



# Call for experiences and effective policy approaches in addressing food security and nutrition in the context of changing rural-urban dynamics

## Template for submissions

(Approximately 1000 words in total)

### Proponent

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### Main responsible entity

Various

### Date/Timeframe

Various

### Funding source

Various

### Location

Various

### Background/Context

Feeding growing cities around the world is a complex and multifaceted issue, which is complicated by the blurring of boundaries between what we classify as “urban” versus “rural” (McGee, 2009). Countries like China, for example, have higher “rural” population densities than many North American and European cities. The food security of urbanites is primarily predicated upon the availability of affordable, and hopefully high quality, food and the means to purchase it. The world currently produces enough food to feed the global population. Reducing post-harvest losses and wastage up and down the food chain is of utmost importance (Yasmeen, 2014). Hence the importance of sustainable livelihoods. Though urban and peri-urban agriculture is important from the point of view of greening cities and connecting urbanites to the experience of growing food, as Hayson and Battersby (2016) and others have demonstrated, few poor urbanites grow their own food. This contribution will document a few examples of initiatives that have enhanced urban food security and provide links to further information / publications.

### Focus/Objectives

1. **White Revolution – India (dairying)**: Also known as “Operation Flood”. Objective was to increase production, reduce milk spoilage and improve distribution by empowering

traditional producers (women with one or two cows) thereby increasing rural incomes and reducing costs to consumers;

2. **Supporting livelihoods in the food sector:** Organizing food producers into associations, cooperatives and unions to improve their working and living conditions;
3. **Progressive approaches to street vending:** Providing stable access to urban public space for livelihoods.

### Key characteristics of the experience/process

1. **White Revolution – India (dairying):** Development funds, leadership of the late Dr. Verghese Kurien of the Indian Institute of Management – Anand, building on the experience of AMUL dairy cooperative, and meaningful involvement of the grassroots;
2. **Supporting livelihoods in the food sector:** Organizing microentrepreneurs to leverage collective power resulting in creation of successful businesses (Lijjat Pappad, AMUL, Cebu City United Vendors Association) as well as, in some cases, registration with Securities and Exchange Commission, running for political office and use of the media;
3. **Progressive approaches to street vending:** Leadership of municipal authorities, grassroots activism (National Association of Street Vendors of India), legal victories.

### Key actors involved and their role

1. **White Revolution – India (dairying):** As mentioned, Dr. Verghese Kurien of the Indian Institute of Management – Anand, modelling the success of AMUL, investment in chilling and distribution, and meaningful involvement of the grassroots, especially women;
2. **Supporting livelihoods in the food sector:** As above and, in some cases, support of trade unions or their umbrella organizations (e.g. VICTO in the Philippines, SEWA in India);
3. **Progressive approaches to street vending:** Well intentioned municipal leaders, pressure tactics by vendors through grassroots organizing and engagement, including use of media and legal approaches (depending on the context).

### Key changes observed with regards to food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture and food systems

1. **White Revolution – India (dairying):** Within a few decades, India went from a situation of milk shortages to becoming a dairy exporter. AMUL is now one of if not the largest dairy company in the world. Institutionalization of the National Dairy Development Board. Affordable milk and dairy products for urbanites with empowerment of traditional dairy producers (women with one or two cows);
2. **Supporting livelihoods in the food sector:** In democratic countries such as the Philippines and India, empowerment of small-scale producers through collective action, more political clout resulting in sustainable livelihoods and greater access to power;
3. **Progressive approaches to street vending:** Depending on the context and political system, improved access to public space or alternatives for sustainable livelihoods. Democratic countries tend to have better, more stable, long term outcomes.

### Challenges faced

1. **White Revolution – India (dairying):** Criticism of imported and mixed cattle breeds, not suited to Indian conditions;

2. **Supporting livelihoods in the food sector:** In certain political contexts, restrictions on grassroots organizing and mobilization;
3. **Progressive approaches to street vending:** In many cities, harassment of vendors by municipal authorities, including police.

### Lessons/Key messages

- A. Overall, we need a comprehensive food-system approach to understand food security for urbanites, particularly those with low-incomes;
- B. We need to critically examine concepts of urban, peri-urban and rural, and how these are defined in various contexts as well as the blurring of conceptual boundaries.
- C. While urban agriculture is important, it may not play as important a role in urban food security as the urban food-security discourse suggests. Attention to other aspects of urban food supply and distribution is also needed.
- D. As Amartya Sen argued many decades ago, food security is mostly about purchasing power and entitlements, hence attention to incomes and livelihoods is of utmost importance to the question of food security, particularly in urban areas.
- E. The world currently produces enough food to generously feed the global population, in addition to incomes and entitlements, more focus needs to be placed on reducing food waste throughout the production and consumption change, particularly post-harvest losses (see Yasmeen 2014).
- F. The important role of women in the agri-food system, should not be ignored. Women play a key role in both food production and consumption in rural and urban areas.
- G. Municipal policies with respect to livelihoods, including within the urban food-system are as important as agricultural and food-distribution systems and related policies.

### Further reading:

1. Hayson, Gareth and Jane Battersby "Why urban agriculture isn't a panacea for Africa's food crisis," *The Conversation*, April 14, 2016. Available at: <http://theconversation.com/why-urban-agriculture-isnt-a-panacea-for-africas-food-crisis-57680>
2. McGee, T.G. (2009), *The Spatiality of Urbanization: The Policy Challenges of Mega-Urban and Desakota Regions of Southeast Asia* (PDF), UNU-IAS Working Paper (161), United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies [http://archive.ias.unu.edu/resource\\_centre/161%20Terry%20McGee.pdf](http://archive.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/161%20Terry%20McGee.pdf)
3. Yasmeen, G. "Accessing Urban Public Space for a Livelihood: India, Thailand and Philippines in comparative perspective," In *Women, Law and Culture: Culture, Conformity and Conflict*, edited by Jocelyne A. Scutt, London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2016. Hyperlink: <https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9783319449371>.
4. Yasmeen, G. and Narumol Nirathron, Vending in Public Space: The Case of Bangkok: multimedia policy brief commissioned by WIEGO. Co-authored with Dr. Narumol Nirathron of Thammasat University. <http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Yasmeen-Vending-Public-Space-Bangkok-WIEGO-PB16.pdf> (Published in August, 2014, dated May 2014)
5. Yasmeen, G. "Malthus Revisited: Can the planet support another billion people?" *iPolitics*, November 28, 2014. <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2014/11/28/malthus-revisited-can-the-planet-support-another-billion-people/>

6. Yasmeen, G. *Bangkok's Foodscape: Public Eating, Gender Relations, and Urban Change*, Bangkok: White Lotus Books, 2006 (Studies in Contemporary Thailand No. 16).  
<http://www.whitelotuspress.com/bookdetail.php?id=E22485>
7. Yasmeen, G. *Feeding Asian Cities. Proceedings of a Regional Seminar* convened by CityNet, the Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific with the technical support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) held in November 2000, Bangkok. Published in May 2001. Rome: FAO. Food into Cities collection, No. 2. 149 pp. Translated into French: *Nourrir les villes d'Asie* (2003). Available in English at:  
<http://www.cityfarmer.org/FeedingAsianCities.pdf> and in French at:  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y3399f/y3399f00.HTM>
8. Yasmeen, G. "Stockbrokers-turned-sandwich vendors: the economic crisis and small-scale food retailing in Thailand and the Philippines" In *Development and Security in Southeast Asia Volume II: The People* (eds.) David B. Dewitt and Carolina G. Hernandez. Series: The International Political Economy of New Regionalisms Series, Aldershot, Hampshire (UK): Ashgate, 2003.  
[https://books.google.ca/books/about/Development\\_and\\_Security\\_in\\_Southeast\\_Asia.html?id=heDsAAAAMAAJ&redir\\_esc=y&hl=en](https://books.google.ca/books/about/Development_and_Security_in_Southeast_Asia.html?id=heDsAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y&hl=en)
9. Yasmeen, G. "Workers in the urban "informal" food sector: innovative organizing strategies." *Food, Nutrition and Agriculture* Vol. 21, 2001, pp. 32-43.  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/Y1931M/y1931m05.htm>
10. Feeding Cities in the Horn of Africa. Proceedings of a Subregional Workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 7-9 May, 2002. Organized by: Addis Ababa City Government and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the auspices of: World Bank Horn of Africa Food Security Initiative and FAO Food Supply and Distribution to Cities Initiative. Report available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x8406e/x8406e00.htm>
11. Yasmeen, G. CFP Report 32 "Urban Agriculture in India: A Survey of Expertise, Capacities and Recent Experience" by Gisèle Yasmeen, Ph.D. A Study Commissioned by IDRC's South Asia Regional Office, 2001. Available at: <http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10276266100report32.doc>