



Social Protection and Resilient Food Systems:

A Synthesis

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Abstract

Social protection has emerged as a key development and humanitarian policy issue in the last decade. There have also been major food price shocks in many countries in the last 5 years. Interest in social protection and food systems is converging, and donor agencies and governments are looking at how different social protection instruments might better support the different components of food systems and maintain their resilience in the face of major shocks. This synthesis report is one of a series of papers developed for GIZ, which explore the impacts of different social protection instruments on resilient food systems, including cash transfers, public works programmes and insurance, as well as broader initiatives that contribute to reducing poverty and vulnerability, such as integrated livelihoods programmes, emergency reserves and structured demand. The synthesis reviews the main findings from each paper, draws out patterns in the effects of the instruments, explores the main issues that emerge across all the papers and identifies what this means for those designing programmes to build resilience in food systems.

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Abbreviations

APRLP	Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project
BDH	<i>Bono de Desarrollo Humano</i>
BMI	Body Mass Index
BONOSOL	<i>Bono Solidario</i>
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CESSP	Cambodia Education Sector Support Project
CFPR	Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction
CLP	Chars Livelihoods Programme
FFE	Food-For-Education
FFW	Food-For-Work
FRA	Food Reserve Agency
HGSF	Home-grown School Feeding
LRP	Local and Regional food aid Procurement
MDV	Millennium Development Village
MEGS	Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme
MPRLP	Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project
NCPB	National Cereals and Produce Board
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PDS	Public Distribution System
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
PWP	Public Works Programme
WORLP	Western Orissa Rural Livelihoods Project

1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

Social protection has emerged rapidly as a key development and humanitarian policy issue in the last decade. At the same time, there have been major food price shocks in many countries in the last 5 years. As a result, interest in social protection and food systems is converging and many donor agencies and governments are looking at how different social protection instruments might better support or enable the different components of food systems and maintain their resilience in the face of major shocks and stresses.

This paper is one of a series developed for GIZ that explores the impacts of different social protection instruments on resilient food systems. It is accompanied by six other papers as follows:

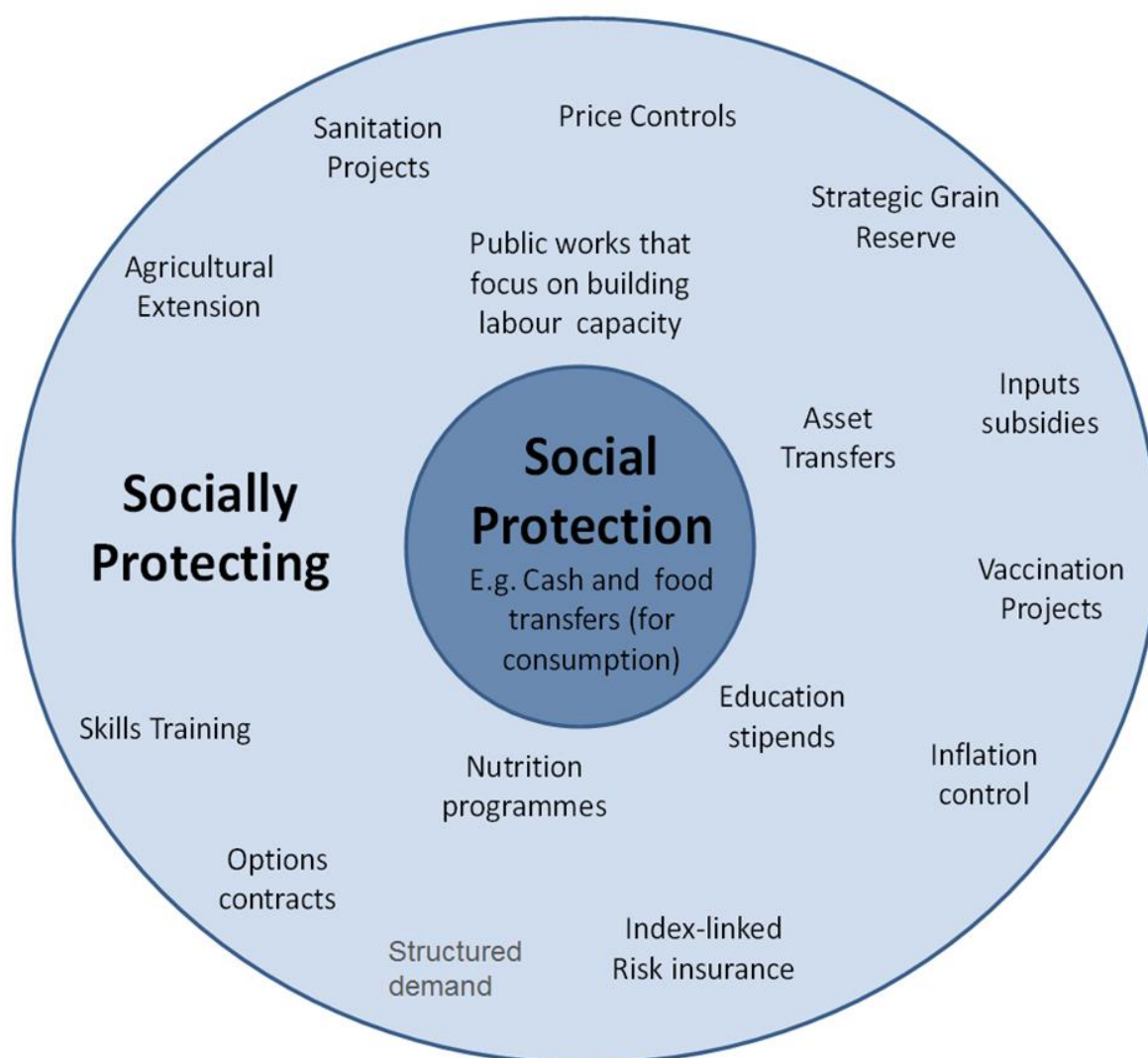
A: Papers on social protection instruments

1. What is known about the impact of cash transfers on resilient food systems?
2. What is known about the impact of public works programmes on resilient food systems?
3. What is known about the impact of insurance on resilient food systems?

B: Papers on broader initiatives that contribute to reducing poverty and vulnerability

1. What is known about the impact of integrated livelihoods programmes on resilient food systems?
2. What is known about the impact of strategic / emergency reserves on resilient food systems?
3. What is known about the impact of structured demand on resilient food systems?

The choice of instruments was made in consultation with staff in GIZ and is meant to cover both basic transfer instruments in the social protection sector, and also other instruments that contribute to reducing poverty, risk and vulnerability in broader ways (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The scope of instruments tackling poverty, risk and vulnerability

In this synthesis, we review the main findings from each instrument-based paper, draw out patterns in the effects of the instruments, explore the main issues that emerge across all the papers and identify what this means for those designing programmes to build resilience in food systems. The synthesis draws out particularly important findings which can be compared across different instruments rather than trying to cover all the evidence discussed in the papers in a comprehensive way.

1.2 What do we mean by resilient food systems?

‘Resilience’ is a major buzzword in both the humanitarian and development policy agendas but there is very little agreement about what it means and a danger that, in trying to capture all of its various components, it becomes too big and unwieldy to result in useful programming. The same risk is true of defining ‘resilient food systems’. In order to avoid this, we conceptualise a food system by drawing on a shared and common definition of food security (‘when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ FAO 1996) and we focus on four specific dimensions of food security:

- The availability of food;
- People's entitlement to food (henceforth called 'access to food');
- The utilisation of food; and
- Crisis prevention and management

Food availability refers to the supply of food at the macro national (global) level, referring to a country's ability to provide enough (nutritious) food to meet the needs or demands of the population either through domestic production or food imports and provide sufficient adequate nutrition-related services (Ecker and Breisinger, 2012; Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009).

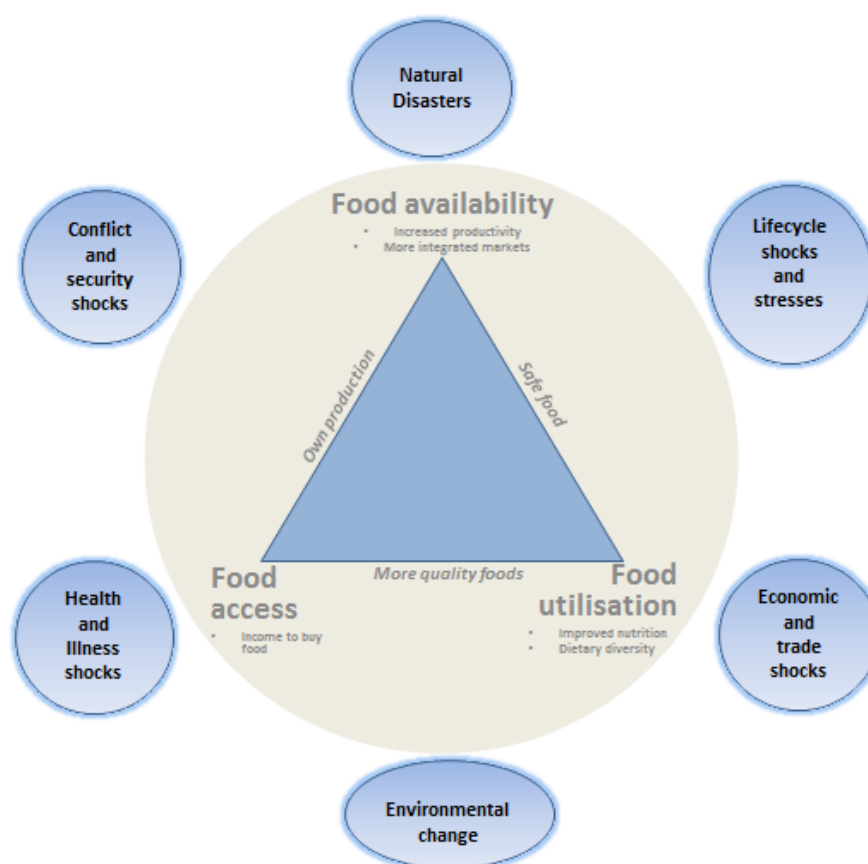
Food access is concerned at the micro level with the household's ability to produce and/or purchase sufficient nutritious food for all household members to meet their dietary requirements and food preferences as well as household members' access to services that affect their health status. Poverty – limited financial resources for buying food or investing in agricultural goods for production – not only limits access to quality and quantity of food but also increases vulnerability to crises (such as food price spikes) and/or seasonal fluctuations in employment or agricultural production. In such times, households adopt a range of 'coping' strategies to manage the risks they face. These may mitigate food insecurity to some extent, but the adoption of some coping strategies (such as reducing the number of meals a day or purchasing cheaper less-nutritious foods) may negatively affect nutrition in the short, medium and long-term.

Food utilisation is concerned with the intake of sufficient, safe and quality food which is adequate according to the physiological requirements of the individual and the utilisation of nutrients from food (Ecker and Breisinger, 2012). Illness and disease, for instance, can reduce the absorption of nutrients. Access to clean drinking water, adequate sanitation, advice on childcare (such as sound feeding practices), basic health care for disease and illness treatment and prevention including immunization, and related information and education campaigns all determine people's nutritional status indirectly through the link with health (Fay et al. 2005; Frongillo et al. 1997; Smith et al. 2005 cited in Ecker and Breisinger, 2012).

Intra-household dynamics are also important to consider here as household preferences or main decision-makers in the household may not prioritise food acquisition or particular nutritious food over other goods and services. Robust evidence demonstrates that mothers' education, knowledge and decision-making are highly correlated with improved nutrition outcomes especially for children. Also, individual household members may be more vulnerable to shocks and stresses than others at different stages of the lifecycle. For instance, young children and pregnant women have specific nutritional requirements and may be more vulnerable to malnutrition with long-lasting development effects.

Finally, the fourth pillar of a resilient food security system is about enhanced *crisis prevention and management*. This pillar is concerned with maintaining food availability, access and utilisation in contexts of emergency and post-emergency situations; in case of local or global price increases; cyclical stresses and longer-term threats (Freeland and Cherrier, 2012).

Overall, this provides an analytical framework for looking at how different instruments or programmes affect the resilience of food systems. Food availability, access and utilisation together constitute the three points of a triangle with the shocks and stresses that may undermine food systems shown in the surrounding circles. In some cases, it is not always easy to differentiate availability from access, or access from utilisation, etc. We show these overlaps along each side of triangle in our diagrammatic representation of resilient food systems in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Analytical framework for resilient food systems

1.3 Methodology

Evidence on the impacts of different social protection instruments exists in numerous forms and places. In order to tap into a broad range of literature, the team employed the following sequence of literature searching:

1. Search of bibliographic databases (Web of Knowledge and ProQuest). This identified mainly books and peer reviewed journals;
2. A forward and backward expert snowball in which we wrote and asked two or three experts for each instrument to provide the best / most useful sources of evidence on each instrument and then track forwards and backwards from each source using citation indices;
3. Institutional website searches (including FAO, WFP, WB, IFAD, ILO, IFPRI, ODI, IDS) for grey literature; and
4. Additional searching via google (particularly google scholar) for additional sources.

This formal searching process means that the team has activity attempted to avoid basing the analysis on the 'usual suspects' – i.e. those papers that are frequently cited. Instead, the formal search process identifies a range of wider materials on which the reviews are based.

The structure for the remainder of the synthesis is as follows: First, we review the evidence on each of the six instruments (in each case highlighting one specific features or lesson about that instrument from the literature). Next, we take those specific features and lessons and compare them across the full range of instruments. Finally, we ask what the findings mean for GIZ advisors and others involved in making policy and programming choices between different instruments in order to enhance the resilience of food systems in the contexts in which they work.

Definitions of instruments

Cash transfers: There are two main types of cash transfers: conditional and unconditional cash transfers. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) provide cash (and sometimes in-kind transfers such as nutritional supplements) usually to the mother or primary caregiver on the condition that recipients commit to undertaking certain actions. The most common condition is enrolling children in school and maintaining adequate attendance levels. Unconditional cash transfers also often target households with children, but also target the elderly (pensions) and disabled (as such, the “non-productive poor”). Such programmes largely include government-run social grant programmes for vulnerable groups, as well as small-scale pilot projects usually financed by donor agencies and implemented by NGOs.

Public works programmes (PWP): There are many different kinds of public works interventions, but the key components are the provision of employment by the state at a prescribed wage for those unable to find alternative employment. This provides a form of social safety net and simultaneously creates public goods. Conceptually, public works are a form of conditional social transfer, in which the transfer is a wage, paid on condition that specified tasks are completed, such as the excavation of a given volume of earth.

Insurance: Insurance is a form of risk management primarily used to hedge against the risk of a potential loss. The main focus of this study is on new forms of agricultural insurance, based on the correlation between records of a particular event (usually rainfall) and crop yields. This allows an index to be constructed so that agreed patterns of the event in a given year trigger one or more compensation payments. Index insurance of this kind can be taken out not just by farmers but by any having a commercial interest in the crop(s) being grown, such as input suppliers, those involved in marketing, processing and storage, and even government whose revenues might be affected in various ways.

Integrated livelihoods programmes: Integrated livelihoods programmes include two or three components which might include transfers (such as cash, food or agricultural inputs), coupled with economic and / or social support (such as training on economic activities or social development awareness-raising meetings on health, nutrition and sanitation for instance). Such programmes have evolved over the last couple of decades largely in South Asia (particularly Bangladesh and India) with a few programmes in sub-Saharan Africa.

Structured demand: Structured demand programmes connect large, predictable sources of demand for agricultural products to small farmers, which, in theory, reduces risk and encourages improved quality, leading to improved systems, increased income, and reduced poverty. In the broadest sense of the concept, poor farmers may be connected to several kinds of large-scale, reliable sources of demand (markets). The three main interventions in this study are: home-grown school feeding (HGFS), local and regional food aid procurement (LRP) – in particular, the United Nations World Food Programme’s (WFP) Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative – and the Indian Public Distribution System (PDS).

Strategic reserves: FAO has defined national food reserves as “stocks held or controlled by governments on a long-term basis for certain future contingencies”. This involves two primary possibilities, (a) the need for food distribution during emergencies which involves the need for food, and (b) the need for government involvement in the market to prevent excessive fluctuations in the price of staple foods. A third purpose is often added to this list as (c) providing working stocks for recurrent food distribution programmes. The three main types of stocks assessed in this study are emergency reserves, stabilization reserves and social safety net stocks.

2 Impact of social protection instruments on food systems: A summary of the evidence

2.1 Cash Transfers

The greatest impact of cash transfers on resilient food systems occurs via increased household incomes, the largest impact being where poverty is most severe. A positive effect on food systems depends on the existence of a well-functioning local food market. If recipients do not have access to markets, or if prices are raised, the purchasing power of cash transfers is likely to be significantly lower. Cash transfers are not usually index-linked and they therefore decrease in value in situations of inflation or supply failure (HLPE, 2012). In these situations, the question of whether to provide cash or food transfers becomes pertinent. The size of the transfer is also relevant: in programmes where the cash transfer has been relatively low, there has been little effect on nutrition (such as the *Bono de Desarrollo Humano* (BDH) programme in Ecuador or the Cambodia Education Sector Support Project (CESSP)). Greater impacts have also been found when beneficiaries have been in the cash transfer programme for a longer period.

Food availability and access can increase if the transfer is invested in production, for example, purchasing seeds, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs which would enhance productivity. However, many regular cash transfers programmes only transfer a relatively small proportion of monthly household expenditure, limiting its potential for investment as opposed to immediate consumption needs. Regular and reliable transfers can however, alleviate credit constraints and provide the security necessary to take more risks and invest in activities which ultimately result in higher returns (Barrientos and Scott, 2008; HLPE, 2012; IFAD et al., 2012). However, few studies have explicitly assessed the impact of cash transfers on productivity and markets and therefore the evidence on this aspect of food security is limited. What evidence exists does show a positive impact on productive activities: beneficiaries of the Malawi social cash transfer programme, Bolivia's *Bono Solidario* (BONOSOL) programme, Brazil's social pension, and PROCAMPO and PROGRESA in Mexico all increased their investment in agricultural inputs (IFAD, 2012; Martinez, 2007; HLPE, 2012; Gertler et al., 2006).

The impact of cash transfers on markets is less clear: there is some evidence from South Africa and Namibia of reduced market risk for producers and traders (Samson et al., 2007; Devereux, 2002) but there are also negative examples, for example, from Meketi in Ethiopia, where cash transfers pushed up the price of food in local markets (Kebede, 2006).

Cash transfers have a much more obvious impact on access to food, in that increased household incomes lead to increased expenditure on food as well as the purchase of better quality food, thereby contributing to improved food access and utilisation. With a 10% increase in income, the poorest households could improve their food security by 5% (measured by calories available for consumption) (HLPE, 2012). When looking at impacts on height for age, weight-for-height and malnutrition, the evidence is again mixed. The Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Scheme in Malawi reduced the proportion of children in beneficiary households whose growth was stunted from 55% to 46% in one year, compared to the control group which remained at 55%. During the same period, the proportion of children who were wasted fell significantly for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. There is plenty of evidence from Latin America showing positive impacts on child growth and chronic malnutrition but other studies show no impact, indicating again the

importance of programme design and implementation features, such as size and duration of the transfer, and the availability of complementary services.

Other evidence uses various proxies (such as expenditure on food or number of meals consumed) or changes in negative coping strategies (such as skipping meals). The major weakness in the evidence is that there are not enough control groups or counter-factuals: evidence describes beneficiaries rather than compares beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. An evaluation of Malawi's cash transfer programme describes beneficiaries spending around 75% of the transfer on groceries (Vincent and Cull, 2009) but does not compare to non-beneficiary spending of cash income. In the Kalomo District pilot scheme in Zambia, the percentage of beneficiary households living on one meal a day fell from 19% to 13% (MCDSS and GTZ, 2006) but we don't know what happened to non-beneficiaries during the same time period.

Households receiving transfers tend to spend more than they did previously on better quality food: the consumption of fats, proteins and vitamins increased for beneficiaries of the Kalomo District pilot scheme in Zambia, (MCDSS and GTZ, 2006) as well as in Colombia, Mexico and Nicaragua (Attanasio and Mesnard, 2006; Hoddinott, Skoufias and Washburn, 2000; Maluccio and Flores, 2005; Macours, Schady and Vakis, 2008).

Cash transfers alone do not have a large impact on other elements regarding the utilisation of food, unless beneficiaries have access to complementary health and nutrition programmes. The evidence is mixed: some evaluations have found that beneficiaries in Latin American countries make more use of certain health services, such as monitoring children's growth in Nicaragua, Colombia and Honduras (Maluccio and Flores, 2005; Macours, Schady and Vakis, 2008; Attanasio et al. 2005; Morris, Flores et al., 2004), but others find no significant effects on preventative health care for children in Chile, Ecuador or Mexico (Galasso, 2006; Paxson and Schady, 2008; Gertler, 2000).

Cash transfers can help to mitigate the negative effects of crises and emergencies by smoothing income and therefore consumption. However, the challenge is in maintaining the purchasing power of the transfer when markets are volatile. There is very little evidence on the effect of long-term cash transfers in economic downturns or crises but in emergencies, short-term transfers can help to increase access and utilisation of food.

For the purpose of this synthesis, there is one key issue about cash transfers that we choose to highlight here: size matters – be it the size of the transfer made to households, or the size of the programme (i.e. the number of beneficiaries). Where either are small, the impacts on resilient food systems are severely constrained.

2.2 Public Works Programmes

In theory, public works programmes can contribute to resilient food systems in numerous ways: i) They can contribute to improved access to food through the public works wage which enables food purchase; ii) Like cash transfers, they can contribute to increased availability of food by preventing asset depletion which can undermine production, and lift liquidity constraints that allows investments to increase own production; iii) The assets created through public works programmes can increase agricultural productivity by preventing environmental degradation, improve soil condition and water availability, and improve market integration by, for example, constructing and maintaining roads.

In practice, we have limited evidence about the extent of these effects. There is plenty of evidence that the wage in public works programmes acts in the same way as a cash or food transfer and directly increases access to food, either by the provision of food (with the size of food wage typically being based on household food consumption) or in the case of a cash wage by enabling food purchase. In public works programmes that pay wages in cash, the purchasing of more or better food is the primary use of transfers where employment is provided to the poorest. However, these effects are not particularly distinguishable from the impacts of cash or food transfer programmes in which there is no works requirement. There are, nonetheless five key findings that are specific to the public works requirement:

First, we have a very limited knowledge of the impact of the assets created through public works programmes and, by extension, whether these assets contribute to increasing agricultural productivity and better market access that leads to reliable and sustained availability of food. There is a strong narrative about this: the assets created by public works enhance production (e.g. through soil and water conservation), increase market integration (by improving transport), and mitigate shocks to production (through the construction of flood defences). However, there is very limited empirical evidence of the effects in practice. Evaluations of even long-term public works programmes tend to focus on the immediate welfare impacts of programmes and very rarely attempt to measure the longer term impacts of

assets such as soil conservation efforts which take many years to accrue. Moreover, measuring the impacts of assets is technically difficult - they tend to be shared public goods that are influenced by many other factors so attributing impacts of public works assets themselves is difficult.

Second, in many countries the impacts on food security are limited because of the low value of the transfer made under public works. Whilst this also is a concern for cash and food transfers, in public works programmes it tends to be exacerbated. Public works are often selected as the result of a political concern about the dangers of providing ‘handouts’ which draw people out of the labour market, and as a result the wage is often limited in order to prevent disruption of local agricultural casual labour markets and wage rates. Whilst there is limited proof of either of these effects, these pressures usually combine to keep rates low. In public works programmes these effects are of greater concern because each day of work on a PWP could mean a loss of opportunity to generate income from an alternative source. McCord (2012) found that among workers in two PWPs in South Africa, 70-80% of workers reported giving up either paid or unpaid work to participate in PWP, with between 15 and 25% giving up casual wage labour. Similarly, Jalan and Ravallion (2003) suggest that in the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS), taking wage labour opportunities foregone into account, the net value of the wage decreases to half of the gross wage.

Third, despite these risks, there is evidence that some PWPs have positive labour market effects i.e. bringing new people into labour force where they generate income (to buy food, improve diet, etc.). However, these effects are only possible when programmes are long-term and operate at scale. Because most PWPs offer only short-term episodes of employment, the effect appears to be negligible. Furthermore, the gendered impacts of bringing women into the work place are mixed.

Household labour displacement due to public works

Whilst bringing women into the labour force where they generate income has advantages, it needs to be carefully thought through: Chirwa *et al* (2004) (cited in McCord 2012) note that there is some evidence, particularly with regard to female participants, that PWP employment may lead to a reduction of time allocated to domestic activities such as child care or food preparation or to reductions in the quality of child care and nutrition. Woldehanna (2009) finds that, in the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia, adult labour is replaced by child labour within households. In some programmes, crèches have been provided for the children of PWP participants in recognition of the need to compensate for the reduction of household members available for child care (McCord 2012).

Overall though, the evidence on household labour adjustment responses is very limited and constrained by methodological challenges (Betcherman *et al* 2004).

Fourthly, there is mixed evidence on impacts on nutrition which are related directly to public works. Significant benefits in terms of food consumption and also child nutrition have been identified in a number of studies (see for example Qisumbing 2003, Yamamo, 2005, and McCord, 2004). Increases in calorie and protein consumption, as well as overall consumption expenditure have been documented among members of participating households (Azam, 2012), as well as significant impacts on household dietary diversity (Uraguchi, 2011). However, the downward pressure on wage rates means there is a limited and sometimes even detrimental impact on household nutrition. Some studies identify losses in Body Mass Index (BMI) and / or health deterioration among workers (Qisumbing 2003; Osmani 1997; McCaston, (discussed in Barrett *et al*, 2002)). In Ethiopia McCaston (1991) found that women on food-for-work (FFW) exhibited deteriorating body mass indices – the primary adult anthropometric indicator of nutritional status – because they shared rations calculated so as just to reproduce the worker’s energy expenditures.

Finally, there are other effects specific to public works which are posited but not well understood or proven. These include whether public works programmes stimulate the demand for labour or increase prevailing wage rates, and whether the wage provides a significant and regular injection of cash into the local economy that stimulates a significant supply response or, conversely, places upwards pressure on food prices that hurts poor people.

A key lesson overall from the analysis of the impacts of PWP is the importance of programme duration. McCord (2008) notes that by far the most common types of public works programmes, especially in Africa, are those offering only a single, short-term episode of employment and that this provides limited opportunities for PWPs to have sustained impacts on food security.

2.3 Insurance

Insurance schemes are relatively new in developing countries and have a low uptake to date, so the evidence of their impact on resilient food systems is limited. The analysis has focussed on agricultural insurance, which has the largest potential impact on food security. The most important issue arising from the discussion is that **index-based insurance could be useful in situations of large, covariate shocks or stresses, where it could cover potential losses in the event of crop failure, if certain key conditions are in place.** Insurance premiums are unlikely to be affordable for the poorest and thus tend to benefit more affluent farmers, unless the schemes are heavily subsidised by donors and NGOs. If insurance only covers agricultural earnings, there is a significant amount of household income which would not be protected in the event of a shock or emergency. Therefore insurance is unlikely to be effective in addressing vulnerability if implemented in isolation from public safety nets such as cash or in-kind transfers, and public services such as healthcare.

In theory, the largest effect of agricultural insurance in terms of food security is on the availability of food, as farmers who take out insurance can move from low-risk, low-return activities to adopt new technologies and therefore increase their productivity. It can also release resources that households would otherwise set aside for emergencies, which farmers could then invest in production. The impact on access could be either positive or negative: if production increases, prices would decrease and thus make food more accessible to buy. However, if taking on insurance displaces traditional sharing mechanisms, such as communal grain banks, the access to food of the non-insured could be significantly reduced. There is unlikely to be any direct impact on the utilisation of food.

There have been a number of pilot programmes of weather index insurance, linked to a locally-determined weather index and correlated with local yields. It is, however, too early to be able to draw any definite conclusions on their impacts. A preliminary assessment of thirty schemes was carried out by IFAD and WFP in 2010, the majority being in OECD countries. The study identified that a key challenge is the high costs involved, both in terms of administration and the cost to clients. In developing countries the cost of premiums makes insurance inaccessible to the poorest. In addition, premiums tend to be calculated based on total area sown, which is difficult to determine where farming systems are mixed and potential losses can vary widely. Mixed cropping is typical among smallholder farmers who would therefore not benefit from index-based systems which are generally linked to a single crop. An ILO study found very little evidence of the impact of agricultural, life, property or livestock insurance. The weather index insurance pilot in Malawi had some short-term consumption smoothing effects but did not increase risk-taking in the uptake of more modern inputs and practices. There was some positive evidence relating to health insurance and increased service utilisation in the short-term, but no longer-term impacts on health and nutrition (ILO, 2008).

Poor households typically have traditional, informal mechanisms for coping with shocks and stresses, which might be more effective than formal index-based insurance schemes. An analysis of data from farm households in India found that larger farmers with profit-maximising portfolios had self-insurance mechanisms, which were more cost-effective than buying insurance, whereas smaller farmers, whose productivity could have benefited from insurance, were not able to afford it (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2012). It is also important to consider that non-agricultural earnings, which cannot be covered by insurance, amount to anything from 25 to 50% of total household income (Ellis and Freeman, 2005; Farrington et al., 2006). Therefore the potential of index-based insurance to enable households to cope with shocks and to enhance their food security remains limited.

One of the critical things we learn from experiences with insurance is that shocks have different dimensions and happen at different scales. Covariant shocks are shared among many people in a single community, whilst idiosyncratic shocks affect people on an individual basis. This has implications for whether insurance will work, but also for the appropriateness and sustainability of other instruments. We'll return to this point in the next section.

2.4 Livelihoods

Integrated livelihoods programmes – where one programme delivers a number of components to the same programme beneficiary – are more popular in South Asia than in other parts of the world. Integrated livelihoods programmes have been spearheaded in India and Bangladesh and are based on the principle that addressing poverty needs a multi-dimensional, integrated, and participatory approach: poor households are not just income poor, they face a number of constraints in both the economic and social spheres which keep them trapped in poverty.

We draw on evidence from four types of integrated programme: i) DFID-funded livelihoods programmes in India focusing primarily on promoting rural agricultural production and enhancing skills for female farmers working in the agricultural sector and in Ethiopia the MERET-PLUS programme focussing on soil and water improvements; ii) “graduation” model programmes in Bangladesh implemented by BRAC (CFPR) and DFID (CLP), a similar programme in Zimbabwe (PRP) and recent pilots in Haiti, India and Pakistan which transfer a lump-sum asset to women coupled with skills training and health care; iii) the Millennium Development Village programmes in Africa and Asia which seek to promote agricultural production alongside improvements in health and education; and iv) the GTZ-funded Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) in Malawi and Save the Children’s Meket Livelihoods Development Project (MDLP) which include agriculture, water, income generation, and health interventions alongside income and/or food transfers.

Across the four types of integrated livelihood programmes, evidence from programme evaluations claims that programmes have had a positive impact on reducing the vulnerability of households to food insecurity, in particular seasonal food insecurity. Studies make this claim largely using qualitative evidence of beneficiaries self-reporting an increase in the number of meals that they are able to eat (or a reduction in the number of meals that they miss). (It is important to recognise that an increase in number of meals does not necessarily mean an increase in food security, because, for example, if households do not have access to clean water, then they can increase their consumption but remain undernourished because of chronic diarrhoea).

More robust indicators, such as stunting, wasting or BMI indicators, are limited. Where they do exist they show mixed findings. A study from the Millennium Development Villages reports a reduction in stunting across nine village sites (out of fourteen village sites in ten countries) (Buse et al., 2008). The IFSP in Malawi led to an improvement in child nutrition: stunting decreased from 61% at baseline in 1995/96 to 41% in 2002 and the rate of severe stunting fell by 16%. Although child wasting also appeared to have improved, malnutrition continues to be a concern in the district (Webb, 2011). Evidence is inconsistent from the “graduation” model programmes: the Fonkoze CGAP programme in Haiti found a reduction in severe wasting among beneficiary household children from baseline to 24 months but reports suggest that moderate malnutrition actually increased from 18 months to 24 months (Huda and Simanowitz, 2010); studies from CLP demonstrate some improvements in women’s BMI but no significant differences in under 5 wasting and stunting between beneficiary and treatment groups (Goto and Mascie-Taylor, 2010; Mascie-Taylor, 2010). Only one of the DFID-funded livelihoods programmes in India (Western Orissa) explicitly examined programme impact on anthropometric indicators, and found the programme had not resulted in improving child wasting (programme beneficiary children rate were similar to the state average) (Sambodhi, 2009a cited in Holmes, DFID conference report 2010).

Across all the types of programmes, the evidence demonstrates that a key contributing factor to reducing household vulnerability to food insecurity is increased agricultural production and productivity¹. In some programmes – notably DFID-funded India and MDVs where agricultural productivity is a main programme objective – programme interventions have resulted in increases in the production of additional crops (in the *rabi* season in India), improvements in land-based productivity resulting in increased yields and a greater diversification in agriculture. These results have been achieved through the combined and integrated approach to rural livelihoods, including improved animal husbandry, forestry, aquaculture and horticulture, small-scale, participatory soil and water conservation techniques, improved soil fertility and improved water-holding status, improved use of technology in the India programmes (Reid in DFID conference report, 2010), and the early introduction of fertiliser, improved seeds and intensified agricultural service systems specifically in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda in the case of the MDVs (Pronyk et al., 2012; Buse et al., 2008).

¹ Although we do not know the extent to which increased agricultural outputs are consumed or are sold, thereby contributing to improved food availability or access.

While the primary focus of the “graduation” model programmes is to generate income through assets such as livestock, programme evaluations still report an increase in productivity due to complementary programme interventions in vegetable / homestead gardening. In the case of CLP, for instance, beneficiaries receive skills training in homestead gardening as well as the provision of quality seeds and fruit saplings, help developing compost pits and in marketing of surplus products.

Another key finding is the importance of increased food availability through community-run grain and seed banks in the DFID-funded projects (Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), Western Orissa Rural Livelihoods Project (WORLP) and Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (APRLP)) and MLDP in Ethiopia to respond to predictable seasonal and unpredictable shocks and stresses. An important function of the grain banks are that they are able to respond much more quickly to local food shortages than centralised food security programmes.

Increased incomes from programme interventions are another key factor which promotes household food security, in particular facilitating better access (and in some cases utilisation) to food. Across the different types of programmes, various programme components are reported to contribute to this impact. In particular, households from the BRAC graduation model (CFPR and pilots) report increased expenditure on food. In the case of CFPR this is attributed² to the availability of the regular cash stipend during the first 18 months of programme participation, and a stronger asset base generated by the programme’s transfer. Similarly, reports from the DFID-livelihoods programme suggest that combining consumption credit and activities to promote livelihoods diversification is a key contributing factor smoothing consumption over food insecure periods. In CLP, Bangladesh, the availability of short-term public works programme (and also found in DFID-funded APRLP) is seen as a critical factor which ensures consumption smoothing in the *monga* season (for more detailed discussion on public works see McCord, 2013 in this series).

While two of the types of integrated livelihoods models (MDVs, MLDP and “graduation” model) also include “social” type trainings and awareness (such as nutrition education, hygiene awareness such as washing hands, and water and sanitation interventions) it is difficult to assess the extent to which these components have contributed to improved nutrition. There are possible explanations for this. One is that although education and awareness is given to beneficiaries, they do not put it into practice. The other is that it is very difficult to separate out the impacts of different components in an integrated programme, as a report on the MDVs in *The Lancet* suggests: “As a complex intervention operating across many sectors, definitive statements about the specific mechanisms of mortality reductions are not possible. In the agricultural sector, the early introduction of fertilizer and improved seeds resulted in a two to three-times increase in staple crop yields, potentially contributing to gains in food security and lower levels in childhood stunting in Millennium Village sites. Finally, major improvements in access to safe water and sanitation might have generated additional synergies”.

Overall, in the context of this synthesis, the key message to be drawn out from experiences with integrated livelihoods programmes is that there can be value in delivering complementary actions in a coordinated and sequenced fashion.

2.5 Structured Demand

Structured demand programming involves providing procurement for large-scale, relatively predictable food transfer or subsidy programmes in ways that can simultaneously provide improved and sustainable market access for smallholder farmers in developing countries. Structured demand frequently includes sourcing food for schools, hospitals, the military and food aid programmes and the use of local and regional procurement (LRP) is a key feature. Our review of structured demand programming for which there is a reasonable body of evidence included analysis of home-grown school feeding (HGSF), the World Food Programme (WFP)’s Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative and the Public Distribution Systems (PDS) in India (Box 3).

² Based on qualitative interviews

Structured demand case studies

Home grown school feeding (HGSF)

HGSF is the combination of local agricultural production (local and regional purchase - LRP) and traditional Food-for-Education (FFE) programmes. Its basic premise is that low farm productivity, poor agricultural market development, and poor educational and nutritional outcomes are mutually reinforcing and they jointly determine key aspects of rural hunger and poverty.

UN World Food Programme Purchase for Progress (WFP P4P)

P4P is a complex portfolio of supply side and market interventions working under the premise that not only should food transfers positively impact the food security of recipient communities (demand side) but also should improve the livelihoods (and, thereby, food security) of small-scale, poor producers (supply side) through LRP activities.

Indian Public Distribution System (PDS)

The PDS in India provides subsidised food grains and other essential commodities through a network of 'fair price shops'. Since its establishment under colonial rule, the programme has evolved from being universal, through geographic targeting in tribal, arid, hill and remote areas in 1992 (Revamped PDS - RPDS), and subsequent economic targeting – the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) – in 1997.

Source: Coles (2013)

The direct impacts of structured demand are as follows:

Localised demand can increase food availability by shifting the demand curve, raising prices and eliciting a supply response. All forms of structured demand, through their shared LRP procurement modalities, can increase food availability by causing upward shifts in local demand curves, raising farmer prices and, thus, stimulating production. However, there are various risks to bear in mind: in practice, corruption and inefficiencies can result in food destined for large programmes to end up on the open market (limiting what reaches intended beneficiaries); tying farmers into contract arrangements may divert attention from their production for consumption – a key part of their risk management. While it is possible that poor targeting may have damaging effects on suppliers we found no evidence of this in the literature. It is key to disaster recovery efforts that food markets continue to function during shocks.

Local and Regional Procurement for structured demand programming can potentially stabilise food prices. LRP for structured demand can secure access by stabilising food prices within and between years, albeit often at an initially elevated level. That can have positive impacts on both food availability and access. If made at the appropriate scale and timing it can avoid harmful market distortions, although distribution is more likely to disrupt food systems. The PDS subsidy is key in granting access to food although the targeting excludes many poor households. However, management and implementation challenges can leave these potential positive benefits unrealised.

LRP can contribute to improved nutrition and the use of more culturally appropriate food types. There is significant evidence that PDS increases both calorie and nutrient intakes of participating households. In the case of HGSF and P4P, locally procured food, as long as it is viewed as high quality and safe, is heavily preferred over internationally sourced rations, contributing to enhanced utilisation by households.

Structured demand programme can mitigate shocks in principal but evidence of this happening in practice is sparse. There is very little evidence for how structured demand programmes contribute to food security in the presence of shocks. However, what little information exists demonstrates that FFE programmes can enable households to avoid coping strategies such as selling assets in order to purchase food. Evidence from LRP programmes suggests that, if well administered, they can help to prevent malnutrition and associated diseases during droughts.

Trying to understand the impacts of structured demand on availability, access and nutrition is further complicated by questions of process. We have no evidence whether it is the procurement element of the programme (i.e. the sourcing of food) or the way in which food is provided to beneficiaries (the benefit) that causes specific effects – especially

those in relation to food access. So, with HGSP, the effects may be exactly the same as programmes that deliver school feeding but with different (and ‘unstructured’) procurement systems.

This raises a critical finding and question about each of the instruments discussed here: namely, how much of the effect we see on food availability, access and utilisation is due to the specific nature of each instrument, and how much of the effect is a result of the way in which the programme was implemented. We will follow this up in the next section.

2.6 Strategic Reserves

Our analysis of strategic reserves focuses on three types of activities:

1. A reserve with emergency relief as its primary aim may involve a static stock depleted only during transitory food shortages or, temporarily, to allow stock turnover. These stock operations are not intended to influence (domestic) market prices. For the purpose of this report these stocks are referred to as *emergency reserves*.
2. In price stabilization schemes the reserve is an operational buffer stock. The government agency involved buys the commodity when prices tend to be low and so builds up stocks and it sells when prices tend to be high with a resulting fall in stocks held. These stocks are used to influence domestic prices to benefit producers and/or consumers. These stocks are referred to in this paper as *stabilization stocks*.
3. Reserves that provide working stocks for regular food distribution programmes. This function has grown in prominence with increasing attention to using social safety nets to address poverty and chronic food insecurity. In the paper these are referred to as *social safety net stocks*. There are strong overlaps with structured demand in this case.

There are three types of reserve composition: physical reserves of grain / food; virtual reserves (to support purchase of imports if required; nationally versus regionally composed reserves).

In the case of emergency reserves, there is little evidence about their impact on food security. They have tended to be used to support the (rather outdated) ‘food aid first’ approach to tackling food emergencies, rather than supporting more recent moves towards food assistance where alternative instruments such as cash transfers might be more effective. Tschirley (2004), discussing the food crisis in southern Africa in 2002-2003, notes that strategic grain reserves played a very limited role in maintaining food systems because other mechanisms were used to mobilise food resources for emergency transfers faster than grain reserves could be mobilised. Maunder (2009) argues that food aid in the Horn of Africa in 2006 came far too late and earlier interventions were required to prevent the erosion of livelihoods (and therefore not emergency food aid supported by strategic reserves).

In the case of stabilisation reserves, specifically those which aim to manage price fluctuations at a national level and to collaborate internationally to influence global markets, the evidence is mixed and attribution is a challenge. Some studies point to success in reducing aggregate price volatility over time: For example the Food Corporation of India successfully reduced price variability in wheat between 2006 and 2012 (McCreary 2012), Zambia’s Food Reserve Agency’s (FRA) stabilized maize market prices throughout the 1996 to 2008 study period (Mason and Myers 2011) and the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) in Kenya stabilized maize market prices in Kenya between 1989 and 2004 (Jayne et al 2008). In general, reserves tend to be used when prices are falling, rather than rising and they tend to increase average food prices (McCreary 2011). Zambia’s Food Reserve Agency’s (FRA) is estimated to have raised mean maize market prices by 17% in Lusaka between 1996 and 2008 (Mason and Myers 2011). In Kenya they raised average price levels by roughly 20% between 1995 and 2004 (Jayne et al 2008). Yao examined the Philippine government’s price stabilization policy for rice over a 21-year period (1983 to 2003) and conclude that it led to moderate increases in producer and consumer prices (Yao et al 2005). In sum, our analysis suggests that a common feature of stabilisation reserves is to increase producer and, often, consumer, prices – making them a regressive food security policy.

So what is the bottom line? First, attribution is difficult because of the varied contexts in which strategic reserves have been mobilised. Second, in the case of emergency reserves, there is limited evidence that physical reserves can be mobilised any faster than other mechanisms for getting food assistance to households in need. Third, stabilisation reserves, whilst they may have positive effects on availability, are often bad for poor net consumers because of their

effect on prices. Given these limitations, why the continued focus on strategic reserves? First, because of the ongoing debate about the extent to which low levels of stocks triggered the 2008 global price spike and, second, (and here is the key message we draw for the synthesis) **because of politics: the call for national food self-sufficiency can be a strong one in many countries with the outcome that decisions about stocks or reserves can be as much about politics as finding the best technical solution to make food systems more resilient.** For as long as political considerations trump cost effectiveness, the question should be more about how to make reserves more effective than whether to have them. This can be achieved by ensuring clarity of objectives, and having clear and transparent criteria for government intervention in markets.

3 Synthesis of key issues

There are some significant differences in the ways that different instruments contribute to resilient food systems. The general picture, unsurprisingly, is that core social protection transfer programmes contribute more to access, whilst wider livelihoods and market-based instruments contribute more to availability. In both groups of programmes, the evidence on impacts on nutrition are mixed. The strength of evidence also differs between instruments. In some cases strong theory is accompanied by sparse empirical evidence (for example insurance) whilst in others there are difficulties with attribution (strategic reserves and structured demand) whilst others have the limitation of no counterfactuals or control groups (cash transfers and livelihoods programmes).

However, there are some insights that emerge across that we have pointed to in the previous section:

1. Size of transfer and size of programme matters
2. Duration is important
3. Individual programmes rarely have significant effects on their own
4. The nature of the problem and the context are critical
5. How you deliver programmes can be as important as what you deliver
6. Politics matter

3.1 The size of transfer and the size of the programme are important

When income from social protection programmes is spent on improving household food security through increased expenditure improving the quantity and quality of food, the size of transfer to household matters. Although even with just a 10% increase in income, the poorest households could improve their food security by 5% - measured by calories available for consumption- (HLPE, 2012), once access to calories reaches some threshold level, attention switches to food quality and household caloric acquisition may continue to rise but at a much slower rate. As such, households diversify their diet, increasing their consumption of fruits, vegetables and animal products (HLPE, 2012:46). Evidence from CCTs in Latin America demonstrate better impacts on household food and nutrition security from programmes which transfer a relatively higher proportion of household income (see, for instance, Nicaragua's RPS). It is still unclear, however, what the optimum threshold is.

Similar findings hold true for public works programmes too. There is plenty of evidence that the wage in public works programmes acts in the same way as a cash or food transfer and directly increases access to food, either by the provision of food (with the size of food wage typically being based on household food consumption) or in the case of a cash wage by enabling food purchase. However, in many countries the impacts of public works on food security are limited because of downward pressure on the size of the wage. Whilst this also is a concern for cash and food transfers, in public works programmes it tends to be exacerbated, sometimes resulting in little impact on poverty reduction or even having a detrimental impact on household nutrition because of the energy expended on the manual works requirement. Devereux and Solomon illustrate the problem drawing on experience from Burkina Faso: ‘The problem with using the wage rate as a self-targeting mechanism is that employment programmes are often introduced in situations of mass chronic poverty, where the only way to ration the number of jobs offered is to reduce the wage rate to unethically low levels. In Burkina Faso in the early 1990s public works wages were set as low as one-third of the national minimum wage, in order to minimise ‘leakages’ to the non-poor. Although this strategy was successful in terms of targeting the ‘poorest of the poor’, the income transferred was so low that there was no discernible impact on poverty reduction, and even the ‘safety net’ objective was compromised.’ (Devereux and Solomon, 2006: 6) cited in McCord, 2012.

Of particular importance is to consider the size of the transfer in the context of fluctuating food prices and food price spikes. The purchasing power of cash transfers in such contexts can diminish rapidly. This points to a number of policy implications to consider in the context of cash (or wage) transfers, including index-linking cash transfers and possible combinations of cash and food/vouchers.

Even where transfer size is large enough to make a positive impact at the household level on access and utilisation, if programmes only reach a small proportion of the population they are unlikely to generate a supply side response. Studies of South Africa’s pension scheme, which has broad coverage, show positive impacts on supply-side responses to the cash transfers, stabilising demand for food and reducing market risk for producers and traders. Similarly McCord notes that there is evidence that some PWP have positive labour market effects i.e. bringing new people into the labour force where they generate income (to buy food, improve diet, etc.) if these programmes are operated at scale.

3.2 Programme duration matters

Evidence from cash and public works transfer programmes also suggest that the duration of programme participation is an important factor contributing to positive impacts on food and nutrition security.

As Barrientos and Scott (2008) state, the time period during which households are supported needs to be long enough to influence the consumption-investment decision of households (Barrientos and Scott, 2008). This will vary across households of different type and composition (Ibid). Studies on the South African child support grant and Mexico’s PROGRESA programme both find greater impacts on stunting in households that had participated in the programme for longer periods of time (cited in Yablonski and O’Donnell, 2009). In South Africa, maximum gains in height-for-age in children were found in those whose families had received the child support grant for two-thirds of the period when children were aged 0–36 months (Ibid). Similar findings are found in public works programmes. McCord explains that the positive effects of PWPs on labour market effects are only possible when programmes are long-term (and operate at scale). However, because most PWPs offer only short-term episodes of employment, the effect appears to be negligible.

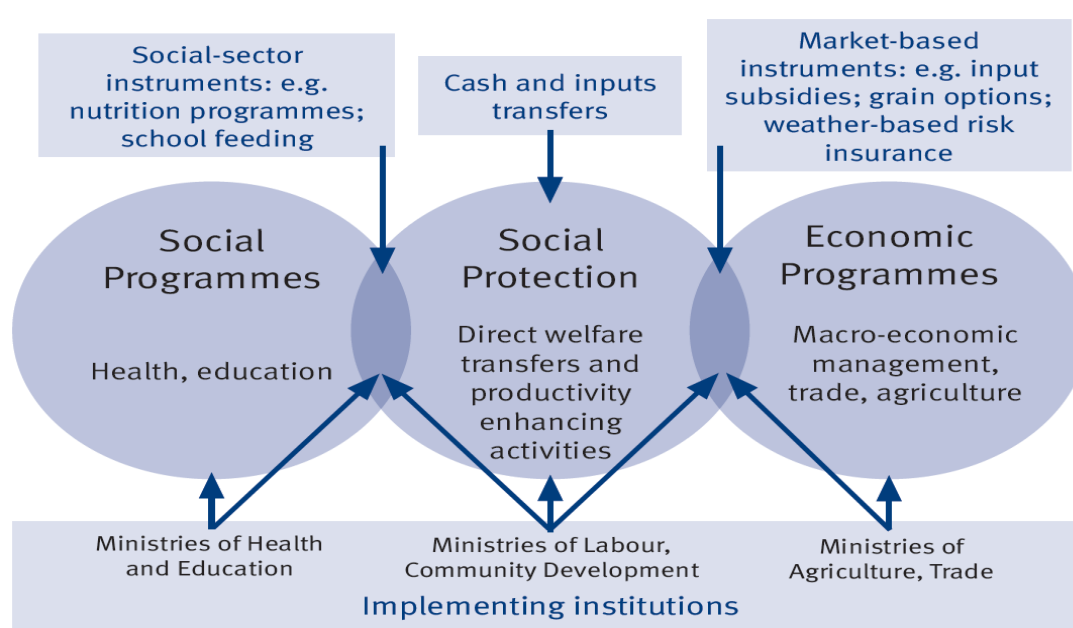
While this evidence generally holds true, there are exceptions to this. In the case of cash transfers, short-term cash transfers implemented in emergency contexts have also demonstrated positive impacts on food and nutrition security. Moreover, this is isn’t necessarily the case in the context of strategic reserves, where their use in emergencies has been largely positive but when used for long-term stabilisation, they have not performed so well.

3.3 Multiple programmes are necessary to have significant effects on food systems

Social protection programmes in isolation only have limited scope to respond to the broad range of shocks and stresses identified above and to transform food systems in their entirety. However, the evidence found in our analysis, especially that related to integrated livelihoods programmes, suggests that complementary instruments and effective sequencing of programmes can allow a broader range of outcomes to be achieved. Some of these investments go well beyond the instruments discussed here – for example, simultaneous investment in infrastructure is important to improve market integration, whilst investments in health are critical to improving nutrition.

Integrated programming brings its own risks and challenges. First there is a danger that when programmes have more than one, simple objective, they become unwieldy, inefficient and difficult to manage. Second, cost is a key constraint: the big integrated livelihoods programmes in South Asia spend significantly more per beneficiary than all cash transfer programmes in Africa. Third, achieving similar complementarities and sequencing by running instruments in parallel with one another is a challenge in many low income countries within limited institutional capacities and thinly spread resources. Coordinating effectively, especially where the programmes are implemented out of a broad range of government ministries or departments, can be difficult (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Layering of social protection programmes and coordination



3.4 Pay attention to context and the type of problem

Food systems are diverse and complex and poor households face numerous shocks and stresses that affect their capacity both to produce and to access food. This means that the specificity of problems in the food system is also highly diverse. In some countries the main problem may be one of production, in others of market integration and in other of unemployment (which means people don't have enough income to buy food). Solutions need to be appropriate to the specific circumstances and type of shock. Whilst cash transfers might work well to address access at the micro level, strategic reserves can address market price instability at the national / macro-level. Our analysis also shows that whether problems in a food system are chronic or transitory is important. The affordability of insurance mechanisms depends very much on whether risks are covariate or idiosyncratic and at what level the risk is held or pooled (see examples in Table 1).

So, a clear articulation of the problem is critical. For example, Timmer (2011) points out that when the problem is presented as a lack of food self-sufficiency, then strategic reserves make more sense, because it is easier to stabilize domestic food prices using domestic production - stimulated by high prices - than depend on the world market for rice, with its great price volatility. But this strategy forces poor consumers to pay high prices for rice and so is not helpful in tackling food access.

The big question though, raised in particular through the analysis of evidence on strategic reserves, is about whether shocks to food systems have, in recent years, become different in either form (qualitative) or magnitude (quantitative). In the strategic reserves paper it becomes clear that we do not yet know if the world has entered a fundamentally different risk environment or not. Wright (2012) says not: judged against the previous years, the grain price peaks of the last few years, adjusted for inflation, are not particularly high. However, the last two decades have seen profound structural shifts in trade patterns and a gradual reduction of stocks which, thus far have been absorbed without significant increases in price volatility (McCreary, 2011) but whether this is set to change is a moot point. Whatever the answer to the question, there are implications for many elements of programming – the use of reserves, the balance between regular cash transfer payments or other insurance instruments, and the use of ex-ante or ex-post risk management strategies.

Table 1: Types of shocks and stresses at various scales

	Micro(idiosyncratic)	Meso	Macro(co-variant)
Natural		Rainfall Landslide Volcanic eruption	Earthquake Floods Drought Strong winds
Health	Illness Injury Disability	Epidemic	
Life-cycle	Birth, weddings, Old age Death		
Social	Crime Domestic violence	Terrorism Gangs	Civil strife War
Economic	Unemployment Harvest failure Ethnic discrimination		Output collapse
	Business failure	Riots	Financial collapse Technology or terms of trade shocks
	Resettlement		
Political			Potential default on social programme
Environmental		Pollution Deforestation Nuclear disaster	

3.5 Is it what you do, or how you do it?

There are certainly important differences that are found in the impacts on food systems of different instruments. For example, in the case of cash versus food transfers, an analysis of a pilot in Sri Lanka found that households receiving cash were more likely than those receiving food to spend resources on improving the diversity of their diets (Mohiddin et al 2007). Studies in Bangladesh found that the marginal propensity to consume food out of food transfers was higher

than out of cash (Ahmed and Shams, 1994; del Ninno and Dorosh, 2003; Ahmed et al, 2010) probably because food is less fungible than cash. In Niger, the majority of households preferred to receive food rather than cash and those receiving food had more diverse diets and less damaging coping strategies (IFAD et al., 2012). An assessment of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) during a period of high food prices, found that 'cash plus food' packages were superior to un-indexed cash transfers. And there are important implications of these findings – for example, that commodity-based vouchers may be more effective than cash transfers during price spikes.

However, the range of evidence available is not especially good at telling us whether it is the innate features of individual instruments that result in different effects, or, conversely, whether the processes of programme implementation have a strong impact. For example, evaluations of structured demand such as Home Grown School Feeding have not yet explored whether school feeding delivered through structured demand mechanism has different outcomes to school feeding delivered using internationally procured food aid. In the case of cash and food transfers, many of the weaknesses found in the delivery of cash in Ethiopia's PSNP programme resulted from a lack of experience delivering cash (for example initially not having enough cashiers at district level and having problems getting cash in appropriate denominations) rather than problems with cash transfers per se (Slater and McCord – forthcoming). In a similar vein, Rachel Sabates-Wheeler has challenged whether cash transfer programme impacts stem from the simple fact that cash was delivered, or from delivery features such as the inclusion of grievance and accountability procedures.

Overall, this suggests that in choosing between different instruments we need to pay more attention to implementation processes, systems and capacities as they may be as influential on outcomes as the basic instrument design itself.

3.6 Politics matters

Our analysis also demonstrates that technical and economic efficiency are not always (indeed not often) the prime drivers of programme choice. In terms of economic efficiency the answer for tackling food insecurity is clear: it is far more cost efficient to use targeted transfers as opposed to general market subsidies. Wodon et al. (2008) note that the targeting efficiency of social protection policies in sub-Saharan Africa is much better than that of other economy-wide policies (whether they be strategic reserves, tax cuts, tariff reductions, or subsidies).

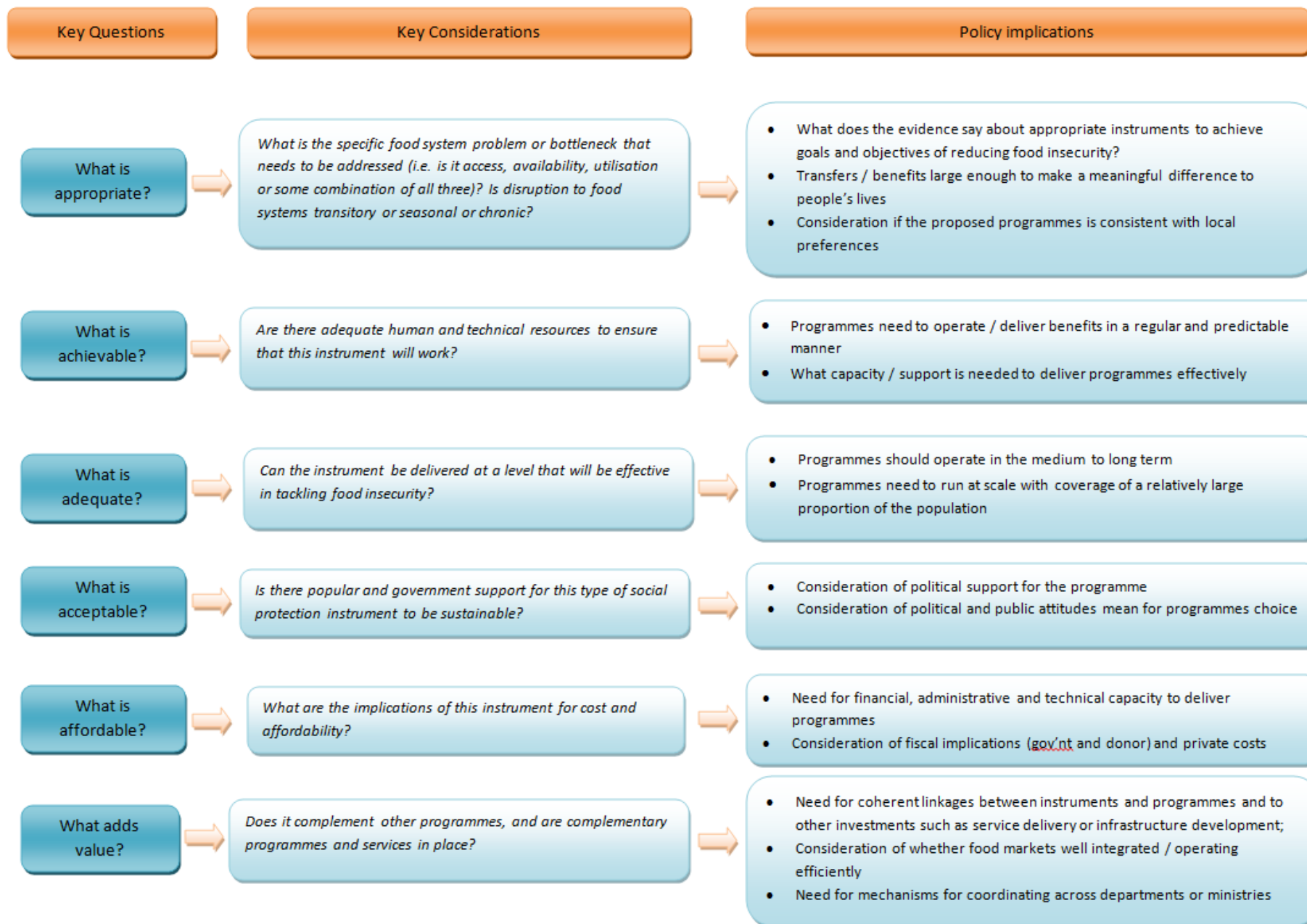
In practice though, politics permeates these decisions: Cash and food transfers include public works requirements because there is a fear of giving 'handouts' or of getting trapped in providing relief in the long term. Cash transfers in Latin America include conditions such as enrolling children in school or attending post-natal clinics in order to maintain their political acceptability with the general public. Politicians focus on food self-sufficiency at the national level rather than providing transfers to poor households because self-sufficiency is seen as an important symbol of national sovereignty.

Ideology underpins many of these drivers. For example, McCord (2012: 2) notes that 'critics [of social protection] from the right of the political spectrum have argued that consumption-oriented welfare provision should be replaced with provision that address both consumption and productivity, harnessing welfare provision to the promotion of livelihoods and employment'. Social protection becomes linked to broader objectives and aspirations – whether they be local and national economic development, the desire to promote political stability, or attempts to tackle demand-side barriers to the uptake of health and education services.

So, in choosing between different programming options, policy-makers and advisors need to be aware of the different political incentives that drive how different food security programming options are viewed, recognise that there are ideologies (for example development through market-led growth or through redistribution of wealth) underpinning all instruments.

4 Conclusion – what do we know about what matters for supporting resilient food systems?

This synthesis highlights a range of features of programming to tackle food security and support resilient food systems in effective and cost-efficient ways. Identifying these features can support advisors in donor agencies and governments in making appropriate choices for successful social protection (and other market-based instruments). However, selecting the ‘best’ programme or instrument to tackle food insecurity is challenging and requires consideration of a combination of technical, economic, contextual, capacity and political factors. A framework for thinking through the policy considerations is presented below, drawing on the “6 As” key questions (Slater, forthcoming):



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