CITY REGION FOOD SYSTEM TOOLKIT

Assessing and planning resilient and sustainable city region food systems

Guidance: Determining entry point and securing political buy-in

Brief description	A detailed explanation of various ways in which the project team might identify entry points for the CRFS project, either at the outset or later in the process, and some ways of securing political buy-in to the project.
Expected outcome	Stakeholders are aware of various ways of identifying entry points and of securing political buy-in to the project.
Expected output	
Scale of application	Project level
Expertise required	-
Examples of application	-
Year of development	2021
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Relevant CRFS Handbook modules; related tools, examples and activities	CRFS Handbook: Inception module.

Full description and justification

This document provides guidance on various ways in which the project team might identify entry points for the CRFS project, either at the outset or later in the process, and some ways of securing political buy-in to the project.

The guidance is needed because it might not be immediately apparent how the CRFS project should be framed, in light of previous food work, local priorities, or needs, and how best to approach political leaders to make the case for their initial and on-going support. This is particularly the case when a CRFS assessment and planning project is externally driven (e.g. by local NGO actors or consultants) or has come about as a result of an existing collaboration between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

1   Determining the entry point

An **entry point** is an issue or policy area of shared interest or concern. It may be used to engage governmental and institutional stakeholders in the process, helping to secure political buy-in and ownership, and ultimately mainstreaming food systems considerations into policies, programmes and action plans.

A suitable entry point can be determined in the several ways. The following are some options:

1)   By examining previous food work

Each city embarking on the CRFS process has a different degree of experience of food systems work at the outset, and a different level of knowledge about its food system. In some cities there has been no meaningful research or concerted food planning in the past. In others, some work has been conducted by the city, in some cases in cooperation with FAO or RUAF, or with other organizations. Other cities have completed the main track of the CRFS process and are now beginning the climate and pandemic-resilient CRFS track in order to delve deeper into these issues.

In cities that have conducted food work in the past, the following are helpful considerations for identifying the entry point for the CRFS project:

- *What was the aim of the past food-related work? What issues did it seek to address?*
  By taking up the same aim, issues, and entry point, the CRFS project can continue, consolidate, and build upon past work.

- *Which departments and stakeholders were involved?*
  It may be possible to identify technical officers or civil servants who would like to re-engage with food systems work, and/or would are prepared to serve as 'champions'.

- *What recommendations came out of the past project(s)?*
  Specific recommendations from a previous project can serve as the framing for new work on the CRFS; data on issues to be addressed can be used to make the case for the new project.

- *Why did the past project(s) come to an end?*
  When a project or programme is not renewed beyond an initial period, this may indicate a lack of will or shifting priorities. Examining the reasons can help identify what is not a suitable entry point, and what is more appropriate and possible today.

> NOTE: Reviewing previous food work is also important for identifying the first module to implement in the CRFS process, the order of subsequent modules, and whether any may be left out entirely.

2) 'Selling in' to top-line priorities

Every city administration has its own policy priorities, determined by the pressing issues in the city and region and the political persuasion of the city leadership. These may include, for example:

- Reducing unemployment / creating job opportunities for young people;
- Attracting investment into the city;
- Reducing obesity or malnutrition / improving public health;
- Improving the urban environment;
- Reducing CO2 emissions;
- Improving (green) infrastructure;
- Building resilience to shocks and stresses (e.g., climate, pandemics, etc.);
- etc.

It is usually possible to identify how food systems work can contribute to objectives under at least one of the policy priorities. This priority can be used to frame the food systems work, and may serve as the entry point. For example:

The entry point of *improving economic opportunities of small scale-producers connected to urban and peri-urban markets* can contribute to the policy priority of 'Reducing unemployment / creating job opportunities for young people'.

The entry point of *improving food security and nutrition of vulnerable dwellers* can contribute to the policy priority of 'Reducing obesity or malnutrition / improving public health'.

The entry point of *improving environmental sustainability of food supply chains can contribute to the policy priority of '*Reducing CO2 emissions'.

One caveat is that political priorities can change, particularly when a new administration comes into power but also, sometimes, mid-term if a new, urgent issue emerges. This reinforces the need to keep the entry point as just that – a way in to secure engagement for a wider agenda, while being ready to bring other aspects to the fore if the top-line priorities change.

Although the phrase 'entry point' implies it must be determined at the start of the CRFS process, the modular nature of the process means it may be determined under a subsequent module, if it makes more sense to do so. Delaying the final selection of entry point should not be a reason for neglecting to secure some tacit political buy-in to the project at the outset, but in such cases it may be necessary to couch the benefits of the CFRS approach in general terms -- or to point out the multiple possible (and interchangeable) entry points.

Additional ways of determining or confirming the entry point later on are:

3) Stakeholder and institutional mapping (in the Define the CRFS module)

The initial stakeholder and institutional mapping process is an opportunity to identify:

- the general objectives of various local government departments and agencies;

- how building a more sustainable and resilient CRFS can contribute to realizing departmental/agency objectives;
- existing food-related roles and responsibilities;
- individuals who are interested and prepared to engage with the CRFS project

Thus, if the entry point has not yet been determined by the time the mapping exercise takes place, it is likely that one or more possible entry point will emerge from it, with which the CRFS approach resonates strongly.

4) Rapid scan findings

If there is little existing knowledge about the character and functioning of the city region food system, it may be necessary to carry out the Rapid Scan of the food system before the entry point can be determined. The Rapid Scan enables the project team to identify specific problems in the CRFS that need to be addressed. Clear communication of the problems, as well as priority areas for in-depth research and eventual action, can point to a logical entry point.

> NOTE: It is important to share thinking about the entry point with the stakeholder advisory group (SAG) once it is established, so that everyone is clear on how the CRFS work is being framed and communicated at the political level. Making this part of SAG discussions will help reinforce other aspects of the CRFS process, such as the vision, selection of priorities and indicators, fine-tuning research questions, and communication of findings. As noted, electoral change and changes in the political agenda can mean an entry point suddenly becomes invalid, so key players should be all aware of, and in agreement about, how to use different entry points if necessary.

2 Securing political buy-in

Political buy-in is the formal agreement of elected officials to support the project (whether through resources or through in-kind actions), to participate in multistakeholder activities, and to give due and proper consideration to recommendations. Securing political buy-in can be extremely difficult and require concentrated effort.

Securing political buy-in can be extremely difficult and require concentrated effort on the part of stakeholders.

Once the entry point(s) has been determined, it is necessary to prepare some materials to share with influential contacts and decision-makers, such as:

1) Briefing materials

Short, clear and to-the-point briefing materials are extremely helpful for drawing attention to the CRFS project and the issues it seeks to address, from both city leaders and other stakeholders. This could take the form of a one or two-page briefing document, that can be circulated with an invitation to attend a multistakeholder meeting, or to request a one-on-one

meeting with a city leader. It is also envisaged that a short, accessible and visual fact sheet of the findings of the Rapid Scan be prepared and used for communication and outreach.

2) Scenarios/modelling

Data-based modelling can be used to show potential future scenarios for the city region and its food system, in relation to the entry point. For example:

If the entry point is 'Reducing Co2 emissions', the data modelling may show future emissions scenarios if no action is taken to improve sustainability of the CRFS

If the entry point is 'Reducing obesity or malnutrition / improving public health', data modelling may show future food security and nutrition scenarios as the urban population grows.

If the entry point is 'Building urban resilience', data modelling may show future scenarios of the impacts of climate and pandemic shocks and stresses on the CRFS, including both food value chains and the wider outcome areas of food security and nutrition, social inclusion and equity, livelihoods and economic development, and environmental and eco-system services.

The inclusion of projected economic costs of non-action (compared with investments in resilience-building) is a powerful way to raise awareness of the gravity of the situation. It is also helpful to include several time frames in the modelling, such as 5 years, 10 years, 15 years; most electoral terms are 5 years, so five-year increments resonate with city leaders.

3) Share case studies from elsewhere

City leaders may well be unaware of the kinds of actions that might be introduced through the CRFS project to increase CRFS resilience and sustainability. Identifying and sharing pertinent case studies – and positive results – from other city regions enables them to see the potential. Case studies that include how an action was put in place and how any challenges were overcome enable city leaders to envisage how a solution could be put in place in their own context. It may also be helpful to have a set of case studies that illustrate different levels of intervention costs. Good solutions do not always have to cost a lot. Elected officials tend to also be quite competitive so having a good example from another place that is regarded as significant will help, e.g. own country or own region.