

27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture

Item 2.8: Agricultural transformation and the Urban Food Agenda

Introduction notes

Cities consume 70% of the global food supply and almost 80% percent of the total energy produced in the world. Many urban and peri-urban communities are exposed to food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition including overweight and obesity and the diffusion of diet-related non-communicable diseases.

Today, 55% of the world's population resides in urban areas and 85% live in or within 3 hours of an urban centre of at least 50,000 people. By 2050, 75% and 85% of rural people or between 2.5 and 2.8 billion people will live near urban areas, meaning that the rural-small city continuum/interface will account for around 4.9 billion people, or 57% of the world's total population with the majority being poor and food insecure. Development of sustainable food systems in those new "rural-urban" realities and support to small and medium size cities in shaping agriculture and food systems, holds the potential for sustainably reducing poverty and food insecurity.

Small and medium-sized cities can influence local agriculture through stronger connections with the rural hinterlands by promoting local food supply and demand and shorter food supply chains. Increasing demand for food can be supplied by local small farmers while the development of local short supply chains can increase employment in small cities and towns. This fruitful interaction can be key in facilitating an inclusive, sustainable agricultural transformation through linkages with the surrounding rural space (functional territory) and in addressing key social, economic, and environmental challenges. In this context, policy action can have a major role in supporting such functional territories to improve livelihoods and strengthen the resilience of people and agri-food systems.

The document *Agriculture transformation and the Urban Food Agenda* proposes to assess these urban-rural realities and the role of small and medium size cities in shaping agriculture and food systems from a "functional territories" perspective. It also introduces FAO's Framework for the Urban Food Agenda (a corporate strategy for ensuring resilient food systems and good nutrition in urban areas) as an entry point for FAO to support and scale-up policy, planning, governance and food systems actions in functional territories. The Urban Food Agenda, is a key component of the recently launched Green Cities Initiative, and is strongly linked to the poverty reduction strategy proposed in the Hand in Hand Initiative.

The Committee on Agriculture is invited to *inter alia*:

- Recognise the potential of and the functional territory approach as a fundamental strategy to meet key SDGs.
- Recommend that FAO's Urban Food Agenda should focus more on small and medium sized cities and functional territories.
- Acknowledge the critical role that sub-national and city governments can play in catalysing a dynamic Urban Food Agenda to meet the SDG2 and other goals.
- Promote the inclusion of the Urban Food Agenda and functional territorial approach in FAO's corporate initiatives such as Hand-in-Hand, "FAO Green Cities" and in the process towards the UN Food Systems Summit.

Jamie Morrison, Director, Food Systems and Food Safety Division, ESF