



“Food Supply and Distribution to Cities”

FAO-ISRA Sub-regional seminar  
“Food Supply and Distribution to Francophone African Cities”  
Dakar, 14-17 April 197

## **FINAL STATEMENT**

**AC/31-99E**

Recent demographic, social, economic and institutional changes have aggravated the food supplies and distribution problems of African cities, all of which will be doubling their current population in less than twenty years.

Very few initiatives have been taken to improve the performance of food supply and distribution systems (FSDS) to cities and minimise the cost at which good quality food products reach the urban consumers' tables.

For this reason, FAO and the Senegalese Institute for Agricultural Research (ISRA) organised in Dakar, Senegal, in April 1997, a sub-regional seminar "Food Supply and Distribution to Francophone African Cities".

During this seminar discussions centred on approaches and initiatives for assisting decision makers and FSDS actors to support the development of FSDS for the enhancement of urban food security.

This Seminar represents therefore an important follow-up of the engagements taken by FAO member countries at the World Food Summit, held in Rome in 1996.

More than one hundred participants, amongst whom were numbered the Mayors of some of African cities, researchers, professionals and city administrators, met in Dakar.

### **Objectives of the seminar**

The objectives of the seminar were the following:

- Stress the importance of FSDS for urban food security.
- Underline the constraints limiting FSDS development in satisfying rapidly expanding urban food demand.
- Identify available alternative public and private interventions aiming at improving FSDS dynamism and efficiency.
- Facilitate contacts and exchanges between researchers and professionals in Sub-Saharan countries.

## **Main recommendations**

### **Urban consumers**

Consumers are FSDS actors. Consequently, all interventions must take their points of view into account. This requires a better understanding of the needs and expectations of urban consumers as well as of their food purchasing habits. In particular:

- To ensure the satisfaction of the food needs of all consumers independently of their living conditions and income. Measures favouring the diversification of available food products should be promoted.
- To take a regional market perspective in order to satisfy consumers' wish for food diversification, benefit from ecological complementarities, reduce economic dependence and stimulate endogenous development.
- To favour the development of consumer associations to dialogue with various groups with interests in commercial activities in the food chain.

### **Food quality in FSDS**

- It is necessary to strengthen the technical capacity and qualifications of staff working in food quality control. These services need legislative and regulatory texts in line with the *Codex Alimentarius*.
- It is necessary to sensitise consumers on the importance of a healthy and good quality diet, and professionals on the advantages of standards for practices in food production, processing and marketing.

### **Modernising FSDS**

- It is necessary to introduce in Africa modern food distribution systems. This implies, *inter alia*, the economic distinction between wholesale and retail markets, and locally adapted market structures.
- The conditions under which wholesale marketing of perishable food take place in African cities present considerable hygienic and health hazards to everybody, and may contribute to mediocre economic performance. Social consequences require national and local political solutions.
- It is consequently extremely urgent to make new and modern market structures available to stimulate competition. Whichever the type of structure, it is necessary, as early as project design, to take the points of view of market agents into account, through dialogue, information and sensitisation, so as to ensure that investments are adapted to the needs and the financial means of market agents.
- The authorities should be involved in the development and management of markets.
- Urban food security should be an important factor in the establishment, development and stimulation of urban-rural linkages. The efficiency of food supplies to urban areas also depends upon the organisation of marketing systems, infrastructures and services in rural areas, to the benefit of producers and traders.

### **The informal sector and FSDS**

The informal sector, far from constituting a social anomaly, is a response to living conditions in urban areas and to the difficulties in food supply and distribution activities. In all African cities, street feeds millions of workers. It should be better known and helped to develop in various aspects: institutional, technological, financial and organisational.

### **The State and local authorities**

The State must be a regulator and a mediator. It must facilitate and supervise the functioning and development of FSDS. Restating the role of the State means to:

- Adopt a credit policy adapted to different actors and their different needs.
- Facilitate the development of a food processing industry in line with the needs of urban consumers.
- Establish a legislative and regulatory framework in which all market actors can freely organise themselves.

Policies and programmes must favour the creation of interprofessional organisations and consumer associations.

Urban markets, which are public services of general interest, are to be placed under the responsibility of local authorities which have an important role in the development of FSDS. Local authorities may, however, delegate the management of market infrastructure under pre-defined modalities.

Local authorities have an important role in FSDS functioning and development, as is confirmed by the Mayors Declaration (see below).

### **Peri-urban agriculture and FSDS**

Food production activities in peri-urban areas, from where many food products originate, help create employment in production and marketing activities. These functions must be supported and peri-urban agriculture needs to be included in urban development plans.

### **Food transport**

Transport costs are often the largest single component of food marketing costs. Consequently, the development of FSDS require that food transport issues be dealt with at all planning levels. Attention should increasingly be given to food transport needs and modalities.

### **Women and FSDS**

Women play a fundamental role in every aspect of the food chain: from production to processing, from distribution to consumption.

Urban perspectives in the third millennium strengthen the consumer expectations with regard to the services rendered by women. Consequently, their working conditions must be improved and they must be encouraged to invest in new and profitable food commercial activities. A regulatory, social and financial environment, adapted to their needs, must be developed. All urban plans and investment must take gender issues into consideration.

### **Legislation and regulations**

Liberalisation, privatisation and decentralisation policies and programmes must not lead to anarchical *laissez-faire*. Well functioning FSDS require the constant revision of legislation and regulations to ensure their adequacy to the needs of private food commercial activities, and their capacity to stimulate the development of more modern FSDS.

The legislative framework for FSDS development must clarify the intervention of the State and provide the basis for its support.

It is necessary to legislate concerning usages, customs and regulations for the activities of police, administration and fiscal authorities with respect to local food commerce.

The needs of interregional food trade require the harmonisation of food trade regulations within the West African Economic and Monetary Union as well as the West and Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

An important question: can the principle “Nobody can ignore the law” be applied to illiterate people?

### **Information and training**

FSDS agents must be professional and specialised. Steps should be taken to favour this.

Local authorities, in collaboration with trader associations, Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Agriculture, ought to analyse information needs of market agents and their training requirements.

## **Urban planning**

Learning about FSDS-related problems gives the opportunity to improve urban planning methods and practices. To ignore FSDS would exacerbate the drift between town planning and the way the city evolves. In this context, the question concerning powers and their effective redistribution under decentralisation programmes should be addressed.

A participatory approach, at local authority level, should be effectively pursued with the aim of reaching acceptable and realistic compromises regarding urban land use and management for:

- strengthening the dialogue with FSDS actors;
- facilitating the organisation of an information and follow-up system focused on FSDS;
- supporting the development of information, training and exchange centres on aspects relating to FSDS in African countries, calling upon existing universities and research institutions.

It is necessary to expand the knowledge of FSDS-related aspects as they relate to urban and periurban areas in Africa.

## **Future research**

Some research orientations were suggested by participants for supporting FSDS development policies and programmes in African countries.



“Food Supply and Distribution to Cities” Interregional Programme

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## **MAYORS’ DECLARATION**

The Mayors of Accra (Ghana), Dakar (Senegal), Douala (Cameroon), Treichville, Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire), who participated at the FAO-ISRA sub-regional seminar “Food Supply and Distribution to Francophone African Cities”, held in Dakar, Senegal, from 14 to 17 April 1997, recognise the importance of the theme of the seminar and of the conclusions and recommendations of participants.

They also underline the urgency and need to ensure, in collaboration with all the concerned actors, the food security of the populations in the urban areas they administer.

The Mayors present in Dakar affirm the importance of the role of local authorities in the enhancement of the food security of urban populations in Africa. They therefore declare their wish to collaborate with Central Government and private sector institutions and organisations in:

- studying the setting of institutional bases to ensure an adequate food supply for all urban consumers;
- favouring the necessary studies to improve the efficiency of food supply and distribution to cities;
- collaborating with all institutions and organisations to strengthen solidarity with the rural world;
- collaborating in activities sharing the above objectives;
- improving their access to information sources;
- obtaining the assistance of national and international institutions and organisations working towards the objective of food security and, in particular, of the decentralised structures of FAO.