

Strengthening the Engagement of Tertiary Education Institutions: Reducing Hunger and Food Insecurity

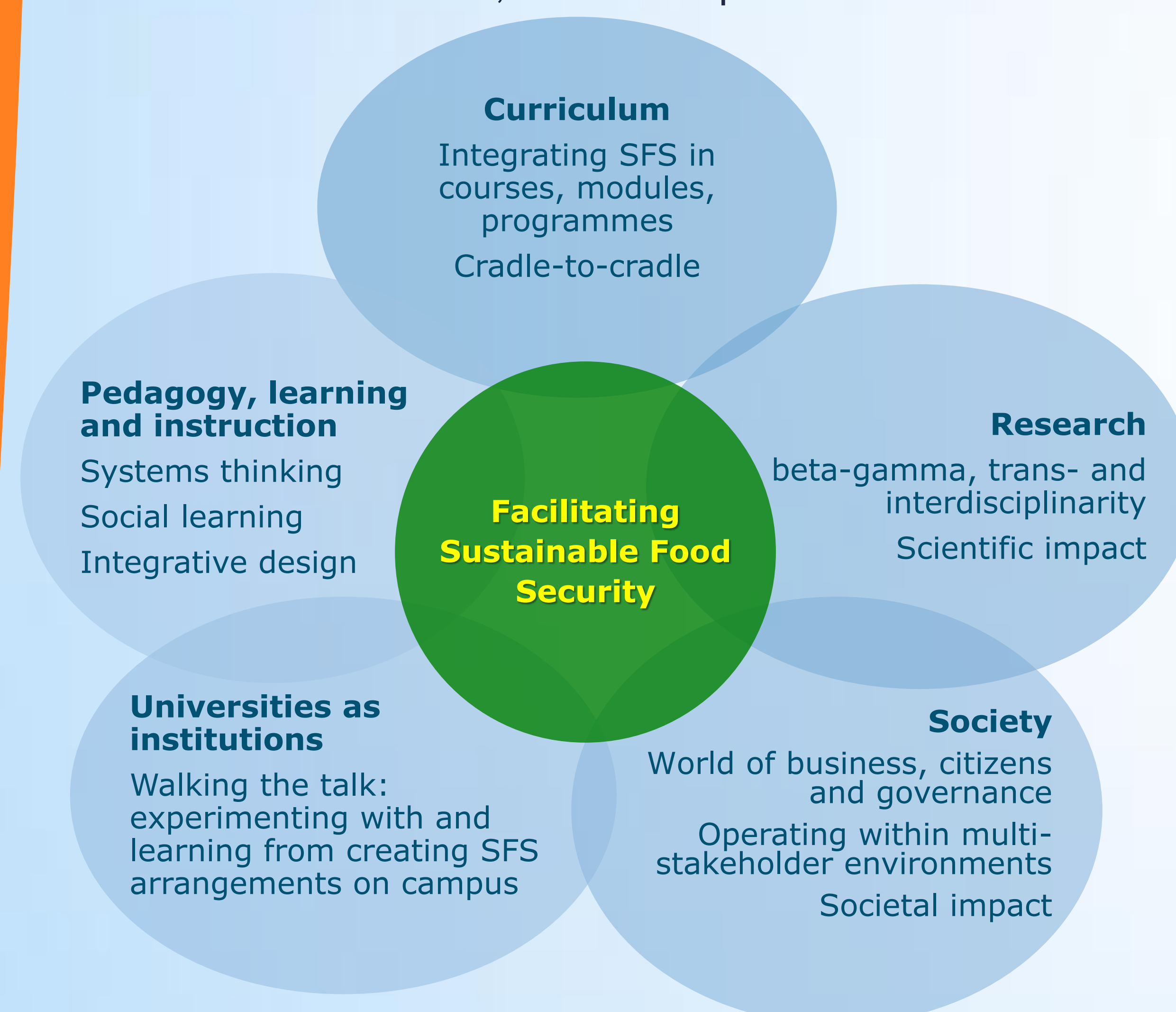
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Introduction

Tertiary education institutions are central to development. Food security is a global long term challenge. Over 200m people are undernourished in Africa. Worldwide, chronic diseases and health care costs are rising and the natural resource base is dwindling. Universities must engage with society, provide talented young professionals and conduct integrated problem-oriented research in collaboration with national, regional and international stakeholders.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework for triggering reflection on institutional policies, education and research and links with society for addressing sustainable food security within universities, was developed.



Materials & Methods

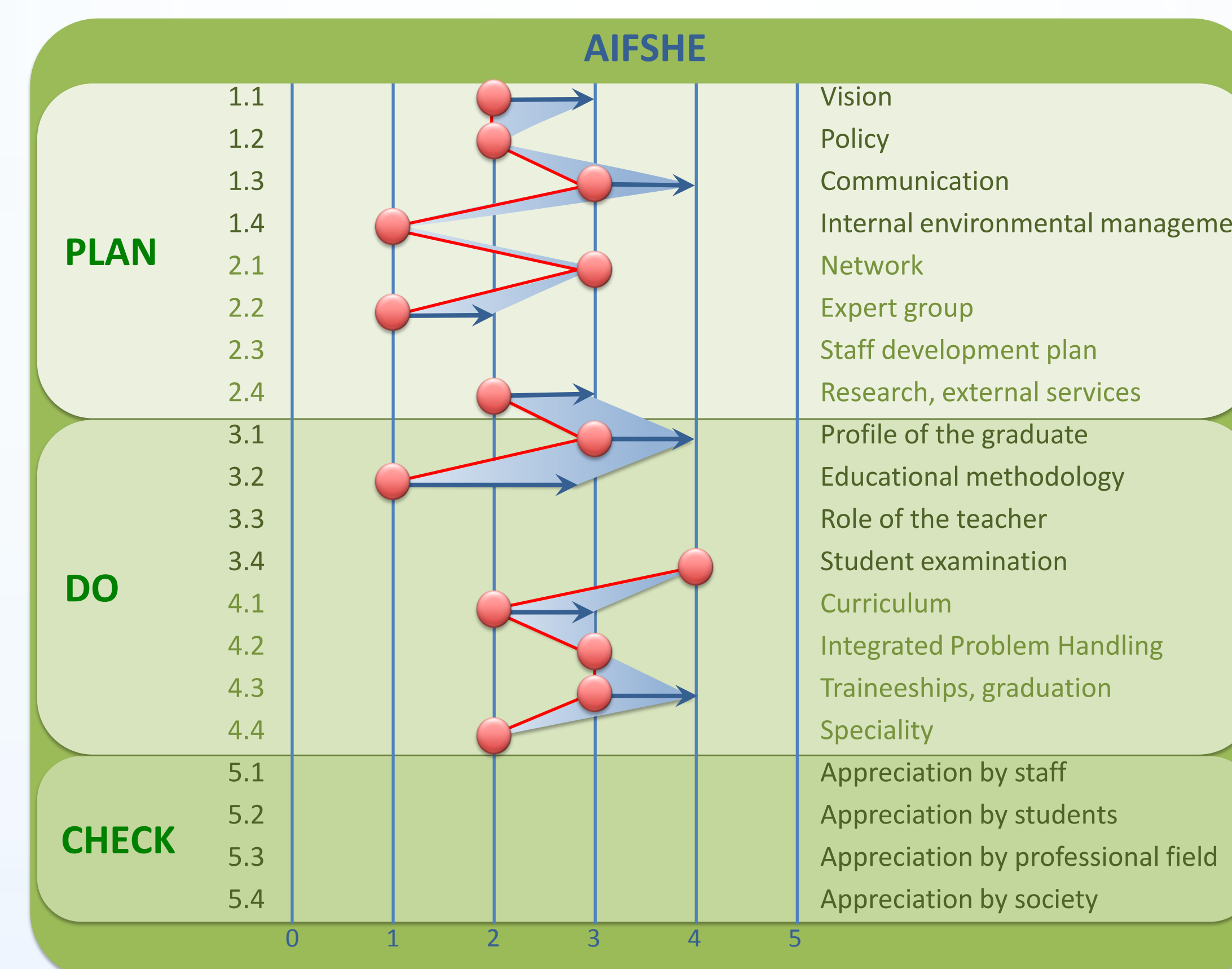
An Auditing Instrument for Food Security in Higher Education (AIFSHE tool) was co-developed and pilot tested in 10 universities in eight countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The assessment covered all aspects of the universities' programme – vision and policy, expertise, educational goal and content, internal environmental management, based on 20 criteria.

Materials & Methods (cont.)

The universities also participated in an online survey, undertook quick scans of their training, research and outreach programmes as well as the national food and nutrition security policy environment, and validated results at an internal academic seminar and during a national consultation with stakeholders on the university's role in food security. The approach played a pivotal role in determining the university's engagement in this development challenge.

Results

The AIFSHE tool provided insight on the existing situation (red dots) and showed the ambitions (blue arrows) for greater integration of FS in university programmes for improving outcomes. A monitoring framework (Deming Cycle i.e. Plan-Do-Check-Act) is used. In this pilot, only the Plan and Do parts have been tested.



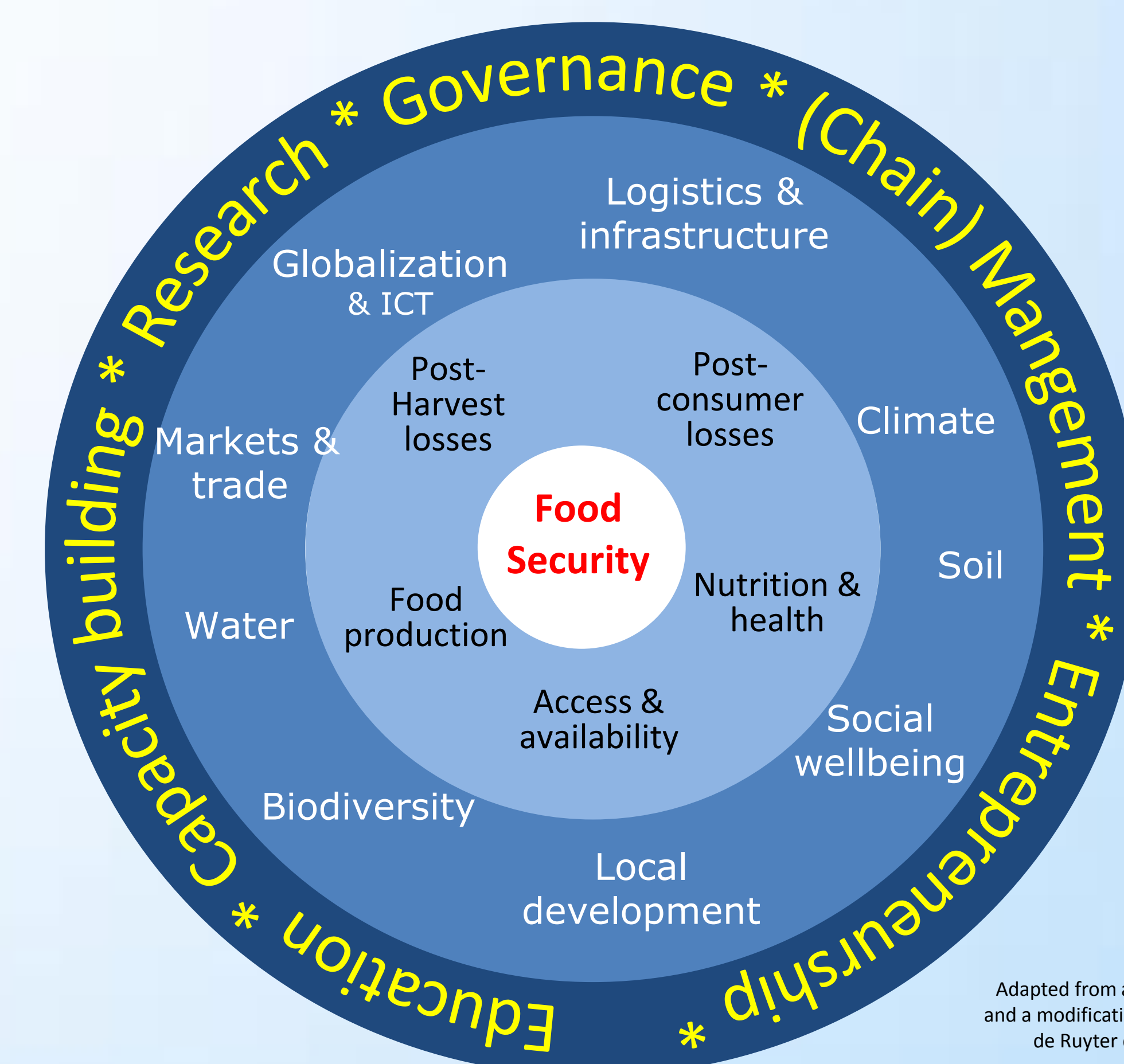
In the example above we see the typical 'Z-shape' of a fragmented integration of FS in an university, a result revealed by the AIFSHE audit. Some other general findings of the pilot 2013 are that FS is rated by all universities as a top priority, and relevant policies exist, although not always consistently implemented. Internal communication of FS and external marketing of academic expertise are also key issues.

Conclusions

- Food security, though a priority is not a central focus of university programmes;
- Greater emphasis is put on the vision and policy vs translating the vision into practice for achieving development impact – little coherence exists;
- The assessments, participatory approach used and emphasis on reporting back internally and to wider national stakeholders resulted in a new (or reinforced) dynamic for change, ownership, and enhancement of self-reflexion for all groups;
- Some ambition levels for improving the FS situation score quite high; they need to be further assessed for their feasibility, ensure a successful integration into programmes and improved practices that can demonstrate increased responsiveness to the food security challenge and measurable impact in the future.

Way forward 2014 & beyond

Universities and partners will build on lessons for deepening university engagement and creating centres of excellence on Food and Nutrition Security.



Adapted from a sketch by Wals (CSDFS) and a modification of a figure created by de Ruyter de Wildt et al, 2012, p 4.

References

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