

Priority issues to be addressed during the CFS policy convergence process on Strengthening Urban and Peri-Urban Food Systems.

Inputs by the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM) for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

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Introduction

This document consolidates the themes and recommendations emerging from the meetings of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM) Urban and Peri-Urban Working Group. It aims to inform the CFS on priority issues and areas to be addressed during the policy convergence process on strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems. The document is organized under four categories: Points of Appreciation on the HLPE report, Priorities to Address in Recommendations, Important Points to Highlight, and Practical Examples of Success Stories.

1) Points of Appreciation on the HLPE report

Recognition of the interconnectedness of food systems

The CSIPM working group appreciates the acknowledgment of the rural-urban continuum, emphasizing that urban, peri-urban, and rural food systems are interconnected parts of a single system. Recognizing this continuum is crucial for developing holistic policies that do not isolate rural and urban areas but instead promote synergistic relationships between them.

Differentiation between global north and global south

The CSIPM values the differentiation between the contexts of the Global North and Global South. This distinction allows for differentiated approaches that address the specific challenges and opportunities unique to each region, acknowledging that solutions effective in one context are not directly transferable to another. In addition, although the two contexts are unique and different and require specific strategies and approaches, looking at these unique perspectives in a holistic manner is important.

Addressing inequalities, poverty, and intersectionality

The CSIPM appreciates the emphasis on tackling inequalities, poverty, using an intersectional lens, particularly highlighting the gendered discrimination prevalent in urban and peri-urban settings. Recognizing these issues is essential for creating inclusive policies that address the needs and priorities of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Recognizing that no single group is a homogenous entity is critical and thus, the intersectional dimension of poverty and inequality in urban and peri-urban food systems should be one of the focus of the policy recommendations.

Role of local governments and urban planning

The CSIPM appreciates the recognition of the crucial role of local authorities in supporting sustainable food systems through policy measures, economic support, and urban planning. Municipalities have the important role to reorder development plans to prevent real estate and housing speculation and to bring food production closer to consumers, schools and urban centers. Without clear city development plans, food production moves further away, and speculation increases, negatively impacting food accessibility. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Land Fisheries and Forests¹ as well as other tools such as Community Land Trusts as recognized by UN Habitat² can also be used by Municipalities to play a key role to keep the urban rural nexus connecting rural producers with urban groups and social and solidarity economies.

Local Governments and Municipalities should be included and inform each level of policy making. They should also be provided with sufficient and adequate resources to be able to support the strengthening of urban and peri-urban food systems, and to support communities' realization of the Right to Food.

Holistic approach to food systems

The adoption of a holistic perspective is valued, viewing food systems as interconnected with health, housing, and other societal factors. This comprehensive approach acknowledges that food security cannot be achieved in isolation but requires integrated strategies addressing various aspects of urban life.

Embedding human rights into policy frameworks

The CSIPM underscores the critical importance of embedding **human rights**, particularly the **Right to Food**, within all policy frameworks and recommendations. The Right to Food is not merely an aspirational goal but a fundamental human right that underpins food sovereignty and the dignity of individuals and communities. Alongside the **Right to Housing** and the **Right to Live in the City**, it serves as a cornerstone for combating systemic marginalization and discrimination in urban and peri-urban contexts.

Explicitly integrating the Right to Food into policy recommendations ensures that all individuals, especially vulnerable urban and peri-urban populations, can access adequate, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. This involves recognizing the interdependence between food security, housing, and equitable urban development, which are essential to achieving dignified living conditions.

Moreover, the CSIPM calls for the Right to Food to be operationalized through:

- **Proactive national legislation:** governments must enact laws that prioritize the Right to Food, ensuring accountability mechanisms are in place to uphold this right at local and national levels.
- **Inclusive planning processes:** urban, peri-urban and rural food producers, as key actors in local food systems, must have a voice in shaping policies that directly affect their livelihoods and communities.
- **Human-rights-based approaches:** policymaking must center the needs of marginalized groups, including women, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and those in

informal settlements, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The CSIPM stresses that the Right to Food, as a binding obligation under international law, provides a powerful tool for accountability and transformation. When policies explicitly recognize and enforce these rights, they pave the way for equitable food systems and resilient urban communities, fostering a collective commitment to justice, human dignity and food security.

2) Priorities that should be Addressed more in the Policy Recommendations

Enhancing promotion of agroecology

We suggest that these recommendations broaden their scope from urban and periurban to include initiatives in rural food production. Agroecology is identified as a key practice to create and maintain sustainable food systems. Yet most public funds are directed to “climate smart agriculture” and “nature based solutions”. The recommendations should dedicate enough emphasis on the role of agroecology for urban and peri-urban food systems. There is a need to support farmers -and their organizations- who are practicing agroecology by strengthening urban-rural linkages, ecological practices, territorial markets, nutritious food production. Agroecological farmers also face challenges in engaging in agroecology, especially in regions like Central Asia, where there is lack of support to connect agroecological family farmers to urban markets and consumers’ groups. Policies should facilitate and provide incentives for agroecological practices and, importantly access to land and natural resources as well infrastructures.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/416990/>

² <https://unhabitat.org/community-land-trusts-affordable-access-to-land-and-housing>

Prioritizing local agroecological products in public procurement, especially for school feeding programs (particularly within programming aimed at nutrition in the first 1000 days), ensures children receive fresh, nutritious food while empowering small-scale farmers and fostering sustainable local economies. It promotes environmental resilience by supporting biodiversity and reducing the carbon footprint of food systems. This approach strengthens food sovereignty and a social and solidarity economy approach, creating healthier, more self-reliant communities, and is in line with the FAO's recognized Elements of Agroecology³.

Emphasizing the role of local authorities

Local authorities, city governments and multi actors participatory governance bodies are key actors for strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems, through the development of inclusive territorial food and agriculture models (territorial markets, public procurements, urban agroecology, short-food chain etc.). These actors are in the position to include marginalized populations in local food systems, to reach the most affected and to effectively build solidarity and social protection nets at territorial level, including the emerging trend of food social security. Myriads of city-led initiatives for resilient territorial food systems already exist; and with supportive global, regional and national policies, those initiatives can be multiplied and scaled-out.

Addressing malnutrition and ultra-processed foods

The recommendations should place greater emphasis on tackling malnutrition by addressing the increasing consumption of ultra-processed foods in urban areas. This includes promoting access to nutritious, fresh, and culturally appropriate foods and prioritizing direct purchase from local agroecological producers in public procurement programmes, particularly school feeding programmes. Such initiatives support local, sustainable food systems while ensuring equitable access to healthy food options.

Additionally, policies should discourage the proliferation of unhealthy food options and ultra processed foods that lead to malnutrition, such as obesity, overweight, underweight (stunting and wasting), micronutrient deficiencies, and chronic diseases, including for children and mothers.

Ensuring workers' rights and dignified income

Ensuring workers' rights and dignified incomes is a priority. Policies should address labor conditions, particularly for informal workers and migrant laborers who are integral to food production. This includes promoting decent work, fair wages, and safe working conditions.

Supporting people in informal settlements and vulnerable populations

The issues faced by residents of informal settlements—such as favelas and internally displaced persons (IDPs)—need to be more thoroughly addressed. These populations often

³ <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/overview10elements/en/>

lack access to state or city programs, suffer from food insecurity, and chronic hunger including acute food insecurity (wasting rates in Urban areas is 8% which is a public health concern) and are vulnerable to violence, including gender-based violence. Recommendations should focus on integrating these communities into urban planning and providing access to essential services and protection.

While the report details well the situation of the 1.1 billion slum dwellers and how they intersect with the most marginalised in society the recommendations lack a focus on particular issues related to slum dwellers. For example tenure of housing and moving from informal to formal settlements. Access to services and livelihoods. Neither does the report provide policy recommendations on how to manage the 2 billion more people expected to live in such conditions in the next 30 years. This is all the more important considering that slum dwellers are set to increase from 1.1 billion to 3 billion by 2050. These premises generally lack sanitary treatment systems and this directly affects people's health and national health systems.

Developing interconnected recommendations

The current recommendations in the HLPE report appear outward-facing and not sufficiently interconnected. It is important to develop integrated policies that address multiple facets of urban food systems, including access to energy (electricity and gas), housing, and social services, to ensure dignified living conditions.

Addressing class issues and income disparities

Addressing class disparities is crucial, as medium and low-income populations face significant challenges in accessing healthy food and participating in sustainable food systems. Policies should aim to reduce income inequalities and ensure equitable access to resources.

Promoting and supporting urban agriculture

There should be recommendations for governments to actively support urban agriculture. This includes providing access to land, resources, and instruments for micro-gardening, and integrating urban agriculture into city development plans to enhance food security and community well-being. Access to water must be recognized as a fundamental right, as the privatization of water often creates significant barriers for urban farmers, limiting their ability to irrigate crops and sustain agricultural activities. Governments should ensure equitable and affordable water and land access for all, particularly for those engaging in urban agriculture, to empower communities and promote sustainable, localized food systems.

Public Procurement and Social Protection, particularly for children

Prioritize local, agroecological and small-scale farmers in public procurement programmes, particularly within school feeding programmes and programming aimed at nutrition in the first 1000 days. Invest in nutrition-oriented public procurement programmes, specifically targeted at vulnerable populations within U-PU populations.

Strengthen institutional procurement as part of national and/or large-scale programmes (e.g. school meals, cash and vouchers, community led food programs).

Specific policy recommendation should be foreseen in relation to the first 1 000 days. The Global Action Plan on Child Wasting is a multi agency, multi sectoral approach that incorporates health, food and social protection. It frames itself around the first 1000 days while prioritising “pregnant and lactating women, children under two years of age, adolescent girls and the elderly”. The comprehensive action plan is designed to work both in rural and urban environments as well as fragile settings.

Other recommendations from the Report which directly align with the Global Action plan on Child Wasting:

- strengthen urban health services (including neonatal and infant nutrition guidance and prevention diagnostics) for FSN outcomes;
- acknowledge temporal variation in U-PU food insecurity and frame social protection policies and programmes to be responsive to periods of heightened food insecurity;
- develop and invest in social protection programmes targeting specific U-PU contexts; and
- promote nutrition in health services, particularly for women of childbearing age and pregnant and breastfeeding women, and in pediatric services, informed by the lived experience of U-PU residents.

Bridging the gap between consumers and agroecological products

Efforts are needed to bridge the gap between middle- and low-income populations and the prices of agroecologically produced food. This includes making such food more accessible and affordable through subsidies, support for local and territorial markets, and education on the benefits of sustainable agroecological food consumption. Directly connecting producers and consumers, without reliance on middlemen, stimulates local economies while ensuring fair prices for both parties. Models such as community-supported agriculture further promote co-responsibility in food production, fostering shared investment in sustainable practices and strengthening the relationship between communities and agroecological food systems. There are many different possibilities within Community-Supported Agriculture to make food shares affordable.

Financial Resources to strengthen Urban and Peri Urban System

While the report's objective is that the policy recommendations are feasible neither finance or funding has been mentioned in the report. It is hoped that this policy convergence process will focus on the multiple dimensions of finance including where applicable Overseas Development Aid and international obligations within the human right treaty.

3) Important Points to Highlight

Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages

While eliminating imported food in cities may not be feasible due to geopolitical complexities, existing circumstances, and external dependencies, the goal should be to strive for food sovereignty. This can be achieved by fostering strong connections with local agroecological farmers and actively promoting urban and peri-urban food production. The recommendations centre mainly on production within urban and peri-urban food systems. While recognizing the upward trajectory of urbanization projected for the next 30 years, it is important to also question the assumption that urbanization will inevitably continue to intensify. The rate and forms of urbanization are shaped by policy choices and economic interests, and these dynamics should be critically examined. Investment in food production must be increased in rural areas, accompanied by policy recommendations aimed at keeping rural food production viable and vibrant, while addressing the structural drivers that influence urbanization patterns.

At the same time, it is critical to address the challenges faced by youth in agriculture, as this demographic is often at the heart of rural-to-urban migration. Staying in agriculture is increasingly difficult for young people due to a lack of infrastructure, the absence of dignified incomes, and limited access to land and resources. Many youth feel their only option is to leave rural areas, abandoning family (or communities') farms and livelihoods, and migrating to cities or megacities where they often end up being poor, living in slums or exploited as cheap labor. This exodus has significant consequences, including rural depopulation, the loss of biodiversity, increased vulnerability to environmental crises such as wildfires, and the weakening of rural economies. At the same time, cities face growing social, economic, and health crises as a result of overcrowding and poverty.

For those young people who wish to return to agriculture, there are often insurmountable barriers, starting with the lack of access to affordable land. Policies and programs must be developed to incentivize and facilitate youth to stay in or return to agriculture, creating supportive conditions and connecting them to urban food systems and markets. These measures could include enabling youth to access rural or peri-urban land in collaboration with urban communities, strengthening the linkages between urban consumers and rural producers. By supporting such transitions and fostering stronger urban-rural connections, it is possible to create more equitable food systems and address the root causes of the current rural-urban divide.

With 70% of the world's food produced and consumed within cities, it is clear that food systems for urban and peri-urban areas are intrinsically tied to rural agriculture. While the HLPE report recognizes these interlinkages, the recommendations of the report focus primarily on food systems within urban and peri-urban settings, neglecting the need to address measures that reduce the rural-to-urban exodus currently underway. By 2050, urban growth is expected to increase from 4.5 billion people (55% of the global population) to 6.7 billion, equating to roughly 215,000 new urban residents daily. Alarmingly, 90% of this urban growth is projected to occur in Asia and Africa, with 96% concentrated in fragile countries. Policies must urgently address these dynamics by supporting the flow of goods, knowledge, and resources between rural and urban areas to enhance food security and sustainability. If the countryside does not produce, the city does not eat, underscoring the fundamental

dependency of urban areas on vibrant and resilient rural production systems.

Food security in conflicts and protracted crises contexts

Food insecurity and or limited access to food is a common issue in conflicts and protracted crises. In the contexts affected by conflicts, food systems face a myriad of challenges limiting access to food by particularly the already vulnerable and poor populations. The challenges include disruption of agricultural production due to violence, the displacement of farmers, and collateral or deliberate damage to farmland and essential infrastructure such as roads, markets and storage facilities. Similarly, are protracted crises in countries such as Southern Sudan, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen among others.

In Gaza, women-led agribusinesses face profound challenges amidst ongoing conflict and systemic barriers, highlighting their critical role in fostering resilience and recovery. The unprecedented military offensive continues to devastate Gaza's food and farming infrastructure and its agroecosystem (50% of women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in agriculture have been partially or totally damaged). Destroyed farmlands littered with unexploded ordnance and toxic contamination only compounds these challenges. Women agricultural producers and small entrepreneurs, many of whom are primary breadwinners, have been disproportionately affected, struggling to access land, resources, and financial support including the burden of care for orphaned children and relatives. Unlike before when an estimated 3,000 women agripeneurs in Gaza formed the cornerstone of Gaza's food systems, providing nutrient-dense and culturally important foods; repeated military offensives, has led to environmental degradation, and a broken infrastructural and institutional system that have severely impacted these enterprises (The Gaza Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Platform (GUPAP) Assessment Report, November 2024).

Supporting alternatives to supermarkets

Analyzing and promoting alternatives to supermarkets and convenience stores is important. Supporting local and territorial markets, collective purchasing groups, community-supported agriculture, and social and solidarity economy initiatives enhances access to healthy food and support local producers, fostering more resilient food systems.

Ensuring access to land

Access to land for food production in urban and peri-urban areas is critical. Policies should focus on preserving green spaces, preventing real estate speculation that displaces food production, and facilitating community access to land for agriculture.

Enhancing education and nutrition in schools

The role of schools in providing education on nutrition and delivering healthy meals is significant. Addressing issues of malnutrition such as obesity and undernutrition among children requires integrating food education into curricula and ensuring that school feeding programs offer nutritious, locally sourced food. School meals help address both underweight and overweight as well as micronutrient malnutrition such as anemia.

Focusing on both producers and consumers

Policies should address the needs of both producers and consumers. Effective communication strategies are needed to promote healthy eating habits among consumers and to support producers in adopting sustainable practices. Engagement with communities can foster a shared understanding and commitment to sustainable food systems.

Recognizing the role of solidarity kitchens

Solidarity kitchens play an important role in addressing food insecurity, particularly in vulnerable communities. Their contribution to providing meals, fostering community solidarity, and offering support during crises should be recognized and integrated into food security strategies. Solidarity kitchens are particularly noteworthy as their operations are managed by the community itself. They should prioritize the use of agroecological food, which not only supports sustainable practices but also helps preserve cultural traditions and prevent the erosion of food heritage in their territories.

Mental health benefits of urban agriculture

Engaging in urban agriculture, such as through “huertas urbanas” (urban gardens), has been shown to improve mental health. This includes gardens that produce medicinal plants for the development of phytotherapies, which can be integrated into public health systems, further enhancing their value. This aspect adds value to promoting urban agriculture, contributing to social cohesion, well-being, and community empowerment.

Food serves not only as sustenance but also as a cultural element and a solution to loneliness, depression, and mental health issues, which are increasing in the Global North. Addressing intersectional issues, especially class, race, gender age and ability; and promoting communal food initiatives can have positive social impacts and improve quality of life.

4) Practical Examples

Local Markets in Peru and Ecuador

Local markets in regions like Cusco, Peru, where self-organized producers sell their products directly to consumers without intermediaries, demonstrate successful models of direct producer-to-consumer sales. These initiatives, often rooted in agroecology, support local economies, reduce food miles, and ensure fair prices for producers and consumers.

Peri-Urban Agriculture in Senegal

In West Africa, countries like Senegal face challenges with peri-urban agriculture. While it fulfills urban consumers' needs, there are concerns about the intensive use of chemicals and pesticides. Improving peri-urban systems involves promoting sustainable practices, supporting farmers' collectives, and ensuring that agricultural activities do not compromise environmental health.

Farmers' Collectives and the Local Economy of Care

Farmers' collectives that produce food from the field are essential but often face obstacles to connect with the local economy of care and territorial relationships. Removing these obstacles can strengthen these connections and enhance sustainability and social integration, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility for local resources.

Reconnecting with the Land Around Cities

Urban expansion often leads to a loss of connection with the land surrounding cities. Emphasizing the importance of territorial food systems can help restore this connection, highlighting the value of nearby resources and promoting sustainable land use practices that benefit both urban and rural communities.

An Example from Togo: Agroecological Markets in Urban Centers

An interesting example, linked to the fact that processed food imports are not necessary to feed cities, is the one presented by ROPPA in the recent webinar co-organized by HLPE and the FAO Right to Food unit. The Togolese National Peasant Platform is organizing farmer agroecological markets in all five of the major urban centers, in collaboration with the municipal authorities. These markets directly connect farmers with urban consumers, showcasing the viability of agroecological systems in feeding cities sustainably.

Agroecology and mental health: Biodynamic Medicinal Agroforestry Gardens in Brazil

In Brasilia, the federal capital of Brazil, a regional government programme has implemented 25 gardens in the public health system. The health units produce food and medicinal plants and promote solidarity networks and links between people who come together for food and nutrition education and health education activities, as well as teaching agro-ecological practices that encourage the cultivation of food in homes and community areas. The programme was a grassroots initiative with strong support from health professionals and authorities and resulted in intersectoral activities and action between health, education, agriculture and environmental services.

Ensuring food security and access and resilience in the context of conflicts in Gaza

In Gaza, urban farming has emerged as a linchpin advocating agroecological practices and principles among women-led and other food and farming enterprises that centre "baladi foodways" for the advancement of food sovereignty even in conflict situations. Foodways is a term that refers to the intersection of food culture, traditions and history while considering the cultural, social, and economic practices relating to the production and consumption of food.

During the challenging times, through the baladi food ways initiative, women demonstrated the

power of social innovation through community solidarity to sustain and provide for their communities. About 300 members of Urban Women's Agripreneur Forum (UWAF) who represent 10% of women with food enterprises in Gaza, captured before and during the current military demonstrated the important women play role in Gaza's food system, as farmers, fishers, shepherds and processors, while often unrecognized. Women established community kitchens during the conflict providing essential meals for displaced families. The Community-led Solidarity Marketing Initiative has distributed over 18 tons of food to vulnerable households, fostering community bonds. Baladi food and cultivation remains pivotal providing diverse, nutrient-dense, culturally important and climate resilient foods capable of restoring a healthy agroecosystem.

Conclusion

The CSIPM working group has identified key themes and priorities to inform policy recommendations on strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems. Emphasis is placed on promoting agroecology, addressing inequalities and class issues centering on intersectionality, ensuring workers' rights, supporting urban agriculture, and fostering urban-rural linkages, while questioning the policy (or lack of policy) and trade frame that often create the conditions for urbanization -and rural exodus- to continue and to deepen poverty, food insecurity and inequalities. It also pinpoints on the role of local authorities/government in fostering urban resilience and addressing urban food systems challenges.

However, political and commercial frameworks are not the only causes for urbanization. causes and structural implications. Whereas urbanisation often refers to a civil and planned process of development of urban areas, rural exodus is often a forced phenomenon, caused by the lack of resources and opportunities in rural areas. on the one hand, the recommendations need to tackle the policies that cause resource deprivation and forced migration from rural areas, and on the other, they need to promote the balanced development of urban and peri-urban areas.

By integrating these insights into the recommendations, the CSIPM hopes they can help create inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban food systems that uphold human rights and improve the quality of life for all.