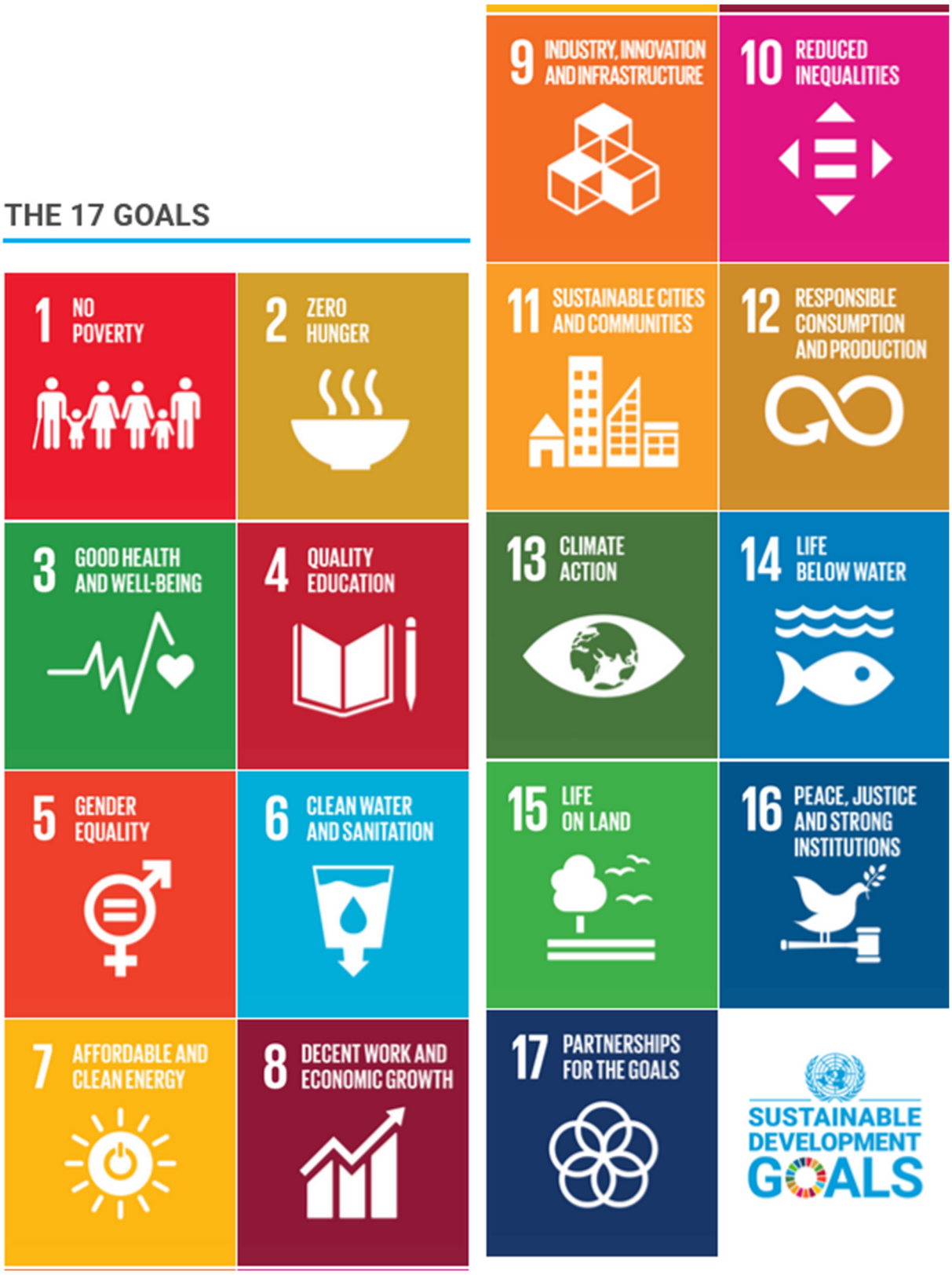
https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fast-facts-what-are-sustainable-food-systems/



Fast Facts – What are sustainable food systems?

A sustainable food system is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all. The system encompasses everything from the processing, packaging and the transporting of food to consumers. Currently, these systems are not efficient or sustainable, and in 2022, about 9.2 per cent of the world population was facing chronic hunger, equivalent to about 735 million people – 122 million more than in 2019. In addition, these unsustainable practices are one of the main contributors to the climate crisis – they account for a third of greenhouse gas emissions and 70 per cent of the usage of the world's freshwater.

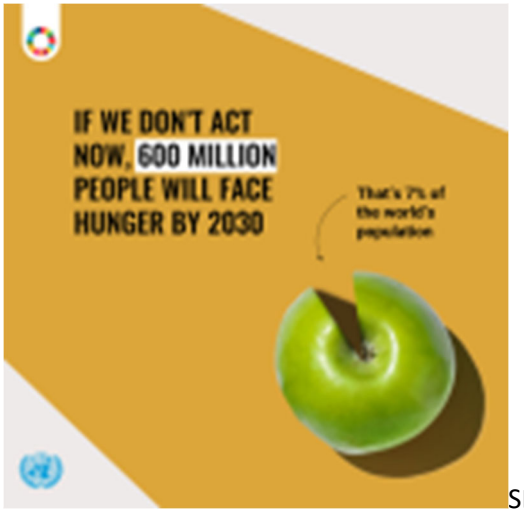
There are three key indicators of whether a food system is sustainable or not:

- Economic sustainability – it is profitable throughout
- Social sustainability – it has broad-based benefits for society
- Environmental sustainability – it has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment

"Broken food systems are not inevitable. They are the result of choices we have made. There is more than enough food in the world to go around. More than enough money to fund efficient and sustainable food systems to feed the world, while supporting decent work for those who grow the food we eat." Secretary General, Antonio Guterres in his remarks to the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment.

But mounting pressures from population growth, urbanization, changing consumption patterns, and climate change are all contributing factors to the strain on food systems, meaning that an overhaul in our current practices is needed for our food systems to become sustainable.

A stressed global food system



SDG 2, 'Zero Hunger' aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The UN estimates that 780 million people have experienced hunger and impacts one in ten globally. The world is not on track to achieve this goal and 660 million people may still face hunger by 2030.

Today, the world is facing a food emergency. Together, conflict, economic shocks, climate extremes and soaring fertilizer prices have created a food crisis of unprecedented proportions. Food inflation is impacting everyone around the world, and it is an opposing force to the economic gains made after Covid, which had led to improved access to food.

According to the 2023 SDG Progress Report, Western Asia, the Caribbean and all sub-regions of Africa are experiencing an increase in hunger, however, most sub-regions in Asia and Latin America have experienced improvements in food security.

The recently concluded Black Sea Initiative has also exacerbated the situation. This agreement allowed the transportation of commercial food and fertiliser from three main ports in Ukraine. Developing countries – which already had issues with food supply, are hit particularly hard by the situation.

Alongside being a source of nutrition, food systems are a source of employment across the world such as in agriculture, forestry and fishing. The majority of rural poor – nearly two thirds – work in small-scale agriculture, where poverty rates are more than four times higher than among non-agricultural workers.

The triple threat of overconsumption, unsustainable practices and malnutrition

Overconsumption is a key issue in food shortages, and wealthier countries are the biggest contributors to the problem. According to UNICEF, if everybody in the world consumed resources at the rate people in the United States, Canada or Luxembourg do, we would require the equivalent of more than five earths to satisfy their needs.

Food shortages also affect our health – malnutrition impacts children from low and lower-middle-income countries the most. Not getting the right nutrients can lead to stunting (growing less than average for their age), micronutrient deficiencies and being overweight which can place children at risk with poor growth and development.

Water, Food and Energy

Water, food and energy form a nexus at the heart of sustainable development. With a growing population, there is a growing demand for all three. Agriculture is the largest consumer of the world's freshwater resources, and more than one-quarter of the energy used globally is expended on food production and supply.

What can we do about the global food crisis?

As outlined in the 2023 SDG Progress Report, we need urgent coordinated action, and policy solutions are imperative to address entrenched inequalities, transform food systems, invest in sustainable agricultural practices, and reduce and mitigate the impact of conflict and the pandemic on global nutrition and food security.

In July 2023, the UN Food Systems Summit + 2 Stocktaking Moment took place, with the purpose of reviewing progress made from the 2021 Food Systems Summit. The UN Secretary-General, António Gueterres noted in his keynote speech: "Over 100 countries have submitted voluntary progress reports on food systems transformation. Countries are taking decisive steps to reflect this priority in national and sub-national laws, policies and programming,".

The Secretary General's report on UN Food Systems explains that in order to bring the Sustainable Development Goals back from the brink, our Food Systems' transformation play a vital role and their objectives must be integrated into global and national policy discussions, commitments and targets.

Learn more about actions you can take to contribute to a more sustainable world: https://un.org/actnow.