

# Sustainable Food Systems and Urban Rural Linkages in the New Urban Agenda<sup>1</sup>

## *Summary Analysis*

The first zero draft of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) released in May 2016 had very little language about the future of food and cities. Concerted advocacy on the part of concerned civil society networks, local government networks, UN agencies, experts and national delegations from May to July resulted in language added to more than 20 paragraphs by negotiators to successive drafts that, when taken together and finally approved, will represent the most substantive international agreement linking of urban and rural communities in the planning and development of territorial food systems that provide food security and improved nutrition for all. To a degree that could not have been anticipated even a few months ago, **food security, nutrition and sustainable food systems are placed at the center of urban and territorial sustainability.**

What follows is a summary of the food and nutrition content in the New Urban Agenda. Audiences for this summary are all interested parties at national, territorial and local levels, both in and outside government. The NUA document agreed to by negotiators in New York on Saturday, 10 September, will be adopted in Quito during the Habitat III Conference from 17-20 October 2016.

**Bringing food to a priority level:** Food security is now specifically mentioned in the second paragraph of the *Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All* (2). In *Our Shared Vision*, food security and nutrition are first in a list of public goods and services that fulfill the social function of cities” including the social and ecological function of land”. (13a).

The same vision paragraph recognizes the territorial functions of cities “as hubs and drivers for balanced sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development at all levels” (13e). *Principles and commitments* include a critical mention of the importance of “preventing land speculation and promoting secure land tenure” which lies at the heart of securing viable food production and smallholder access to nearby markets (14b) and “protecting ecosystems and biodiversity” (14c).

In the *Call for Action* smallholder farmers and fishers are named among sub-populations that require particular attention to address specific challenges (20). Thus, in the very first four out of twenty-two pages and 164 paragraphs of the NUA **we now have language that makes integral the linkages between smallholder farmers and fishers to food security and nutrition in integrated territorial development across urban and rural areas.** The following sections of the NUA take these priorities (among the many others) to the level of specific commitments, including the nexus of issues such as food, water, energy, waste, etc., support for integrated governance mechanisms, balanced urban rural spatial planning and financial support. These are the levels of specificity that numerous expert meetings and briefing events, issue and policy papers, brought to national delegations in the negotiation of the NUA.

**From priority to commitment:** The *Quito Implementation Plan for the New Urban Agenda* again includes a commitment “to ensure equitable and affordable access to sustainable basic physical and social infrastructure” including “safe, nutritious and adequate food”. (34)

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<sup>1</sup> This draft has been prepared by Thomas Forster, City Region Senior Fellow, EcoAgriculture Partners, with contributions from organizations in the [City Region Food Systems \(CRFS\) Alliance](#) closely following negotiations for the New Urban Agenda from May to September, 2016.

Up to this point the additions are insertions of food, nutrition and smallholder language in pre-existing paragraphs. Paragraphs 49-51 however lay out a holistic approach to “support territorial systems that integrate urban and rural functions” and “promote sustainable management of natural resources and land” and “foster equitable regional development across the urban-rural continuum”. Governments commit to “promote the development of urban spatial frameworks,” including “strengthening food system planning”.

**Issues linking urban and rural planning:** In promoting *Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development* in the face of climate change and disasters of all kinds, specific urban and rural natural resources essential to well functioning urban and territorial ecosystems are detailed in an effort to **integrate planning for land, open spaces, waterways and coastal areas, energy, food and forests and waste with an emphasis on local provision of good and basic services including food**. These paragraphs (70-71) are not only relevant to the work of national governments, but reinforce the goals of global networks of local governments, including ICLEI, UCLG, C40, the Milan Pact cities among others, as well as regional and national networks.

The critical issues that need better integration across urban and territorial planning and development also need supportive governance frameworks. National urban policies (86) are needed to “mainstream sustainable urban and territorial development”, linking national, subnational and local coordination and cooperation (86) to “promote coherence between goals and measures of sectoral policies, including **rural development, land use, food security, management of natural resources,**” etc. (88).

**Governance for functional territories:** Capacity building for “effective local and metropolitan multi-level governance, across administrative borders, and based on functional territories” is a goal that has been highlighted by experts and representatives of local governments throughout the Habitat process. Not just governments, but support for “full and effective participation” and regulatory frameworks “in partnering with communities, civil society and the private sector” are included in urban and territorial governance (90).

Urban rural linkages and integrated territorial development have been associated with *planning and managing urban spatial development* in Habitat Issue Papers and Policy Papers leading up to the negotiation of the NUA. In this section we find explicit support for “integrated, polycentric, and balanced territorial development” including “small and intermediate cities and towns in enhancing food security and nutrition systems” as well as perhaps the time that a call for support of small scale farmers and fishers, urban agriculture and farming as part of the urban-rural continuum includes a preference for access to local markets (95).

This is what many advocates, experts and the UN food agencies have been advocating. The most important sentence may be in the following paragraph that states “**we will promote urban-rural partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms based on functional territories and urban areas as effective instruments to perform municipal and metropolitan administrative tasks, deliver public services, and promote both local and regional development**” (96). “Inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms” is a broad governance category, and explicit mention of subnational integrated and equitable urban and territorial governance mechanisms is important (98).

**Focus on food and nutrition:** A paragraph (123) dedicated to food and nutrition in the context of urban and territorial development was added after expert meetings in May and June and reads:

We will promote the integration of food and nutrition needs of urban residents, particularly the urban poor, in urban and territorial planning, to end hunger and malnutrition. We will promote coordination of sustainable food security and agriculture policies across urban, peri-urban, and

rural areas to facilitate the production, storage, transport, and marketing of food to consumers in adequate and affordable ways to reduce food losses and to prevent and reuse food waste. We will further promote the coordination of food policies with energy, water, transport, waste, and other policies in urban areas to maximize efficiencies and minimize waste.

This paragraph is consistent with the provisions of the Framework for Action in the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact signed by 128 cities as of September 2016. The Milan Pact has registered commitment to implement the New Urban Agenda in the issue area of food, nutrition and sustainable food systems.

**Organizing for implementation:** Two paragraphs in the *Means of Implementation* are critical to operationalize the support and commitment in earlier sections of the NUA. Paragraph 136 calls for “vertical and horizontal models of distribution of financial resources to decrease inequalities across territories... and between urban and rural areas”. Paragraph 148 calls for the engagement of local government associations along with civil society, private sector, professionals, academia and research institutions to deliver capacity development programmes,...peer-to-peer learning,...the establishment of practitioner networks and science-policy interface practices”.

Taken together, the paragraphs referenced above, and other indirectly supportive paragraphs, constitute a strong global foundation of support for the inclusion of food security, nutrition and sustainable food systems as a priority for sustainable urbanization, the implementation of which will be the responsibility of many actors who may utilize this normative framework in support of food policy and practice in cities, territories and countries in coming years.