



STRENGTHENING URBAN AND PERI-URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE CONTEXT OF URBANIZATION AND RURAL TRANSFORMATION

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Rationale

(i) By 2050, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanization one of the twenty-first century's most transformative trends¹. Considering that an estimated 1.7 billion people of the world's 2.2 billion people experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity already live in urban and peri-urban (U-PU) areas, this rapid urban growth represents a significant food security and nutrition global challenge.

(ii) Urbanization and peri-urbanization result from interconnected transformations in demography, economies, culture, social systems, land use and technology and innovation. Understanding the changes occurring throughout agriculture and food systems requires therefore adopting a rural-urban continuum lens, which takes into account the different scales of territories and the dependencies between rural, urban and peri-urban areas, rather than seeing them as separate identities. This approach allows highlighting the growing interconnectedness of urban, peri-urban, and rural areas as a foundation for addressing socio-economic dynamics, planning effective resource distribution, and developing policies that reflect the complex realities of these interlinked communities. In this perspective, the concept of an “alliance of territories” is crucial. It promotes multi-level and cross-sectoral cooperation among local and regional governments, ensuring that food policies and resource management strategies reflect the shared challenges and interdependencies of urban and rural areas. By fostering stronger institutional and economic linkages, this alliance can enhance resilience, equity, and sustainability across the entire food system

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(iii) Building on a rural-urban continuum approach, the following CFS policy recommendations are envisioned as a focused, action-oriented guidance tool to enhance the ability of U-PU residents to realize their right to food in the context of multiple challenges such as climate change, political instability, economic downturns, increased inequalities, conflicts, rapid and unplanned urbanization. They aim at fostering policy coherence between different governance levels and sectors to ensure integrated territorial food system strategies.

(iv) The Policy Recommendations recognize that the complex nature of urban and peri-urban food systems requires a system approachholistic approach that integrates multi-sectoral, multi-level, multilateral and multi-actor governance processes, within and beyond the State, to promote an enabling policy environment that empower stakeholders and foster collaboration to deliver equitable, resilient and sustainable food systems. In particular, it is important to highlight the key role of local governments in driving innovation and shaping food systems to achieve food security and nutrition.

(v) At the same time, ensuring food security and nutrition across the rural-urban continuum requires policies that address inequalities and are embedded in human rights, including the right to food, the right to water, the right to adequate housing and the right to decent work at all levels of governance. This implies adhering to human rights obligations, and principles such as participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law. These principles should be operationalized through concrete mechanisms such as participatory budgeting or decision-making platforms.

¹ A/RES/71/256 – New Urban Agenda

(vi) These Policy Recommendations are addressed primarily to national and subnational governments, in particular regional/metropolitan/municipal departments. Additionally, the recommendations are addressed to private sector associations, philanthropic foundations, civil society organizations, International Organizations, universities and academic institutions. They are voluntary and non-binding and should be interpreted and applied consistently with existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments and in accordance with national legal systems and their institutions. They build upon and complement relevant existing CFS policy instruments and are informed by the CFS High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) report on "Strengthening Urban and Peri-Urban Food Systems to Achieve Food Security and Nutrition, in the context of Urbanization and Rural Transformation".

A. Urban and peri-urban food systems for food security and nutrition

Production

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, should:

1. Prioritize equitable access to land, water, finance, innovation and technology, and other food production resources to address the needs of the poorest, most vulnerable and those most left behind²; (*access to resources*)
This should include measures to better protect smallholder farmers from land speculatation or landgrabbing or displacement due to urban expansion;
2. Develop and implement land-use zoning policies, including forestry and greening, that safeguard and support urban agriculture, livestock and fishing activities; (*zoning policies*). These policies should be designed in collaboration with local communities to ensure alignment with their needs practices.
3. Prioritize agricultural extension services that preserve natural resources, enhance soil health and biodiversity. This could entail promoting agroecological and other innovative approaches³, such as permaculture, regenerative agriculture and bioeconomy strategies as well as regenerative and nutrition sensitive practices, among others; (*extension services*)
4. Strengthen food systems actors' equitable access to capacity development programmes for the use of innovation and technologies such as water efficient hydroponics, vertical and indoor farming, renewable energy systems, artificial intelligence, as well as social innovations such as community gardens; (*innovations*) These support mechanisms should ensure that small-scale producers, women, vulnerable communities and youth benefit from these advancements.

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Midstream (storage, processing, transportation, wholesale)

Governments, including subnational and local and regional government authorities, the private sector and civil society should:

5. Strengthen public and private investment in infrastructure and logistics, and enhance capacities in the intermediary segments of urban food value chains, to chains, to increase access to fresh and perishable foods while supporting local economies and promoting sustainability. This may entail strengthening investment in innovation and technology, such as climate-resilient, energy-efficient and affordable storage systems, biodegradable or recyclable packaging, and digital platforms to effectively leverage the opportunities that urban and peri-urban food systems provide; (*investment*)
6. Encourage social innovations such as community supported agriculture, food cooperatives, food hubs and farmers' markets that enhance access to safe and nutritious food while contributing to equity, social inclusion and resilience across the rural and urban continuum; (*social innovations*)
7. Foster diversity of food actors and support inclusive wholesale markets to strengthen connections with small-scale producers and informal sector actors, ensuring fair supply chain practices to redistribute value.

² For the purpose of these policy recommendations *the poorest, most vulnerable and those most at risk of being left behind* refer to: women, smallholders, family farmers, peasants, landless, farmworkers, homeless, informal workers, migrants, internally displaced people, refugees, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, racial and ethnic minority groups, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic illnesses, older people, youth, boys and girls.

³ In line with the CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for sustainable food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. 2021

Governments should also implement policies that prevent monopolization and price manipulation in food distribution chains. This could entail supporting the use of innovation and technologies for small businesses that connect consumers to small scale producers through digital platforms and delivery services; (*inclusive supply chains*)

Market and retail

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, should:

8. Support territorial markets and shorter supply chains that integrate urban and rural functions into the national and subnational urban planning, thus promoting sustainable management and use of natural resources and land, as well as increased access to fresh produce for all residents across the rural-urban continuum; (*territorial markets*). Local and regional governments could play a key role in designing and facilitating the implementation of policies that strengthen direct linkages between producers and consumers, including through farmer's markets, the use of municipal infrastructures, wholesale's markets, cooperatives and urban food hubs;
9. Protect and sustain traditional markets by strengthening investment in infrastructure, operations, logistics, innovation and technology, access to water and affordable energy, as well as by providing capacity development and training to value chain actors, particularly informal vendors, to enhance food safety standards across the rural urban continuum; (*food safety*)
10. Address power imbalances across the rural-urban continuum to foster competition and diversification of food distribution channels. This entails supporting traditional and community markets, street food vendors, supermarkets, online delivery services, as well as non-market channels, such as food procurement, community, solidarity kitchens and food banks that enable equitable access to adequate, safe, nutritious and affordable foods, which promote livelihoods and increase the resilience of households; (*diversified distribution*). Local and regional authorities can create enabling regulatory environments that recognize and support informal food actors, ensuring they also have access to infrastructures and more generally enhancing their role in urban food systems.
11. Strengthen the capacities of peasants, smallholders, family farmers - especially women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities - to access international, regional, national and local markets, by strengthening cooperatives, farmers collectives, associations, unions, networks and other organizations, while also promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship, which can expand their bargaining power and allow meaningful participation in agriculture and food systems value chains, including in territorial markets⁴; (*inclusive market participation*). Local and regional
11. Provide incentives for the purchase of healthy and sustainably produced foods, particularly in areas where multidimensional poverty is prevalent, including through appropriate regulatory instruments such as nutritional warning labels and fiscal measures that promote consumption of fresh foods; (*regulatory and fiscal instruments*). Local and regional governments could introduce supportive fiscal instruments like subsidies, tax breaks, voucher systems, local currencies systems targeted at low-income households to enhance affordability and accessibility of fresh, nutritious food. For instance, in France, pilot projects on food security are testing local food security funds, where residents can acquire food products from certified professionals, strengthening local economies and supply chain resilience.

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⁴ In line with the CFS Policy Recommendations on [Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition](#), 2024

13. Promote behavior change towards healthier food choices on the part of consumers through targeted food nutrition education, awareness raising campaigns, which can include public education campaigns, interpersonal communication and community dialogues as a way to positively influence knowledge, attitudes and social norms; (*nutrition education*). Local and regional authorities have a key role to play to integrate nutrition education into local schools, community centers and healthcare facilities.

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Public procurement and non-market initiatives

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, should:

14.13. Prioritize and invest in nutrition oriented public procurement programmes, such as school feeding programmes, incentivizing locally produced foods, prioritizing smallholders and targeting the poorest and most vulnerable across the rural-urban continuum, to achieve multiple objectives related to nutrition, sustainability, biodiversity, social inclusion and resilience of livelihoods; (*food procurement programmes*)

14. Strengthen government capacities to provide food aid in crises, leveraging civil society's reach and local networks and ensure that food aid from international organizations reinforces local and national food systems for long-term resilience; (*food assistance*). Local and regional governments should be central actors in coordinating emergency food distribution, ensuring rapid and targeted responses to crises, and fostering community-based solidarity initiatives like it was done during the pandemic.

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15. Strengthen public food procurement systems by integrating them into broader food policy frameworks to support local producers, including smallholders, family farmers, and cooperatives, while enhancing sustainable food production, processing, transport, and consumption. Governments, including subnational and local authorities, should simplify procedures to facilitate direct sourcing from local producers, ensuring that public institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals, armies, and prisons prioritize high-quality, local, seasonal, and sustainably produced foods. Local and regional governments play a key role in designing and implementing public procurement policies that foster short supply chains, improve the resilience of local food systems, and contribute to healthier diets while stimulating local food economies.

15.16.

Food losses and waste

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, and all relevant stakeholders should:

16.17. Strive to minimize food loss and waste throughout all stages of the food value chain across the rural and urban continuum by: providing supportive infrastructure such as shading and cold storage units; facilitating access to innovation and technology to informal sector actors to increase availability of fresh food and preserve perishable foods; providing training and resources; and supporting circular economy through redistribution programmes that repurpose surplus food and reduce waste and adoption of sustainable practices such as composting. (*food losses and waste*). Local and regional governments should establish waste management and redistribution frameworks that connect food business, markets and consumers to food recovery programs, food banks, promoting a circular economy approach.

B. Urban and peri-urban interrelated systems that impact food security and nutrition

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, should:

17.18. Incentivize access to and investments for the provision of basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including housing, reliable and affordable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation,

waste management, education, and information and communications technologies to enable healthy diets, safer food handling, washing, preparation and cooking of meals at home, targeting low-income residents and neighborhoods; (*physical and social infrastructure*)

18-19. Increase responsible investment in infrastructure, including for transport, services and technologies and ensure that it benefits areas where multidimensional poverty is prevalent, by adopting territorial approaches while also strengthening local, national, regional and international, trade and market connectivity; Such investments should be aligned with sustainability goals to avoid exacerbating environmental degradation. (*improved connectivity*)

19-20. Enhance equitable and affordable access to quality health services for all across the rural-urban continuum for improved food security and nutrition outcomes, particularly for women of child-bearing age, pregnant and breastfeeding women and children; (*health services*)

21. Embed and explicitly integrate food, including food trade infrastructure, into urban planning to ensure that all residents across the rural-urban continuum, regardless of income, race, or geography, can access nutritious, affordable food but also that planning policies address the needs of vulnerable populations, such as low-income families and informal food vendors; (*urban planning*)

20.

21-22. Design interventions that integrate disaster risk reduction into urban planning and design, prioritizing climate risk mitigation, enhancing resilience of supply chains, and strengthening critical infrastructure, such as cold storage and distribution networks, to ensure food security and nutrition can continue to meet the needs of U-PU residents in times of crisis; Additionally, enhance early warning systems and build local capacities to ensure communities are prepared for climate-related food crises. (*resilient supply chains*)

23. Integrate spatial planning into urban and peri-urban food security policies to promote sustainable land use, safeguard agricultural land, urban forests and green spaces, to enhance climate mitigation, biodiversity and food systems' resilience and foster disaster risk reduction. This requires strengthened coordination between land-use planning and food system governance to manage urban growth while enhancing the resilience of food systems across the rural urban continuum; Governments should also promote agroecological approaches to farming in urban and peri-urban areas and incorporate food systems resilience into national land use and climate policies (*spatial planning*)

22.

23-24. Integrate food security into housing and zoning policies by supporting food production solutions within the built environment, including urban farms, green infrastructure, and the use of underutilized spaces in both new developments and urban areas in need of improvement. Identify and remove regulatory barriers to urban agriculture, particularly in areas where food insecurity is most prevalent; (*housing and zoning*)

24-25. Promote access to decent work and employment in food systems across the rural-urban continuum, with specific attention to young people ⁵and seasonal workers, by strengthening and enforcing regulatory frameworks and laws to enable wages that provide an adequate standard of living; Additionnaly, encourage the developmen

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⁵ In line with the CFS policy recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems for Food Security and nutrition. 2022

of job training and educational programs for youth and marginalized groups to enhance their employability in the food sector(decent work and employment)

25-26. Develop and invest in social protection programmesprograms, including shock-responsive and conditional cash transfer programmesprograms, that meet the specific needs of the poorest and most vulnerable across the rural-urban continuum, prioritizing youth and women. (social protection)

C. Urban and peri-urban governance for food security and nutrition

National governments should:

26-27. Ensure that municipal financing is adequate and coherent with municipal mandates, particularly in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) contexts, and identify and promote innovative approaches for mobilizing resources, such as municipal bonds and public-private partnerships; Local and regional governments should also explore opportunities for blending public and private investments to support food systems resilience in urban and peri-urban areas. (financing and resource mobilization)

27-28. Include local and subnational governments in the development of national food security and nutrition policies and strategies; Local and regional governments should be actively involved in the policy design and implementation processes to ensure policies are contextually relevant and adaptable to the specific needs of urban and rural communities(inclusive governance)

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, should:

28-29. Develop and strengthen the capacities of food system actors across the rural-urban continuum, particularly those of the poorest, the most vulnerable and those most at risk of being left behind, to effectively engage in and influence decision-making, including in areas related to trade and investment, by enhancing their skills in financial literacy, market dynamics, land tenure, climate resilience, consumer awareness, among others; (capacity development)

29-30. Strive to align trade regulations and policies with national and subnational efforts towards improving equitable access to and affordability of healthy diets; (policy coherence)

30-31. Strengthen the agency of food system actors across the rural-urban continuum, particularly the poorest, the most vulnerable, and those most at risk of being left behind, by fostering their meaningful inclusion, participation and representation in multi-level, multi-actor and multi-sectoral platforms, such as food policy councils; To that regard, Local and regional governments should ensure that youth, women and vulnerable communities are well represented in these decision-making bodies.(agency)

31-32. Promote, support and finance North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation as well as subnational, decentralized and city-to-city cooperation to help achieve an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate food across the rural-urban continuum; This can include funding but also fostering knowledge exchanges and joint projects between local governments and regional governments, especially on food security. (cooperation for development)

32-33. Promote human rights-basedrights-based accountability frameworks that assess roles, responsibilities and mandates of different levels of governance in shaping food security and nutrition policies, and nutrition outcomes across the rural-urban continuum, while fostering inclusive multi-actor participation across platforms with specific measure for managing conflicts of interest. (accountability)

D. Strengthen data, research and knowledge systems to enable improved understanding and monitoring of food security and nutrition across the rural urban continuum

Governments, including subnational and local government authorities, and International Organizations should:

34. Prioritize capacity development on FSN data collection, analysis and use⁶ across the rural urban continuum, as well as on geographic information systems, remote sensing, digital tools and participatory mapping to target areas most vulnerable to food-system disruption and to inform long term planning and crisis response; This should also include creating open-data platforms that allow stakeholders to collaborate and share relevant food systems data. (capacity development)
35. Encourage the use of digital technology in relation to food issues in order to facilitating and organizing relationships between actors in the food system, develop digital applications enabling access to information and logistical products and services, fostering more direct links between producers and consumers, between the supply and demand for good and services related to food.
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38. Ensure finer grain disaggregation of FSN data by geospatial location and socioeconomic status and incorporate qualitative data to capture multiple and compounding dimensions of vulnerability across the rural urban continuum; (data disaggregation)
39. Invest in tools, information technology and digital systems that address data gaps such as those in the midstream sector and streamline and simplify FSN data collection while improving data quality; (investment in data collection)
40. Invest in and enhance monitoring and evaluation of food policies and programmes by implementing comprehensive assessment frameworks that also include evaluating economic development, environmental sustainability, and other broader socio-economic effects; (monitoring and evaluation)
41. Invest in and learn from local governments, city food networks, local universities, civil society organizations and local knowledge institutions, as a mechanism for leveraging diverse knowledge, including traditional knowledge, digital tools, participatory frameworks, and multi-stakeholder platforms. This approach ensures transparency, enables progress tracking, and facilitates the sharing of lessons, results, and challenges between cities and across sectors; This approach ensures transparency, enables progress tracking, and facilitate the sharing of lessons, results, and challenges between cities and across sectors; (knowledge sharing)
42. Prioritize funding for interdisciplinary research, including research innovation qualitative and participatory research that focuses on the complexities of food security and nutrition across the rural-urban continuum, encompassing agricultural practices, urban planning, supply chain dynamics, public health, and social sciences. Governments should also promote research collaboration between universities, research centers and local governments to bridge knowledge gaps (interdisciplinary research)

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⁶ In line with the [CFS Policy Recommendations on Strengthening collection and use of food security and nutrition \(FSN\) Data](#)