



FOOD *for* THE CITIES

Urban food security, nutrition and livelihoods

Challenges...

As people move to towns in search of better opportunities, accelerating urbanization brings new challenges. More people in urban areas mean that more food, more goods, more services and more employment opportunities must be provided.



Food security and livelihoods. While there are certainly more foods available year round and more jobs and social services in urban areas, not everyone is able to benefit. A growing number of urban poor face a daily struggle to feed their families. Poverty and unemployment are

often associated with social exclusion. This means that many poor people have neither physical nor economic access to adequate and safe foods, nor to the facilities required to store and prepare them.



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Food consumption and nutritional well-being. People who move to cities must adopt new methods of acquiring, preparing and eating food. Many city-dwellers have limited time for shopping and cooking and they rely increasingly on processed and convenience foods, including street foods. Poor shelter, lack of sanitation and hygiene and insufficient social services in slum areas further compound the problems of the poor. As a result, under-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, coupled with over-nutrition and rising problems of obesity and diet-related chronic diseases can be found in most cities. This situation is further exacerbated by low levels of physical activity.

FAO's response...

Achieving good nutrition in urban areas requires an integrated strategy:

- the amount and variety of safe and affordable foods required to meet nutritional needs must be available to everyone year round;
- people must have the means, knowledge, time and motivation to purchase, prepare and consume the food they need for a healthy and active life; and
- urban areas must be healthy and safe, provide basic services and ensure a favourable social environment.

Focussing on food security, nutrition and livelihoods in urban and peri-urban areas will help city-dwellers to attain a healthier life. It will also allow municipalities to broaden their strategy towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.



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FAO's action...

Surprisingly, the worrying situation which is emerging in many cities has not generated the sufficient attention to food security and nutrition. Action needs to be taken urgently. FAO has started to document the food and nutrition constraints of the urban poor to raise awareness of decision-makers and enable its Member Nations to develop appropriate strategies to protect and promote food security, nutrition and livelihoods in the urban environment.



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Examples of current and recent activities. They include case study reports on the double burden of malnutrition in developing countries; pilot testing of a participatory community process to assess food and nutrition needs in slum areas and present them to relevant stakeholders at municipal level (India); projects to assess the nutritional quality and safety of street foods (Burkina Faso, Guinea), and more specifically those sold to school children in urban areas (Tanzania and Uganda).

Recent publication. On the basis of its collaboration with FAO in the slum areas of Bhuj, India, the Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI) published, in collaboration with FAO, an Experience Learning Booklet entitled Participatory Urban Food and Nutrition Security Assessment Process.

FAO and urban nutrition. Since the mid 1980s, FAO has been working on the following areas:

- the impact of urbanisation on food supply;
- the role and safety of street foods in the urban environment;
- the impact of urbanisation on food security and food consumption patterns;
- the assessment of dietary changes and nutritional status in urban areas;
- and most recently, strategies to meet urban food security and nutrition needs.

For further information:

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