

‘Wild’ Foods, Hunger and Nutrition – harnessing knowledge for sustainable food security

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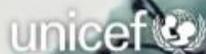




Food and Agriculture
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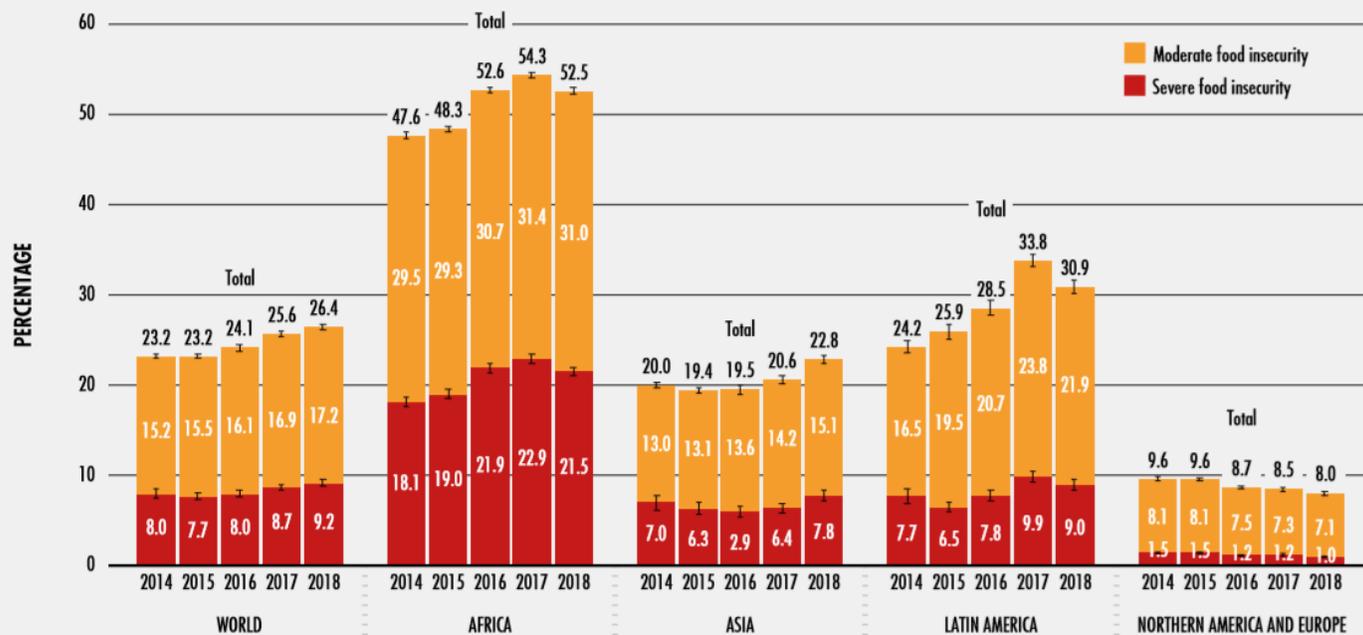
World Health
Organization

2019

THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD

**SAFEGUARDING AGAINST
ECONOMIC SLOWDOWNS
AND DOWNTURNS**

FIGURE 10
OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS (2014–2018), TOTAL LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY HAVE BEEN ON THE RISE AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL, MAINLY DUE TO INCREASES IN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA



NOTES: Differences in total are due to rounding of figures to the nearest decimal point.
SOURCE: FAO.



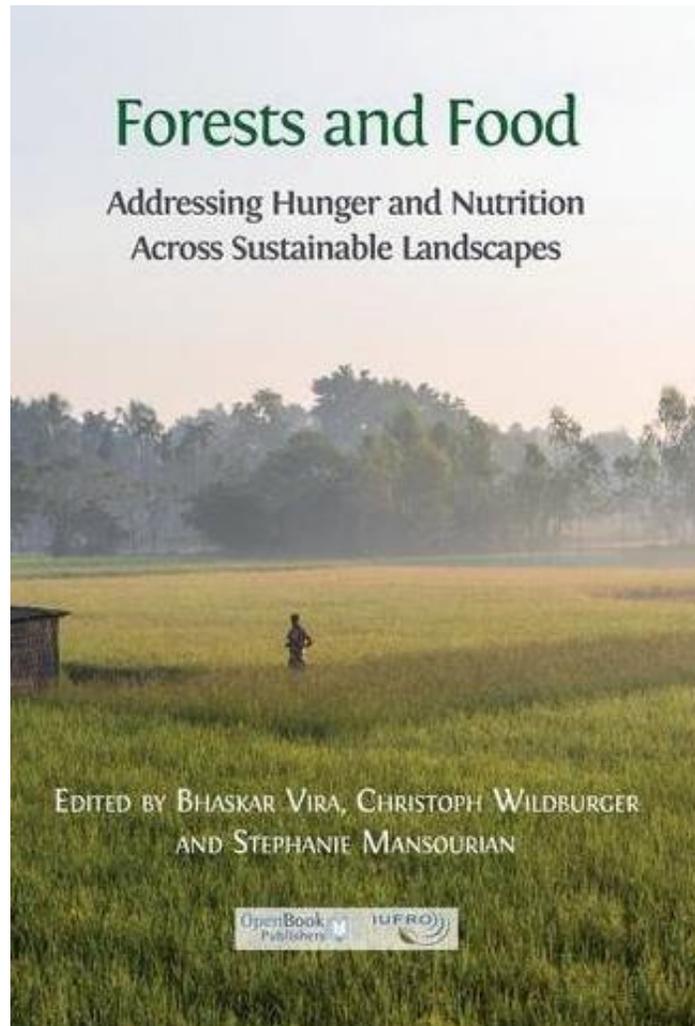
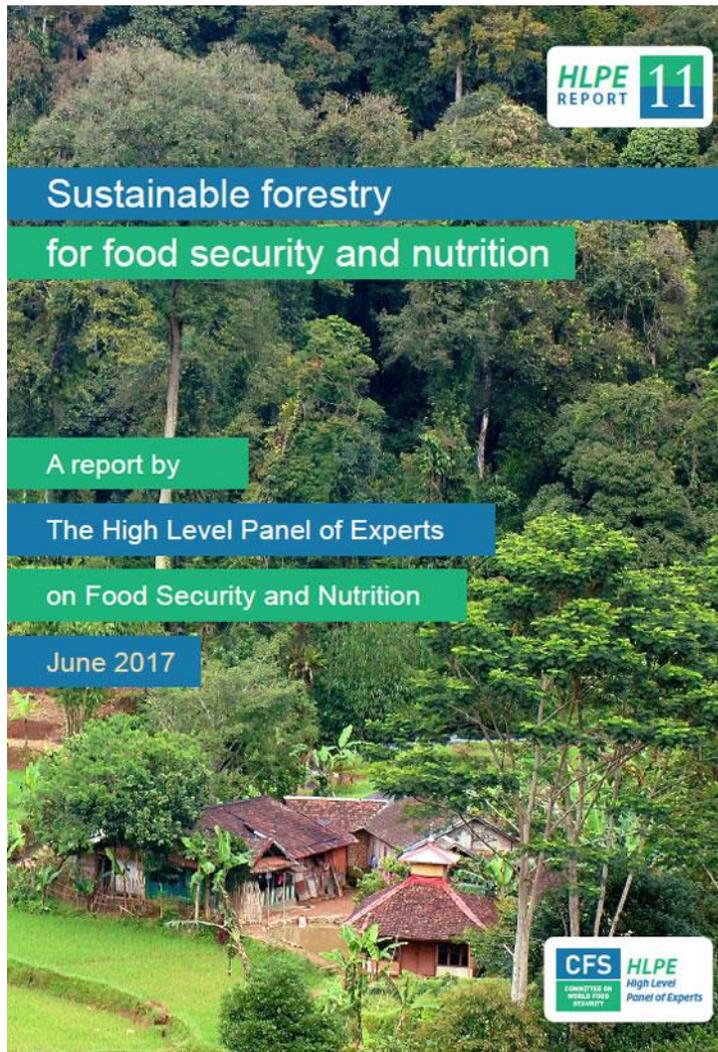
Context of PhD Research

Number of hungry people in the world is rising.

Mainstream hunger and agricultural policies have prioritized production of staple crops & calorific minima.

= Global dietary simplification & loss of biodiversity.

Indigenous and rural groups worst affected.



“Wild” foods

Forest and tree-based systems are a significant source of micronutrient-rich ‘wild’ foods for millions of people worldwide.

Examples: bushmeat, insects, fruits, leaves, seeds.

Notable absence of wild foods in academic & political literature.

Supporting the consumption of uncultivated foods in forest-proximate could help achieve food security and nutritionally-diverse diets, and ecological health.



Bihar, India

- Limited progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition.
- Huge disparities in hunger and health, concentrated in tribal groups.

Bihar, eastern India

- Tribal dominated district
- Forested
- Wild foods consumed

My PhD asks:

- *Can "wild foods", sourced from forests and tree-based systems, contribute safely to sustainable food security, human and ecological health in rural communities?*
- With COVID-19 comes an added dimension of human safety to this question.



COVID-19 and Wild Foods: Balancing the Risks

1. Direct risks of wild food consumption

- Human behavior is inextricably linked to zoonotic spillover events.
- Renewed focus on wildlife consumption and trade with COVID-19 pandemic.
- Bushmeat consumption has been flagged as the driver of previous zoonotic spillover events.
 - But represents a small fraction of all spillover events.
- Need to understand the context of spillover and how we might appropriately regulate/prevent.



COVID-19 and Wild Foods: Balancing the Risks

2. Indirect risks & threats to local food security and livelihoods

- Reliance on wild foods as sole sources of dietary protein, fat and micronutrients, or as important sources of income.
- Restricted access to places of nature due to fears of human-animal contact (e.g. India).
- Banning such practices could push consumption/trade underground, where regulating becomes far more difficult.
- New regulation needs to be carefully managed to avoid jeopardizing food security and livelihoods.



Concluding Remarks

- *Going forward, can we balance the benefits of wild food with the risks?*
- *Can we ensure it is sensitive to local needs and local risks*

Recent media/publications:

- Can healthy ecosystems prevent pandemics?
<https://forestsnews.cifor.org/67260/can-healthy-ecosystems-prevent-pandemics?fnl=en>
- Coronavirus and Conservation – An interdisciplinary conversation.
<https://www.conservation.cam.ac.uk/news/coronavirus-and-conservation-interdisciplinary-conversation>

