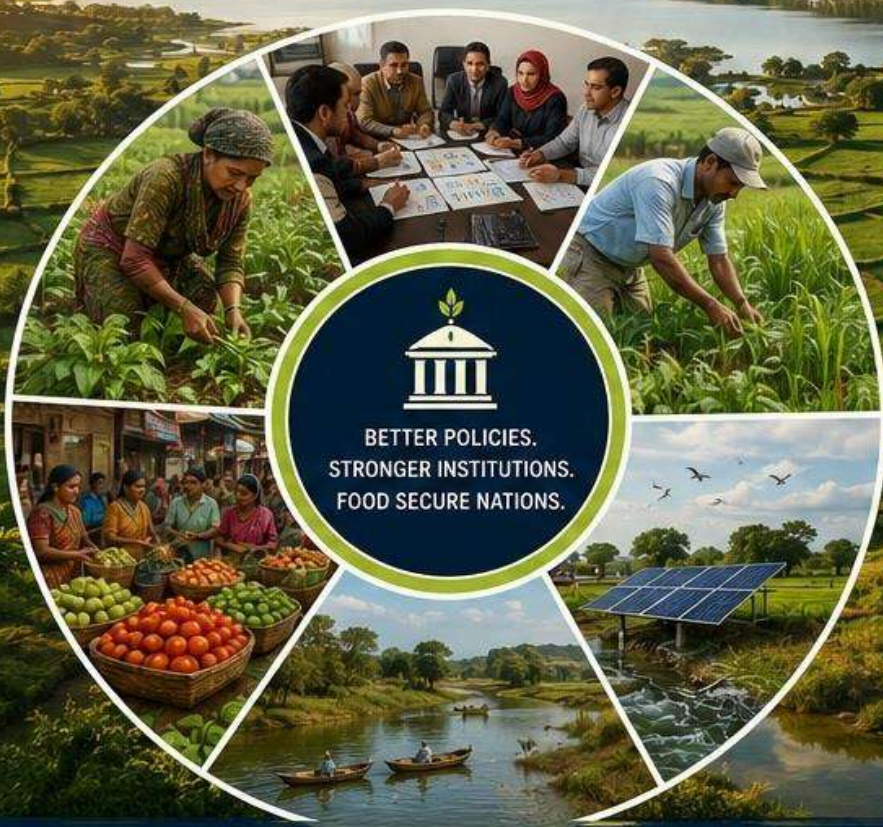


RETHINKING FOOD SECURITY POLICY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Governance • Equity • Resilience • Sustainability



Edited by

Muhammad Khalid Bashir

Muhammad Umar Farrukh

RETHINKING FOOD SECURITY POLICIY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Muhammad Khalid Bashir^{1,2,*}
Muhammad Umar Farrukh³

¹Institute of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

²Policy, Advocacy, and Outreach, Pak-Korea Nutrition Center, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

³Department of Economics, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Pakistan

**Corresponding author's email: khalid450@uaf.edu.pk*

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Muhammad Khalid Bashir



Dr. Muhammad Khalid Bashir is a distinguished academic, researcher, and policy expert specializing in agricultural economics, food security, climate change, and rural development. With more than two decades of experience in teaching, research, and policy engagement, he has made significant contributions to advancing evidence-based solutions for sustainable agriculture and food systems in Pakistan and beyond. His research has informed food security policies, nutrition initiatives, and rural development strategies. His scholarly excellence has been recognized through the HEC Best Research Paper Award, HEC Best Young Researcher Award, the Pakistan Council for Science and Technology (PCST) Productivity Award, and the Express Media Group Teaching Award. He has also been recognized among the Top 1% of Reviewers worldwide by Clarivate, reflecting his international academic standing and commitment to research excellence.

Muhammad Umar Farrukh



Dr. Muhammad Umar Farrukh is an economist, academic, and researcher specializing in food security, agricultural economics, development economics, public policy, and sustainable economic growth. As an Assistant Professor of Economics, he is actively engaged in teaching, research, and policy-oriented initiatives addressing contemporary development challenges. His research explores the relationships among food systems, governance, rural transformation, and economic resilience, with particular emphasis on developing countries. He has contributed to evidence-based policymaking by examining strategies that strengthen food security, promote agricultural sustainability, enhance institutional effectiveness, and support inclusive development. His work advocates innovative approaches integrating governance, technological advancement, and human capital development to build resilient food systems and foster sustainable economic prosperity. Dr. Farrukh remains committed to producing impactful research that informs policy and improves livelihoods.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Abdullah Hammad	Maryam Nawaz	Rehana Ali Naqvi
Adan Noor	Masood Ahmad Khan	Roma Saleem
Afsheen Aqeel	Motiba Ghafoor	Saba Javed
Ahmad Abdul Wahab	Muhammad Adeel Sattar	Saba Shamim
Ahmad Saleem	Muhammad Amjad Iqbal	Sabir Hussain
Ahras Rasheed	Muhammad Asad ur	Saher Jabeen
Amar Razaq	Rehman Naseer	Sajjad Hyder
Amina Yaqoob	Muhammad Dildar Gogi	Sania Shaheen
Ashir Kamal	Muhammad Farooq Khalid	Sarah Aleem
Ayesha Noreen	Muhammad Hafeez	Sharoon Aftab
Ayesha Rouf	Muhammad Hamid Bashir	Shoaib Akhtar
Ayesha Wasti	Muhammad Haroon U	Shoaib Sarwar
Ayisha Aman Ullah	Rashid	Sidra Riaz
Burhan Ahmad	Muhammad Imran	Siti Aida Adha Taridala
Faisal Munir	Muhammad Imran Khan	Syed Muhammad Subtain
Farwa Tariq	Muhammad Khalid Bashir	Abbas
Fasiha Batool	Muhammad Shoaib Naseer	Tahira Sadaf
Hadia Islam	Muhammad Talha Arshad	Tamrin
Hafiza Javeria Shehzadi	Muhammad Umair Sial	Tayyab Ali
Hasan Zulfiqar	Muhammad Umair Zulfiqar	Umair Rafiq
Iqra Alam	Muhammad Umer Farrukh	Umamah Ahmed
Irfan Ahmad	Mustafa Kan	Umar Aftab Abbasi
Irfan Hussain Khan	Naeem Saddique	Umar Farooq
Kadir Akan	Nazia Tabasam	Usman Rianse
Kashif Hamid Boparai	Neelam Rana	Wa Kuasa Baka
Kinza Khaliq	Omar Abdullah Alkhateeb	Yusuf Sabilu
Kiran Aslam	Qaiser Ali	Zaki Rauf
La Ode M. Aslan	Qasir Abbas	Zainab Razaq
Maliha Sarfraz	Ramsha Akram	Zamah Bukhari
Mannan Aleem	Ratna Diyah Palupi	

PREFACE

This book began with a discomfort that neither of us could fully shake. Between us, we have spent the better part of two decades working on agricultural and resource economics in Pakistan and the wider South Asian region, teaching, advising, reviewing policy documents, and watching successive food security programs arrive with great fanfare and depart with little to show for themselves. The puzzle was never a shortage of effort. Governments invested. Donors funded. Researchers published. And yet hunger persisted, year after year, in the same districts, among the same categories of people, often despite measurable increases in national food production. At some point the explanation that production had simply not caught up with population stopped being credible. Something else was going on.

That something else, we came to believe, was governance: the institutions, incentives, and political arrangements that determine whether a subsidy reaches a smallholder or is captured along the way, whether a devolved mandate comes with the finance needed to discharge it, whether a price shock is cushioned by a functioning safety net or simply passed on to households already living close to the edge. This is not a novel insight in the abstract; development economists have argued versions of it for institutions and growth more generally. But it had not, in our reading of the food security literature, been pursued with sufficient depth or breadth specifically for food systems in developing economies, and it had certainly not been pursued in a way that took marine food systems, political economy dynamics, and decentralization equally seriously alongside the more familiar territory of agronomy and nutrition.

We therefore set out to assemble a volume that would put governance at the center rather than the margins of the food security conversation, and that would do so through the work of scholars who study these questions from the ground up, in their own countries and regions, rather than through a single authorial voice imposing a single national lens on a problem that is, by its nature, comparative. The contributors to this book work across South Asia, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Europe, and they bring with them methods ranging from systematic review and time-series econometrics to political economy case analysis and primary survey work. What unites their otherwise quite different chapters is a shared willingness to ask not only what food security outcomes look like, but why the institutions responsible for producing those outcomes behave the way they do.

Readers will find in the chapters that follow an unusual combination of attention to marine food systems alongside terrestrial agriculture, to the everyday politics of subsidy and procurement reform alongside the technical apparatus of price volatility modelling, and to the household-level behavior of food waste alongside the national-level architecture of policy learning. We have tried, as editors, to preserve the distinct voice and disciplinary grounding of each contribution while ensuring that the volume reads as a coherent argument rather than a loose anthology. The Introduction that follows this Preface sets out that argument in full, together with a chapter-by-chapter roadmap and the organizing questions that each chapter takes up; we will not repeat that material here.

This book is addressed to several overlapping audiences. We have written and edited it with graduate students and early-career researchers in mind, particularly those approaching food security from agricultural economics, development studies, or public policy, who are looking for a single volume that connects technical analysis to institutional theory. We have also kept policymakers and practitioners in view throughout, especially those working within the ministries, donor agencies, and civil society organizations that design and implement food security interventions in the countries discussed here. And we hope the volume will be useful to researchers already working in this field who are looking for comparative material beyond their own country or region of specialization.

No volume of this scope comes together without considerable debts. We are grateful to every contributor for the care they brought to their chapters, for their patience through multiple rounds of review, and for their willingness to engage seriously with the governance framing we asked them to adopt even when their own training inclined them toward more conventional production- or nutrition-centered analysis. We thank the peer reviewers who strengthened individual chapters with their comments, often substantially. We are grateful to our respective institutions, the Institute of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, and the Department of Economics at Government College Women University,

Sialkot, for the time and support that made this project possible. And we thank our families for their patience during the long months of editorial work that a project of this kind inevitably demands.

Responsibility for the volume's remaining shortcomings rests with us as editors. Food security is too large and too consequential a subject for any single book to settle, and we do not claim to have settled it. What we hope this book offers instead is a sustained, comparative, and institutionally grounded case for rethinking how food security policy is designed, financed, and governed in the developing world, and a set of analytical tools that researchers and policymakers can carry forward into their own work. If the chapters that follow leave readers more attentive to the institutions standing between policy intention and food security outcome, the volume will have done what we set out for it to do.

Muhammad Khalid Bashir
Muhammad Umar Farrukh
Faisalabad and Sialkot, Pakistan, 2026

FOREWORD

Food insecurity in the twenty-first century is not principally a problem of insufficient production. Global cereal output has more than kept pace with population growth over the past three decades; calories, taken in aggregate, are not scarce. Yet hunger and chronic undernutrition persist concentrated in the same regions and often the same communities year after year, even in countries that have recorded genuine agricultural advances. This paradox, familiar to anyone working at the intersection of agricultural science and development policy, is the starting point for the volume you are about to read. It is a paradox that resists agronomic solutions alone. What is missing, repeatedly, is not yield potential or improved varieties, but the institutional capacity to translate productive gains into food security outcomes for those who need them most. *Rethinking Food Security Policy in Developing Countries* sets out, with rigor and comparative breadth, to explain why that gap persists and what can be done about it.

The volume's central argument that food insecurity in developing economies is best understood as a governance problem rather than a production shortfall is not a fashionable provocation; it is a conclusion supported by a substantial body of empirical and institutional work, including much of the research gathered in these pages. I have seen subsidy programs, designed with genuine technical sophistication, fail to reach the smallholders they were intended to serve because of capture along the distribution chain. I have seen decentralization reforms transfer responsibility to local governments without transferring the finance or capacity required to discharge it. And I have seen, far too often, water and land management decisions made without the institutional mechanisms needed to translate sound agronomic science into outcomes for the rural and urban poor who depend on them.

What distinguishes this volume from much of the food security literature is its refusal to treat institutional questions as a footnote to technical ones. The decision to give marine food systems: fisheries, aquaculture, and seaweed economies equal analytical standing alongside terrestrial agriculture is both overdue and, in my view, correct. For the hundreds of millions of people across coastal Asia and Africa for whom marine foods are a primary source of protein and income, a food security framework that omits the sea is incomplete by construction. Equally valuable is the volume's sustained attention to the political economy of reform: why inefficient subsidy and procurement arrangements persist even when their costs are well documented, and under what fiscal, institutional, and political conditions reform becomes politically feasible rather than merely economically desirable. These are not questions that crop scientists are always well placed to answer, which is precisely why a volume that brings economists, political scientists, and policy scholars together within a shared institutional framework is so valuable.

The South Asian dimension of this volume merits particular attention. Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and their neighbors have each invested heavily in agricultural intensification, irrigation infrastructure, and food subsidy systems over the past half century. In doing so, they have accumulated a rich body of policy experience, both instructive successes and costly failures, from which the rest of the developing world can learn. The challenge of governing wheat procurement in environments of price volatility, the design of targeted social protection in the absence of comprehensive household data, and the politics of water pricing in smallholder irrigation systems are not unique to South Asia. However, the region has confronted them at a scale and over a time horizon that yields genuinely transferable policy lessons. The editors and contributors draw on that experience with precision, situating it within a comparative framework that spans Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Europe. The result is a volume that is regionally grounded yet global in its implications.

This book will be of considerable value to the audiences I encounter most often: graduate students and early-career researchers in agricultural and development economics seeking a rigorous comparative treatment that connects technical analysis to institutional theory; and policymakers and practitioners in agriculture, finance, and social protection ministries who must translate strong evidence into politically feasible reform. The editors are to be commended for assembling a volume that is broad in scope yet disciplined around a coherent analytical thread. They have brought together contributors employing methods ranging from systematic review and time-series econometrics to political economy case analysis and primary survey research and have integrated these diverse approaches within a framework that ensures coherence without sacrificing depth.

Agricultural science has made remarkable strides over my career, and I remain convinced that innovation in crop physiology, genetics, and farming systems will continue to play a central role in feeding a growing and warming world. But science alone is not governance, and governance ultimately determines whether its benefits reach those who need them. I commend this volume to researchers, students, and policymakers who share the conviction that the most important frontier in global food security today lies not only in the laboratory or the field, but in the institutions that connect them to the table.

Kadambot H. M. Siddique

AM CitWA FTSE FNAAS FAAS FPAS

Hackett Professor and Director, The UWA Institute of Agriculture

The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

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