The country experiences high rates of malnutrition, with notable occurrences of stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies, particularly among vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women. Although there have been significant improvements across the different types of malnutrition, malnutrition continues to constrain human lives and Nepal’s socioeconomic development. The Table 2 presents the current malnutrition status in Nepal alongside its international commitments.

Table 1: Global Food Security Index of SAARC countries

Country	GFSI Rank/Score	Category Rank/ Score		
		Affordability	Availability	Quality and Safety
Afghanistan	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bangladesh	80/54	87/52.1	46/61.5	71/58.4
Bhutan	NA	NA	NA	NA
India	68/58.9	80/59.3	42/62.3	67/62.1
Nepal	74/56.9	85/52.7	13/70.9	72/57.8
Maldives	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pakistan	84/52.2	75/59.9	61/58.3	97/49.4
Sri Lanka	79/55.2	74/61	64/57.2	81/55

Source: GFSI, (2022) <https://foodsecurity.index.eiu.com/>

Table 2: National nutritional status

Indicators	Nepal’s WHA Target (2025)	Nepal’s SDG Target (2030)	NDHS, 2022 Status
Stunting among under five	24.2	15.0	24.8
Wasting among under five	<5	4.0	7.7
Low birth weight rate	8.5	<1.4	11.5
Obesity among under five children	1.0	<1.0	1
Obesity among women of reproductive age	15.0	<12.0	-
Anemia among 6 months to 59 age children	20.0	10.0	42.4
Anemia among adolescent girls (10-19 years)	25.0	<25.0	-
Anemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years)	18.0	<10.0	34

Considering the food insecurity and malnutrition status in Nepal, addressing these challenges requires more than just the formulation of policies guaranteeing the right to food for the population. It necessitates the effective implementation of these policies and regulations to ensure tangible outcomes. Efforts must include strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, and investing in sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, there should be a focus on community-based interventions and public awareness campaigns to foster long-term behavioral change. Only through a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach can Nepal effectively combat food insecurity and reduce malnutrition, ensuring a healthier future for its citizens.

Overview of Agrifood System and Food Security Situation

The agrifood system in Nepal is a crucial sector that significantly impacts the country's economy and livelihoods. Contributing around 25% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it employs two-thirds of the population, with over 70% of the labor force being women. This sector spans a diverse agro-ecological zone, highlighting the varied agricultural potential across different regions (MoF, 2021). Agricultural land in Nepal covers 28% of the total land area, with 21% under cultivation. However, the average landholding size remains small at 0.68 hectares, reflecting the predominance of smallholder farms (NPC, 2022). Despite these challenges, Nepal has made significant strides in reducing hunger. The

Global Hunger Index (GHI) score has improved from 37.4 in 2000 to 19.1 in 2022, now ranking 81st out of 121 countries assessed (von Grebmer et al., 2020).

Nepal's agrifood system is characterized by smallholder dominance, feminization, and a need for increased competitiveness. Climate-induced disasters pose a substantial threat to the sector, impacting national economic and social development. The direct costs of these events are estimated to be equivalent to 1.5–2% of the current GDP per year, underscoring the urgency for resilient agricultural practices and climate adaptation measures (NPC, 2022). Some major challenges faced by the agrifood system of Nepal is shown in the Table 3.

To improve the agrifood system, which is intrinsically linked to addressing hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity in Nepal, it is imperative that policies related to the right to food are implemented with the utmost efficiency. These policies should not only be well-formulated but also effectively enforced to ensure that all individuals have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. This involves a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing coordination among various stakeholders, and investing in sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, the government must ensure that these policies are inclusive and equitable, targeting the most vulnerable populations. By doing so, Nepal can make significant strides in securing food security and improving nutritional outcomes for its citizens.

Table 3: Challenges of agrifood system in Nepal

1.	Climate change and natural disasters: Nepal's vulnerability to climate change results in erratic rainfall, droughts, floods, and landslides, impacting agricultural activities and leading to food shortages.
2.	Limited access to agricultural finance: Farmers face challenges in accessing financial institutions and credit facilities, hindering their ability to invest in inputs and modernize farming practices.
3.	Insufficient value addition and processing facilities: Inadequate infrastructure for processing, storage, and value addition restricts farmers' ability to increase product value and access higher-value markets
4.	Inadequate infrastructure and market access: Limited roads, storage facilities, and market connections hinder transportation and marketing of agricultural produce, resulting in low prices and post-harvest losses.
5.	Limited access to modern farming technologies: Many farmers lack access to improved seeds, fertilizers, irrigation systems, and machinery, impacting productivity and efficiency.
6.	Inadequate agricultural extension services: Farmers have limited access to knowledge on modern techniques, crop management, and market information, affecting productivity and adaptation.
7.	Soil degradation and water scarcity: Overuse of chemicals, improper irrigation, and deforestation lead to soil degradation and reduced water availability, impacting agricultural productivity.
8.	Policy and governance challenges: Inconsistent policies, weak enforcement, and limited coordination among government agencies hinder implementation of effective agricultural strategies.

Source: (Lee et al., 2012; Paudel et al., 2023)

Commitments, Provisions and Programs in Nepal to Ensure Food Security

Nepal's Constitution of 2015 enshrines the right to food as a fundamental right. Article 36 ensures that all Nepali citizens have the right to food security, adequate food, and clean drinking water. It mandates the state to uphold food sovereignty, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and provide access to safe and nutritious food for all. Since the right to food has become a part of Nepal's Constitution in 2015, significant strides have been made in policy and governance. The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act, formulated by the Government in 2018, marked a pivotal step towards ensuring food security for all citizens. This was further bolstered recently by the approval of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation in 2024, providing a robust framework for implementation (Secretariat and Durbar, 2015; MoALD, 2024).

The Government of Nepal has prioritized food security by approving the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation, which comprises various programs for its effective implementation. Farmer identification has already begun, with 1.6 million farmers registered, and the registration guideline is being in the process of updating. The preparation of a food plan and the formation of a food council are in progress, while awareness programs related to regulation's provisions are targeted at local governments. The finalization of the type and quantity of food for distribution to food-insecure populations is under discussion, and fair price shops are designated for food distribution at the field level, with guidelines already drafted. Additionally, a feasibility study is underway to identify food storage and distribution needs across the country, and the appointment of inspectors as mentioned in Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation is in progress. Additionally, Nepal's National Pathways for Food Systems Transformation were developed based on the evidence /outcomes from the three national and seven provincial food systems dialogues organized from June to August 2021. These pathways guide the actions, intentions and commitments of the stakeholders to transform the food system by 2030. Among the six action tracks in the national pathway, one focuses on the effective implementation of the Right to Food and food sovereignty Act and Regulation. Similarly, the (MSNP) Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan (2023-2030) and the (ADS) Agriculture Development Strategy (2015-2035) are significant government initiatives. These strategies aim to enhance food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agricultural development in Nepal. By addressing various aspects of the food system, these plans demonstrate the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being and health of its population. Within the framework of the aforementioned strategies, the Government of Nepal has made various concerted efforts to enhance the agricultural sector. Policies have been

implemented to promote agriculture, with significant manpower and organizational resources dedicated to this sector. The government has prioritized agriculture in its budget allocations, and efforts are coordinated across all three tiers of government. Initiatives include the procurement of chemical fertilizers, subsidies for agricultural promotion, and agriculture/livestock insurance schemes. Additionally, the government has established minimum support prices and provided subsidies for food and salt transportation. Mega projects such as the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project (PMAMP) and the Nepal Livestock Sector Innovation Project (NLSIP) further underscore the commitment to advancing agriculture in Nepal (MoALD, 2024; NPC, 2022). Besides these, current major policies and plans concerning food security and the agrifood system are outlined below:

- National Agricultural Policy, 2004;
- Agri-business Promotion Policy, 2006;
- Agro-biodiversity Policy, 2007;
- Agro forestry policy, 2019;
- Food Safety Policy 2019;
- National Seed Policy, 2000;
- Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS), 2015-2035;
- Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan- I, II and III (MSNP-III, 2023-2030)
- Food system transformation strategy 2022
- Right to Food and food Sovereignty Act, 2018;
- Agriculture bill (2023) is in pipeline.
- In line with these policies several acts, regulations, directives and guidelines are developed.

In July 2023, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Nepal's commitment to the effective implementation of the right to food during the SDG stocktaking. This underscores the recognition of food security as an integral part of national security. Moreover, the Office of the Auditor General, a constitutional body, reviewed the food security situation and urged the Government to intensify its efforts in implementing the provisions of the Right to Food Act and Regulation. These developments highlight Nepal's dedication to addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, ensuring that all citizens have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, as guaranteed by the constitution.

Major Provisions of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act and Regulation

The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act was established in 2018 and Regulation in 2024 with a vision to address fundamental rights pertaining to food, food security, and food sovereignty as guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal. This legislative framework was deemed necessary to create legal provisions that ensure the practical realization of these rights for all citizens. The Act

aims to establish appropriate mechanisms that facilitate citizens' access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. By institutionalizing these rights, the Act seeks to uphold the constitutional mandate, thereby fostering a more equitable and food-secure nation.

The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act of 2018 encompasses several major provisions designed to ensure food security and protect agricultural stakeholders in Nepal. Key sections of the Act include the identification of food-insecure households (Sections 5 and 6) and the distribution of food to priority households (Section 7). It also emphasizes the protection of farmers' rights (Sections 12 to 14), sustainable use of agricultural land, and the promotion of local agro-crops and livestock products, along with providing compensation to farmers (Sections 15 to 20). Additionally, the Act mandates the development of a comprehensive food plan (Section 21) and the creation of a public food supply and distribution system (Sections 26 to 30). It criminalizes actions that impair access to minimum essential foods (Section 40) and establishes national and provincial food councils as well as local food coordination committees (Sections 32, 34, and 36) to ensure effective implementation and coordination across various levels of government (MoALD, 2018).

In accordance with The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act of 2018, the regulation to operationalize this landmark legislation was finally drafted and approved by the government in 2024. This regulation outlines detailed mechanisms and processes to ensure the Act's effective implementation, aiming to enhance food security and uphold citizens' rights to food and food sovereignty. The main features of the regulation are comprehensively

illustrated in Fig. 1, highlighting key components such as household identification, food distribution systems, and farmer protection measures. This regulatory framework represents a significant step forward in realizing the vision set forth by the original Act.

Identification Of Food Insecure Target Households

The regulation outlines a systematic process for identifying food-insecure households to provide targeted food assistance. According to Sections 4 and 5, the identification is based on specific criteria set forth in Schedule-1, with the Ministry preparing and publishing the necessary household survey forms in the Nepal Gazette. Households are evaluated based on their economic and food access status, and those scoring below a certain threshold are designated as targeted households. Local governments may use internationally developed scales, such as the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale and Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, to further refine the identification process. The identification process involves local governments conducting surveys via ward offices, which collect and process household data. The compiled list of targeted households is then reviewed and finalized by the local executive body. The draft list is published for public comment, allowing at least thirty days for claims and objections. Necessary amendments are made based on these inputs before finalizing the list. The final list is then recorded in a standardized format (Schedule-2) and updated annually. If a household's status is uncertain, local authorities can conduct on-site inspections for final decisions. This system ensures accurate and transparent identification of food-insecure households, facilitating effective food assistance distribution (MoALD, 2024).

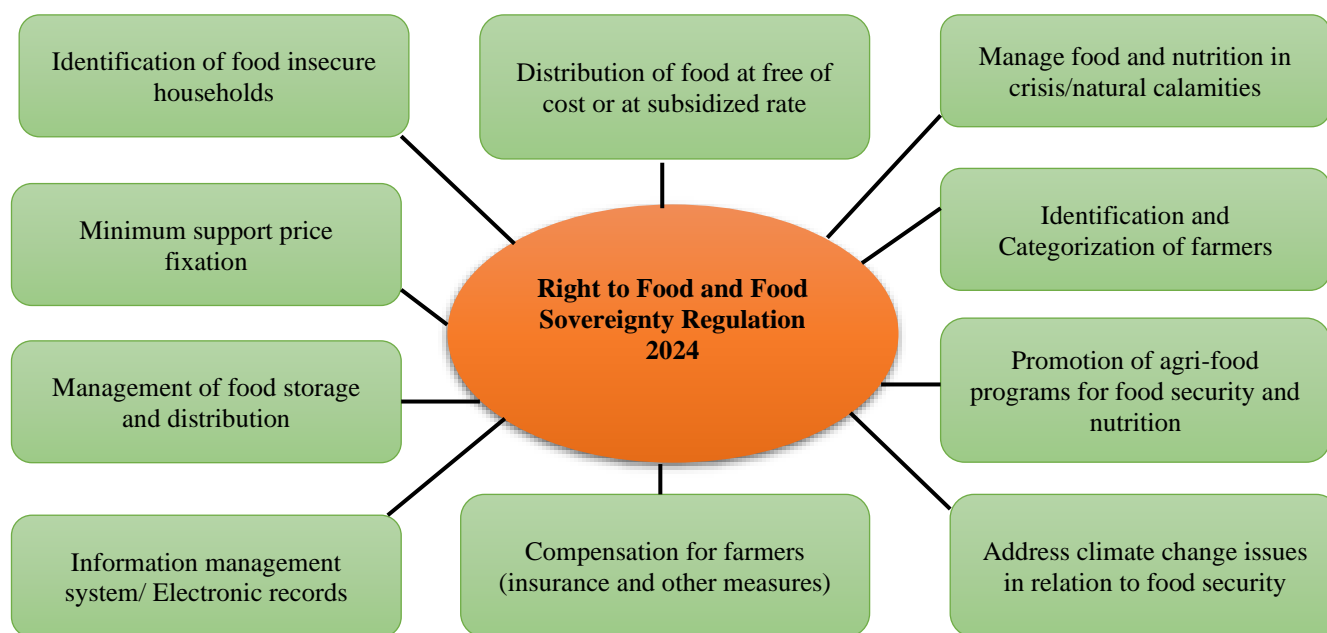


Fig. 1: Major provisions in Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation

Provision Of Food Assistance (Either Free or At Subsidized Price)

The regulation stipulates that targeted households identified for food assistance will receive free food aid for the designated period through the coordination of the federal and provincial governments with local governments. Households with food assistance identification cards will receive aid without duplication. The aid can be provided either in the form of food items or cash equivalent, depending on accessibility. For remote areas where food supply is challenging, food items will be prioritized, emphasizing local production. The cost of food assistance will be calculated based on the minimum support price for designated food items or prevailing market prices. If local government resources are insufficient, the federal or provincial government will cover the shortfall. Emergency and nutritional assistance will be coordinated by the local food coordination committee. The type and quantity of food assistance will be determined and published in the Nepal Gazette by the federal government, varying for free and subsidized aid. This determination will consider individual and household needs, economic aspects, and local requirements to ensure tailored and effective distribution (MoALD, 2024).

Manage Food and Nutrition Security in Crisis Areas

In areas experiencing food crisis, the government of Nepal, in coordination with provincial and local governments, will ensure food and nutrition security through several measures. These include preventing actions that could adversely affect food supply and distribution, facilitating the procurement and smooth supply of essential food items to address the crisis promptly, and monitoring markets and supply chains to prevent black market activities. Additionally, the government will oversee the quality testing and distribution management of food aid received from non-governmental and other sectors. Efforts will also focus on restoring the livelihoods of affected individuals, families, or communities. Special priority will be given to the needs of pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly, children, disabled, and sick individuals to ensure their food and nutritional security during the crisis (MoALD, 2024).

Setting Minimum Support Price (MSP)

The government of Nepal will establish minimum support prices (MSP) for staple crops such as rice, wheat, maize, millet, and lentils at least two months before harvest to ensure long-term storage and market stability. These prices will be announced through a notification in the Nepal Gazette. If the federal government does not set an MSP for certain crops, local governments have the authority to determine and announce the MSP for those crops produced in their respective areas. This measure aims to support farmers by guaranteeing a minimum price for their produce, thereby enhancing food security and market predictability (MoALD, 2024).

Identification and Categorization of Farmers

Farmers seeking identification cards under the Act and its regulations can apply to their local ward office. Those farming in multiple localities can choose one ward office to apply. The Ministry will publicly announce the application process within six months of the regulation's commencement. Applicants must submit details about their farmland, ownership or lease documents, livestock or fishery operations, and annual production and estimated income. The local ward office will review applications and recommend eligible farmers to the local executive for further verification and classification. The Ministry will then classify and inform the local government, which will issue the identification cards valid for three years, requiring renewal thereafter. Changes in classification can be requested through a similar application process. Farmers who stop agricultural activities must return their identification cards. Identified farmers will receive non-duplicative subsidies, discounts, facilities, and grants for agricultural production and insurance from federal, provincial, and local governments, with special priority given to landless, marginalized, subsistence, Dalit, endangered indigenous, and female farmers. The provision of benefits will be streamlined to be production-based, objective, and contribution-oriented, with measures to prevent misuse (MoALD, 2024).

Agricultural Benefits and Subsidies

Rule 17 introduces a framework that grants agricultural producers access to conveniences, exemptions, facilities, and subsidies on agricultural inputs like production materials or insurance premiums. Farmers can obtain these benefits from the Nepalese government, provincial authorities, and local municipalities without duplication. The regulation prioritizes disadvantaged groups such as landless individuals, marginalized communities, Dalits, indigenous peoples, and female farmers when distributing these benefits. Additionally, Rule 17 mandates consideration of farmers' needs, resource availability, and alignment with national food security plans when providing such advantages (MoALD, 2024).

Agricultural Insurance Grants: Provision Of Compensation

The Nepalese government will administer agricultural insurance to compensate farmers for losses incurred due to disasters such as floods, landslides, droughts, hailstorms, excess rainfall, pests, plant diseases, infertility, earthquakes, fires, and other similar situations affecting agricultural production or livestock. Under Subsection (1) of Rule 19, farmers interested in agricultural insurance under Rule 1 will receive subsidies through local authorities without doubling the premium amount. Furthermore, under Subsection (1) of Rule 20, if a farmer requests compensation under Article 20 of the Act due to crop loss, the farmer must submit an application to the Ward Office of

the concerned local body within sixty days of the information being received regarding the fact that the seeds did not germinate or there was a substantial decrease in seed production (MoALD, 2024).

National Food Plan

The Ministry will form a National Food Plan, focusing on: ensuring food security and protection from malnutrition and insecurity; enhancing the efficiency of food production, storage, distribution, and logistics; ensuring easy access to food for targeted families and communities; regulating food import and export based on national interests; stabilizing food supply and prices; ensuring cleanliness, transparency, and accountability in the food industry; promoting food and nutrition security information flow and policy development; fostering sustainable agriculture and livestock development; promoting gender and social inclusion in food systems; mitigating climate impacts on agriculture; preserving traditional knowledge; and enhancing food availability, distribution, and access (MoALD, 2024).

Promotion of Food Security and Nutrition

The local government plans to implement various programs to enhance food and nutrition security, including initiatives to support pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and infants, promote exclusive breastfeeding, provide meals to school children, offer free treatment and nutrition to malnourished children and elderly, improve community access to nutritious food and clean water, support local agriculture against climate change, eliminate discriminatory food practices, and establish a food security information system to streamline policy implementation (MoALD, 2024).

Mitigating Climate Change Impacts in Relation to Food Security

Nepal's government, provincial bodies, and local authorities plan to collaborate on the following measures to reduce risks posed by adverse effects of climate change on food production: conducting research on climate change resilience strategies, promoting drought and flood-resistant crops, disseminating forecasting and early warning systems, enhancing positive initiatives for agricultural adaptation, expanding access to agricultural insurance for affected farmers, fostering community-level climate education for climate-resilient farming and animal husbandry, monitoring and documenting ongoing negative impacts, and partnering with organizations and agencies in climate change adaptation efforts (MoALD, 2024).

Management of Food Storage, Preservation, and Distribution

In response to the challenges posed by food security, storage, and distribution, the Nepali government has enacted legislation to establish national and provincial food storage and preservation facilities. This initiative aims to ensure adequate food reserves and efficient management at

both national and regional levels. Key provisions include allocating funds for foundational storage infrastructure at the provincial level, promoting self-sufficiency through local production and regulated procurement of essential food items, adhering to quality standards throughout storage processes, and mitigating the impact of price fluctuations on basic food items. The government will also collaborate closely with provincial authorities to bolster food security and streamline distribution channels, encouraging public-private partnerships and cooperative ventures to enhance operational efficiency. Concurrently, under Section 26, designated agencies or companies will manage the regular distribution of essential food items, ensuring continuous supply and compliance with regulatory guidelines to meet public demand effectively (MoALD, 2024).

Establishment of National Food Council

The establishment of the National Food Council involves defining its roles, duties, and rights under the following provisions: identifying issues related to food rights policies and laws for recommendation to the Nepali government; coordinating the implementation of recommendations from constitutional bodies and various agencies on food rights issues; managing resources for nutrition security programs through government and non-governmental coordination; ensuring equitable distribution of resources for national food plans; preserving and enhancing traditional livelihoods and food production sources identified by local communities for food security; coordinating, supporting, and facilitating the translation and implementation of policies, laws, plans, strategies, and programs related to food security, food availability, storage, supply, and distribution systems; and adopting other appropriate measures to achieve the objectives of the law (MoALD, 2024).

Maintain Electronic Records

Local authorities and relevant agencies must list detailed information on targeted households, households at risk of food insecurity, lists of farmers' identification and categorization, facilities, benefits, exemptions, and grants provided. These records will be posted on their respective websites for transparency and accessibility (MoALD, 2024).

Process of Formation and Approval of Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation

The draft formation process of Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation in Nepal began its journey in 2020 with initial groundwork conducted by a drafting committee in collaboration with development partners. This collaborative effort included extensive field-level interactions with provincial and local governments to ensure comprehensive stakeholder engagement. Subsequently, a national-level workshop convened where relevant stakeholders from federal ministries, departments,

provincial bodies, and agricultural and consumer organizations provided crucial feedback. Further refinement followed with inputs from the Ministry of Finance and insights gained from an exposure visit to India to study their public food distribution system. The draft underwent additional revisions based on comments from the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs,

culminating in its finalization by the Ministry for submission to the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. Ultimately, after approval in the meeting of the council of ministers, the regulatory framework for right to food and food sovereignty was set to move forward, reflecting a collaborative and inclusive approach to policy development in Nepal.

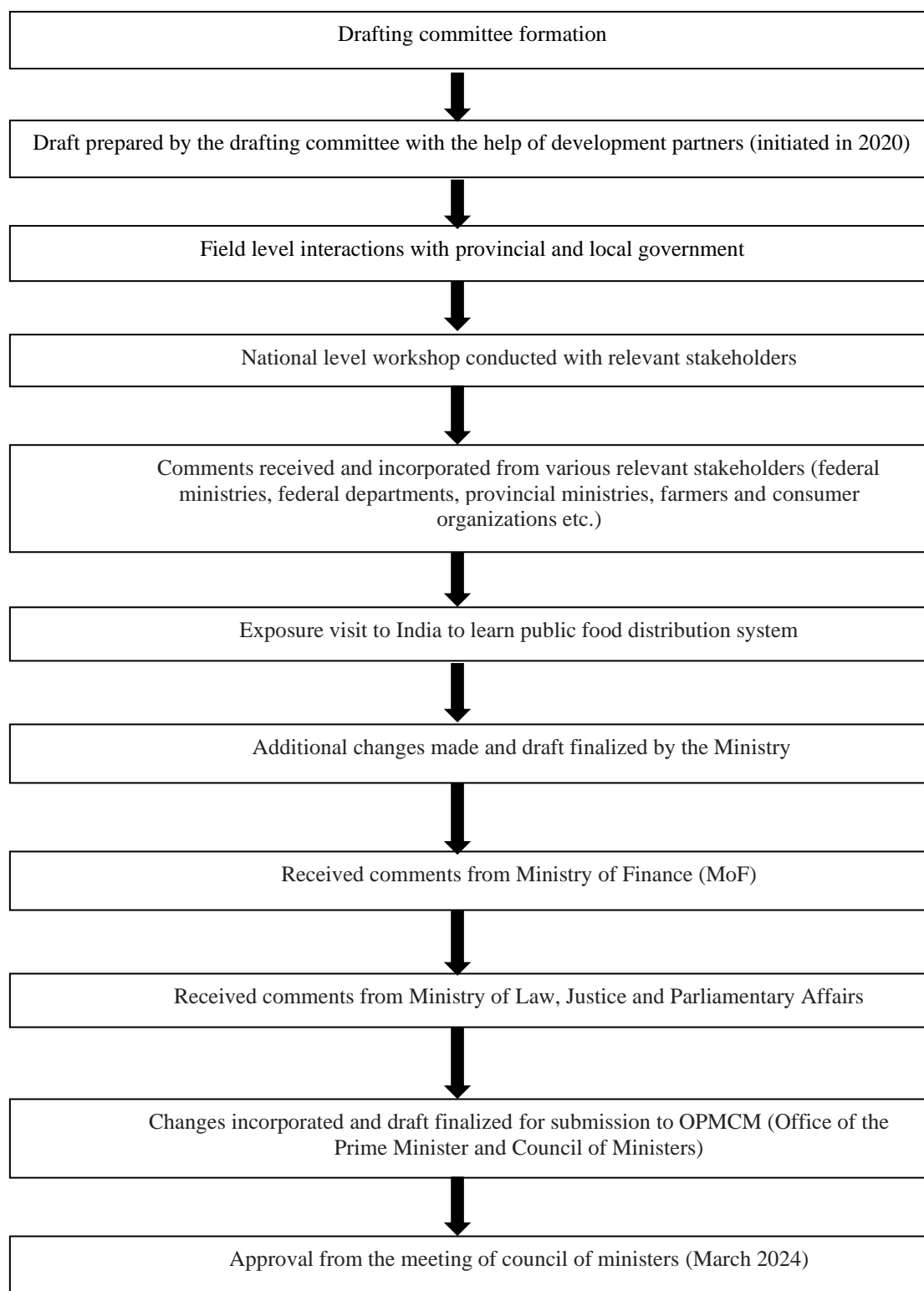


Fig. 3: Process of formation and approval of Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation in Nepal

Major Stakeholders in Enhancing Food Security

There is an increasing recognition that addressing complex, multi-dimensional issues such as food security and nutrition necessitates cross-sectoral and holistic approaches. This involves pooling together the resources, knowledge, and expertise of diverse stakeholders. Achieving the goal of nourishing citizens cannot be accomplished by the government alone; the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is crucial. From policymaking related to the right to food and nutrition to its implementation, a multi-sectoral approach is essential (Beuchelt and Virchow, 2012; Clayton *et al.*, 2015; Nandakumar, 2010; Pingault *et al.*, 2018). In context of Nepal, stakeholders can be categorized into internal and external groups, as shown in the Table 4. Internal stakeholders include government organizations responsible for enhancing and implementing food security and right-to-food policies. External stakeholders encompass NGOs and other entities that support these efforts through various means.

The successful implementation of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Regulation in Nepal hinges on the coordinated efforts of government agencies at various levels and development partners. The Federal Ministry plays a critical role by developing guidelines and tools, coordinating with other governments, and managing financial aspects to ensure the regulation's effective enforcement. Additionally, the ministry's collaboration with External Development Partners (EDPs) is essential for

resource mobilization and technical support. Provincial Ministries are tasked with the construction and management of warehouses for food storage, handling food properly, registering farmers, and promoting agricultural practices to enhance food production. Local governments have the crucial responsibility of registering farmers, identifying food-insecure populations, and ensuring the distribution of food through fair price shops to maintain accessibility and affordability.

Development partners are instrumental in providing resources, technical support, and advocacy to strengthen the implementation process. Their involvement includes mobilizing resources, offering technical expertise, and advocating for food security initiatives. Moving forward, several tasks need to be addressed in partnership with development partners. These tasks include orienting provincial and local governments on their roles and responsibilities, finalizing survey forms to identify food-insecure populations, and assistance in developing software to manage data on these populations. Establishing criteria for identifying the most vulnerable, determining the type and quantity of food for distribution, and declaring minimum support prices are also crucial steps which requires united efforts. Furthermore, efforts are required to prepare a national food plan, establish a digital food security information system, identify suitable locations for food storage and handling, set up fair price shops, and create a food council. Recruitment and training of Right to Food (RtF) Inspectors will further strengthen the monitoring and enforcement of food security policies where development partners can provide technical assistance.

Table 4: Major stakeholders for enhancing food security in context of Nepal

Internal Stakeholders	External Stakeholders
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development	Representatives, Peasants Association (women)
Ministry of Agriculture (provincial ministries)	Municipal Association
Ministry of Finance	Rural Municipality Association
National Planning commission	Federation of Chamber of Commerce
Ministry of Land Reform, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation	External Development Partners (UN Agencies, WHH, FIAN and others)
Ministry of Forest and Environment	
Ministry of Energy, Land Resources and Irrigation	
Ministry of Science and Technology	
Ministry of Commerce and Supplies	
Ministry of Health and Population	
Nepal Agriculture Research Council	
Nepal Food Management and Trading Company	
Local level Government and related stakeholders	
District Administration Offices	

Challenges in Implementing the Right to Food Policies

Despite notable strides in agricultural development and policy formulation, the effective implementation of the right to food policies remains hindered by a myriad of obstacles. The government's commitment to guaranteeing this fundamental right is enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal, yet practical execution is fraught with difficulties that span financial, technical, and sociopolitical dimensions.

Financial Resources

One of the primary challenges in implementing right to food policies in Nepal is the allocation and management of financial resources. Identifying and listing households in need, managing warehouses, procuring and distributing food, and maintaining an updated list of farmers require substantial funding. The government's budget constraints often limit the scope and efficiency of these operations, leading to gaps in service delivery. Additionally, the logistical costs associated with transporting food to remote and mountainous regions further strain financial resources, complicating the equitable distribution of food aid.

Technical Manpower

The shortage of technical manpower is another critical issue impeding the implementation of right to food policies. Adequate food handling requires skilled personnel trained in food safety and quality management. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on digital solutions for tracking food distribution necessitates expertise in software management. The lack of trained professionals in these areas hampers the efficient management of food supplies and undermines efforts to establish a robust food security system.

Establishment of Fair Price Shops

The establishment of fair price shops, intended to provide affordable food to low-income households, faces numerous hurdles. Securing appropriate locations, ensuring consistent supply chains, and maintaining affordable prices require coordinated efforts and substantial investments. Additionally, monitoring and preventing exploitation or corruption within these shops is crucial to their success. These challenges necessitate a comprehensive strategy that encompasses regulatory oversight, community engagement, and sustained financial support.

Cultural Factors

Cultural factors, including public expectations and political interests, play a significant role in the implementation of food security policies. The general public's expectations for immediate and visible benefits can pressure policymakers to prioritize short-term solutions over long-term sustainability. Moreover, political interests often influence resource allocation and policy decisions, potentially leading to biased or inequitable outcomes. Balancing these cultural dynamics with the overarching goal of food security requires careful navigation and stakeholder engagement.

Capacity of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture

The capacity of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to implement right to food policies is constrained by limitations in human resources, expertise, and coordination. Effective policy execution demands a workforce with specialized knowledge in agricultural practices, food distribution logistics, and regulatory compliance. Additionally, the Ministry must coordinate with provincial and local governments, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure a cohesive and unified approach to food security. Strengthening the Ministry's capacity is essential for overcoming these challenges and achieving policy objectives.

Policy Coherence Across Government Tiers

Achieving policy coherence across the federal, provincial, and local levels of government is crucial for the successful implementation of right to food policies. Discrepancies in policy interpretation and execution can lead to inefficiencies and conflicts, undermining the overall effectiveness of food security initiatives. Ensuring alignment and coordination among the three tiers of government requires clear communication channels, consistent policy frameworks, and collaborative planning processes.

Interest of External Development Partners

The interest and involvement of external development partners are pivotal in supporting Nepal's right to food policies. These partners provide vital financial aid, technical expertise, and capacity-building initiatives. However, aligning their objectives with national priorities can be challenging. Effective collaboration and mutual understanding between the government and external partners are essential to harmonize efforts and maximize the impact of food security programs.

While Nepal has made commendable progress in formulating right to food policies, the journey toward effective implementation is fraught with multifaceted challenges. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that encompasses financial investment, technical capacity building, cultural sensitivity, institutional strengthening, policy coherence, and strategic partnerships. Only through concerted and coordinated efforts can Nepal realize its goal of ensuring food security for all its citizens.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the establishment of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act in 2018, followed by the approval of its Regulation in 2024, marks a significant milestone in Nepal's commitment to ensuring the fundamental rights related to food, food security, and food sovereignty as enshrined in the Constitution. This legislative framework provides the necessary legal provisions to translate these rights into actionable outcomes, aiming to secure sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for all citizens. The Government of

Nepal's ongoing strategies further reinforce this commitment by prioritizing food security and sustainable agricultural development. Through policies that promote agricultural productivity, significant investments in manpower and resources, and the implementation of mega projects like the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project (PMAMP) and the Nepal Livestock Sector Innovation Project (NLSIP), the government is taking comprehensive steps to enhance food security. Initiatives such as subsidies for chemical fertilizers, agriculture/livestock insurance schemes, and support for food and salt transportation are also pivotal in this endeavor. These collective efforts reflect Nepal's dedication to creating a more equitable and food-secure nation, ensuring that the constitutional guarantee of the right to food is not just a theoretical concept but a tangible reality for every citizen.

Authors' Contribution

All authors conceived and designed the paper. All authors wrote and revised the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be held accountable for the content therein.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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