



Global Food Security and the War in Ukraine

Jennifer Clapp
University of Waterloo
Vice-Chair, High Level Panel of Experts-CFS
Presentation to Global Donor Platform for
Rural Development
April 20, 2022

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has exposed not just one food crisis, but a constellation of overlapping food crises



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned of a coming “a hurricane of hunger”

1. The immediate humanitarian crisis in Ukraine



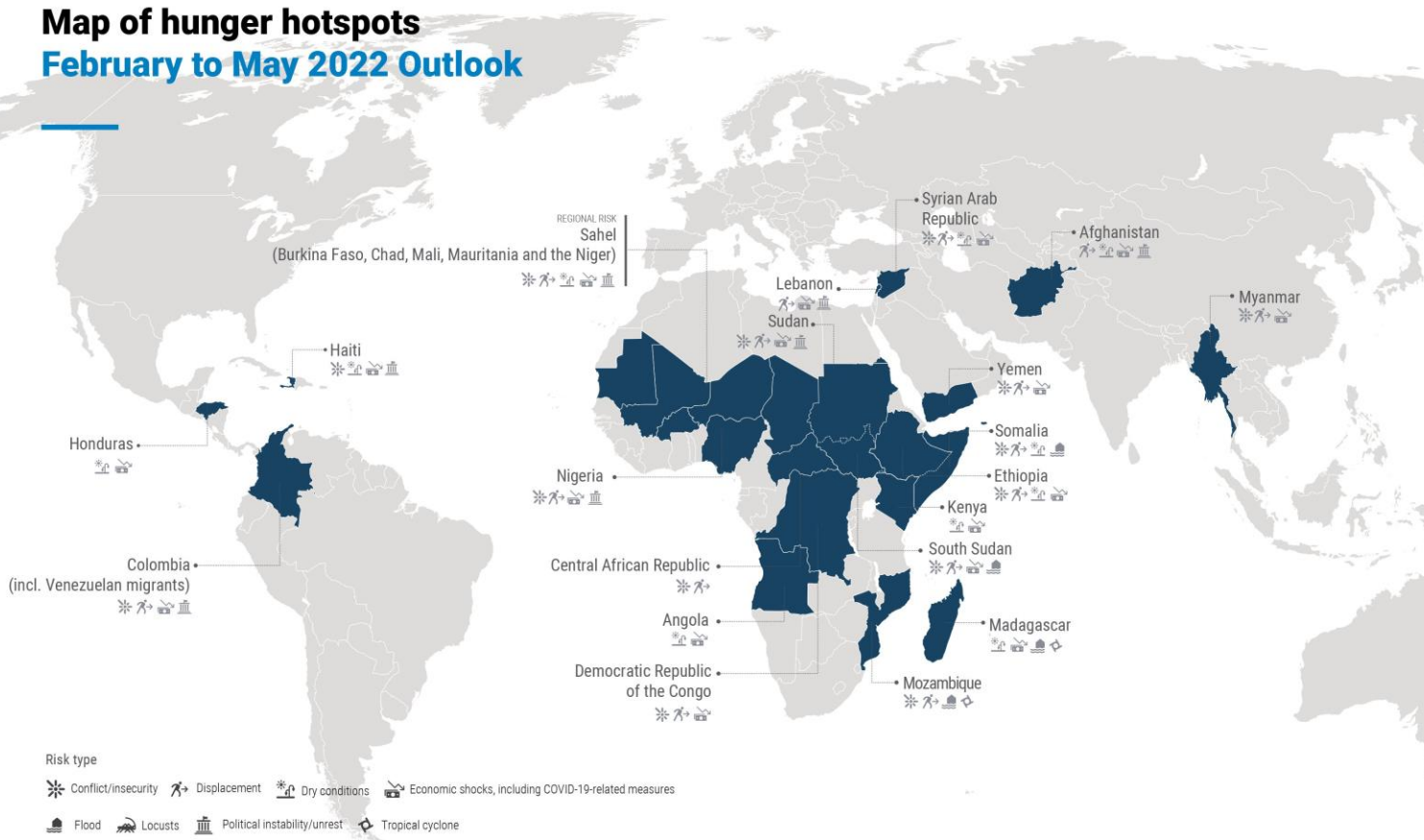
- At least 10 million Ukrainians have fled their homes to escape the violence
- Over 4 million refugees have left Ukraine
- World Food Programme providing some assistance in Ukraine, but extreme challenges due to infrastructure damage

Uncertainty re: future food production in Ukraine



- Deliberate destruction of food and farming infrastructure

Map of hunger hotspots February to May 2022 Outlook



Many of the countries facing the most severe hunger are also experiencing conflicts.

Source: FAO and WFP, *Hunger Hotspots, February 2022*

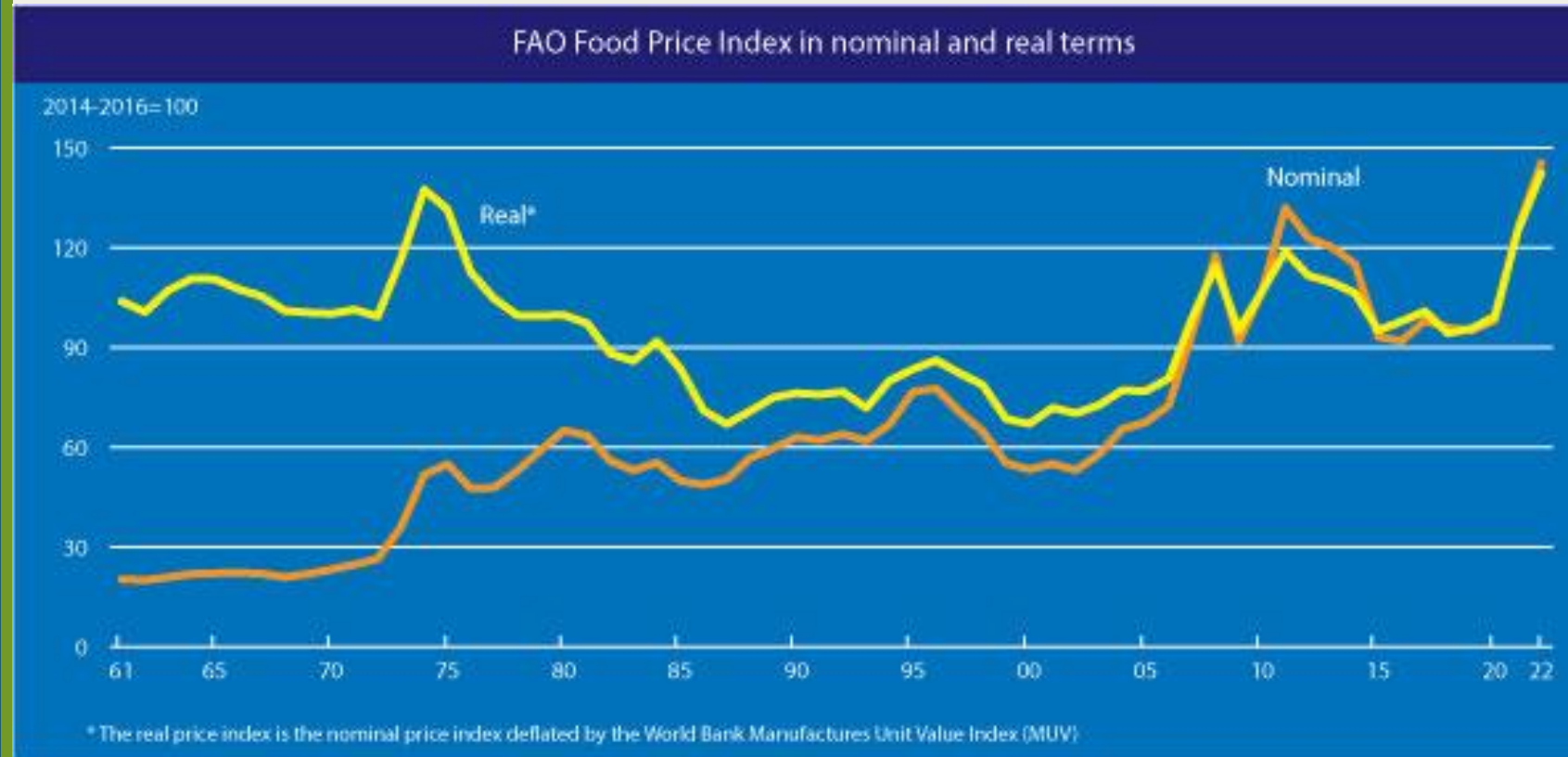
2. Global food crisis



- Over 30 countries depend on Russia and Ukraine for over 30% of their wheat imports
- Food prices are rising everywhere
- Africa, Asia, Middle East most affected



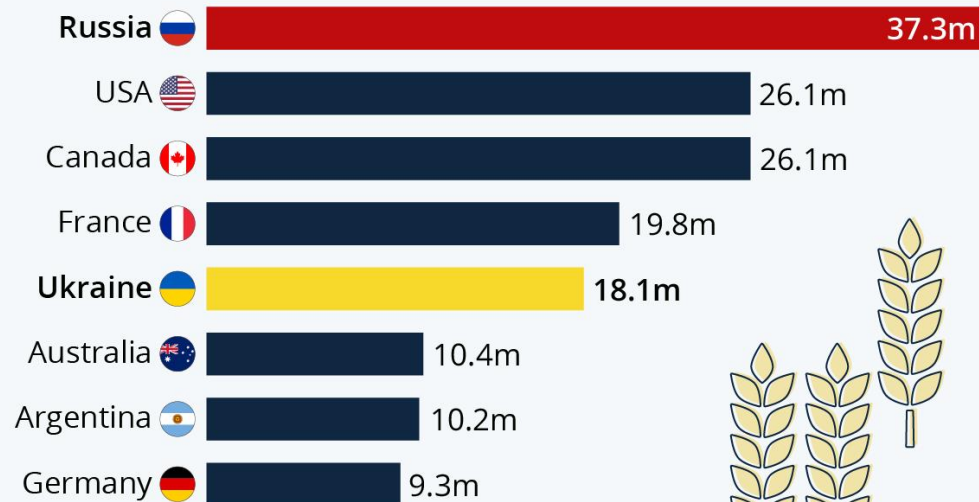
- In early February 2022, the FAO Food Price Index had already reached levels as high as the 2008 food crisis **BEFORE** Russia invaded Ukraine



Factors exacerbating the conflict-driven global food crisis

Ukraine Crisis Likely to Push Up Wheat Prices

The world's largest wheat exporters in 2020
(total exports in tonnes)*



* HS Code 1001: wheat and meslin

Source: UN Comtrade Database



statista

- *Highly concentrated markets*
- *Export restrictions*
- *Commodity market volatility*



Low-income, food import-dependent countries most affected

- The poorest segments of society in these countries typically spend over 60% of their income on food
- Supply response from farmers is far from guaranteed
 - Prices of fertilizer and other inputs skyrocketing too
 - Not environmentally sound if it means bringing marginal and sensitive lands into production

3. The ongoing Covid-19 hunger pandemic



- An *additional* 70-161 million people experienced chronic undernourishment in 2020 – reaching 720-811 million people
- 2.37 bn people (1 in 3) now facing food insecurity at a moderate or severe level in 2020
- Many countries have depleted their capacity for social protection spending and face high levels of debt
- Crisis highlights precarious nature of food systems livelihoods, including small-scale farmers and food system workers

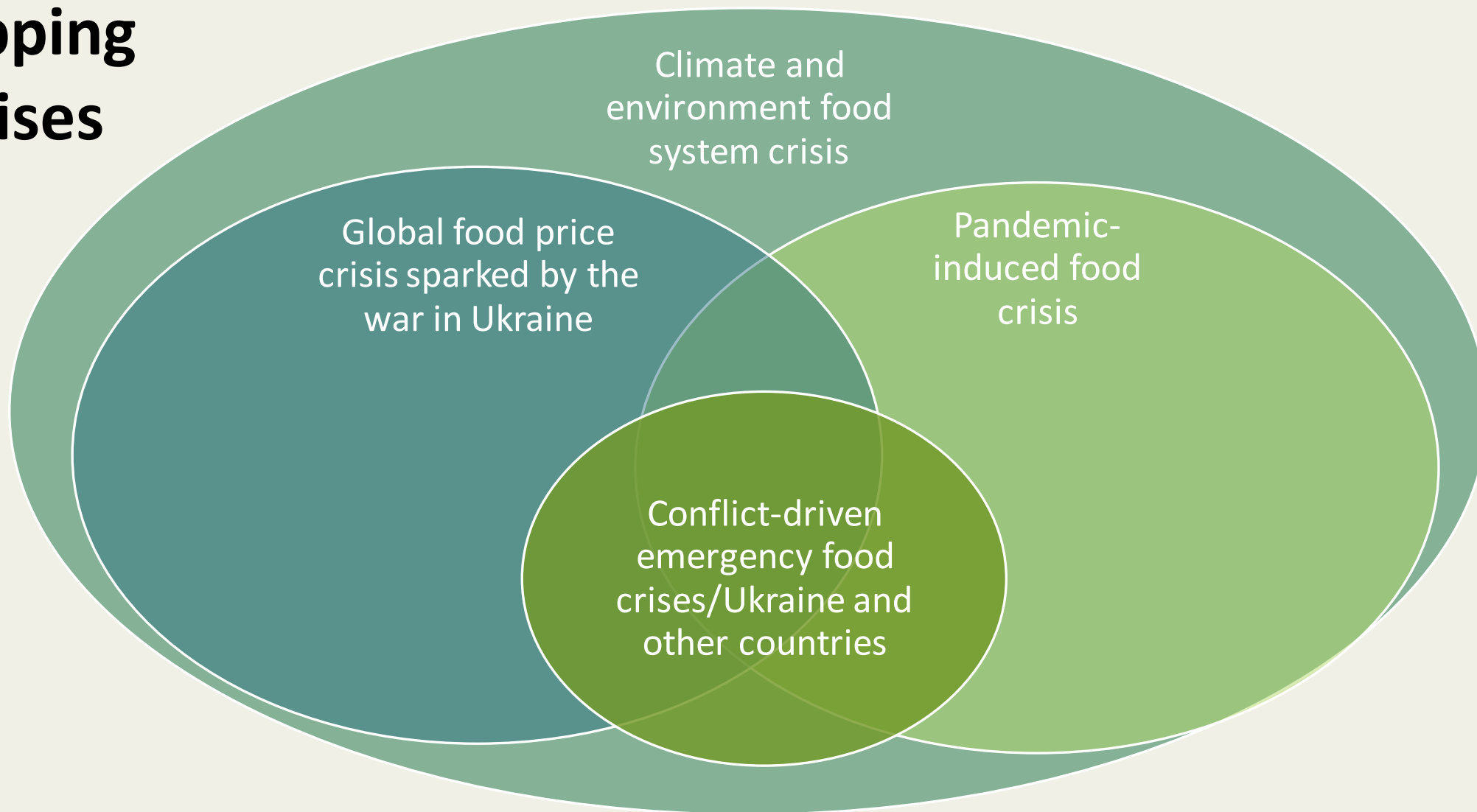
Source HLPE: Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition, 2021

4. The broader environment and climate food systems crisis



- Food and agriculture systems account for 21-37% of GHGs
- Biodiversity decline, water scarcity, depleted soils
- Yields expected to be negatively impacted, especially in countries in the global South
- Industrial food production methods associated with high energy and synthetic fertilizer use

Multiple and overlapping food crises



Increased frequency of global food crises raises questions about current food systems organization



Policy Responses

Need to shift from the 'why' to the 'how' of crisis response and food systems transformation

Key policy principles for donors to keep in the foreground:

- Uphold human rights, including the right to food
- Approach policies using a food systems approach
- Empower the most marginalized and vulnerable populations by addressing structural barriers
- Strengthen resilience of food systems – by enhancing sustainability, equity, and diversity
- Ensure transparency, accountability, and responsible investment
- Coordinate policy responses at the international level

Short term priorities:



- Significantly increase humanitarian assistance in Ukraine and other countries experiencing conflict-driven famine
- Assistance to poorest food import dependent countries to source alternate food supplies
- Assistance to create an enabling environment for food security and nutrition in affected regions
- Exporting countries should refrain from export restrictions and grain hoarding
- Governments should closely watch commodities markets for excessive speculation

Medium to long-term policy priorities:



- Invest in enhancing and diversifying domestic food production, especially in the world's poorest and most food import dependent countries
- Invest in climate resilient food production methods that support decent and equitable livelihoods for small-scale food producers
- Invest in market infrastructure at the local and regional level that empowers food system workers
- Invest in adaptive social protection systems to ensure food consumption and nutrition, especially for poor and vulnerable people.
- Adopt a UN CFS Global Food Crisis Response Framework to guide policy responses to future crises

To conclude...

The wider implications of the war in Ukraine forces us to confront the urgent need for food systems transformation

‘Crisis as usual’ is no longer an option

Thank you
