



American University of Beirut
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences
Department of Agriculture

Healthy Earth, Healthy Food, Healthy People



Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU)

Introduction and Current Activities
April 2021



The Environment & Sustainable Development Unit ESDU



- Established in 2001
- Inter-disciplinary R&D unit at FAFS/AUB
- Regional Leader in Rural Sustainable Livelihoods
- ***LINKING ACADEMIA TO RD***



Putting People at the Center

- **Participatory Approach**
- ESDU has always been involved in community-based projects in the poorest areas of the MENA region.
- Capacity Building to **Improve skills, Empower marginal groups** and **Give sustainability a CHANCE.**



Communication Tool



KariaNet

Knowledge Access in Rural
Interconnected Areas Network

- Since 2013, ESDU is managing and hosting **KariaNet** a regional online network for KM/KS in agriculture and rural development in the MENA region
- Karianet was founded by IFAD and IDRC and was devolved to ESDU following a competitive call.
- Karianet is used as a tool to share best practices on
 - Local Food Systems
 - Access to finance
 - ICT
 - Natural resources management
 - Local governance

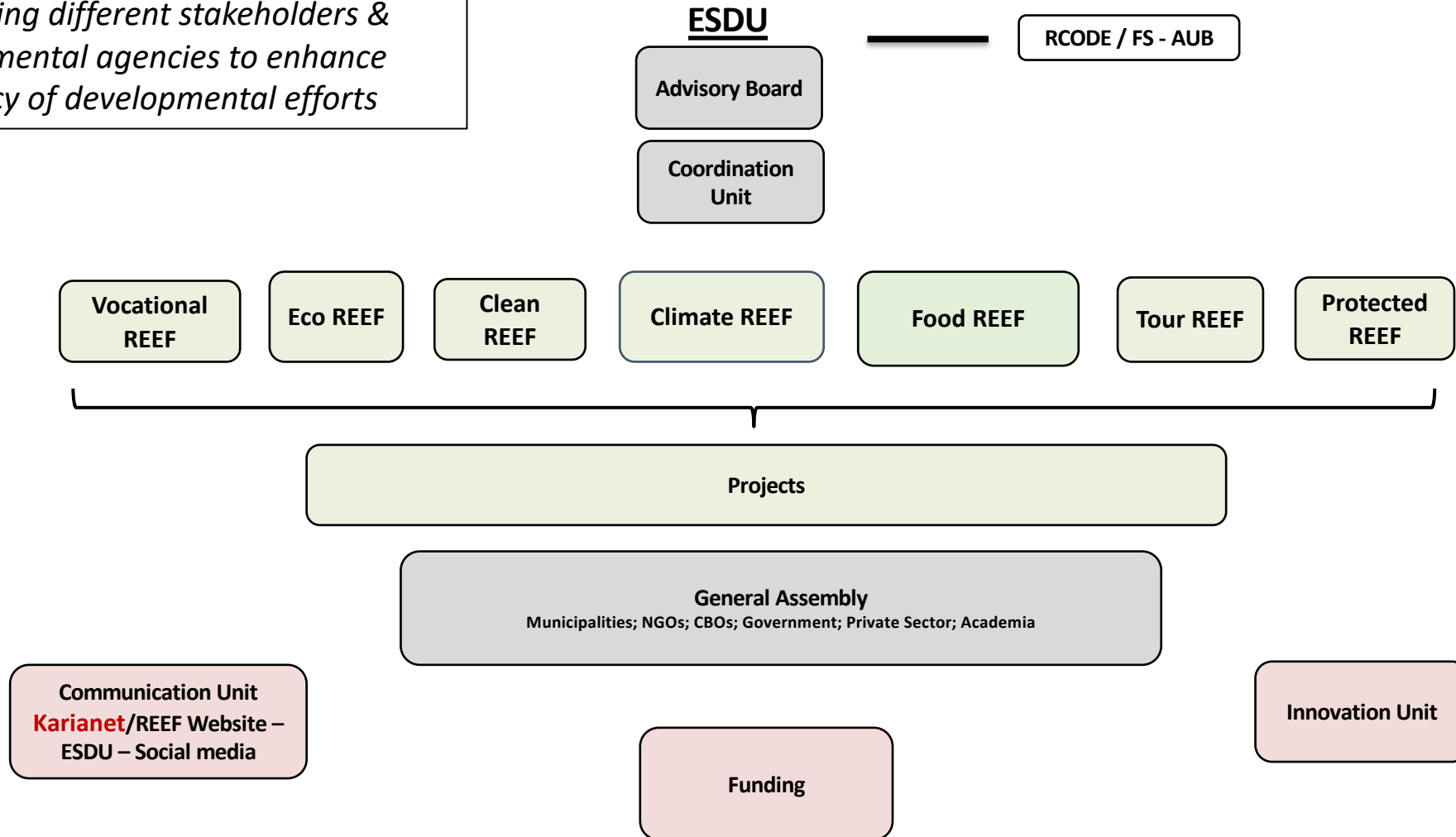
www.karianet.org



INNOVATIVE MODEL

Rural Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Forum (REEF)

Aim: linking different stakeholders & developmental agencies to enhance efficiency of developmental efforts





COVID-19 Crisis Localizing Food Security

Lebanon

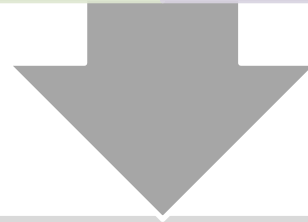
Before the pandemic outbreak, Lebanon was struggling with its worst economic crisis in decades:

45% of the population facing poverty according to official estimates.

debt to GDP ratio 152% (among the highest in the world)

youth unemployment exceeding 35%

swelling inflation and rising food prices, rising taxes, widening inequalities



Lebanon suffers from severe food insecurity

the country being dependent on imports representing 80% of its consumption
more than 30% of the population being unable to consume healthy food throughout the year.



Relying on the Local Food System for Food Security

- In light of the current crisis, the significance of the local food system rises more than ever.
- Importance of Local food system (LFS):
 - Small-scale farmers produce about 70% of the food produced in the world
 - LFS results in increase food security and enhanced community self-reliance.
 - LFS helps ensure money circulates within localities and create more vibrant communities.





ESDU PROJECTS

Promoting the Local Food System

I. MedSNAIL

Sustainable Networks for Agro-food Innovation Leading in the Mediterranean



- Funded by the EU
- Project period: 36 months (Sep 2019 – Aug 2022)
- Implemented by:
 - Andalusian Federation of Towns and Provinces (Spain)
 - Slow Food Foundation (Italy)
 - **ESDU & Dep. of Landscape Design & Ecosystem Management**
 - Palestine - تنمية المرأة الريفية - جمعية
 - Tunisia - جامعة صفاقس
 - Kunitat Reġjonali għal Għawdex (Malta)
 - Jordan - نساء الثقافية للتنمية (نماء) - جمعية

MedSNAIL

- Project AIM: Fostering the valorization and development of small-scale traditional agro-food value chains, combining enhancement of market potentialities and socio-economic sustainability.
- Location: Shouf and West Bekaa

Main Activities:

- create agro-food business alliance at transnational level for preserving **Mediterranean agro-food heritage** and prompting business opportunities based on it
- implement agro-food value chain pilot projects, increasing the quality, visibility & marketing of products
- create business services hubs, animated by local leaders trained on MedSNAIL principles and procedures, providing local SMEs with tailored consultancy and training



II. Women Economic Participation

- Funded by the Government of Canada through UNDP
- Project Duration: 28 months (Oct 2019 – Feb 2022)
- Location: Bekaa and South
- Implementing Partners:
 - **ACTED** - Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
 - **ESDU**
 - **ABAAD** - Resource Center for Gender Equality
 - **DOT** - Digital Opportunity Trust Lebanon



Women Economic Participation



AIM: To contribute to the economic empowerment of Lebanese and Syrian women

- Build the technical and social capital of vulnerable women in selected value chains (1500 women)
- Improve women-led enterprises' income-generation and market access through creation of value-added goods and services across the selected value chains (26 coop/SME/startup)
- Enhance the capacities of local institutions to engage in designing and launching initiatives supporting women's economic participation (10 municipalities)
- Promote community-wide awareness to recognize existing obstacles faced by women for economic participation, and advocating for policy change (50,000)



III. COVID-19 Response

- Period: 3 months
- Two Projects - Partners:
 - ACTED & ESDU
 - LLWB, FHF, Berytech
- Funded through UNDP
- Aim: Supporting local production
- Activities:
 - Providing vulnerable workers with employment opportunities
 - Targeting cooperatives/SMEs & farmers
 - Providing training to farmers, coops members and workers
 - Cash for Training/Work modality



IV. Value chains for improved socioeconomic well-being of Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities

- The project is implemented by Concern World-Wide in Partnership with ESDU and LARI.
- Akkar and Donnieh regions
- Aim: to support 2 value chains: Herbs (mainly zaatar and coriander) and Dairy.
- 2 years period



V. Innovation System Networks for Agricultural Development Based on Gender-Inclusion and Eco-Entrepreneurship

ISNAD

Implementation Areas

Bekaa | Baalbek | North

Implementation Period

June 2020 – March 2021

Partners

LLWB - COSPE

General Objective

Improving household **food security** and promoting **resilient livelihoods** for **vulnerable communities** - Lebanese and Syrian Refugees

The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Germany, under the WFP's Program "Enhancing the Livelihoods of Vulnerable Lebanese Host Communities and Syrian Refugees Through Food Assistance for Training (FFT) Activities"



ISNAD - WINDOW 1

WHO

500 Lebanese and Syrian farmers, women and youth

WHAT

Tackling short-term Food Security | Building capacity on Climate-Smart Agriculture

HOW

- **Holistic Trainings** (FFT): Technical (Agricultural & Food Processing), Business Skills and Soft Skills, and Gender Issues
 - **Facilitating Market Linkages** (70 farmers)
 - **Upscaling best practices**



ISNAD - WINDOW 2

WHO

30 Cooperatives and SMEs

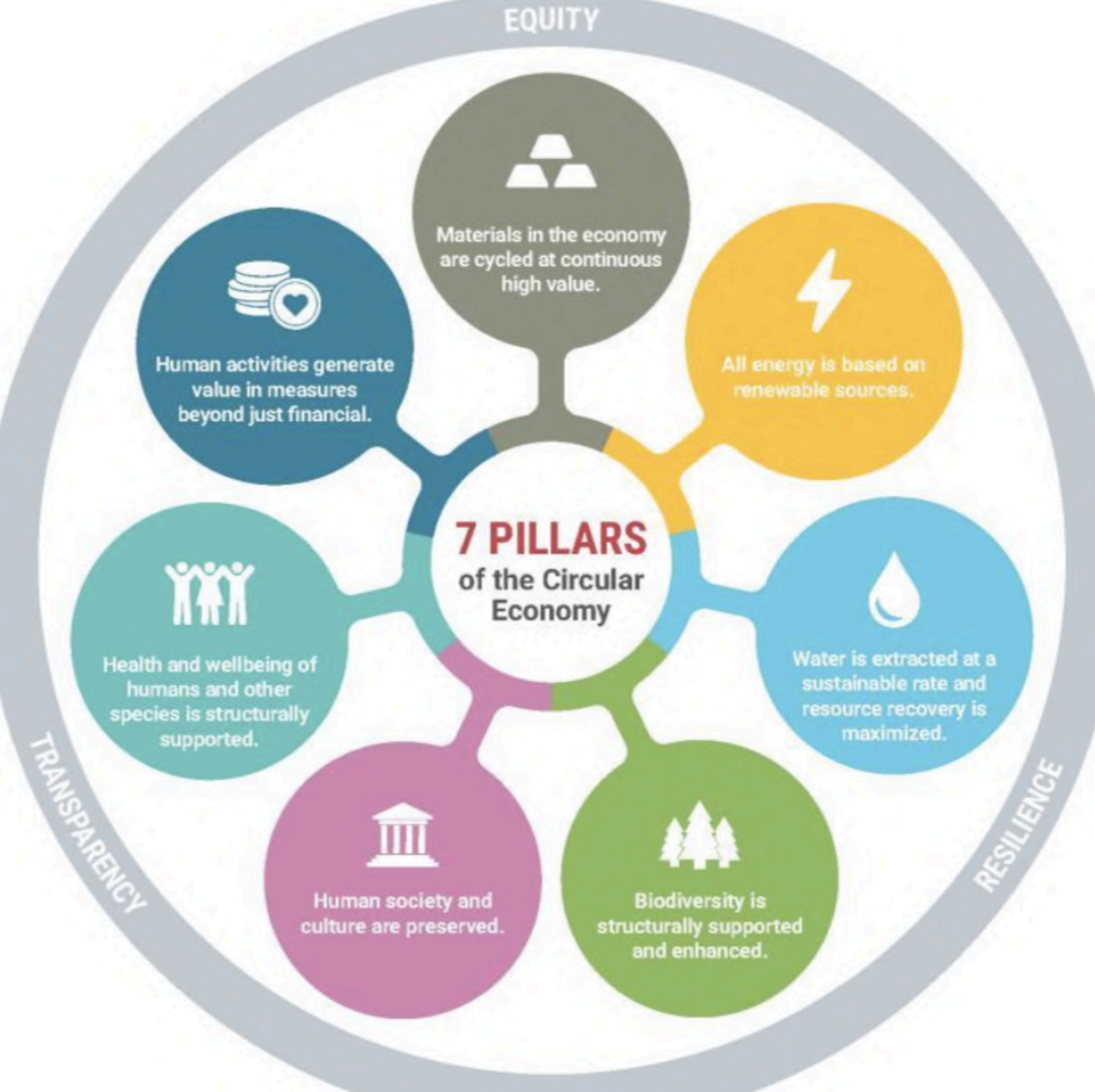
WHAT

Long-Term Capacity Building Support

HOW

- **Holistic Trainings and Coaching sessions:** Technical (Agricultural: Fruits & Vegetables VC, Small ruminants, and Food Processing), Business Skills and Soft Skills, and Gender Issues
 - **In-kind support** (15 Coops/SMEs)
 - **Building robust marketing structure**





VI. DAWWERA Designing Alternative for Water, Waste, and Energy in Rural Areas

- Initiative aims at enhancing and empowering small-scale food producers in the rural areas by integrating Circular Economy principles into their agricultural practices
- Implementing decentralized solutions based on renewable resources pertained to water, waste and energy would significantly support the agricultural activities of rural farmers.

Living Labs

- ESDU is currently establishing living labs across Lebanon in partnership with the local communities for the aim of promoting sustainable best practices, climate smart agriculture, circular economy approach, etc.
- These include:
 - Organic Plot
 - Seed Production Unit
 - Sustainable Agriculture Practices and Agro-Food Processing
 - Circular Economy Demo-Plot
 - Food Processing Demo-Plot
 - Urban Agriculture
- For more details: <http://karianet.org/Local-Food-Systems/7435414500>





Ardi Ardak
National Food Security Initiative

National Food Security Initiative launched by ESDU, LLWB, FHF and Zico House

Ardi Ardak

(my land, your land)



**AIMS AT REVIVING FOOD
SECURITY SECTOR BY
FOCUSING ON SMALL
SCALE HOLDERS WITH A
SPECIAL FOCUS ON
RURAL WOMEN**



**IS CRITICAL IN TIME OF
CRISIS AT IT FOSTERS
SELF-SUFFICIENCY &
DECREASES IMPORT
DEPENDENCIES**



**BUILDS ON:
ESDU INFRASTRUCTURE
& PROJECTS**

Ways of Support

Grants

In-kind Donations

Subscription (to
Ardi Ardak different
initiatives)

Membership

Investment

Volunteers





Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Populations

- Community-based initiatives in response to the current crisis are working to maintain food security.
- ESDU is supporting vulnerable communities through **Ardi Ardak** in partnership with the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB), the Food Heritage Foundation (FHF) and Ziko House.
- Ardi Ardak is providing vulnerable communities with:

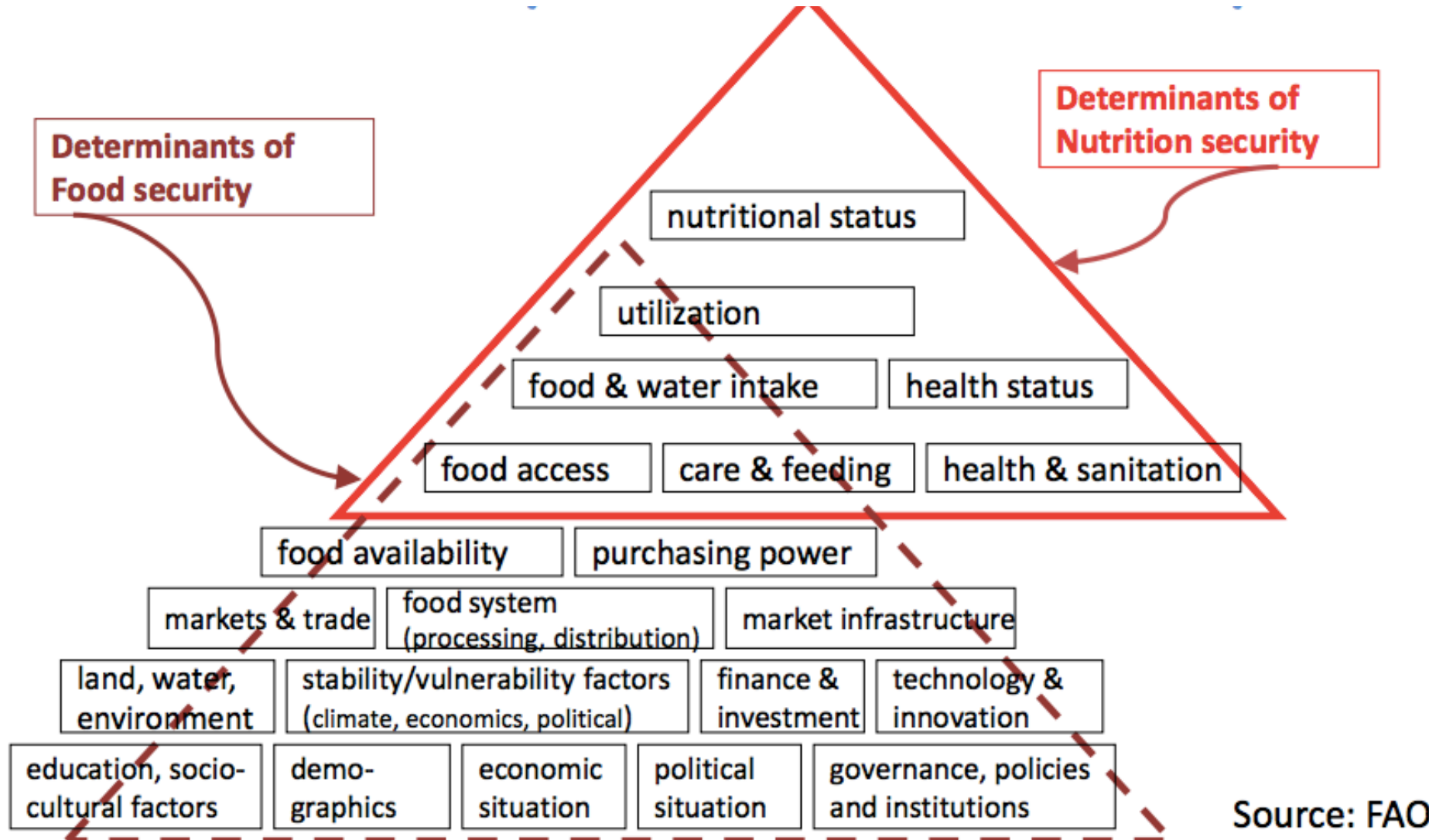
- **Mouneh boxes**

Most of the products are being purchased from rural small-scale producers participating in ESDU capacity building projects.

- **Seedlings & technical guidance**

to help them in attaining their self-sufficiency in these dire times

Impact of ESDU Interventions on FS & Nutrition Security



ESDU's Contribution to SDG Implementation



Thank you!

