

New York University / Steinhardt
Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health

FOOD-GE 2015.001 FOOD POLICY: FALL 2012

Instructor: Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health

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Teaching Assistant: Diana Caley

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Details: 30 hours: 3 points. Meets Mondays 4:55 to 6:35 p.m. in Silver 509

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is based on the premise that a rational and desirable goal for any society is to develop and maintain a food system that promotes health, protects the environment, is sustainable, and supports the livelihoods of its participants.

The course deals with how governments—particularly that of the United States—design and implement policies and programs to foster social goals such as ensuring a sufficient, safe, affordable, and sustainable food supply. It examines why and how governments do or do not decide to set policies; reviews how stakeholders in the food system become involved in and influence policy development; identifies the social, cultural, economic, and political factors that influence stakeholder and government positions on policy issues; and describes the ways in which these factors promote or act as barriers to policies aimed at promoting the health of people and the planet.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to question assumptions and premises and to consider whether food choices should be matters of policy or should be left up to individuals. Should governments have a role in food policy? If so, what should that role be?

The course emphasizes analysis of the:

- *Research* and other evidence used as a basis for food policy development.
- *Context* (nutritional, political, economic, cultural, etc.) in which food policies are developed.
- *Processes* through which stakeholders influence policy decisions.
- *Methods* through which government agencies translate policies into regulations and programs.
- *Consequences* (intended and unintended, positive and negative, measurable and not) of policies promoting healthful and sustainable food.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Define what is meant by policy, and explain how policies differ from programs.
2. Describe the principal areas of domestic and international nutrition, food, and agriculture policy and the most important current issues related to those policy areas.
3. Identify the government agencies primarily responsible for each area of food and nutrition policy, explain their roles, and describe their principal policy goals and method for achieving them.
4. Explain what is meant by "food system," the issues raised by this term, and the principal stakeholder groups and positions on food system issues.
5. Identify the ways in which social, cultural, economic, commercial, and institutional factors promote or act as barriers to the design and implementation of agriculture, food, and nutrition policies and programs, and the ways in which these policies and programs affect health.
6. Identify the principal health-related problems linked to food and nutrition. Explain how these problems, in both U.S. and international populations, may (or may not) be linked to domestic and international food policy.
7. Identify and apply the methods by which stakeholder groups affect the design and implementation of agriculture, food, and nutrition policies.
8. Describe arguments that support and counter the position that government should not be involved in the food choices of individuals.

COURSE READINGS

Required textbooks: available at the NYU Bookstore, online, and in the library on reserve.

- Nestle M. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, 2007.
- Nestle M. *Safe Food: The Politics of Food Safety*, 2010.
- Imhoff D. *Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill*, 2012.
- Poppendieck J. *Free for All: Fixing School Food in America*, 2010.
- Simon M. *Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines our Health and How to Fight Back*, 2006.

Recommended texts for students interested in international food policy (these readings are optional unless otherwise indicated)

- Pinstrup-Anderson P, Watson DD. *Food Policy for Developing Countries: The Role of Government in Global, National, and Local Food Systems*, 2011
- Fan S, Pandya-Lorch R, eds. [*Reshaping Agriculture for Nutrition and Health*](#). International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Additional course readings

Readings are listed in the course outline by category.

- *Required readings*—books, articles, and reports—are indicated by this symbol: ►
- *Background information* and relevant websites are listed under *Browse*.
- *Optional readings* are listed under *International perspectives*
- *Add-ons*: If especially relevant documents are released during the semester, these may be added as announced by e-mail and in class (but will be kept to a minimum).

Current events

You are expected to read (in print or online) a national daily newspaper influential in policy matters—the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, or *Washington Post*, and relevant blogs and online sources—as a basis for discussion and analysis of food and nutrition policy events as they occur.

EXPECTATIONS

- Inform instructor *in advance* by e-mail if you are not going to be in class.
- Class begins on time: arrive on time.
- Inform instructor *in advance* if you need to leave early.
- Complete assigned work on time; there will be penalties for late work.
- Plan ahead: no incomplete grades are given (except in dire, documented emergencies).
- Your voice matters: Participate! Take responsibility for your own learning. If you don't understand something, ask!
- If something isn't working, complain! (Politely, of course).

FOOD POLICY CLASS SCHEDULE, FALL 2012

DATE	FOOD POLICY TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS Readings should be <i>completed</i> and ready to discuss by the indicated class date. Note: links are live.
Sept 10	Introducing food and nutrition policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans ▶ Food Politics: Appendix. Issues in food and nutrition research, pp. 395-405. ▶ Pinstrup-Anderson, Ch. 1, 2 (on Blackboard) <p><i>Optional</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fan S, Pandya-Lorch R, eds, Intro
Sept 17	Setting and evaluating domestic policy goals: preventing obesity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Healthy People 2010 home page: About Healthy People ▶ White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity. Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity within a Generation, May 2010. <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rest of the Healthy People site. • CDC site on adult obesity • CDC site on childhood obesity • Let's Move site
Sept 24	Educating the American public: Dietary guidelines and food guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Food Politics: Prefaces; Introduction; Part 1; Afterword pages 376-380. ▶ The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans ▶ Selected messages for consumers <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of Dietary Guidelines • The 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee report (especially Part D, Section 1) • MyPlate resources
Oct 1	Influencing U.S. policy: stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Food Politics: Part 2; Part 3; Afterword, pages 380-393. <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Responsive Politics: Open Secrets: Influence and Lobbying

Oct 8	<p>Regulating the domestic food industry: sodas</p> <p>Case study: New York City's soda cap initiative</p> <p>Case study: Richmond California's soda tax initiative</p>	<p>► Food Politics Part 4; Part 5; Conclusion</p> <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor's press release. • The Task Force Report (PDF). • The proposed rule (PDF). • Maximum Size for Sugary Drink - Board of Health Presentation June 12, 2012 (PDF). • Maximum Size for Sugary Drink - Briefing Document (PDF). <p><i>International perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLoS Medicine series on Big Food <p>Note: last chance for first short paper is via e-mail to dlc360 by noon on Sunday, October 14.</p>
Oct 15	Fall recess	
Oct 22	<p>Regulating the U.S. food industry: food labels, health claims, marketing to children</p>	<p>► FTC, CDC, FDA, USDA. Interagency Working Group report on food marketed to children, April 2011.</p> <p>► Brownell KD, Warner KE. The perils of ignoring history: big tobacco Played Dirty and Millions Died. How Similar Is Big Food? Milbank Quarterly 2009;87:259-294.</p> <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDA Food labeling and nutrition • FDA front-of-package initiative • FDA menu and vending machines label rules • FDA point-of-purchase background information • USDA label policies <p><i>International perspective</i></p> <p>► Pinstrip-Anderson & Watson, Ch. 11</p>
Oct 29	<p>Guest Lecture: Dr. Maya Joseph</p> <p>Regulating new food technologies</p>	<p>► Safe Food: Prefaces; Introduction; Part II (chapters 5-8); Epilogue 277-281; Appendix on the science of plant biotechnology.</p>

Nov 5	<p>Regulating U.S. food safety</p> <p>Case study: the latest recall</p>	<p>► Safe Food: Part I (chapters 1-4); Conclusion; Epilogue 281-297.</p> <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDA website on food safety • FDA Food Safety Modernization Act • FDA recall announcements • USDA recall announcements • CDC outbreak surveillance • Bill Marler's blog http://www.marlerblog.com/ <p><i>International perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinstруп-Anderson & Watson, Ch. 3 part on food safety
Nov 12	<p>Preventing global hunger and obesity</p> <p>Case study: the nutrition transition (ABC-TV Foreign Correspondent, Globesity, July 2012)</p>	<p>► ACF International. Taking Action: Nutrition for Survival, Growth & Development, White Paper, May 2010.</p> <p>► Swinburn BA, et al. The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments. The Lancet 2011;378:804-814. FREE but registration required.</p> <p>► Gortmaker SL, et al. Changing the future of obesity: science, policy, and action. The Lancet 2011;38:838-847. FREE but registration required.</p> <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO hunger home page • World Food Programme • WHO: Controlling the global obesity epidemic. <p><i>International perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinstруп-Anderson & Watson, Ch. 3 & 4 • Fan S, Pandya-Lorch R, eds, Ch. 22
Nov 19	<p>Preventing hunger and malnutrition: domestic</p>	<p>► Center for Study of the Presidency and Congress. SNAP to Health: A Fresh Approach to Strengthening the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, July 2012.</p> <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA food assistance

Nov 26	<p>Linking agricultural policy to health policy</p> <p>Case study: the farm bill</p>	<p>► Imhoff D. <i>Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill</i>, 2012.</p> <p><i>For background and context, browse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current status of the farm bill • USDA agricultural support policies home page • Environmental Working Group database on farm subsidies • Previous farm bills <p><i>International perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinstrup-Anderson & Watson, Ch 7 • Fan S, Pandya-Lorch R, eds; (browse chapters most interesting to you, especially Ch 17, 18, 21) • Hawkes C, et al. Linking agricultural policies with obesity and noncommunicable diseases: A new perspective for a globalising world. <i>Food Policy</i> 2012; 3:343-353 (on Blackboard) <p>Note: Last chance for second short paper is due next class, December 3.</p>
Dec 3	<p>Advocating for policy change: school food</p> <p>Guest lecture: Jan Poppendieck and Kate Adamick, school food consultant and author of <i>Lunch Money: Serving Health School Food in a Sick Economy</i> (2012)</p>	<p>► Poppendieck J. <i>Free for All: Fixing School Food in America</i>, 2010.</p>
Dec 10	<p>Advocating for policy change</p>	<p>► Simon M. <i>Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines our Health and How to Fight Back</i>, 2006.</p> <p>► Cohen D, Rabinovich L. Addressing the proximal causes of obesity: the relevance of alcohol control policies. CDC Preventing Chronic Disease at</p> <p><i>International perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fan S, Pandya-Lorch R, eds, Ch. 23
Dec 12	<p>Making policy work: class discussion TBA</p>	
Dec 17 5:00 p.m.		<p>DUE: Portfolio</p>

EVALUATION

NOTE: Written work: Put your name and e-mail address on all work submitted.

All work must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of paper leaving one-inch margins, clearly marked with your name and e-mail address, titled with the issue you are discussing, and presented in a readable font (if you are using anything smaller than 12-point, you must clear it with the instructor). Do not exceed space or word limits. Write clearly. Use grammar and spell checks. Do *not* use right justification.

1. Attendance and participation (15%)

This includes three elements: (a) your presence in class, (b) your contribution to class discussion, and (c) your completion of weekly questions based on the reading.

The weekly questions: You will post at least two questions related to the readings on the class Blackboard page. You are encouraged to read your classmates' postings, and either post follow-up or related questions, or come up with new questions. Questions should address matters covered in the reading that you think need clarification, explanation, alternative hypotheses, or further discussion. These will help guide in-class discussions each week.

- **DUE:** no later than 12pm each Monday (anything later will not be credited).

2. Short policy issue papers (25% each)

Choose two class sessions that are most relevant to your professional or research interests and write a short policy analysis of related issues raised by the reading, class questions or discussion. The paper should do a quick "P's" analysis, stating the problem, the policy, the program, the people (stakeholders), and the politics. Does the policy have a reasonable chance of fixing the problem? What other alternatives might work better? Feel free to draw on the readings, include appropriate references and other material to support your argument, but you should also provide your own arguments, insights, and opinion. Use your judgment to decide whether to focus on a specific aspect of an issue or to take a 'big picture' approach. The goal of these papers is to develop skills in policy analysis as well as to articulate coherent answers to questions posed by the course objectives.

Limits: 5 page maximum, but you can use up to two more pages for references, tables, figures, or other supporting material.

- **DUE:** Each paper is due the Monday *following* the class you choose. Give one hard copy to Diana Caley at the start of class.
- **ADVICE:** Be sure to plan ahead and get these done earlier rather than later when things get busier.
- **NOTE:** last chance for #1 is due October 15; last chance for #2 is December 3.

3. Policy advocacy portfolio (35%)

Your task during the semester will be to create a thoughtfully constructed portfolio of items designed to support your position on a policy issue in agriculture, food, or nutrition related to health or the environment. You may pick any issue related to food that you think needs a policy change, as approved by instructors. You will prepare a portfolio of items aimed at achieving the policy and designed to convince others to support the position you are taking. The policy should be one that can be implemented by city, state, federal, or international governments or agencies.

- **LENGTH:** no more than 10 pages of text, although references and additional supporting materials can be attached in additional pages.
- **TURN IN:** Two *hard* copies to receptionist at 411 Lafayette (to be put in Dr. Nestle's mailbox).
- **DUE:** Monday, December 17, 5:00 p.m.

Your portfolio should contain all of the following pieces:

▶ **Cover page** with your name and e-mail address, a title stating your policy and what it is meant to do ("A soda tax policy to reduce obesity") and a very short **summary** of the problem, why a new policy is needed to address it or an existing policy needs to be changed, and what you are proposing.

▶ **A background "white" paper** on the issue prepared as if for a member of the government agency or legislative body most able to do something about your issue. This should be no more than 5 pages of text. It should explain the problem, the "P" issues, and what policy you are proposing and why. Construct this as a research-based paper designed to support an argument, counter objections, and convince skeptics.

▶ **A plea for support. Pick one.**

- A **letter to the editor** of [the New York Times](#) or other influential newspaper or magazine. The length and format must meet word limitations and editorial requirements of that publication, **or**.
- An **op-ed piece** prepared for [the New York Times](#) or other influential newspaper, **or**
- A **letter requesting support** from an appropriate advocacy or professional group. This should be directed to an appropriate person in the group and can be formatted for electronic submission or snail mail. It should be no longer than 1.5 pages (with attachments if needed).

▶ **Social media: pick one**

- A **comment to an Internet debate on the topic.** Find a website devoted to your topic. Join the debate. Insert links to supporting documents, if appropriate, **or**
- A **tweet** designed to elicit action on your issue. This must be no longer than 120 characters, including spaces and a TinyURL link, to leave room for retweeting.

▶ **Annotated reference list** of key print and web sources related to your issue reflecting conflicting viewpoints. Your list should include at least ten useful references to books,

articles, and websites that you relied on as basic resources or compelling sources of information about various stakeholder positions. For websites, your short annotation (a sentence or two) should say who runs the site, what position it represents, and, if relevant, who funds it.

It should be obvious from this list of required items that their content will—and should—overlap considerably. Your background paper is your primary resource. You should draw on it and tailor information from it for the other purposes indicated.

NOTE: If you wish to submit any of your work for publication or placement on social media sites during the course, you may certainly do so (put copies as attachments to your portfolio). For print publications, standard practice is to submit pieces to only one place at a time.

GRADING: Grading will be based on depth of knowledge and research, cogency of argument, adherence to format, quality of the policy plan, consistency with reality, quality of the writing, and other such matters.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

Blogs focusing on nutrition and food policy

- Marion Nestle's blog: <http://www.foodpolitics.co>
- Michele Simon's blog: <http://www.appetiteforprofit.com>
- ParkeWilde's blog: <http://usfoodpolicy.blogspot.com>

Websites advocating for nutrition and food policies

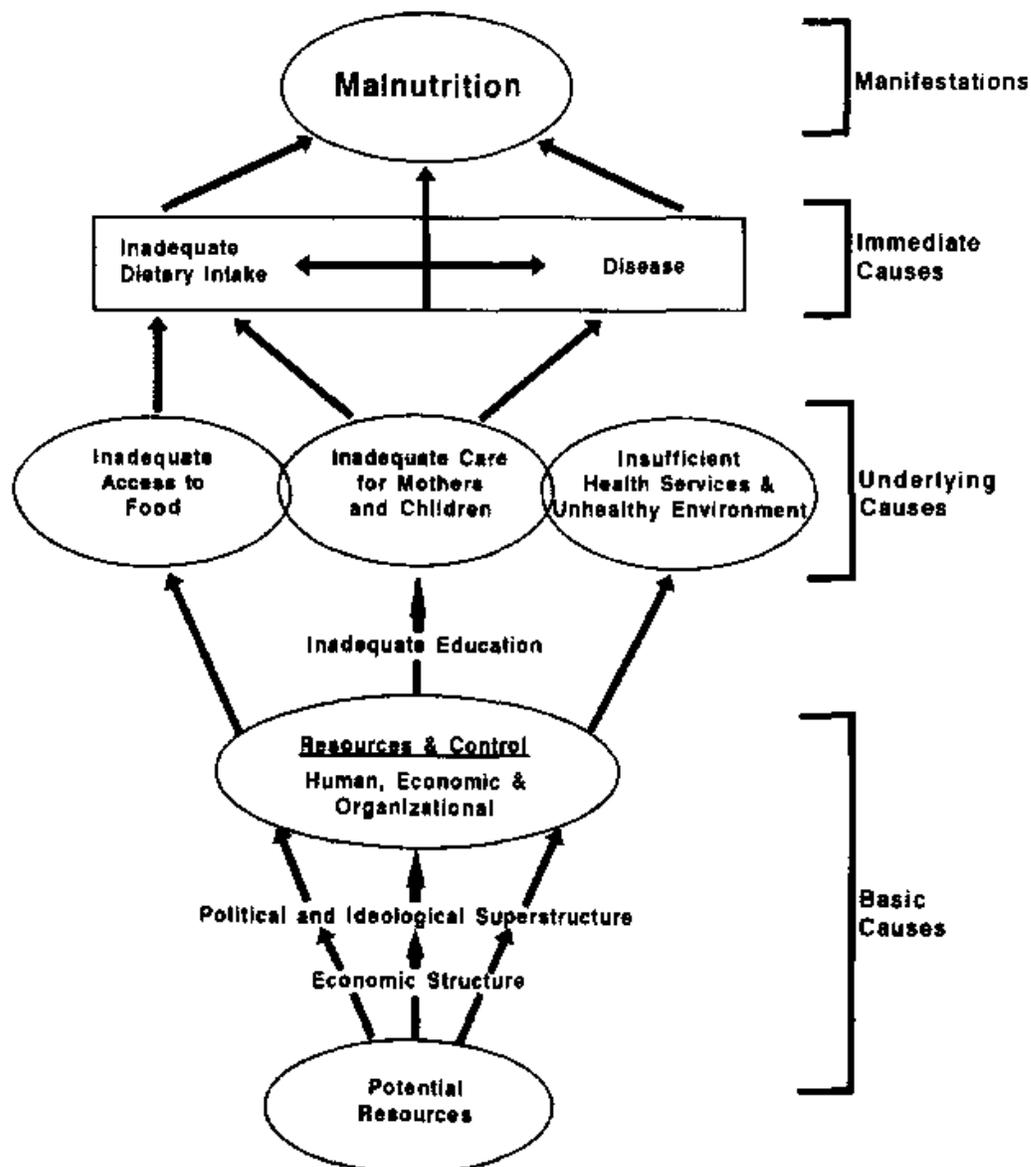
- Agriculture and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M: <http://www.afpc.tamu.edu/>
- California Food Policy Advocates: <http://www.cfpa.net>
- Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI):
<http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy>
- Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale: <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org>
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis: <http://www.iatp.org/>

U.S. government food and nutrition policy websites

- Nutrition.gov
http://www.nutrition.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=11&tax_level=1
- Food and Nutrition Information Center, National Agricultural Library
http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=4
- USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/>
- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, DHHS
<http://odphp.osophs.dhhs.gov/>
- USDA Policy Topics:
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Browse/view.aspx?subject=PolicyTopics>
- FDA food regulation: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/default.htm>
- FTC regulatory policies: <http://www.ftc.gov/>
- Federal Register: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/>
- Congress: <http://www.govtrack.us/>

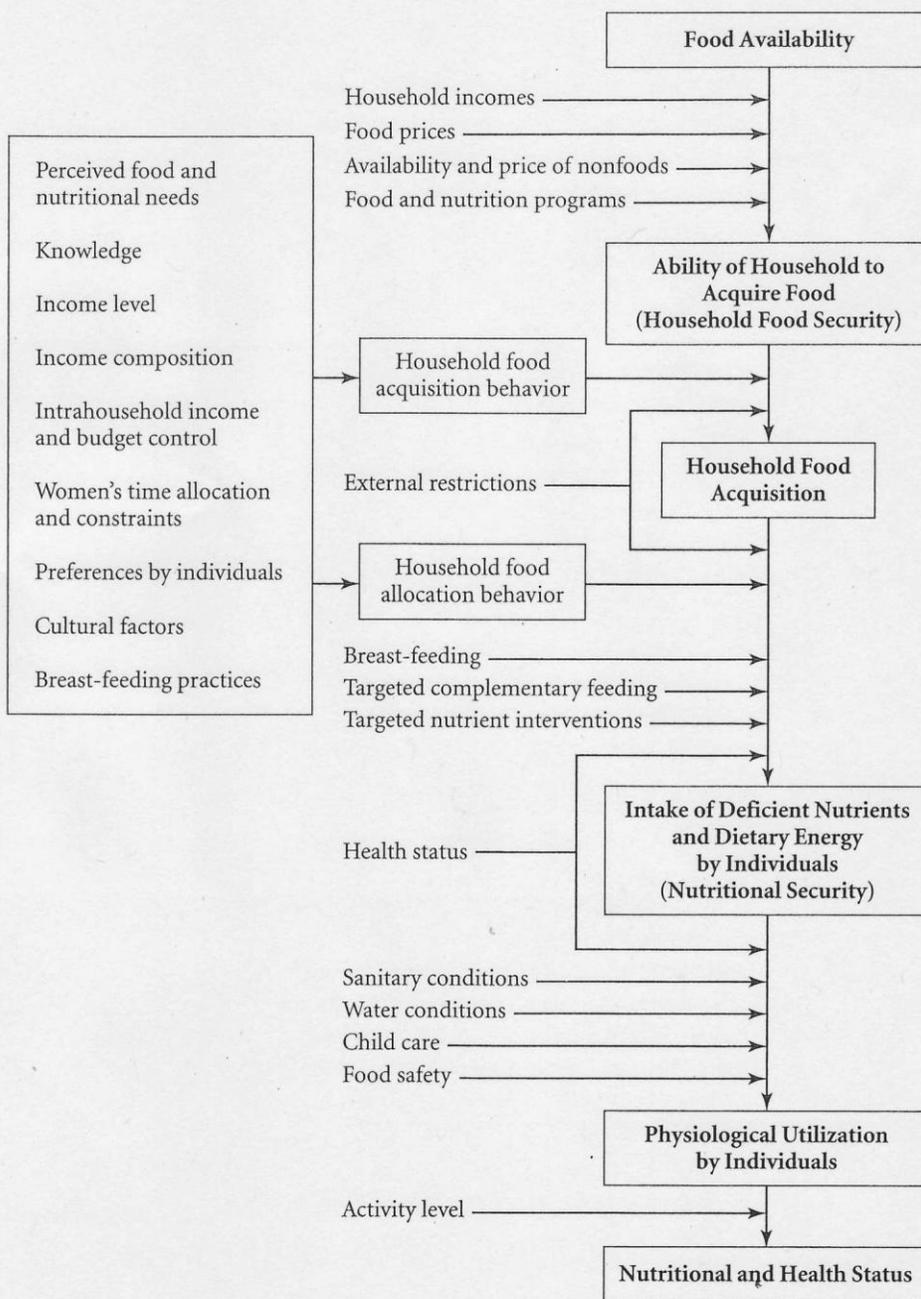
International food policy organizations

- [Food and Agriculture Organization \(U.N.\)](#)
- [World Health Organization \(U.N.\)](#)
- [International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#)



UNICEF Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Causes of Malnutrition.
 From: UNICEF. *Strategy for improved Nutrition of Children and Women in developing countries*. New York, 1990.

FIGURE 3.6.
A simplified conceptual framework linking food availability, food security, and nutrition. Source: Modified from Pinstrup-Andersen and Herforth 2008.



From: Per Pinstrup-Andersen and Derrill D. Watson II. *Food Policy for Developing Countries*. Cornell University Press, 2011.