Food Systems Dashboard

Using the Food Systems Dashboard to examine the double burden of malnutrition in India *for policymakers*

Brief #4: Food systems transformation using the Food Systems Dashboard

March 2023

Purpose and Use

These briefs demonstrate how various stakeholders can use the Food Systems Dashboard to inform their work.

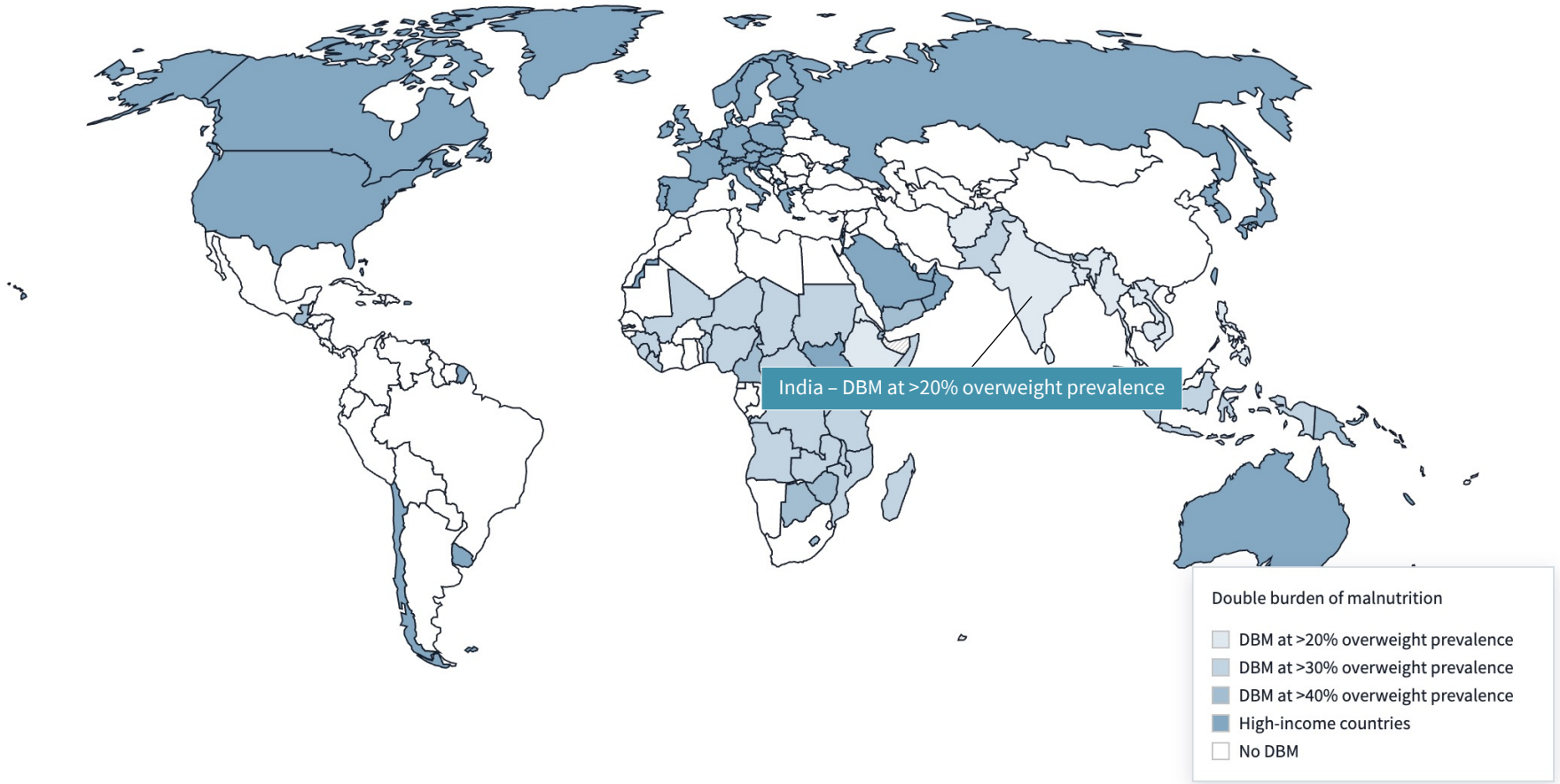
- The purpose of this brief is to show how policymakers can use the Food Systems Dashboard (FSD) to understand the status of a country's food system and how food supply chains and food environments influence dietary intake and health.
- Stakeholders can learn about what actions are needed within food systems to promote positive outcomes and avoid negative consequences by using multi-year data, making comparisons across countries, and examining trends.

The Double Burden of Malnutrition (DBM)

- DBM is defined as the presence of undernutrition as well as excess calories and a high burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) within the same population, household, or individual.
- At the population level, DBM occurs when countries rapidly transition from food systems where hunger and undernutrition are prevalent, to ones where there is an overabundance of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods (for example: ultra-processed foods such as soda and potato chips).
- Populations in which undernutrition was prevalent during pregnancy or childhood may be more susceptible to diet-related NCDs later in life.
- Interventions to prevent high rates of overweight, obesity, and NCDs are most effective when implemented earlier in the food system transition process.

Food Systems Dashboard

India’s Double Burden of Malnutrition



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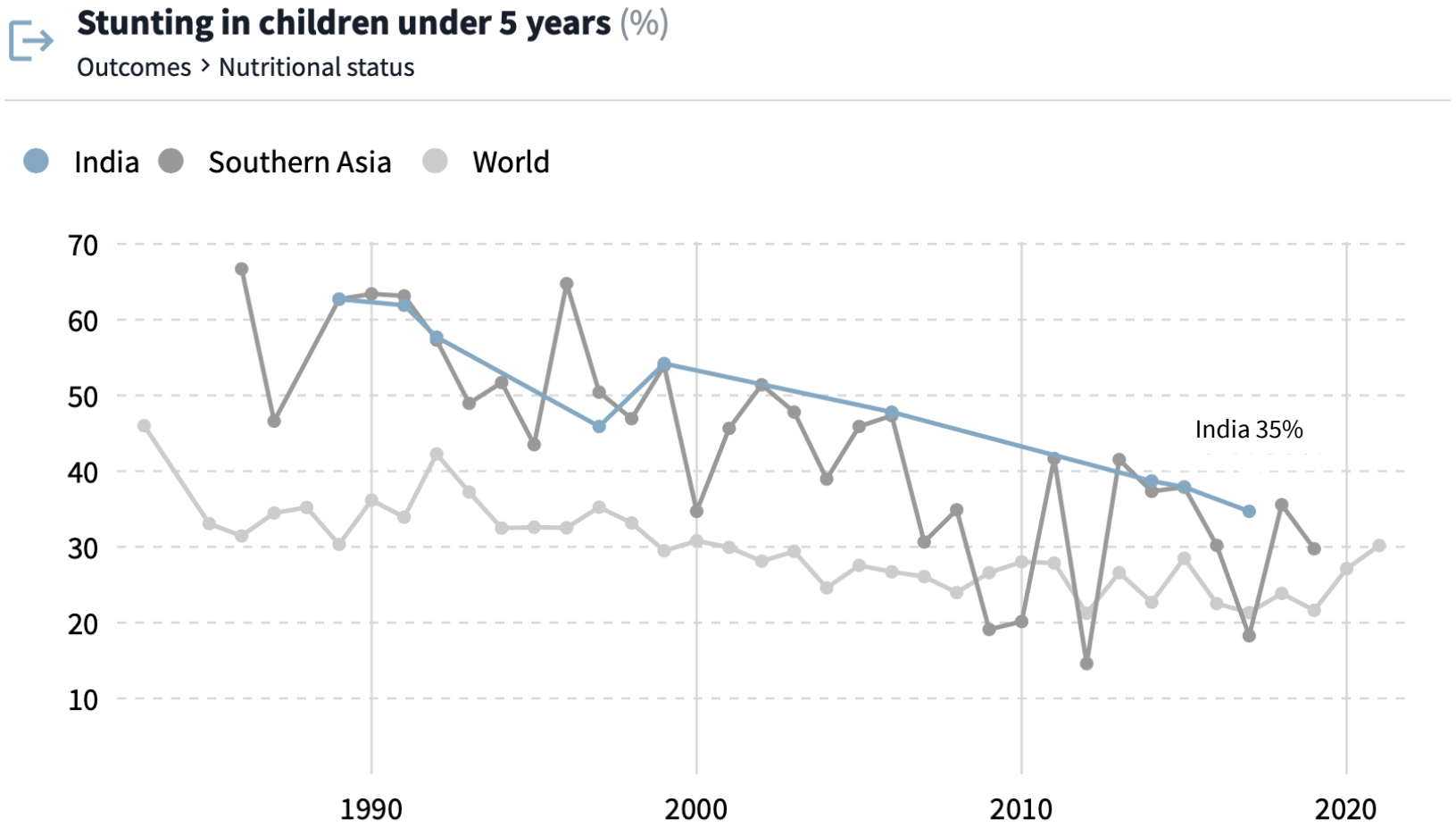
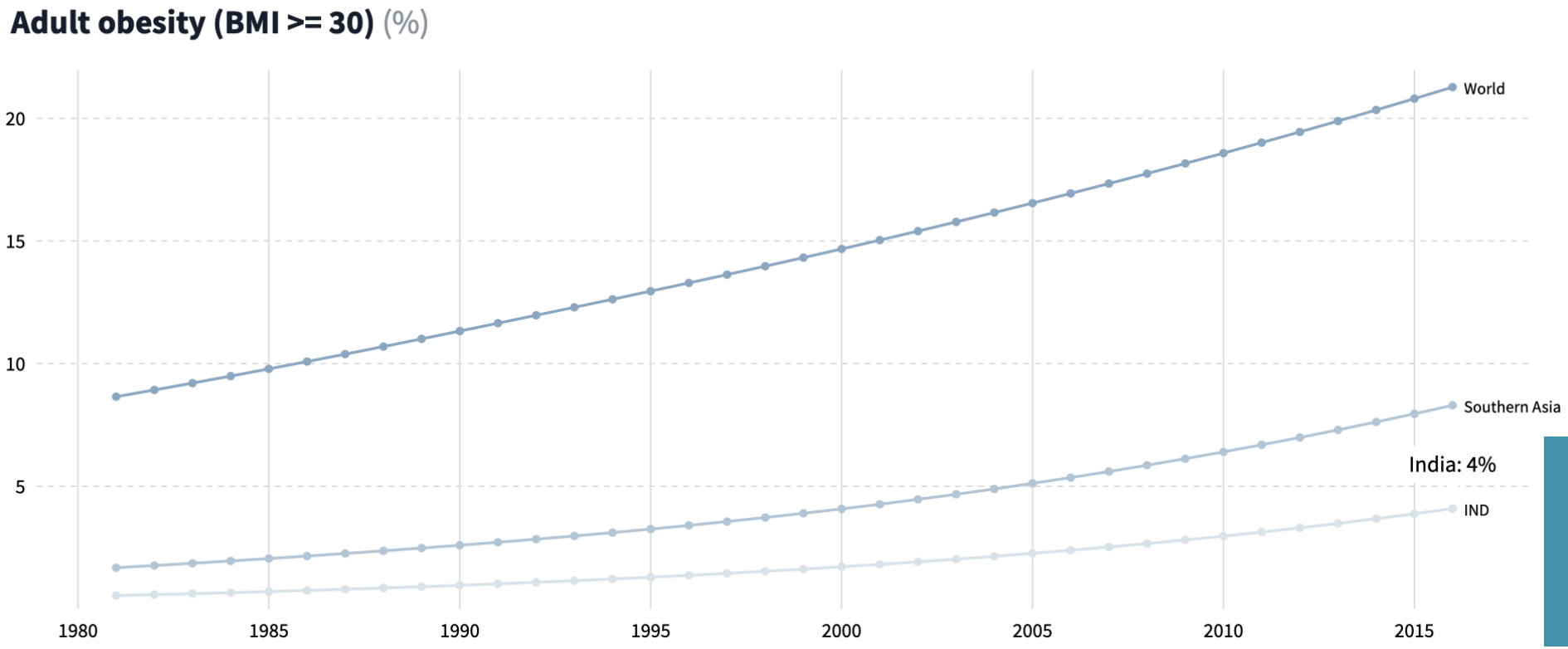
In India, stunting is decreasing but remains high compared to Southern Asia and global estimates

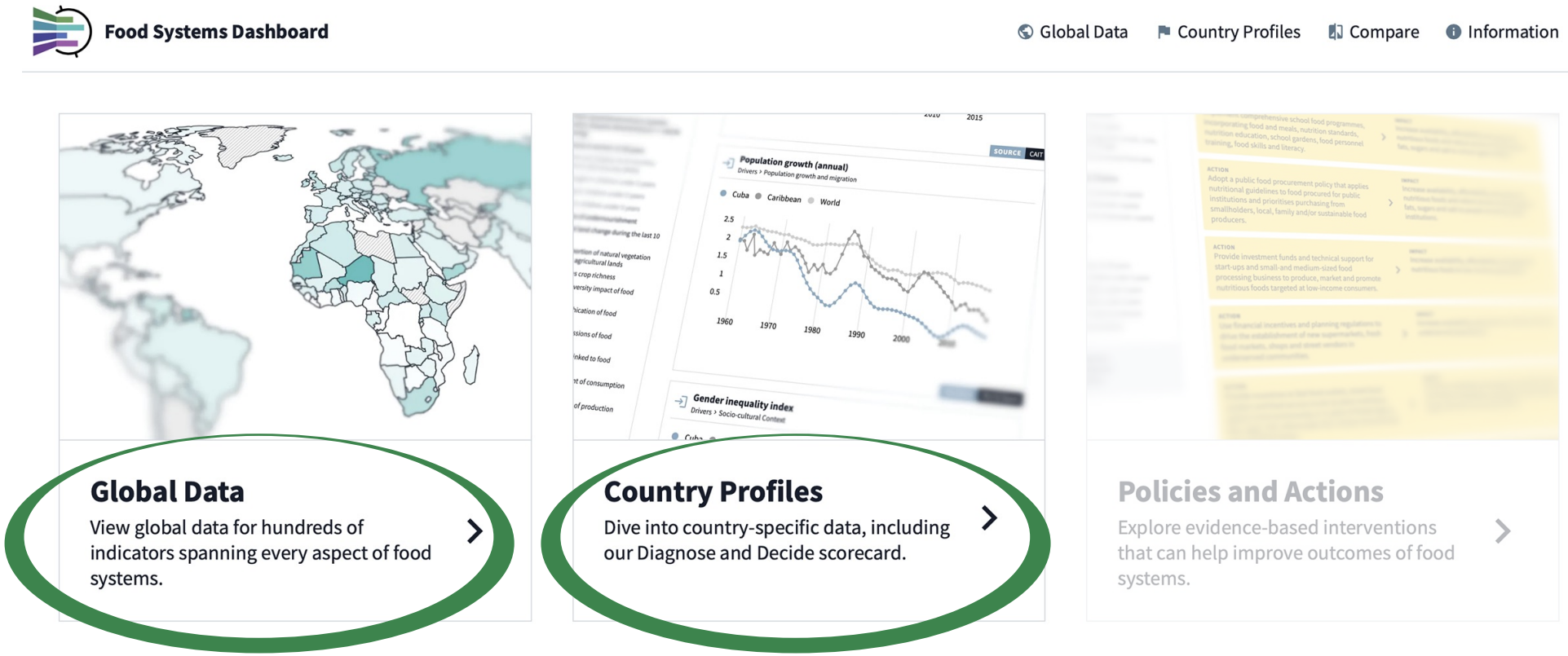


Simultaneously, adult obesity prevalence is increasing



Obesity prevalence in India remains lower than global and regional averages

Let’s use the Global Data and Country Profiles to explore how DBM is emerging in India



Food Systems Dashboard

Clues from Adult Dietary Intake in India in 2021

Adults (age ≥15 years): Consumption of at least one fruit

India has a drastically lower prevalence of adults consuming at least one fruit within one day of reporting (vs. the region and globe).

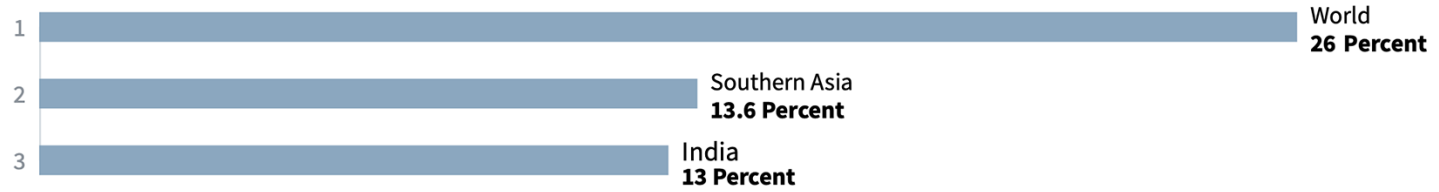
Adults (age ≥15 years): Salty packaged snacks, instant noodles, or fast food consumption (Percent)

Yet the prevalence of adults consuming fast food/packaged snacks/instant noodles was significantly higher (vs. the region and globe).

Clues from Adult Dietary Intake in India

India has lower estimated intakes for sugar-sweetened beverages, sweet foods, and deep-fried foods (vs the regional and global intakes). But these estimates are still high and excessive consumption of these foods is linked to an increased risk of NCDs, overweight, and obesity.

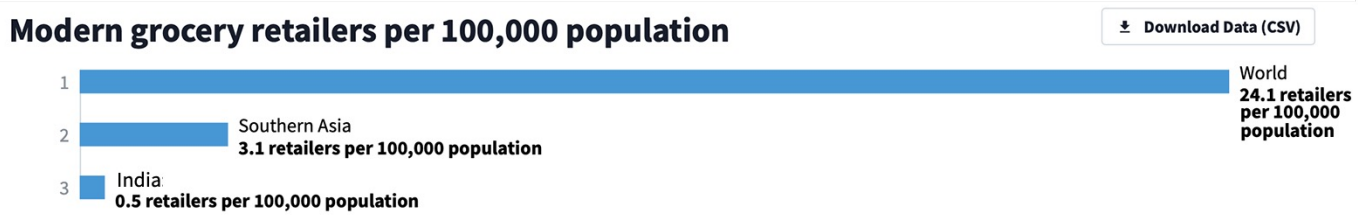
Adults (age ≥15 years): Sugar-sweetened soft drink consumption (Percent)



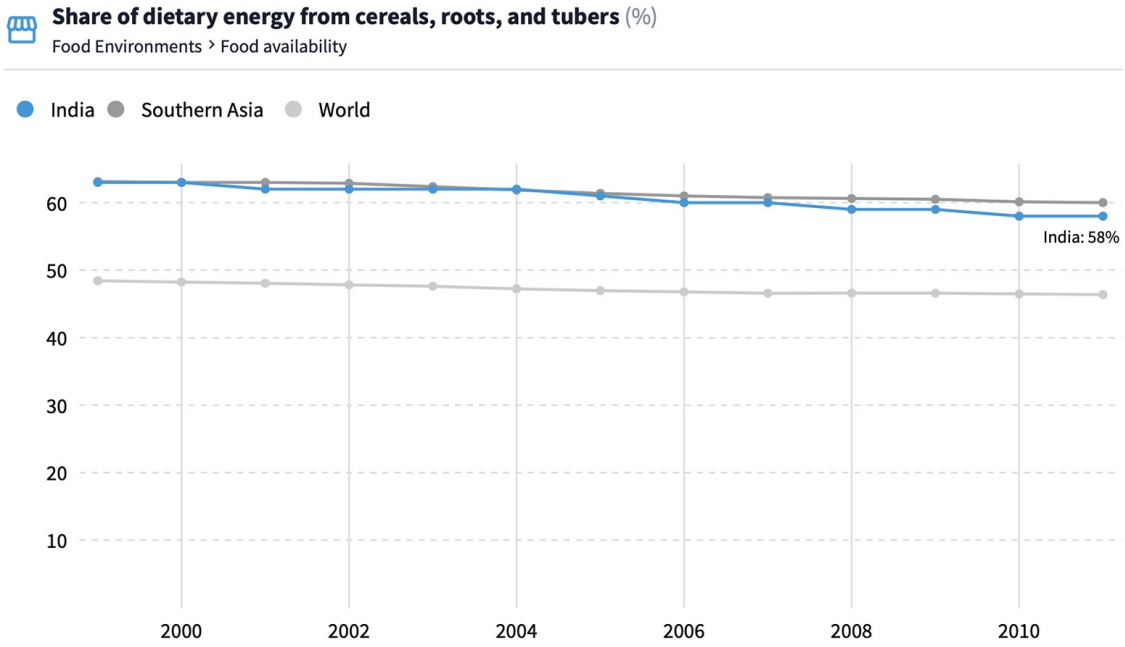
Adults (age ≥15 years): Sweet foods consumption (Percent)

Adults (age ≥15 years): Deep fried foods consumption (Percent)

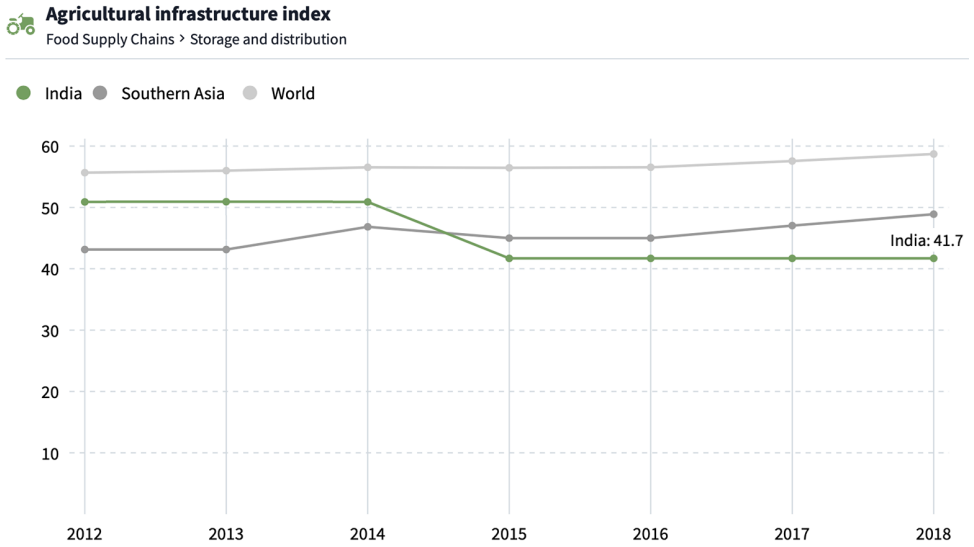
Clues from Food Environments in India

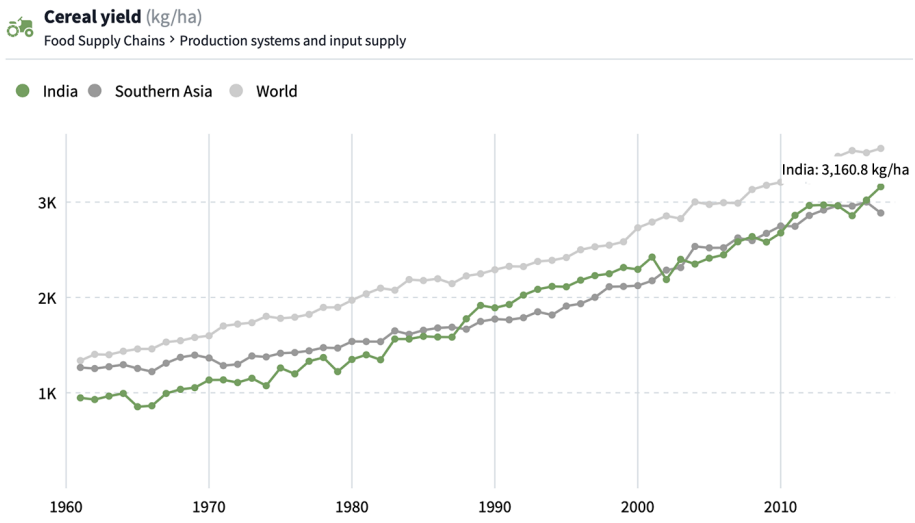


- Very few modern grocery retailers compared to other Southern Asian countries (and globally), indicating food access may be a challenge.
- Yet, ultra-processed food sales have skyrocketed compared to regional and global rates over a 5-year period.
- A high percentage (58%) of dietary energy comes from cereals, roots, and tubers.
    - Reliance on these foods suggests more nutrient dense foods are unavailable or unaffordable and may reflect lower rates of consumption of fruits and vegetables.

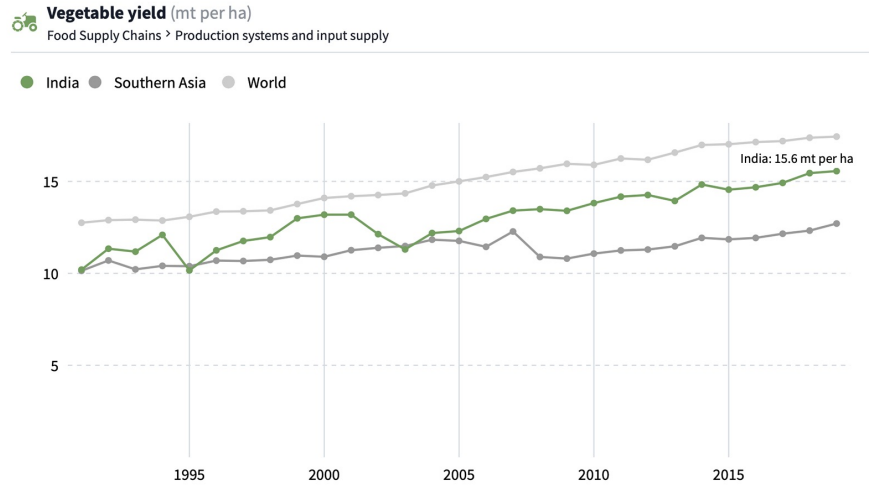


Clues from Food Supply Chains in India





- Relatively low agricultural infrastructure index – the ability to store and transport crops to market – compared to other Southern Asian countries and the globe.
- Cereal and vegetable yields have steadily increased in the last decades, surpassing regional yields. Still, yields remain below global estimates.



Key Messages and Recommendations

Key Messages

- India is experiencing a double burden of malnutrition (high undernutrition and high overweight).
- It is not yet as severe as other countries in Asia, yet rates of obesity are rising.
- Dietary changes, food environments, and the food supply all play key roles in this phenomenon.

Recommendations

Possible areas for action before DBM worsens:

- Strengthen fruit and vegetable production, distribution, and promotion.
- Prioritize agricultural subsidies for nutritious foods.
- Incentivize reformulation of ultra-processed foods to have less added sugar, saturated fat, and salt.