The Role of Policy in Arctic Food (In)security
A Case Study of Nunavik

L. Thackeray[1,3], C. Furgal [2,3]

[1] Sustainability Studies Graduate Program, Trent University, Peterborough, ON
[2] Indigenous Environmental Studies/Sciences, Trent University, Peterborough, ON
[3] Health, Environment and Indigenous Communities Research Group, Trent University, Peterborough, ON

Background

Context

- Many of Canada's northern Indigenous communities have much higher levels of food insecurity than the Canadian population as whole
- Indigenous communities in the North utilize a mixed food system (store-bought and harvested 'country' foods) adding a further dimension to this complex issue
- The issue of food cuts across many sectors of society and a 'western' political framework is often seen as incompatible with governing complex and cross-cutting issues such as food
- Policy challenges and deficiencies in these fields may play a role in household food insecurity

What is Food Policy?

- Policy can range from formal regulation by institutions to unwritten accepted standards in a community or culture (Torjman, 2005)
- In this project we considered policy to include government and organizational documents at the federal, provincial and regional levels pertaining to regulations, standards, guidelines and processes for practice, as well as key programs and initiatives related to food

Food (In)Security in Nunavik

1) High prevalence of household food insecurity
- The 2004 Nunavik Inuit Health Survey reported 24% of individuals lacked food during the month prior to the survey, which is much higher than the rest of Canada
- Complex food system
2) Much like many Northern regions, Nunavik has a mixed food system
- Food policy must consider country foods, market foods and the potential for local production
- Examining food policy in a Northern context is identified as a gap in the literature
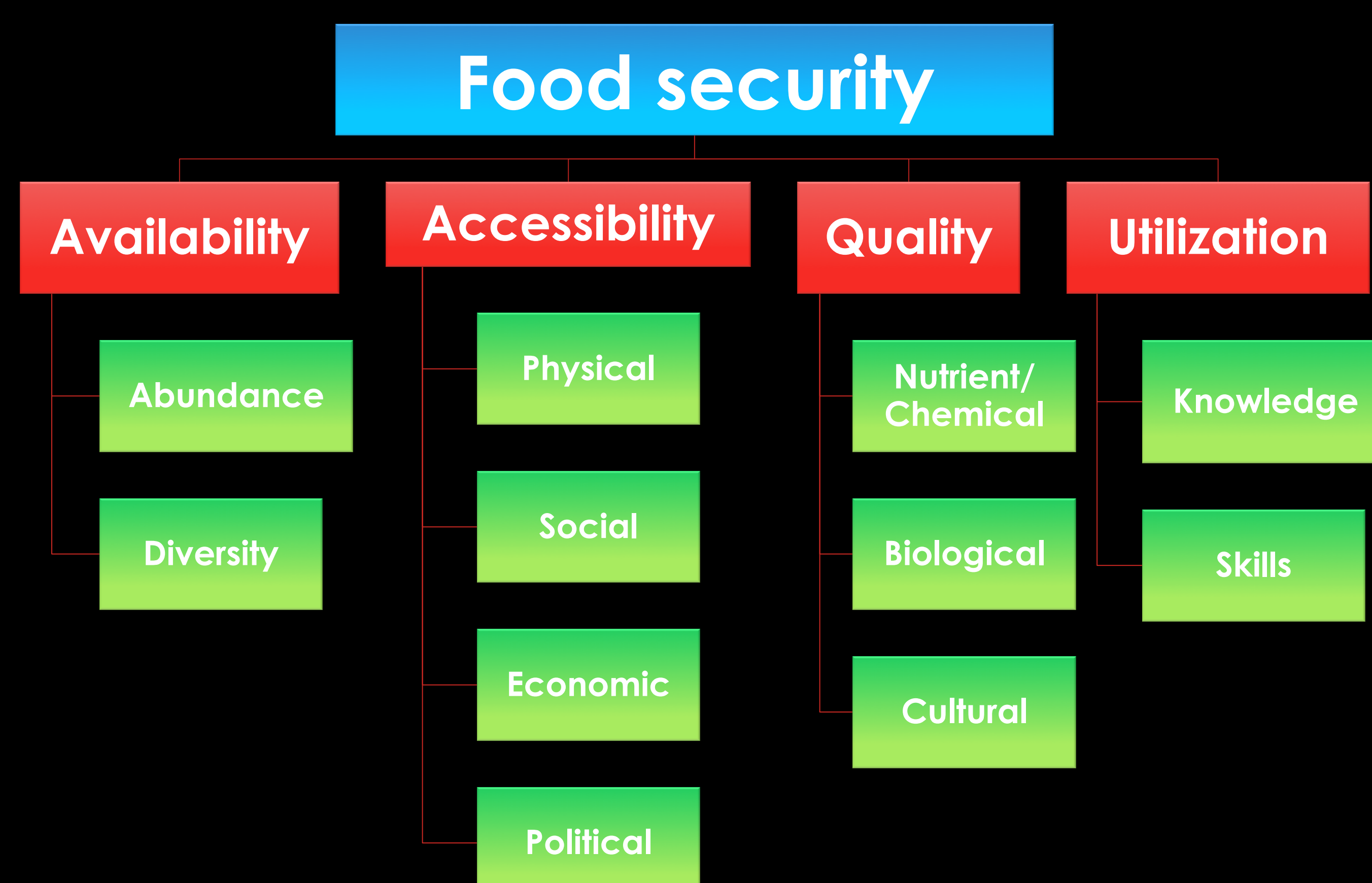
Research Question

What is the role of food and food related policy in household food security?
A case study of Nunavik

1) What is food and food related policy of relevance to Nunavik?

2) What is food security and food security status in Nunavik?

Figure 1: The research question and sub questions. The project explores the research question by examining the relationship between 1) and 2)

Food security

Availability	Accessibility	Quality	Utilization
Abundance	Physical	Nutrient/Chemical	Knowledge
Diversity	Social	Biological	Skills
	Economic	Cultural	
	Political		

Figure 2: Four pillars of food security with their corresponding sub-pillars, used as a coding scheme for this project. As adapted from Furgal et al. (2012)

Photos depicting both the market and traditional food systems in northern communities.
Photo credit: Kristeen McTavish

Methods

1) Document Collection and Review
- Food relevant policies were identified and gathered at federal, provincial and regional levels from sources publicly accessible online, such as government and organizational websites
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied and duplicates were eliminated to ensure documents retained for analysis were relevant

2) Document Coding and Analysis
- All documents and text contained therein were reviewed and coded using the components of a food security framework (Fig. 3)
- Coded text was then also categorized and coded as either a food security 'facilitator'(an element of policy as defined in this project that eases or enhances a particular element of food security) or 'barrier' (an element of policy as defined in this project that diminishes or inhibits a particular element of food security)
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the database was conducted to identify and examine patterns in the policy landscape at federal, provincial and regional levels
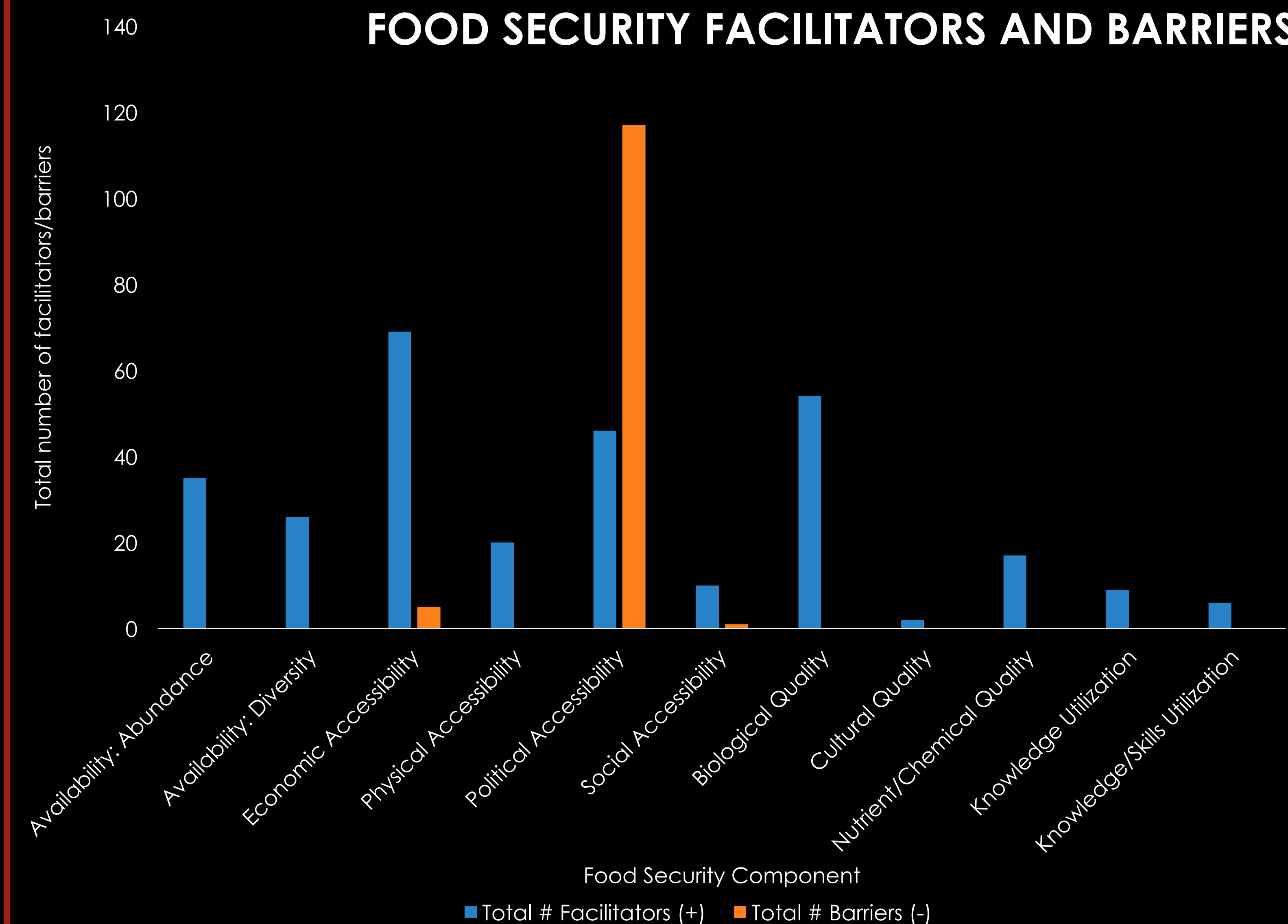
3) Literature review on status of food security in Nunavik
- Peer-reviewed and grey literature was reviewed to identify the state of knowledge on food security in the region and identify factors affecting status (e.g. income, high cost of goods, etc.)
- Factors were categorized using the components of the food security framework (Fig. 3)

4) Cross-analysis
- Relationship between identified policy facilitators/barriers and identified factors affecting food security was analyzed (shown in Fig. 2)
- Interpretation of the role of policy in food security status is being conducted

Preliminary Results

- A total of 747 documents representing policy as defined in the project were identified and included for analysis from the federal (n=286), provincial (n=215) and regional (n=246) levels
- Food and food related policy is an issue with multiple agencies and departments represented in the policy landscape at the federal (n=12) provincial (n=19), and regional (n=6) levels
- The largest number of total documents were related to food accessibility, particularly political accessibility
- A greater number of facilitators to food security than barriers existed in all categories of the framework with the exception of political accessibility which also reported the largest number of barriers among any category (Fig. 3)
- The largest number of facilitators in documents reviewed pertained to economic accessibility, followed by biological quality/safety

FOOD SECURITY FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Figure 3: Total number of food security facilitators and barriers among all policy documents (federal, provincial and regional) related to each pillar (availability, accessibility, quality and utilization) and sub-pillar of food security (N= 156).

Next Steps

- Currently completing policy landscape analysis and starting cross analysis with identified factors influencing food security in Nunavik after which results will be interpreted and conclusions/recommendations made
- Upon completion the results will be presented and discussed with the Nunavik Food Security Working Group