



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Food for the Cities Programme

Building sustainable and resilient city region food systems



Food systems link rural and urban communities

Looking beyond city limits – City region food systems

A city region food system approach recognizes that there is great diversity between contexts, the nature of urbanisation, sizes of urban centres (from small and intermediate towns to megacities), types of food systems, and nature of ties with the surrounding countryside and rural populations. It is a cross-sectoral, multi-level, multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach.

In an urbanizing world, dynamic food systems are affected by changes in social, physical and ecological factors. Food insecurity and malnutrition concerns need to be addressed in urban areas as much as in rural areas. City region food systems encompass the complex network of actors, processes and relationships involved in food production, processing, marketing and consumption in a given geographical region. A flow of people, goods and ecosystem services exists across this regional landscape. This rural-urban continuum fosters interdependence of rural and urban economies.



:: What we do

FAO aims to create more resilient and inclusive food systems within city regions and to build a basis for action. In partnership with RUAF, FAO assists governments in identifying and understanding gaps, bottlenecks and opportunities for sustainable planning, informed decision making, prioritizing investments, designing sustainable food policies and strategies to improve local food systems. FAO's Food for the Cities Programme focuses on:

- ❑ **Strengthening capacity** of local actors within a local food system to improve food and nutrition security.
- ❑ **Strengthening urban-rural linkages** for more inclusive, efficient and resilient activities of small-scale agriculture within a local food system while ensuring sustainable use of natural resources.
- ❑ **Fostering participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue processes** is essential to build ownership by all actors.
- ❑ **Scaling up practices** by evaluating, monitoring and mapping city region food systems.

:: Building sustainable and resilient city region food systems

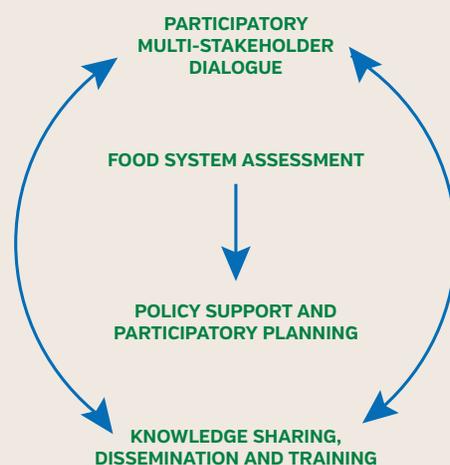
A city region food system that is both sustainable and resilient aims to:

- ❑ **Increase access to food.** Rural and urban residents have access to sufficient, nutritious, safe and affordable food, while supporting a local food culture.
- ❑ **Generate decent jobs and income.** It provides a vibrant and sustainable food economy with fair and decent jobs and income opportunities for small-scale producers and businesses.
- ❑ **Increase resilience.** It aims to increase resilience against shocks and to lessen the dependence on distant supply sources.
- ❑ **Foster rural-urban linkages.** It connects food, nutrient and resource flows across urban and rural areas and prevents/reduces food wastes. It promotes urban-rural relations, social relations and the inclusiveness of smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups across the supply chain.
- ❑ **Promote ecosystem and natural resources management.** It protects agroecological diversity and ecosystems while reducing the ecological footprint of the urban food systems –from production to consumption– and lowering greenhouse gas emission in food transport, processing, packaging and waste management.
- ❑ **Support participatory and inclusive governance.** Food policy and appropriate regulations in the context of urban and territorial planning fosters transparency and ownership of the food chain.

:: In practice

FAO's Food for Cities Programme, in collaboration with RUAF's City Tools Project, is engaging with city regions around the world to develop a framework and action plan that underlines priority areas of intervention to build sustainable and resilient city region food systems. The process involves:

- ❑ **Participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue.** It is essential for it to be on-going at all stages in the process.
- ❑ **Food system assessment.** This provides the basis for in depth analysis, defines baseline indicators for identified issues, monitors changes and progress, and develops indexes (to describe status, constraints, bottlenecks). The key outputs include multi-dimensional indexes, spatial information and case studies.
- ❑ **Policy support and participatory planning.** This allows building scenarios, developing strategies and action plans to address local priorities and strengthen urban-rural linkages while considering forecasted urbanization trends and implications on agricultural land, resources and local production. Training needs and opportunities for strengthening farmers' production will be identified.
- ❑ **Knowledge sharing, dissemination and training.**



:: Where we work



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For more information

**FAO's Food for Cities Programme:
Building food secure and resilient city regions**

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RUAF's City Tools Project

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