

URBAN AGRICULTURE MAGAZINE

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Rural-urban linkages

**Urban agroecology - a tool for
social transformation**

**Growing a sense of place and
community in Cape Town**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

This issue of Farming Matters and Urban Agriculture Magazine is a co-production between ILEIA and RUAF Foundation. Farming Matters 31.1 meets Urban Agriculture Magazine 30! This joint initiative enabled us to share unique expertise and perspectives. RUAF draws from grounded experiences in urban agriculture and food systems and ILEIA from family farming and agroecology. We see this as an opportunity to explore and affirm the links between rural and urban in renewing our food systems, and in the process to create a thorough and in-depth 'twin' issue of our magazines on rural-urban linkages. We wish you good reading, outside the rural and urban boxes.

Edith van Walsum, director ILEIA and Marielle Dubbeling, director RUAF



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Changing face of urban agriculture



Many believe growing food is for society's 'less privileged'. Starting in my community, I set out to change this false belief. I want to prove the potential to produce food and generate income from urban farming in Belvedere, my home in Harare, Zimbabwe.

In October 2014, with 400 m² and US\$200 I started an urban agriculture project. I have already harvested two cycles of lettuce, enough to feed my family, sell some to the local supermarket and to people in my community. I've earned enough income to invest in a drip irrigation system which will improve my production potential.

I have done the sums. If each of the 400 families in my community put their available land to this use there would be eight hectares for organic food production. This would provide high quality and healthy vegetables for the whole community, and reduce their reliance on vegetables grown more than 1000 kilometres away.

Most of my neighbours are waiting to see how my initiative pans out before starting their own. But one man heard about my work through the Zimbabwe Farmers Union and after a visit to my farm has planted 1000 lettuce seedlings in his back garden. I also collaborate with four other young farmers who live and grow vegetables in other parts of the city.

This is just the beginning of a new community of urban farmers in Harare. I'm confident that my next couple of harvests will encourage those 'wait and see' people and my experience will be multiplied. This will go a long way towards re-discovering, re-inventing and re-creating food production systems and ways of living. With some support from the local authorities and cooperation amongst the local community, this simple idea can be realised.

Dominic Machingura can be contacted at evsimeon@gmail.com Photo: Sizhakele Martha Mukwedini



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Community Supported Agriculture thriving in China

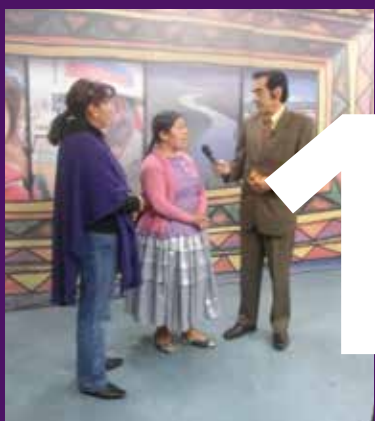
Community Supported Agriculture provides real income to producers and affordable healthy food for consumers. This concept is taking off fast in China. The engine behind this locally based model of food production is a growing group of educated youth returning from the cities to their roots in the countryside.



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Growing a sense of place and community in Cape Town

Harvest of Hope is a vegetable box scheme which combines community empowerment with economic market development. Urban micro-farmers from disadvantaged townships have joined forces with engaged consumers. The initiative blends the best of both 'urban' and 'rural' worlds.



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Between city and country: domestic workers build food sovereignty

The well organised domestic workers' unions across Bolivia are supporting the small farm economy. Activities in La Paz show the power of solidarity between urban workers, consumers and producers for creating community-based food systems rooted in justice, sustainability, health and culture.



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Threatened landscapes unite rural and urban communities

The problem of shrinking and aging rural populations across Japan led to a nationwide movement to protect its degrading cultural landscapes. Rural and urban inhabitants work together to protect landscapes and to produce food in a traditional way.

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Women and agroecology

Women are strong drivers of agroecological change in farming and consumer communities. One example is the women’s movement for agrobiodiverse, pesticide-free crop production in India. In other places, women experiment with intercropping, vegetable box schemes and seed exchanges. What motivates them? And what role does agroecology play in improving the lives of women?

There are 500 million small scale farm families around the world, and 70% of the agricultural work on these farms is done by women. According to FAO, women could increase their productivity by up to 30% if they had the same access as men to productive resources. Closing the gender gap, as was called for by so many during the 2014 International Year of Family Farming, could reduce the number of the world’s undernourished people by 12-17% (www.fao.org/sofa/gender/home/en/).

We have long known that women hold important agriculture and food knowledge, and that they are a force pushing for agroecological changes that lead to resilient farming. Where men tend to focus more on economic gains, women’s ultimate concerns tend to food sovereignty and nutrition, social stability and peace, and the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources.

We want to have a closer look at what motivates women to inspire progress in farming. How do agroecological practices impact their workload, family nutrition and their quality of life? And what role do women and their organisations play in building a better future for their families and themselves?

We invite you to share your experiences, looking especially for practical stories of women as farmers, farm workers, cooks, mothers, educators, and community representatives, of women in policy, women in positions of power, women as role models, or stories of those working directly with these women.

Articles for the December 2015 issue of Farming Matters should be sent to the editors before 1 September 2015. E-mail: info@farmingmatters.org

Building sustainable food systems beyond the rural-urban divide

Rural-urban linkages connect people in cities with people in the countryside on a daily basis. The links are tangible and include markets, migration flows, knowledge exchange, leisure and tourism, ecosystem services, food production and consumption. To support sustainable, fair and resilient food systems, an enabling political and institutional environment is needed. This 'twin' issue of *Farming Matters* and *Urban Agriculture Magazine*, produced together by ILEIA and the RUAF Foundation, looks at some existing experiences with strengthened rural-urban linkages and what they teach us about improving food systems for both consumers and agroecological farmers.

Madeleine Florin (ILEIA) and Henk Renting (RUAF)

The role of both rural and urban spaces for rebuilding food systems is ever more relevant today. Cities are growing and globalisation is impacting everyone, producers and consumers alike.

Hunger, malnutrition, unhealthy diets and obesity affect billions of people, soil degradation affects billions of hectares, and we face an alarming climate crisis. In this context, our food systems – how our food is produced, where, and how it ends up on our plates – must be rethought. From a production perspective, we need to value agroecological approaches and family farming as a way of life. From a consumption perspective, we need enough safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for everyone and to break out of non-resilient patterns of urban development.

Many debates on rural and urban development have remained rather dislocated. The city was mainly conceived as a far-away place where consumers had to be reached with 'market access' programmes but very

Domestic workers in Bolivia are keenly aware of the need for solidarity with rural producers.

Photo: SITRAHO-SP



little real connections were established between producers and consumers. Rather, the role of rural areas was reduced to a supportive one: feeding cities with cheap food. Policies pushed for intensive industrial agriculture, disconnecting people from their food and leaving room for middlemen, large distributors and retailers to take control over ever larger parts of the food chain. Decision makers in cities were hardly concerned about the ecological impacts of urban development for their peri-urban and rural surroundings, and saw no role for themselves in developing policies to influence food consumption and production patterns of their inhabitants. But all of this is rapidly changing, and there is growing awareness that improved rural–urban linkages are an essential element in the necessary transition towards more sustainable and resilient food systems. This is seen in joint initiatives by farmers and urban-based consumer groups for concrete changes that span across the urban–rural divide, with examples in this issue.

The important role of rural–urban linkages is also increasingly recognised through policy as a key factor for the development of sustainable, healthy and resilient food systems (Matheissen, page 43). That more than half of humanity now lives in cities, and that this share is likely to increase further in the coming decades, especially in Africa and Asia, has shifted policy priorities and introduced new actors. Concerns over climate change, resilience to environmental and economic shocks, food security and health have put food firmly on urban agendas. Cities have become important policy actors on food issues, and many have developed their own urban food policies in an area that was traditionally dominated by rural and agricultural policies. Likewise, civil society organisations in cities increasingly take up activities around urban agriculture and food, either for reasons of gastronomy or for environmental, social and health concerns, thereby building bridges between the rural and urban.

But where does the rural stop and where does the urban start? This is difficult to answer as the boundaries between city and countryside, or urban, peri-urban and rural, are ever more blurred. Rural and urban spaces cannot and should not be categorically separated. They are intimately linked and recognising and further strengthening these linkages is an important starting point for building viable pathways to sustainable and resilient food systems.

Dual identities With rapid and increasing urbanisation, what does it mean to be urban? The move from rural to urban is often a result of necessity. National and international policies that favour industrial types of agriculture make it more difficult to continue family farming, pushing people to the cities, who can then send money to support those who stay



Cities have become important policy actors on food issues. Photo: Rotterdamse Munt

on the farm. On page 25, Pablo Tittone points out that such ‘safety nets’ enable many farmers to continue producing when sole reliance on farming is no longer an option, but that this also works both ways, with urbanites in turn depending on traditional and diverse foods from their rural families.

These mutual relationships, made possible by urban people holding firmly to their rural identities, transcend individual families and rural–urban divides, and can manifest themselves as class-based alliances. Bolivian domestic workers fighting for food sovereignty (page 18) is one such example where city dwellers, often recent migrants from the countryside, work together with peasants to create alternative food systems.

Strong rural identities in an urban context are also seen among growing numbers and increasingly varied urban agriculture initiatives. Such ‘rural’ activities in cities serve social needs, provide food security, and income-earning opportunities in marginalised communities. City farmers in black townships in South Africa introduce elements of rural lifestyles such as a sense of place and community ties in the urban context (page 14). Urban agriculture is also political, and citizens are fighting for control over their food systems and for recognition as urban farmers. In many cases, these objectives overlap, as in Rosario, Argentina (page 37).

Counterforces Even with hostile market and policy environments and increasing urbanisation, family farmers provide 70% of the world’s food. ‘Feeding the world’ is no small task, but citizens are not passively being fed, they are actively shaping how their food is produced and by whom, ever more preferring food from family farmers. For this reason, farmers and consumers build new connections and start to collaborate.

Innovative direct marketing arrangements are an important link between farmers and consumers that contribute to overcoming the rural–urban divide.



Direct relationships between farmers and consumers are gaining ground. Photo: Judith Hitchman

Shortening value chains, and developing direct relationships between farmers and consumers is gaining ground, and the strongest and most successful are those where the new social relationships are much more than a mere economic exchange. They include trust, friendship and new communities, as seen in initiatives that circumvent the strongly globalised food system in the Netherlands (page 40). Community Supported Agriculture, an alternative food system popular in Japan and the USA, spreading rapidly to Europe and also emerging in the global south, is a good example. In China, this concept is popular, providing consumers with reliable and safe food while also supporting young farmers to produce ecological food and pursue a lifestyle of their choice (page 10).

Besides direct marketing arrangements that build social networks, other initiatives that strengthen relationships and cooperation between farmers and citizens also emerge, founded on mutual benefits and often with shared or converging goals. For instance, across Japan, a system of shared 'ownership' supports farmers and urbanites to work together to preserve their highly valued but threatened rice terraces (page 28). Farmers share their traditional knowledge to preserve cultural landscapes and revive their rural communities, while people from the city want to learn about farming and educate their children.

Although the net flow of people is from rural to urban areas, there is an emerging counter-flow. Young people in particular are moving from cities to start farming. These so called 'new farmers' or 'neo-rurals' are motivated by social and environmental concerns and often choose agroecological practices (see page 21). This is happening in many different parts of the world, and concepts such as Community Supported Agriculture, as in China and (peri-)urban farming, as in Brazil (page 34), are part of this dynamic.

Governance structures for agroecology

Agroecology is a consistent thread in building stronger rural–urban linkages. It is striking that urban agriculture initiatives like those in Argentina (page 37) and South Africa (page 14) explicitly choose agroecology as a point of departure, both in terms of production methods and for social and market relations that these initiatives embody. Also, several urban-based initiatives aim at closing nutrient and water flows at the local level, thereby improving the ecological 'metabolism' of the city. This shows that agroecology is as much the domain of the urban as it is of the rural. We see a convergence between rural- and urban-initiated movements, showing that consumers and producers alike have a stake in agroecological food production. Besides safe and healthy food, sustainable farming offers other benefits such as protection of cultural and environmental landscapes, carbon storage, biodiversity and clean water which city dwellers demand. Ecosystem services provided by farmers to cities deserve particular recognition.

A common denominator of the successful examples highlighted in this issue, is that they all have succeeded in putting into place appropriate social networks and institutional arrangements needed to add value to and strengthen the potential of rural–urban linkages. These range from marketing structures like Community Supported Agriculture or 'food hubs', social mechanisms that mobilise voluntary labour and initiatives that provide required knowledge, support and exchange. These structures allow citizens and farmers to govern their food according to their own values and principles. Without such governance structures that interconnect and strike the right balance between key rural and urban actors, improved rural–urban linkages would not be possible.

New and international policy making arenas (page 43) are embracing the importance of rural–urban linkages, as seen in this issue. These pages provide examples from across the world, where citizens, farmers, consumers, workers, women and youth, are building new, and strengthening existing rural–urban linkages with positive and concrete benefits. While these practices are promising, many challenges remain and still need to be addressed. On the one hand, it is key that international and national policies create space for emerging alternatives, Biraj Patnaik demonstrates for the World Trade Organisation (page 9) that this is not always the case. On the other hand, we must make sure that rural–urban linkages continue to be grounded in practice, to avoid that it turns into another new buzz-word. For this, the active engagement of citizens, both consumers and producers, is the best way to create new pathways towards sustainable food systems we so urgently need.

How much support can developing countries provide to their farmers for domestic food security without being accused of *distorting international trade*? This question is at the heart of a heated conflict in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

India proposes to spend less than US\$25 per person per year under its National Food Security Act, aiming to stock food from local farmers for the food security needs of its population. Following the National Food Security Act of 2013, the central government would provide rice, wheat, maize and traditional grains like sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet, through the public distribution system. But the USA and other countries say that this is 'a subsidy in disguise' claiming it goes against WTO rules agreed in the 1994 Uruguay Round.

The US itself spends US\$1608 per person per year under its Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program, which remains unchallenged in the WTO. Now that India has the means to address its people's food security needs, they would not be not allowed to do so? This hypocrisy highlights the WTO bias in favour of developed countries.

The developing world presented a comprehensive proposal for a progressive overhaul of the Agreement on Agriculture. But developing countries have been arm-twisted into accepting a temporary 'peace clause' allowing them to continue with food security programmes 'until a permanent solution is found'.

Developing countries must unite and call for fundamental changes to reverse this injustice. Civil society groups meeting in Tunis in March 2015 agreed on the following proposals.

First, all countries should be allowed to implement comprehensive support programmes to develop sustainable, local food production systems for domestic food security. Second, no country should be allowed to export subsidised food that may have negative impacts on domestic food production of any other country. Third, countries should be allowed to use tools such as tariffs and 'special safeguard mechanisms' to counter import surges and falling commodity prices, and to protect domestic producers. Fourth, developing countries should be allowed greater flexibility to impose tariffs on products designated 'special products' that impact their food security, rural development and livelihood security needs.

Anything short of these steps would enhance the inequities enshrined in the WTO. If this struggle is won, domestic food security and food sovereignty considerations would finally get precedence over the dictates of international trade.

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The WTO must allow support to national food systems

RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES > GROWING MOVEMENTS

Community supported agriculture thriving in China

Photo: Jan Douwe van der Ploeg



Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is one of the best examples of a successful, alternative food distribution system, providing real income to producers and affordable healthy food for consumers. Food continues to be grown in peri-urban areas and trust between producers and consumers is strengthened. And China has not been left behind by this global movement, over 500 CSAs with 75,000 consumers are now contributing to new food systems in more than a dozen cities across the country.

Judith Hitchman

Feeding the world's growing cities has become ever harder over the past 50 years. Migrants from the countryside used to have supplies sent from their families, or could buy from local farmers at street corner markets. But much of this has disappeared, replaced by industrialised agriculture, identical products, multinational corporations, and supermarkets. Add to this the burning need to tackle climate change and energy transition, we must do everything to preserve agricultural land, particularly that close to major cities. And with this, to develop alternative food systems that support sustainable production of safe, healthy food that is available to all. This is the context in which Community Supported Agriculture has emerged around the world: an alternative, locally based economic model of agriculture and food distribution, in which consumers pledge

to support one or more local farms, and share the risks and benefits of food production.

Chinese consumers, particularly the new middle class, are hungry not only for new foods, but also for new food systems. In the wake of various large-scale food scandals, food safety is a major concern for both the government and consumers. Compounded by pollution, pesticides and chemical fertilizers, trust in industrial farming has been undermined. Many people are buying food labelled organic, and for about the last seven years, more people have joined CSA groups. While relatively new in China, there are already around 500 CSAs, with a membership of about 75,000 consumers and these figures are growing fast! The citizens and farmers involved in these initiatives have created a national network to share knowledge and other resources, and are also part of Urgenci, the global CSA network.

What is Community Supported Agriculture?

The CSA model was born in Japan, where in the 1970s, as a result of mercury contamination (the famous Minimata disaster), a group of Japanese housewives started sourcing their food directly from organic farmers. This was known as Teikei, and the network is still flourishing in Japan today. The movement went global, with Urgenci, a network of national networks, now bringing well over a million producers and consumers together. There are also many thousands of groups that are not part of networks, especially in the USA.

So how does it work? A key point is that the consumers commit to buying from producers on a regular basis and, at least for a whole growing

season. This means that they share both the risks and benefits from the growing season. Payment is usually made in advance, but can vary, to allow those in difficult situations to still participate.

Distribution models vary between countries, and even from one CSA to another. In some cases, boxes are prepared on the farm, and there are a number of collection points in the city. In others, consumers are far more involved, assisting with planting, tending, harvesting, packing or distribution. There is a lot of good humour and exchange, and this is where community spirit is built. Many CSAs also have special festivals and newsletters to keep their consumers informed.



Shi Yan and her husband Cheng on Shared Harvest farm. Photo: Judith Hitchman

China's first In 2008, Shi Yan, a soft-spoken but determined graduate from Renmin University, Beijing, helped to set up one of China's first CSA farms called 'Little Donkey' (www.littledonkeyfarm.com). It was a joint initiative between her university, the district government, and the Renmin Rural Reconstruction Centre.

Shi Yan became the chief operator. She was inspired by her experience in 2008, working with Earthrise Farm, a small CSA in Minnesota, USA. "It changed my life," says Shi Yan. She arrived there thinking that she would study its business model, "but when living there, I realised that it's not just a model, it's a lifestyle, and although I was concerned about rural issues, I never thought about living in a village." But seven years ago she moved to the northwest corner of Beijing's Haidian district to manage the farm, going against the trend where young people are abandoning rural villages for jobs in the city.

Little Donkey bucked another trend in Chinese agriculture. Chinese farmers are now among the world's biggest users of chemical inputs, but cultivation at Little Donkey is chemical free. Although not certified organic because of the high certification costs, they do not use any chemical fertilizers or pesticides. They build soil health with knowledge and techniques from traditional practices, permaculture, and 'natural farming' principles of the South Korean farmer Han Kyu.

Little Donkey has 'working share' and 'regular share' members. Those with a working share rent 30 m² and are provided with all material inputs such as seeds and organic fertilizers, tools and technical assistance to grow their own vegetables. Those with a regular share sign up for a weekly supply of seasonal production, which they can either pick up or have delivered to their door. Most payments are made online. Little

Donkey currently has around 700 members, most of them residents of Beijing city. The farm is also used for training and research and is a hub for community activities with the possibility to organise visits and demonstrations of ecological farming.

More than production and consumption

Shi Yan recently moved on from Little Donkey and now works another farm, Shared Harvest, with her husband and his parents, where they rent land from the village authority. They employ 25 mostly young people who studied agriculture at university and are motivated to live a more communal, fulfilling life.

Shared Harvest includes 500 families, four groups of parents from local schools, and organic clubs and restaurants in Beijing. Another community building aspect is the 'Earth School', where children come to learn about ecological farming and the environment, how food is grown and what it looks like. Intent on nurturing the community, Shi Yan also set up a clothes exchange on her farm, and in November this year, the national network of about 500 groups will hold their annual conference in the area, including visits to her farm. This conference will also be back-to-back with the Urgenci International network conference, with more than 50 international participants. Shi Yan keeps a popular blog (blog.sina.com.cn/us-ashiyen) about all these initiatives.

'New farmers' Since 2008, more CSAs have popped up in China, so what makes them so popular? Besides consumers finding that CSA offers the alternative food system they are seeking, another big reason why it is taking off is because it provides an opportunity for educated youth, so called 'new peasants' or 'new farmers', to return to their roots. Young, qualified graduates who moved to the city to study, disillusioned by the bright lights, are increasingly choosing to return to their villages. Caring for elderly family members is another reason for many young Chinese to choose to return to their villages, as grandparents are often left alone when children and grandchildren all work in the cities. These 'new farmers' lead many of China's CSAs and this is also the case in the rest of the world. Often they even leave behind stable employment and a good salary in the cities.

Liu Yueming is one such new farmer. She moved to Beijing and qualified as a biologist, but after working there for some time, she decided to move back to her family farm in 2010. She explained that the move has allowed her to be closer to her grandparents, and also to be able to spend more time with her own son. Liu employs 15 people on her eight hectare farm, most from the local village. Half the land is rented from the

village authority on a 30 year lease, the rest is rented from different families in the village. She began working with 20 families, with just one rundown poly-tunnel, but with government support she now has seven more. Today, 400 nearby families choose between four different weekly vegetable boxes. Much of the communication between members and the farm is via Weibo, the Chinese version of Facebook.

Protected peri-urban land Like Liu Yueming, new farmers can usually rent additional land, either from other families or from the local authorities. In fact, with a shortage of people to work the land in the villages, CSA has been welcomed with open arms. Protected peri-urban land dedicated to agriculture is common across China, and supports the spread of CSA. It provides access to fresh organic food and a viable model for new farmers to return to the land.

Farmers' markets Most of Liu's produce is dedicated to feeding the local community, but she sells surplus at the Beijing Farmers' market, one of a dozen across China operating together with CSAs. Certification is not yet common, but the Chinese network is in the process of setting up a participatory guarantee system.

The legal situation of the farmers' markets is uncertain. Theoretically, markets require a permit, but at the same time, farmers are allowed to sell their produce freely. Another issue, at least in Beijing, is that refrigerated trucks must be used to transport all food into the



CSA members harvesting carrots on Little Donkey farm. Photo: Jan Douwe van der Ploeg

city, and farmers near Beijing now work together to transport their produce to the market in this way.

What does the future hold? It is impossible to know how CSA will evolve in China, but the government is looking closely at the model as a supplier of safe and healthy food to the cities. But they could also favour other forms of production, namely partnerships with private companies. However, the number of CSAs grows every year, proving that this food system, involving farmers, consumers and local authorities, is popular. Individuals such as Shi Yan have done much to show the power of Community Supported Agriculture.

Judith Hitchman (hitchman@club-internet.fr) is an advocacy officer for Urgenci, and currently consumer constituency member of the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security and Nutrition.

Rural–urban linkages and *Hukou* in China

China has the largest agricultural system in the world in terms of farm output and it includes a little more than 200 million smallholdings, representing at least 800 million people. On just 10% of all cultivated land in the world, these smallholders produce 20% of the world's total food supply. The average farm has only five *mu* of agricultural land, about one third of a hectare. However, China is self-sufficient in as far as the nutritional needs of its huge population are concerned. Over the last four decades total food production and productivity grew more than in any other country. Granaries, barter and multiple cropping are some of the underlying mechanisms, as well as a massive and richly chequered provisioning of food from farmers to cities through a widespread network of interconnected food markets.

The national *Hukou* household registration system

provides rural Chinese the right to access land. This given also shapes rural-urban migration flows. In China, migration is not a one way move from the countryside to the cities, but is circular. Many young people leave the villages in order to work in urban industries. After marriage and the first child, women return to the village while men only come back in periods of land preparation and harvest. After many years, the men return to the rural areas permanently to invest their savings in the farm. Many social struggles in the countryside rest on the right to land embedded in *Hukou* and it has enabled a number of peasants to start their own community supported agriculture initiatives.

Jan Douwe van der Ploeg
(jandouwe.vanderploeg@wur.nl)



Photo: Femke Hoekstra

Growing a sense of place and community in Cape Town

The Harvest of Hope initiative is a vegetable box scheme in Cape Town, South Africa, set up as a social enterprise by a local NGO. By promoting ecological urban farming, Abalimi Bezekhaya (meaning 'Farmers of Home' in Xhosa) improves income and household food security, and empowers disadvantaged households by building their confidence and capacities in farming. Building a sense of place and strengthening community ties, neither so common in South Africa's urban areas, are keys for success of this approach.

Rob Small and Femke Hoekstra

Established in 1982, the Abalimi NGO has for 33 years been working with urban small scale producers to develop their own ecological vegetable gardens in Khayelitsha and Nyanga townships and surrounding Cape Flats areas (www.abalimi.org.za). Abalimi provides support services, supplying compost, seed, seedlings, marketing, sales support, training, extension, support for monitoring and evaluation, development of local networks and partnerships, and building community organisations.

The work of Abilimi contributes in different ways to food security and strengthening of livelihoods in the townships. Initially, Abalimi started working with disadvantaged women, engaging them in vegetable production in home and community gardens to improve household food security. When some produced a surplus, they started selling ‘over the fence’ to their neighbours. They wanted to access new markets beyond their local community as they did not see their local markets as large or reliable enough, though they lacked the capacity to do so on their own. Abalimi had been experimenting with marketing inside and outside the townships for seven years, and started the Harvest of Hope initiative to support the development of supply chains to local markets.

Subsistence and market-oriented production

According to Abalimi, farm development schemes often make the mistake to assume a contradiction between subsistence farming and market-oriented food production. Conventional farm development tries to pull the urban poor into commercial production, forgetting that many or most don’t want to be full time producers. Through experience, Abalimi found that farmers apply a range of different strategies and tools to improve their food security and sovereignty, and developed the ‘development chain’ methodology to assist farmers’ groups to choose the strategies that best fit their specific situations.

The methodology has four phases: the survival, subsistence, livelihood and the commercial phase. Producers or producer groups can remain in any phase permanently, or move between phases. In each, producers need different types of support, from basic training on how to grow vegetables, to learning how to plan for regular production throughout the year.

A crucial aspect is that producers first need to become sustainable and stable at each development stage before deciding to move up to another that is more complex and demanding, and especially before deciding to take on a serious commercial element. For producers to sustainably move between stages, a step-

The Farmer Development Chain for organic micro farming projects

Originated and developed by Rob Small for Abalimi Bezekhaya and the Farm & Garden National Trust

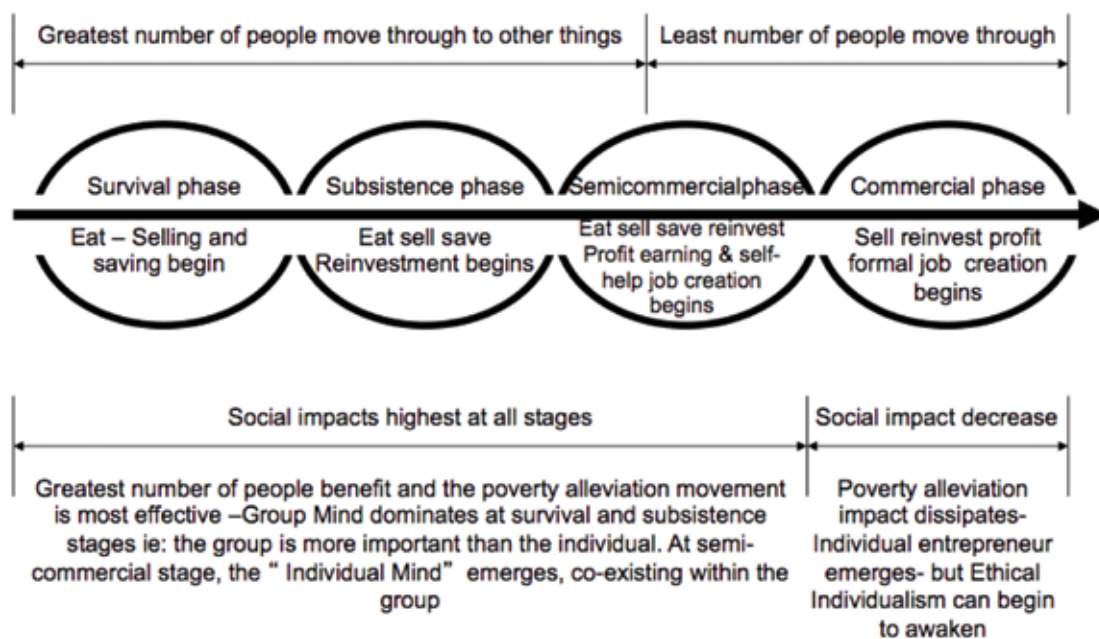


Image from Rob Small on behalf of Abalimi, Harvest of Hope and the Farm and Garden Trust, under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 licence.



Vegetable boxes are ready to be delivered to a collection point. Photo: Femke Hoekstra

wise approach is needed, that addresses socio-political, environmental and economic difficulties encountered on a daily basis. These include, among others, poor education, poverty, mentality, gender, racial and class tensions, very poor soil, and mass unemployment.

Harvest of Hope The Harvest of Hope initiative was set up by Abalimi in 2008 to develop short marketing chains that would support the move from subsistence farming to (semi-)commercial farming (www.harvestofhope.co.za). It is a marketing system selling boxes of ecologically grown, seasonal vegetables on a weekly basis, with the following objectives.

- Providing a sustainable and growing market for urban micro-farmers from the townships;
- Using this market as an engine for poverty alleviation, enabling township farmers to have dignified, sustainable livelihoods.
- Giving customers access to fresh ecological produce with less food miles and at competitive prices.
- Ensuring that fresh ecologically produced food is available year round for producers, their families, and local communities.

Harvest of Hope was launched in partnership with the South African Institute for Entrepreneurship (SAIE) and Business Place Phillipi, with support from the Ackerman Pick n Pay Foundation. The initial investment was used to renovate and upgrade the packing shed, develop training materials, to design and launch the brand, and train staff. Starting with eight producer groups, Harvest of Hope was working with 18 groups and around 120 producers after three years. The weekly food box membership increased from 79 in 2008, to 350 in 2012, and some 450 boxes in early 2015, with vegetables produced in 29 paid up member gardens and 43 non-member gardens (ad-hoc suppliers). About a quarter of Abalimi's producer groups supply Harvest of Hope boxes.

This is a clear example of a social enterprise combining community empowerment with economic market development. The main beneficiaries are the vegetable producers, mostly older women and some dedicated younger producers, as well as the customers. There are similar organic vegetable box schemes elsewhere in Cape Town, such as Wild Organic Foods, Ethical Co-op and SlowFood, but these do not have the same focus on social community development and not-for-profit philosophy.

Harvest of Hope manages the packaging, marketing and selling the products, while Abalimi supports producers with technical support, production plans, provision of seeds, organic fertilizers, and the maintenance and repair of irrigation equipment. Harvest of Hope has a full-time marketing manager and a team of part-time staff consisting of field workers, a book keeper, packers and drivers.

Consumers subscribed to the vegetable box scheme collect their boxes from any of 25 collection points around Cape Town, usually schools, university buildings, business and government offices, and friendly shops. They target educated, middle class and socially responsible consumers, with new customers attracted

Its dynamics and success are strongly based on rural–urban linkages

mostly through word of mouth and social media, though there are also weekly garden tours.

Harvest of Hope does not have official organic certification as requirements are very strict and take at least three years. But they use their own standards whereby no artificial chemicals, pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers are used, and are in the process of setting up a participatory guarantee system, a locally focussed quality assurance system that certifies producers based on the active participation of stakeholders.

Growing sense of place and community

Harvest of Hope is an initiative with an urban background in Cape Town townships, but its dynamics and success are strongly based on urban–rural relations. Up to half of the disadvantaged black population in Cape Town have roots and have migrated from nearby rural areas, especially the Eastern Cape. And, their rural roots and the associated rural–urban links are still very much alive. Amongst the producers within Abalimi and Harvest of Hope, about 60% regularly spend weekends and summers in their rural areas of origin. Also, it is common amongst those

who made a good living in the townships to return to their rural home communities after retirement.

Rural–urban linkages are also important in terms of farming practices and agroecology. There are frequent reports from fieldworkers about the exchange of seeds, seedlings and cuttings used within Abalimi's programmes, bought from the Abalimi Garden Centres in Nyanga and Khayelithsha and taken back to the Eastern Cape. There is also a counter-flow of traditional crop seeds of rainbow maize, beans and melons, from rural areas to Abalimi's gardens. A good example of this is Mama Mabel Bokolo who runs the Abalimi People's Garden Centre in Nyanga. Ma Bokolo regularly grows saved seed from her rural home to generate new seed stock, saying that "I plan to return permanently to the Eastern Cape in 2017, and I want to promote the Abalimi way in my rural home."

The experiences of Abalimi and Harvest of Hope build on the strengthening of links between the 'urban' and the 'rural'. Harvest of Hope was intended as a means to join forces between producers and engaged consumers, with the concept of community supported agriculture as a guiding principle. This strong community development-orientation is one of the factors that differentiates Harvest of Hope from more commercially-oriented vegetable box schemes in the area.

Abalimi's and Harvest of Hope's activities help to introduce elements of community organisation and 'rootedness' in the land, to the black townships of Cape Town, two things uncommon to South Africa's urban areas. City people in South Africa are often strongly individualised and focused on competitive notions of entrepreneurship, whereas social life in the countryside is managed around community ties and clan relations. This sometimes results in tensions and difficult life choices, as with the young farmer leader



A group of producers decide which vegetables are ready to be harvested. Photo: Femke Hoekstra

Xolisa Bangani, 25 years old, and next in line to a clan chieftainship in the Eastern Cape. He is contemplating taking up this responsibility, but first wants to develop his own organisation in Cape Town and gain life experience. As such, activities of Abalimi and Harvest of Hope centred on agriculture and food, manage to blend socio-cultural and lifestyle elements across the rural–urban divide and combine the best of both worlds.

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This is a clear example of a social enterprise combining community empowerment with economic market development. Photo: Femke Hoekstra





Photo: SITRAHO-SP

Between city and country: **domestic workers building food sovereignty**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, domestic workers make up 18% of the female labour force. Migrating from rural areas to work in the city, many maintain both rural and urban identities. With strong connections to their family's farm on one hand, and playing a key role in buying and preparing food in urban households on the other, they occupy a strategic position within food systems. In Bolivia, increasingly well-organised unions of domestic workers are using this space to both empower their members and educate urban consumers about indigenous foods, healthy diets, agroecology, and the importance of supporting the small farm economy.

Karen Pomier and Tanya Kerksen

Like many countries of the global South, Bolivia has experienced large waves of internal migration in the past few decades – especially from rural farming areas to urban areas such as the capital, La Paz. The causes of rural outmigration include neoliberal policies that undermine the price of peasant-produced crops, and climate change, which makes agricultural production increasingly uncertain. As a result, many Bolivian women from farming households find themselves forced to move to cities in search of work – often before the age of 15, with little formal education, and many from indigenous backgrounds. Indeed, while rural outmigration is typically portrayed as male, the ‘feminisation’ of migration is increasingly recognised.

In the worst cases, these vulnerable young women become victims of human trafficking. Others end up working in private homes as domestic employees charged with cleaning, preparing meals, and providing child and elder care. Working conditions for domestic workers vary widely, from near-slavery to relatively dignified jobs. But in general, this sector, which comprises an estimated 72,000 workers, 97% of whom are women, has languished in the shadows.

Despite the challenges of organising often fragmented and isolated domestic workers, remarkable progress has been made in forming unions to defend their rights. In 1993, the National Federation of Domestic Workers’ Unions (FENATRAHOB) was founded, which now comprises 13 unions from Bolivia’s nine departments. The unions work to defend domestic workers’ and women’s rights, and provide education and resources to their members. They also work to build the self-esteem and cultural identity of their members, most with roots in rural areas, by strengthening links between the countryside and the city.

Domestic Workers in Search of Dignity and Food Sovereignty

In 2009, the domestic workers’ union of La Paz, SITRAHO (*Sindicato de Trabajadoras del Hogar*), launched the Domestic Workers in Search of Dignity and Food Sovereignty project, with the goal of providing members a political education in food sovereignty, and increasing the direct marketing of healthy, ecologically produced food.

With support from the Interchurch Cooperative for Development Cooperation (ICCO), SITRAHO opened its Practical School for Women Domestic Workers (*Escuela Integral Práctica de Mujeres*), which carries out programmes focused on leadership skills, financial management, and entrepreneurship. Among these, the Programme in Gastronomy and Food Sovereignty provides training to the union’s 2000 members in culinary arts, food safety, and other practical food

management skills, together with a political education in the principles of food sovereignty. The curriculum focuses on the use of local products, procuring ingredients from family farmers’ organisations, and revaluing indigenous foods. These principles are then applied in the homes where SITRAHO members work, thus spreading the values of food sovereignty to middle and upper class families. The programme also runs its own lunch counter selling healthy, ecological, locally sourced, and affordable dishes with a focus on consumer education. Most of the consumers are working people from the San Pedro neighbourhood, where the restaurant is located, with the profits used to support unemployed or elderly union members.

Rural and indigenous identity

Many domestic workers remain closely connected to their rural villages, with family members still engaged in farming activities. They are keenly aware of the difficulties farmers face, and of the need for urban, worker, and consumer solidarity with rural producers. Rosalía Lazo Lazo, who came to La Paz from the rural province of Omasuyos at the age of 14, comments, “since we started in 2009 I’ve heard from a lot of peasants and indigenous farmers and this makes me remember my childhood and think of my parents who still work in the fields.”

**They are keenly aware
of the need for urban,
worker and consumer
solidarity with rural
producers**

Many domestic workers are from Quechua or Aymara indigenous cultures and are familiar with native indigenous foods such as quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*), cañahua (*Chenopodium pallidicaule*), açai (*Euterpe oleracea*) and muña (*Minthostachys mollis*). These foods are often unknown to urban residents, and are not found in supermarkets that primarily sell imported products and processed foods with homogeneous tastes and textures. Through the Domestic Workers in Search of Dignity and Food Sovereignty project, not only do domestic workers value foods from their own food culture, they also introduce these foods to their employers.

Domestic workers are generally responsible for making all household food purchases and for preparing three meals per day. This gives them tremendous influence over families’ food choices, what kind of

food system they support, and whether they promote corporate value-chains or the peasant economy. Rosalía comments, “I know farming is hard work and that people in the countryside need support. My mother still wakes up very early each morning to look after her sheep, and frost or hail sometimes damage her crops. Consumers don’t value ecologically produced products, preferring instead to buy imported produce. But in my last job, I would buy cañahua for the kids. It was hard because they preferred to eat junk food, but I would say to them, don’t you want to grow up to be big and strong? And they then would eat it! Nothing is impossible when you believe in what you do.”

Alliances with family farmers

Over the past few years, SITRAHO has formed partnerships with important food advocacy groups, small businesses, and producers’ organisations including the Association of Organic Producers of Bolivia (AOPEB); the Coordination of Peasant Economic Organisations (CIOEC); *Fundación Sartawi* which promotes sustainable agriculture in the municipality of Calamarca (south of La Paz); Madre Tierra, a chain of organic food stores in La Paz; and Slow Food Bolivia. SITRAHO has made a commitment to source food from these small farmer organisations and local businesses to strengthen the local food economy and support small scale farmers.

In October 2014, SITRAHO co-organised La Paz’s first Ethical Food Fair (*Festival de Comida Consciente*). The women of SITRAHO were in charge of preparing all of the dishes offered at the fair, with an explicit commitment to educating people about non-GMO and ecologically produced ingredients sourced from local farmers’ organisations. Piero Meda, a farmer from Calamarca said, “we work closely with the union of domestic workers to bring healthy food directly to consumers.”

SITRAHO’s partnerships go well beyond food sourcing, consumer education, and helping to create local markets for small farmers. They also translate into political alliances with farmers on important issues of agricultural policy. For instance, SITRAHO is an active member of the Bolivian Consumers’ Collective, a broad-based coalition of workers, activists, and consumer groups, which recently issued a declaration condemning the government’s support of transgenic crops and industrial agriculture.

Looking ahead SITRAHO’s Domestic Workers in Search of Dignity and Food Sovereignty project is a powerful example of collective efforts to repair the social, economic, and ecological damage caused by rural outmigration. Such rural–urban alliances are critical to supporting declining peasant

economies and to building food sovereignty in the city and the countryside.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges faced by the union so far is the history of trauma of many of its members. Many domestic workers have been victims of trafficking, child labour, and abuse, experiences that often manifest as internalised oppression. Whereas many domestic workers feel a strong connection to their rural roots, others aspire to the urban, consumerist values of their employers. They have often been subjected to intense racism and may reject indigenous foods so shopping at the supermarket or buying imported food can symbolise status and acceptance.

Thus, building food sovereignty requires tireless, ongoing work to dismantle racism, sexism, and classism; recover rural identities; and construct class-based alliances that link workers and peasants, producers and consumers, in a collective struggle. These lessons from Bolivian domestic workers can be applied much more broadly, to efforts around the world, to create community-based food systems rooted in justice, sustainability, health, and culture.

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The practical school for domestic workers is transformed into a restaurant during lunch hours.

Photo: SITRAHO-SP



New peasants moving back to rural areas

In the eyes of many, farming is not considered a desirable career. However, a growing number of urban youth see things differently. After a 'first life' outside agriculture, and often with a university degree, they have decided to become farmers. We call them *new peasants*. And many of these young people choose agroecology as an alternative way to enter the food system, promoting both social and environmental sustainability. This is a new urban-rural link, and a growing counter force to the dominant trend of rural outmigration.

In interviews, new peasants in France told us they find fulfillment in farming. But they also emphasised that farming is a risky business, and it takes several years to build a secure livelihood from it. New peasants have little prior agricultural knowledge, and certainly no 'family land' to inherit. They often have to learn how to farm without the support of their rural neighbours who consider them 'outsiders'. Lack of land due to high prices and land grabbing, combined with difficulties in entering markets, make it very difficult to establish a new farm. Financial tools and credit are often unsuited to the small scale, multifunctional types of farms they want to develop. And where appropriate programmes do exist, many new peasants said that they had never heard of them.

Farmers remain a category of people with a negative social image. But this is a huge paradox as they master many skills – they connect with rural and urban people alike, find market opportunities, manage a complicated business, and, importantly, they excel in physically challenging agricultural techniques. And not being educated in family farming traditions, new peasants often turn out to be very innovative. When they work alongside existing farmers, they become a driving force for change based on sustainable, agroecological production.



Sidney Ortun Flament and **Bruno Macias** (contact@neo-agri.org) are part of the Neo-Agri association, which supports new peasants and established farmers working with agroecological approaches (www.neo-agri.org).

New peasants are a crucial response to the issue of succession. Many retiring farmers do not have a son or daughter who wants to take over the business, while at the same time, many young people are looking for land to start a new farm. More support is needed to bring the two together.

We founded the Neo-Agri association to facilitate such crucial knowledge sharing and networking among new peasants and between them and established farmers. To support this movement further and revitalise rural areas we believe additional government interventions are needed.

Egyptian youth challenge the city–country divide

The ancient Egyptian civilisation, founded upon the agriculture and peasantry of the Nile Valley, is famous worldwide. Yet, today peasantry in Egypt often denotes poverty and there is a widening social divide between farmers and urban consumers. But over the past ten years, and particularly since the revolution in 2011, Egyptian youth are leading the way in changing the face of Egyptian society. Nawaya is one such initiative that focuses on creating a 'bridge' between farming families and Cairo's city dwellers.

The past ten years have seen rapid change in Egypt as the modern culture of innovation, startups, and green economy has continued to gain ground. Many youth from Cairo have had the opportunity to travel abroad and have on their return, taken an interest in environmental issues, renewable energy and urban farming. NGOs such as Nahdet el Mahrousa (www.nahdetelmahrousa.org/), sought alternatives beyond depending on foreign aid development efforts, and supports young innovators achieve their entrepreneurial goals. One notable social enterprise they helped to set up is Nawaya, a group from Cairo working to strengthen rural–urban linkages.

The Nawaya team knew that building stronger links between rural and urban populations in Egypt is a fundamental part of building sustainable farming and food systems. Since the time of the Ottoman rulers, the rift between drivers of agricultural development and the needs of the peasantry has been growing. Today, agricultural holdings have been fragmented, been turned into housing or industrial areas, or sold to

big investors. In rural areas, farming is no longer an attractive profession, challenged by inadequate financial and technical support and inaccessible marketing channels. And in urban areas, consumers find it ever more difficult to access high quality, locally produced products. This was the social challenge that Nawaya set out to tackle.

Nawaya Nawaya is an Arabic play on words meaning 'fruit stones' and 'intentions', both alluding to improving sustainable agriculture, its central goal. Today, the team has seven members, most of whom are also busy with other work. Sara el Sayed the project manager and curriculum developer, manages an educational travel company, and Ahmed Galal the field coordinator, maintains a popular Facebook page dedicated to changing the way people relate to food.

The group is working on several parallel initiatives including technical aspects of farming with few external inputs, permaculture design, preserving agrobiodiversity, agrotourism, value-adding and product marketing. Importantly, Nawaya is creating a space where the goals and aspirations of both farmers and city dwellers meet.



Preparing to make a date paste, one of the products marketed by Nawaya. Photo: Christina Risk

Green innovation hubs It was not before the January 25th revolution, 2011, when a real window of opportunity opened for the aspiring youth to take bold steps. And, it was no coincidence that several supportive networks emerged during this period, in which Nawaya was well embedded.

Nawaya not only received technical assistance, legal support, essential training and mentorship from Nahdet el Mahrousa. But the Permaculture Research Institute (www.permaculturearabia.org/) provided them with experts, trainers and educational material. And the Fagnoon art school, a well established arts centre on the outskirts of Guiza, part of greater Cairo, provided the location for most of their activities, including an experimental plot. Moreover, ICE-Cairo entered the scene (www.icecairo.com/), a massively popular meeting point for Cairo's community interested in solving environmental and social challenges. Nawaya was set up in part by one of ICE-Cairo's co-founders and until now, ICE-Cairo remains the hub for green innovation.

Farmer field schools Nawaya developed a curriculum for a farmer field school with funding from Drosos foundation. The curriculum was

developed in a participatory way with farmers to ensure that the most relevant topics would be covered. In particular, the field school focused on practices for building soil fertility, pest management and seed production.

Fifteen farmers and their families are currently involved. Those who joined were those willing to experiment on a small part of their own farms (on areas of about 700 m²). Most of the farmers grow wheat, graze cattle, and cultivate various fruits and vegetables, including okra, dates and mangoes.

The learning process worked both ways

A key part of the farmer field school approach is learning by doing. Nawaya took over a plot of land in Guiza, within the premises of Fagnoon art school, where they could experiment with permaculture principles alongside the farmers. The soil was highly saline and the available irrigation water was of poor quality, like that of many nearby farmers. The learning process worked both ways, with farmers showing why their traditional techniques worked, and in turn, the Nawaya team showing them how to improve productivity by building up soil fertility with techniques such as composting.

According to one of the farmers, Nawaya's plot has improved dramatically. No laboratory tests were performed but a change in the soil quality was evident. This motivated the farmers already recruited by Nawaya to continue working with that project, and more farmers from outside the project to know about it. The knowledge generated on Nawaya's plot and also on farmers' fields has been documented as success stories for future users, forming part of Nawaya's educational material in print and film.

Besides experimenting, Nawaya also organises workshops where both producers and consumers participate. For example, a farmer with experience in bee-keeping gave a workshop to a group from Cairo. This was empowering for the farmer and is a step towards breaking down social barriers that exist between producers and city dwellers in Egypt. Activities like this help to build trust between growers and the Nawaya team, one of the biggest challenges Nawaya has faced.

From farm to fork The real *chef d'entreprise* in any small scale farm is often a woman. This is true worldwide and Egypt is no exception. For this reason, Nawaya also tried to involve as many women as possible. They set up a community kitchen at Fagnoon art school where women could get creative



From field schools to farmers' markets. Photos: Aurelia Weintz

with recipes that add value to what they grow and other local products. Besides providing the kitchen space and assisting with recording recipe development, Nawaya took on the task of packaging and marketing the end products in Cairo.

In early 2014, two Nawaya members, Sara Pozzi and Brendon Johnson, launched the Baladini food brand (www.baladini.org/). They are now selling pasta from the community kitchen at weekly farmers' markets and shops in Cairo. This initiative has provided an opportunity for women to work outside their homes and to share and learn new skills. Until now, finding a viable business model for this activity has been particularly difficult, and Nawaya is currently exploring how to share the risks and the profits so that the women can reliably generate extra household income.

Consumer consciousness Nawaya has a growing network including a diverse range of city dwellers that support their activities in different ways. Some of them are well to do consumers interested in the highest quality food products, health conscious consumers supportive of small scale farmers, people interested in the culinary traditions of Egypt, permaculture enthusiasts, chefs, researchers and schools that wish to engage their students in educational gardens. In total, about 2000 consumers are involved, and the Nawaya Facebook page has received 10,000 likes so far. People buying Nawaya's produce have particularly enjoyed the traditional white cheese made from grassfed buffalo milk, honey and innovative food items such as caffeine-free coffee made from dates. "Yesterday, in Kattameya market I bought flour from Nawaya. It smells different and reminds me of my childhood," said Essra, who immediately made bread and looks forward to trying it with the cheese. Now, they aim to reach out for an even bigger market and target middle class consumers. A broader range of products, larger

quantities and more exposure might be a way to get more people on board.

Creative network Much of Nawaya's success can be attributed to the commitment of their team and their solid local network that has been actively involved from the start. Access to funding at the beginning allowed them to learn by doing, and having space at the Fagnoon art school was particularly helpful to establish themselves as a community. And, working closely with the ICE-Cairo community provided a wealth of creative ideas that helped to find solutions to practical issues. However, it is still challenging to navigate complicated legislations that are not conducive to developing small scale production operations, and accessing specialised knowledge and expertise when needed.

Nawaya has created a 'bridge', where farming families dedicated to reducing external inputs and diversifying their activities meet Cairo's city dwellers. But this success has not come easily. Perhaps the most important lesson learnt is the importance of risk taking, trial and error, and how to deal with failure constructively. There is still a lot of work ahead as Nawaya plans to further explore the concept of multifunctional farming. They have identified a need for more strategic business planning, more efficient marketing channels, and more involvement from city dwellers. And working on social cohesion and conflict management has become increasingly necessary as they work more with rural communities.

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Only recently I realised that when I was a child, my grandfather was practicing a form of urban agriculture in our backyard in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. But he didn't see it as such. In his eyes, he was simply producing vegetables for the family, just as his father had done in the Piedmont of the Italian Alps before migrating to Argentina. Most people around us were doing the same thing too.

After all, our neighbourhood had been a green belt of commercial vegetable production only a few decades ago. During this transition, we lived in an open landscape with some relics of wilderness on the low productivity soils, marshes or river margins, and new signs of urbanisation – infrastructure, public transport, schools, parks and shops. I have to think about this mosaic every time I hear about projects for 'new green cities' in Europe.

It also reminds me of other places. When I first visited Vihiga district in western Kenya, back in 2002, the population density was already incredibly high, with up to 1000 people living in every square kilometre. With the average family of about five cultivating less than half a hectare, about 60% of households earned part or most of their income from work outside the farm. Life would not have been possible without a fluid and strong rural–urban connectivity. Family members living in cities would send money to their rural 'homes'. And especially in times of economic crises, rural families sent food to assist those in urban areas. Revisiting the area in 2012 we found that rural–urban connectivity had become even stronger with the spread of mobile phones.

Smallholder farming in these peri-urban regions is being privately subsidised through cash remittances and off-farm activities. Which is logical. You can't make a living from half a hectare of maize even if you get the best yields ever!

Perhaps it is time to rethink the role of these farms that straddle the rural–urban continuum. Peri-urban farming is fading as a livelihood option, but not as a source of traditional and diverse food which is not always found on the market. The produce can buffer shocks in times of scarcity, contribute substantially to both rural and urban diets, provide ecosystem services and maintain agrobiodiversity.

This was true back in the 1970s in my grandfather's garden and it is true for Vihiga today, and could become true in the future green cities of Europe. Perhaps it can be an alternative to the current research and development approach to food security, which continues to push the narrow idea that increasing yields of staple food crops is the primary solution.

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Finding food security in the rural–urban continuum

There are many benefits from strong rural–urban linkages. Amongst others, consumers access healthy, ecologically produced food and build connections with producers, while farmers access fair markets that value their way of life. As seen here, it is for these reasons that both farmers and consumers work together to strengthen the connections between rural and urban.

Learning lunch with nature

How do you get your wonderful lunch? Is it because you can afford it or because somebody has worked to produce it? Where do you think your food comes from, and where will it come from in the future? These are some of the questions attracting hundreds of residents from Mumbai and Pune to Saguna Baug. Saguna Baug is Chandrashekhar Bhadsavle's 50 hectare multifunctional farm combining agrotourism with cereal crops, multipurpose trees, livestock and aquatic fauna. Restoring the dignity of farming as a vocation was the main objective behind transforming the farm into an agrotourism hub. Over the past 20 years, the farm has developed into a place where leisure and learning merge and provide opportunities for farmers and urban residents to interact. This rural–urban interface

brings visitors close to nature where they can learn and practice food production. The visitors can enjoy bird watching, water sports, purchase the farm's produce or get involved with farming activities by working. They gain a better appreciation of some of the challenges and pressures farmers face. And, "appreciation not only ignites confidence but restores dignity too," says Bhadsavle, who is acutely aware that restoring farmers' confidence in farming is crucial to reversing rural outmigration. This initiative has other benefits too. Agrotourism accounts for 40% of the income from Saguna Baug, the farm now employs 60 local youth and, as consumers learn how their food is produced they are reshaping their eating habits.

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Photo: Shekhar Bhadsavle

Basque Country

Basque peasants connect with cities

In Basque Country (Spain) the severe economic crisis of the past few years coupled with unprecedented levels of youth unemployment, is opening space for agriculture as a new opportunity, especially among young people. They are seeking to build a decent future on the land, a future linked to the production of quality food, and another way of life. Interestingly, many of these are urban youth who were born and raised in the cities and towns of Basque Country (see youth and agriculture on page 21). In parallel, Basque Country is a breeding ground for a large number of dynamics that link urban citizens to producers in the countryside. These include a growing number of consumer networks around small scale farmers, trading initiatives based on

high quality peasant production, and various initiatives to revive local markets through direct sales. These innovations are central in the socio-political agenda and strategies of farmer organisations, especially for the Basque farmers' union (*EHNE Biscay*), a member of La Via Campesina.

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Photo: FORMACIÓN - EHNE BIZKAIA

United Kingdom

Growing Communities

Growing Communities is a successful social enterprise that builds community-led alternatives to the current damaging food system (www.growingcommunities.org/). They began 18 years ago and the team now numbers 25 part-time staff. They provide a direct connection between farmers and consumers in a number of ways and it is this diversity that makes their enterprise unique.



Photo: Sophie Verhagen

Through a box scheme, more than 3000 people receive fresh, local organic vegetables each week. Growing Communities also set up the Stoke Newington farmers' market where about 25 local farmers sell direct to the public every Saturday. And, on top of these marketing initiatives, Growing Communities has a 'Patchwork Farm' scattered across Hackney in East London. From 12 small market gardens and plots of about 100 m² each, they produce two tonnes of salad leaves each year. And this is complemented by a wider variety of fruit and vegetables produced at Dagenham Farm, which is about three quarters of a hectare. Urban growing apprentices are trained each year on these farms and the group also supports other communities wishing to build their own alternative food systems. Through a 'start-up programme' that offers workshops, financial tools, practical support and interest-free loans, more than ten groups across the UK have since set up their own box schemes.

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Ecuador

250,000 families to lead the food transition

Frustrated by their government's inability or disinterest in seriously addressing the unwanted human health, social and environmental consequences tied to industrial food, Ecuador's National Agroecology Collective (or *Colectivo*) launched an ambitious initiative to recruit 250,000 families to commit at least half of their existing food budget to 'responsible consumption': pesticide- and GMO-free, locally sourced, culturally empowered, sustainable food. Together, this would represent some US\$300 million per year – a sizeable investment in the sought after transition to healthier food. In the words of a concerned mother: "If the government is unwilling to represent our interests, then

we must take things into our own hands." To recruit the 250,000 families (roughly 5% of the country's population), the Colectivo, a loose network of some 300 organisations, is both reinforcing its tried-and-tested methodology of sensorial food workshops as well as piloting a game in which participating families complete a series of challenges to self-evaluate the quality and effects of their food practices. The families also share their experiences through one-minute videos: www.quericoes.org.

They represent an example for their neighbours and through this new campaign they become part of the country's agroecology movement – a rising democratic force for a tastier future.



Photo: Ana Deaconu

For more information contact **Ana Deaconu** (adeaconu@ekorural.org) and see **UA Magazine 29** for a full article on this initiative.



Threatened landscapes unite rural and urban communities

In the past 50 years, about a quarter of Japan's cultivated land has been lost, threatening food production, cultural landscapes and biodiversity. One of Japan's most valued cultural landscapes includes rice terraces. In order to prevent them from abandonment, an innovative concept known as the Ownership System, was devised almost 25 years ago. This has today become a national movement based on the cooperation between rural and urban communities who combine food production with landscape conservation, cultural activities and environmental education.

Pia Kieninger and Marianne Penker

Japan is one of the most urbanised countries in the world where rural communities are rapidly shrinking and aging. About three quarters of nation's population live in cities, each located in the few flat areas of this otherwise mountainous country. Japan is the 'oldest' country worldwide, with 25% of the population being 65 or older, and the average farmer is close to 70 years old. The problem of shrinking and aging rural populations across the country led to the creation of the term, *genkai shūraku*, literally translated as 'communities on the edge of existence'.

As rural communities grow ever smaller, land is abandoned, infrastructure is lost, and traditional Japanese cultural landscapes known as *satoyama*, degrade. In the national biodiversity strategy, the "lack of human influence" in *satoyama* is highlighted as one of the top three biodiversity crises and the role of civil society to protect landscapes is emphasised. Rice terraces (*tanada*) are particularly important in *satoyama*, yet about 40% of the country's rice terraces are abandoned. Apart from food production, they are hotspots of biodiversity and cultural identity. Many people perceive them as the landscape most close to them and they feel attracted to them due to their high cultural

and aesthetic value. *Tanada* are landscapes of their ancestors, culture, tradition, (spiritual) homeland and important places for national identity.

The Ownership System Civic movements to save *satoyama* started in the 1980s, firstly by mainly supporting forestry, as cultivation of agricultural land was restricted by law to farmers only. But to support civic engagement on farmland, the government suspended these restrictions in a number of special districts.

The first Tanada Ownership System started in Yusu-hara on Shikoku island in 1992. The Ownership System later became a national movement, where mainly city dwellers, called ‘owners’, rent agricultural land in order to cultivate it under the well-organised support of local farmers and other experts. Among all the different types of Ownership Systems, those focusing on rice production are most popular. In 2008, 187 Tanada Ownership Systems were officially registered across Japan, but the actual number might be even higher. The foundation of many Tanada Ownership Systems coincided with the Agricultural Ministry’s award for the top 100 terraced paddy fields of Japan that highlights outstanding scenic beauty and sustainable use. This award brought publicity and visitors to the rice terraces, but it also raised local pride and encouraged them to engage in conservation activities.

Tanada Ownership Systems all over Japan share the same principles, but organisation, size and participation fees differ. In the area of Kamogawa City, close to

greater Tōkyō, there are at least seven Ownership Systems. One of these, the Ōyamasenmaida Tanada Ownership System in Chiba Prefecture, is commonly regarded as a best practice example. The experiences of locals and city dwellers participating in this system are presented here.

The old farmers possess a lot of knowledge to offer the city people

Ōyamasenmaida Ōyamasenmaida is a mountainous rice terrace landscape around 100 km south-east of Tōkyō. Over 400 terraces, ranging in size from 20 to 900 m², extend up a south-east slope. They belong to the hamlet of Kogane, numbering less than 20 households. With an aging population, this region lacks farm successors, owing in part to the uneconomically small scale of the paddy fields. In 1997, landowners and other locals founded the NPO ‘Ōyamasenmaida Preservation Association’ and initiated a Tanada Ownership System to safeguard their rice terraces. The founders saw the Ownership System as a win-win for the region. The director explained, “the ownership system is the right way because the small paddy fields are big enough for city dwellers and the old farmers possess a lot of knowledge to offer the city people.” In

‘Owners’ manually harvest the rice and prepare it for drying. Photo: Pia Kieninger



2000, the Ownership System started with 39 terraces, and membership expanded quickly to include 453 owners with 415 plots, or more than 1000 participants including their families and friends in 2006.

Six different programmes are offered. Two are for growing rice (for individuals with families and friends, or for groups sharing common paddy fields), one is for growing rice and brewing rice wine, one is for cultivating soybeans, and one for growing cotton, producing textiles and dyeing them with indigo. The sixth, a programme for reconstructing old houses was also recently introduced. Participation fees for the city dwellers range from the equivalent of around US\$30 to US\$300, depending on the type of programme and field size, with 10% of the fees going to the landowners and the rest to the association.

The owners' farming activities are strictly scheduled within seven collective working days during the year: rice planting in April/May, weeding in June, July and August, harvesting and threshing in September, and the harvest festival in October. Each day starts with an attendance check and a welcome speech to explain the procedures. Oyamasenmaida Preservation Association members and local volunteers act as instructors, while during the rest of the season, the association takes care of the other tasks. Besides these scheduled activities, exchange and communication among the owners, farmers and local people is equally important. Working days typically include shared lunches or dinners, dancing (the Oyamasenmaida dance), and karaoke parties. This helps to establish and deepen friendships between participants. Moreover, several side activities are offered such as courses

'Owners' receive instructions from farmers and association members before planting rice.

Photo: Pia Kieninger



Intergenerational exchange after the harvest.

Photo: Pia Kieninger

on preparing traditional dishes and handcrafts, nature education programmes, hiking tours, traditional dances, concerts and theatre, and even volleyball tournaments in the paddy fields before rice planting. The association also built the tanada club house financed by the Kamogawa City, to encourage more rural–urban exchange. “Many people meet farmers at the tanada club and become personal friends. I guess this is also an aim of the club,” says one of the owners who developed a lasting friendship with the landowner of his rented paddy field and spends the nights before working days in the landowner's house.

Why participate? The motivations driving the participation of the local landowners and population include landscape conservation, revival of rural areas, exchange with the urban population, and attracting urban people back to the countryside in the long run. It remains to be seen whether many of Japan's urban majority will be motivated to move to the country and take up farming as a profession or help to rebuild rural communities. At the moment, urban participants who travel up to 150 km to reach the land, are mostly motivated by their love for the rice terraces which they wish to preserve. They also look for recreation, the joy of manual work in the open air, and to be close to nature. Most of them had no connection with farming before taking part, and they want to learn more about agriculture and Japanese culture. Many parents see the educational value of involving their children. “Tanada can only be cultivated by hand. It is important to protect the heritage of our ancestors and the cultural landscape. I bring my children and grandchildren to learn to work with their hands. It is very important that children see that manual labour is exhausting.”

The relevance of the Ownership System for food production is marginal, as the terrace areas and the amount of rice harvested by individuals is quite small, and from a strictly economic point of view, rice in supermarkets is much cheaper. However, the ‘non-economic’ values gained during the production process and from the self-produced rice, rice wine, tofu and soybeans far outweigh the lower prices from supermar-

kets. Furthermore, since the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, the director of the association reported an increased interest in food safety and an even higher interest in participation by young people and families.

The rest of the world Although the Japanese experience is unique in terms of its socio-economic and demographic transformation processes, similarities can be found in initiatives around the world. For example, a similar system called 'rent a grapevine' started in 2002 in vineyards in Purbach and Retz, Austria. Volunteers learn to appreciate farming and the landscape, and are rewarded with their own wine. As in Japan, participants work for five or six days each year. The initiative was initiated by the tourism association to promote the municipality and support local farmers with additional income. Whereas the Japanese Tanada Ownership System helps to safeguard rice terraces threatened by abandonment, in Purbach, vineyards have been newly created for the purpose of the renting programme, and in Retz, farmers take turns in providing land. Similar to Japan, participants are mostly high educated city dwellers, but with a passion for wine.

Protecting landscapes and accompanying all the steps of food production seem to be important motivators for urban participants. The rural urban cooperation seen in Japan not only satisfies urban participants,



Cultural landscapes protected by the Tanada Ownership System. Photo Pia Kieninger

but can be highly beneficial for the conservation of cultural landscapes and biodiversity. And, last but not least, the work of local farmers is more highly valued, and they are better able to share their knowledge, experience and skills, and contribute more to the cultivation of their land.

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Celebrating with some traditional theatre during the annual harvest festival. Photo: Pia Kieninger

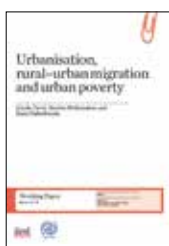




Sustaining Local Food Webs

B. Murphey (Ed.), 2014. Practical Action Publishing, Warwickshire, UK, 92 pages.

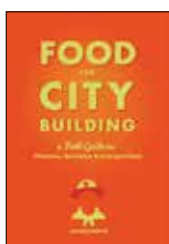
This report concludes that “local food webs are a cornerstone for the model of food provision that should be prioritised in order to secure our future food.” The authors’ set out to convince those who influence agricultural, food and nutrition policies of this statement. Case studies exploring African and the European contexts support the claim that local food webs are efficient when compared with long chains that deliver the commodities produced by industrial agriculture to distant consumers. Each case study raises different arguments for more protection, investment and support for local food webs. For instance, in Cameroon, local food production and exchange is shown to be a lifeline during failings of the formal sector. In Kenya local food webs are shown to provide food for the majority even when small scale producers are pushed to the margins. And from England, the mapping of local food webs is shown to be a powerful tool in the campaign against agribusiness. Similarities in terms of threats to the local food webs in each case study are highlighted and the mutual impacts between agricultural sectors in Europe and Africa analysed. Overall, the book provides a compelling case for sustainable food systems that help realise food sovereignty.



Urbanisation, rural-urban migration and poverty

C. Tacoli, G. McGranahan and D. Satterthwaite, 2015. International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK, 33 pages.

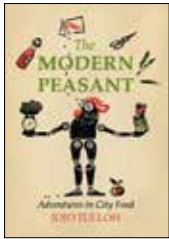
In an increasingly urbanised world, substantial transformations in population distribution seem inevitable. In countries where most of the population is rural, agricultural production systems are evermore based on large-scale, mechanised farming. And often inadequate access to resources puts a strain on the capacity of smallholders to adapt to droughts and climate variability. Rural-urban migration is the result of these transformations, and a critical component of urbanisation. This working paper aims to better understand migration and urban poverty and to challenge the assumption that urban poverty is a result of migration. The authors emphasise the role of cities and municipal governments in addressing the needs of their residents and stress that the lack of information on residents living in low-income and informal settlements is a reason why governments fail to reduce urban poverty.



Food for City Building: A Field Guide for Planners Actionists and Entrepreneurs

W. Roberts, 2014. Hypenotic Inc. Toronto, Canada, 336 pages.

This book is a reflection of Wayne Roberts’ ten year experience as manager of the Toronto Food Policy Council, a pioneering group and the first food policy council to be officially embedded within a major city government. This book is clearly about putting people and place first in food policy advocacy and makes an impressive attempt at, “connecting many of the dots linking food... to a hometown place... to neighbourhood agencies... to community-based businesses... to farmers... to workers... to the environment... to local governments... to residents, citizens, and activists... to democracy and empowerment... to physical and mental health.... to spirituality.” The book’s versatility is reflected in the different groups of readers it targets – including entrepreneurs, innovators and activists amongst city officials exploring food dimensions of civic development and the youth who are energising the food movement and will be the next generation of food professionals and leaders.



The modern peasant: adventures in city food

J. Tulloh, 2013. Chatto and Windus, London, UK, 336 pages.

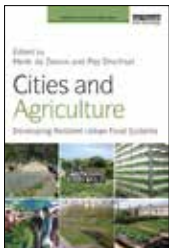
Alarmed by the fact that city dwellers are ever more cut off from the countryside and that the hidden costs of the 'supermarket culture' are enormous, this book sought to find out if some kind of peasant-like self-sufficiency could be achieved for city dwellers. The author was quickly inspired by her discovery that London is teeming with so called modern peasants. Vivid stories of visits to producers are complemented by tips for baking, pickling, fermenting and foraging. These stories and a deep knowledge of cookery are combined to celebrate the city as a centre of food production. And the experiences from London show that taking the best from past and present traditions is exhilarating.



Food in an urbanized world. The role of city region food systems in resilience and sustainable development

S. Jennings, J. Cottee, T. Curtis and S. Miller, 2015. 3Keel, Oxford, UK, 92 pages

This report, commissioned by the Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit, seeks to provide an overview and synthesis of the current state of knowledge on city region food systems. The concept of 'city region food systems' has come up strongly in international policy debates in recent years as amongst others highlighted by a Global Call for Action on City Region Food Systems that was adopted by an international coalition of NGOs and government organisations at the 7th World Urban Forum in Medellín in 2014 (www.cityregionfoodsystems.org). The report aims to clarify the city region food systems concept and analyse the proposed benefits of pursuing a city-regional approach to food policy and planning. It provides recommended actions that would help stakeholders ensure improvements to food systems outcomes at a city-region level and as a means of implementing more integrated approaches to improving rural-urban linkages.



Cities and Agriculture. Developing Resilient Urban Food Systems

H. de Zeeuw and P. Drechsel (Eds.), 2015. Earthscan Food and Agriculture Series, Routledge, 416 pages. Publication date 29 September 2015

In response to the challenges set to food systems by ongoing urbanisation processes, this edited volume presents experience and evidence-based 'state of the art' chapters on the key dimensions of urban food challenges and types of intra- and peri-urban agriculture. The book provides urban planners, local policy makers and urban development practitioners with an overview of crucial aspects of urban food systems based on an up to date review of research results and practical experiences in both developed and developing countries. By doing so, the international team of authors, of which many are closely connected to the RUAF network, provides a balanced textbook for students of sustainable agriculture, food and urban studies, as well as a solid basis for well-informed policy making, planning and implementation regarding the development of sustainable, resilient and just urban food systems. The book covers a wide range of relevant topics, amongst others, urban food systems and policies, multi stakeholder planning, agriculture in urban design and spatial planning, short chain food marketing, productive and safe use of organic wastes and wastewater, urban agriculture and climate change, gender, financing urban agriculture and the role of urban agriculture in disasters and emergencies.



Participatory **certification** supports **local food** systems

Participatory guarantee systems support farmers' access to markets, and provide an alternative to often prohibitively expensive third-party certification. They also bring together networks of farmers and urban citizens who are redefining food production standards from the bottom up. In the past two years, the number of participatory guarantee systems across Brazil has more than doubled, resulting in better access to healthy food in the cities and more recognition for agroecological farmers.

Maria Alice F.C. Mendonça, Nina Abigail Caligiorne Cruz,
Irene Maria Cardoso and Flávia Charão Marques

Although Brazil is well known for its massive investment in industrial agriculture, it is also one of the world references when it comes to public policies supporting agroecology and organic production. This reputation is largely based on a set of policies and institutional programmes that have been implemented since 2000. These include the National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production launched in 2012, followed by a National Plan in 2013. Consolidating agroecology and supporting organic production are two distinct goals, but participatory guarantee systems (PGS) are an example of an overlapping strategy.

Organic certification and labelling Participatory guarantee systems are now used by more than half of Brazil's certified organic producers and their products are increasingly reaching people in the cities. The others are certified via third-party systems. PGS became legally recognised in 2009, supporting two different approaches. The first, based on 'participatory assessment bodies', allows farmers to use the same national organic label as that used for third-party certification. The second, based on 'social control organisations', only provides certification and not the right to use the organic label. This latter system suits farmers who sell directly to both rural and urban consumers, for example at farmers' markets or directly from their farms; situations that do not require an organic label.

Today, there are more than 200 such systems across Brazil, meaning much more ecological production reaches consumers, especially in urban areas. And, through PGS, farmers claim their identity as agroecological producers for which they receive greater recognition and support.

Autonomy PGS also increase the autonomy of agroecological producers. “The middleman buying our products would mix everything, with or without pesticides, and decide how much he would pay,” lamented Terêncio, a farmer from the community of Arroio do Padre on the north coast of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil. He is amongst a group of farmers producing in an agroecological way and struggling for more autonomy. Besides relying on middlemen to reach markets because of long distances, they were increasingly confronted by demands of middlemen to specialise and produce greater quantities of single products. This was not always in line with their aspirations.

In 2006, this group of family farmers formed the Cooperative of Itati, Terra de Areia and Três Forquilhas (COOMAFITT). The cooperative was part of their strategy to improve access to local markets, and to institutional markets through government procurement programmes, namely the food acquisition programme and the national school feeding programme. Setting up a PGS was seen as a complementary activity to the cooperative, as farmers would receive a premium of up to 30% on organically certified products sold into these urban, institutional markets. So, in 2011, they started the process of organic certification via a PGS.

A three-year process began with support from technicians from NGOs, and government rural extension and environmental services, mainly to navigate the bureaucracy. Farmers have experienced many benefits from being part of the group. Monique, a former tech-

nician highlights that for many, certification has increased the recognition of the value of their products: “the group’s name made access to fair markets and public programmes much easier. I have witnessed farmers gaining more power and identity through the PGS.” Now, the group holds monthly meetings with about 40 participants each time, mainly farmers and technicians. The Ministry of Agriculture has just approved their status as a participatory assessment body. These developments have also made the farmers much less dependent on middlemen.

Recognition as agroecological producers Autonomy with respect to production systems and maintaining identity as agroecological farmers are as important as reaching markets. This is the case for a group of 12 farmers in the municipality of Divino in the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil that started to set up a PGS in late 2014.

Some of the farmers in Divino have been producing ecological coffee in agroforestry systems for more than 15 years without organic certification. They believe that the new organic label will help them to reach consumers in the cities who don’t know them yet. But, these farmers say that it is not just about organic production techniques and reaching more consumers. They also strive for increased recognition as agroecologists. Their main goal is to promote the spread of food production systems that are in balance with local ecosystems, are based on and respect for local culture, and are supported by fair urban markets. They believe that PGS will help to expand this movement.

How are they going about this? The farmers asked for technical and organisational support from the Centre of Alternative Technologies of Zona da Mata (CTA-ZM), an NGO with whom they have been working together for many years. They have had four meetings so far, each on a different farm. Together the group is explor-

Participatory guarantee systems

“Participatory guarantee systems are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange,” states IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. They also provide a reliable guarantee for consumers seeking certified products. A key difference from third-party certification is that the guarantee is the result of

direct participation by producers, consumers and others, who define the standards and verification procedures themselves. The benefits are clear. PGS operate at a local level and are accessible to small scale farmers as costs and bureaucracy are minimised. They support farmers’ flexibility and diversity. They encourage active participation and increase awareness amongst consumers, and they promote expansion of local food production systems.



Maintaining autonomy is as important as reaching markets. Photo: OPAC do Litoral Norte

ing how to combine their aspirations and needs with the official requirements for organic certification. During each meeting, they visit the farm and the participants reflect on their observations by raising ideas related to adopting new practices and adapting existing ones. They are using the 'Organic Management Notebook' provided by the Ministry of Agriculture to assist with this process. This notebook provides accessible information on organic management techniques, and on how to manage and provide the information required by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Rural spaces in the cities The participatory nature of PGS means that it supports different types of small scale producers involved with ecological production across Brazil. A group of 28 rural and urban producers has set up a PGS on the doorstep of Porto Alegre, the largest city in Rio Grande do Sul. Besides selling their produce beyond street markets, their major aim was to hold onto and preserve the 'rural spaces' in their urban context. Flying in the face of large investors and the mindsets of municipalities, they fought for recognition as agroecological and organic farmers. Building their identity as a group of agroecological and organically-certified urban farmers *and* consumers is their biggest achievement.

In 2011, farmers, consumers and technicians from the rural extension services came together to set up a PGS, and at the end of 2014 the Ministry of Agriculture authorised their certification.

With their new label, the aim is to construct new markets that are compatible with their agroecological farming in the city's competitive environment. They sell their produce to restaurants and shops, and they are working to become part of the school feeding programme. They have become well known for producing and selling a number of unconventional edible plants including *araça* (*Psidium longipetiolatum*), *butiá* (*Butia capitata*) and *tomate-de-capote* (*Physalis angulate*). These are sold raw and processed, as jams and breads.

An additional benefit from the PGS process was better cooperation amongst the group. Most of them are 'new urban farmers', and sharing knowledge and

skills, but also combining their resources, have been key to their success. Some producers provide land and inputs while others provide labour and knowledge. This has enabled them to share the benefits of ecological urban production with many more residents of Porto Alegre.

Institutional support The official recognition and institutional support for participatory organic certification has served as a meeting point between local experiences of small scale farmers, and the rules of organic production. A number of successful participatory guarantee systems across Brazil highlight the importance of positive interactions between farmers, government and civil society organisations. In all three examples here, technical support and financial incentives such as access to food acquisition programmes, have contributed to their success.

Participatory certification and its recognition by governments contribute to the development of ecologically-based production and the expansion of local, sustainable food systems. The versatility of the participatory guarantee system lies in the fact that it preserves farmers' autonomy and creativity in both rural and urban spaces, and is flexible enough to support their different circumstances, goals and aspirations.

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Bustling farmers' market in Porto Alegre.

Photo: Maria Alice Mendonça



Photo: Rosario Urban Agriculture Team

Urban agroecology

– a tool for social
transformation

Antonio Lattuca is the director of the urban agriculture programme in the city of Rosario, 300 km northwest of Buenos Aires. It began as a response to the 2002 economic crisis in Argentina, building upon existing initiatives that promoted vegetable gardening among families and with schools. It is now one of the most successful urban agriculture initiatives in South America, connected to consumer groups, educational institutes, public policy and the gastronomy movement, and offers a great model that many are learning from.

Interview: Teresa Gianella-Estrems and Teobaldo Pinzás



The youth have been infected with enthusiasm for agroecology Photo: Silvio Moriconi

What was the main motivation behind the urban agriculture programme?

At the end of the 1990s, there was an emerging movement for territorial development, and looking at the benefits from vegetable gardens, the municipality was interested in promoting local development, and establishing an inclusive municipal policy on urban farming. Building on experiences from earlier programmes which focused on agroecology and targeted disadvantaged neighbourhoods we defined a number of aims that would contribute to vulnerable urban families achieving food sovereignty. We wanted to improve neighbourhood landscapes by producing healthy organic food, to establish markets that directly connect farmers with consumers, to uncover the potential of unemployed people and secure tenure rights. We saw an urban agriculture programme as a most suitable vehicle to meet these objectives.

Why did you choose agroecology as an approach?

We want to promote sustainable crop cultivation as a means for social transformation and to generate conditions for 'living well'. Agroecology has the advantage of using accessible technology while reducing the dependence on external inputs. Farmers learn to produce their own inputs and they manage the entire production process themselves.

How big is the programme?

There are currently 1500 farmers who produce food for their own families and another 250 who also sell their surplus produce. And there are various types of urban farming in Rosario. Some are in families' own gardens, or in schools, or public parks, as well as on 24 hectares of 'unused land'. This land that is owned by the national government, the municipality or the

railway company, is divided into plots of between 600 m² and 2000 m² and free and secure tenure is assigned to interested families.

Where is the produce sold and to whom?

Rosario's urban farmers produce the only widely available agroecological fruit and vegetables in the city. This food can be bought from the farms themselves, at farmers' 'agrochemical free' markets, through vegetable box schemes or eaten when dining out, as some urban farmers also sell their vegetables to restaurants.

The market for the programme's produce is expanding rapidly, and it has transformed from a niche market into a 'mass' market. Much effort has been made to ensure that the most vulnerable can produce or afford to buy seasonal fruit and vegetables. For example, families from the same neighbourhood can join 'exchange clubs'.

How did the programme establish producer-consumer relations?

During its 13 years, the programme has built a trusting relationship between the state, urban farmers and consumers. The Network of Gardeners of Rosario has been very active. And, a consumer network the Green Life Network, organises farm visits, guarantees the purchase of vegetables before harvest, and many members participate actively in monthly 'healthy lunches', a farmer-inspired idea.

Is this only an urban experience or are rural farmers involved?

We are actively involved in the National Forum for Family Farming which helped to create the national Secretariat for Family Farming in July 2014. The positive experience in Rosario was one of the reasons that small scale urban farmers became recognised by this new institution. This is important, as it enables them to be registered with the National Register of Family Farmers, which then gives rights to beneficial tax and pension schemes.

We work with farmers in Rosario's peri-urban zone but also those in the rural areas beyond, and with several associations and agroecology technicians. Through CEPAR, we are also linked to organic farmer networks in Argentina and with the Latin American Movement of Agroecology (MAELA). For the past few years, a movement promoting agrochemical-free rings around the towns in the highlands where Rosario is situated has become more active, with our programme being a focal point.

Amongst the participants, those with a rural farming background have been able to share and promote their agroecological knowledge, particularly that related to soil improvement and pest management.

How are women and youth involved?

Through workshops and other activities, we build awareness about the need to change the asymmetric power relations between men and women. Women lead the network and make up 65% of all involved. They participate in all activities, in gardening, processing, management, and take a leading role in commercialisation in local markets.

We believe farmers and gardeners should be at the highest level of the social hierarchy, because without food, there is nothing. However our society still does not adequately appreciate farmers' work. We make an effort to improve the image of farmers and gardeners as caretakers of the environment. This helps to make urban farming more attractive to our youth.

Young people are increasingly active within the programme, and today, about 140 are training to become urban farmers. Some are members of cooperatives which offer ecological gardening services. Another youth group provides courses in vegetable gardening, while others train school children in the city centre. This latter work is particularly important because it encourages interactions between young people from the poorest neighbourhoods and those from the wealthier city centre.

What about training, and links to schools and universities?

Training and long-term capacity building are at the core of our work. Learning starts in the field, and is complemented with workshops, encounters, exchanges, excursions, seminars and congresses. We value all knowledge and the associated wisdom embedded in farming practices.

We have created a mobile school that focuses on ecological crop production practices. The first 18

people have received their certificates and later this year a second group will follow. The certificate opens opportunities for them to work as specialists in ecological farming.

The programme is embedded in 40 schools that have vegetable gardens to promote healthy food and care for the environment. We also undertake many activities with different faculties at the University of Rosario, including the Faculties of Agrarian Sciences, Architecture, Medicine and Civil Engineering.

We value all knowledge and wisdom embedded in farming practices

How do you share your experience?

Our pioneering experience has inspired other urban agriculture initiatives across Argentina, in Morón, Mar del Plata, Rio Cuarto, Corrientes, Tucumán and Santiago de Estero. And we have also inspired other Latin American cities that are now implementing urban agriculture initiatives, including Lima in Peru, Belo Horizonte and Guarulhos in Brazil, and Bogotá in Colombia.

Political decision makers, technicians and professionals from other cities have visited us to learn and adapt our experiences to their situations. Many come during our annual Week of Urban Agriculture called RAICES (Roots: Networks, Food, Inclusion, Culture, Ecology, Solidarity) that we have organised for the past 12 years. Our farmers and team members also actively participate in other events.

What makes the programme so relevant?

Although we work primarily on urban farming, our programme is strongly focused on social issues such as territorial approaches, agroecology, social inclusion and environmental protection. The programme has built bridges between the rural and the urban, between the public and private sectors, and between farmers, consumers and civil society as a whole. And in particular, we have helped to transform the image of farmers into a positive one, and farmers are now appreciated in Rosario as caretakers of the earth and our landscapes. And perhaps most importantly, the youth, the farmers of the future, have been infected with enthusiasm for agroecology as an innovative occupation.

For more information visit www.agriurbanarosario.com.ar or twitter.com/AgriUrbanaRosar

Preparing land for vegetable gardens.

Photo: Rosario Urban Agriculture Team





Producers and consumers build new food practices

Initiatives based on 'short chains' between farmers and consumers are slowly but surely gaining ground in the Netherlands, a country with a strongly industrialised food system. Looking for ecological, healthy, and fresh food, urban consumers are now creating innovative channels that support local and organic food producers.

Greet Goverde-Lips, Janneke Bruil and Henk Renting

An increasing number of Dutch citizens are worried about industrial food. They are apprehensive about the effects of additives that keep the food 'fresh' and presentable for a long time and reject the large amounts of packaging, food miles and waste connected with the food in supermarkets. They are looking for fresh and healthy food and want to contribute to the local economy and the sustainability of local farms.

'Short chains' in which urban consumers engage directly with producers, are opening new perspectives. Consumers get affordable, fresh and seasonal produce, usually produced in an (agro)ecological way. And producers receive fair prices. Direct sales eliminate various steps in the food chain where power is concentrated in the hands of just a few retailers (see illustration).

A way out Direct sales represent an alternative for farmers struggling to survive in the dominant system. Prices of feed, seeds and chemical fertilizers are increasing and at the same time large retailers are pushing down the prices farmers receive. This locks producers into a 'race to the bottom' whereby they end up receiving a small fraction of the prices consumers pay. This also locks them into a 'treadmill' of upscaling and intensification which requires ever more borrowed money from the bank. Unable to cope, one third of Dutch farmers stopped farming between 2000 and 2013.

Many producers look for ways out of this trap. But due to the continuous trend of upscaling within the Dutch agricultural sector, a large customer base is required to sell all products directly, and finding and keeping customers requires a lot of time and effort. As

a result, the many emerging initiatives that facilitate direct sales from farmers to urban residents are a major transition in food and farming practices. They represent a new model in the Dutch context, which by world standards, is particularly globalised. Experiences from two initiatives are presented here.

Food collectives Food collectives, or consumer groups that buy food directly from farmers, are emerging across the country. A young woman called Judith Vos set up a successful food collective (www.voedselkollektief.nl/site/) in Amersfoort. It is internet-based: each week the participating farmers enter the vegetables, fruit and dairy products they can deliver and the customers place their orders accordingly. Volunteers amongst the consumers pick up produce from the farms, deliver it to a garage in the city, the sorting and collection point for consumers. All of the farmers are within 25 km of the city, thereby reducing food miles. The collective started out with 25 people in 2011, and now has 300 members, all of whom are supposed to contribute in some way or another.

Setting up the collective was not without difficulties. All of the work is done on a voluntary basis by members and with the growth of the initiative people reconsidered whether they were able to do the necessary work. Judith: “The bigger you are the more coordination and feedback is needed. For some people, this isn’t appealing, and for others it is hard to keep on top of more complex initiatives.” The limited opening time for consumers to collect their orders, only one and a half days per week, is another issue. And, she adds: “it is important to keep in mind that decision making in a collective is inclusive, but can be quite slow!”

The next step is to establish a real shop offering additional products such as pasta and bread, and opening six days per week. The anticipated challenges are finding enough customers to pay the rent and a few staff, and professionalising the organisation. “This shop will allow us to reach new people, who may find the collective inaccessible. But we will maintain the collective spirit as the shop too will be owned and run by a cooperative of urban citizens,” says Judith.

There are a few dozen collectives across the country now. But how do you set up a collective? Judith advises: “Just start. Decide *what* you want and *how*. You will learn by doing.” She adds that it is important to tackle difficulties as they arise and face up to things that are not working well.

Much more than customers At Veld en Beek farm (www.veldenbeek.nl) near Wageningen, the 35 cows are owned by the farm’s customers, who bought a ‘cow-share’. In practice, the farmers work on and maintain the farm but don’t own the cattle. Hundreds of citizens financed the original

purchase of cattle since the start in 1999. Today, more than 1800 members buy their weekly milk, yoghurt, meat and vegetables through an online ordering system and collect it from large refrigerated walk-in containers in five nearby towns. Every member has a key to their nearest container. The system is based on trust and quality products: the members trust the farmers to take the agreed costs from their bank accounts, and the farmers trust the members not to take more than was agreed.

There is an annual members’ meeting to discuss issues on the farm

The members also have a voice in decisions regarding production methods and new developments. For example, based on members’ concerns, the farmers work to increase the time that calves spend with their mothers. Vice president of the association’s board Kees van Veluw: “We know that our members appreciate the fact that the cows graze outside (instead of in closed barns) as much as possible, the calves are kept with their mothers and the milk is produced without fertilizers and pesticides. Also, the cows have kept their horns and antibiotics are only used in cases of emergencies. Members have repeatedly said that they find this important.” The farm opens its doors to the public several times a year, and there is an annual members’ meeting to discuss issues on the farm. People who buy and drink this local organic milk are much more than customers.

What makes Veld en Beek so successful? Kees: “Veld en Beek is benefiting from the new food movement in the Netherlands. People are looking for local and transparent ways of food production, and they like having contact with a farmer now and then.” But Veld en Beek’s success has been accompanied by challenges. For example, in the context of municipal regulations, it was difficult to find space and approval for the walk-in containers. And, according to Kees, the learning process continues, “we are still searching for the best organisational model that accommodates the farmers, investors and consumers, three key groups of stakeholders in the farm.”

Building food hubs Many similar initiatives have emerged in the last few years, providing important building blocks for the transition towards a more localised, sustainable and resilient



All 300 members of the food collective are both volunteers and consumers. Photos: Milieudefensie

food system in the Netherlands. However, to really be able to make a difference and provide a serious alternative to the mainstream food system it is necessary to scale up and coordinate in a better way. This is especially true in the Netherlands where the centralised and large-scale nature of the food system makes it impossible for small scale producers to enter mainstream retail. This means alternatives have to operate in a market with very low price margins and where consumers are used to convenience and one-stop shopping.

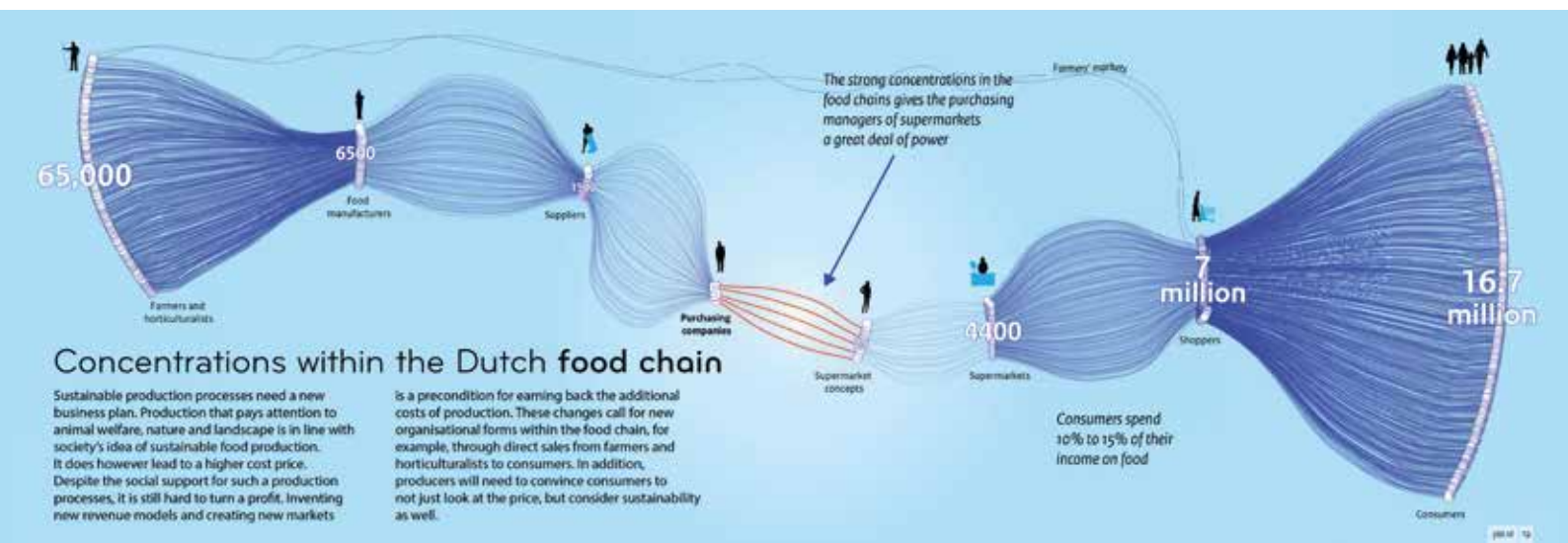
In response to these challenges, different short chain initiatives of producers and urban consumers are now being connected at a regional scale, forming regional, city-based *food hubs* which, on the one hand, bring together the demand from consumers and, on the other, aggregate products from local and ecological producers in surrounding areas. One example in Amsterdam is called 'Ons Eten' (Our Food) (www.onseten.nu/) which brings together diverse actors including the provincial environmental federation to allow direct selling of regional produce from

farmer to plate. More of these initiatives are popping up in other places across the Netherlands, of which various aim to supply local ecological produce to public and private institutions. This provides a promising outlook for what might be a next phase in the development of professional regionalised food systems in the Netherlands.

These connections are an important aspect of the emerging food movement in the Netherlands. When the initiatives gain further strength they may together represent a major challenge to the dominant system.

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Image from PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, www.pbl.nl/en/infographic/concentrations-within-the-dutch-food-chain, under Creative Commons (BY) licence.



Creating city region food systems

As cities continue to expand and ever more people migrate to urban areas, current unsustainable patterns of urbanisation and ineffective policies are no longer acceptable. The typical approaches that maintain the separation between rural and urban neglect all of the ways that connect both worlds. And nowhere else are rural and urban areas more linked than within the food system.

Emily Mattheisen

The expansion of cities and their increasing demands for food is paired with the challenges of improving rural livelihoods. Unsustainable consumption and trade continue to grow, and in particular the continued corporate takeover and dominance of the food and agriculture sector. This has left many urban families and their communities without access to affordable, nutritious, safe and fresh food. At the same time, these practices disenfranchise small scale food producers and rural people, reduce rural livelihoods opportunities and exacerbate rural poverty. This begs the question – how can we make better development decisions based on a more inclusive framework?

A community plan produced by citizens of Medellin, Colombia. Photo: Emily Mattheisen

Urban-rural linkages in the food system

Rural-urban linkages can be best supported through making real change in the food system. The food system itself is complex and many-layered, including flows, exchanges and impacts across rural and urban areas – from food production, distribution, processing, marketing, consumption and waste, as well as supportive infrastructure.

A revolutionary change in the food system is not global; it is small scale and locally based.

Many issues and interventions are being discussed by governments and civil society that seek to better connect areas through territorial approaches to governance at the local level. Improved relationships between producers and consumers, which also support vulnerable populations in rural and urban areas, are vital. For many communities, this means preserving traditional and public market spaces, improving social protection and food support pro-

A revolutionary change
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grammes, amending public procurement policies, and supporting direct purchasing schemes and community supported agriculture, are some of the many interventions that are needed.

Local governments and authorities

Decentralisation of power and clear guidance for local authorities is key to carrying out international policy commitments and human rights obligations to support integrated rural–urban planning. Food systems are particularly important in this regard, as law and policy that dictate food waste, labour conditions and livelihood improvement, public procurement, land for food (including public land), zoning for urban and peri-urban food cultivation and production, and food retailer placement, among others, are often in the hands of city, municipal or regional authorities.

There are some key players currently leveraging this sort of change. For many years local government networks, including ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability and their annual Resilient Cities Forum, as well as the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) link local and regional governments together from cities of all sizes. Such networks seek to insert the needs and experiences of the local level into international policy processes as well as to build the capacity at the local level to engage directly with inhabitants, including those in peri-urban and rural areas away from urban centres.

From ‘city’ to ‘city region’ Urban–rural linkages are also a fashionable topic in international policy discourse. They are discussed in international processes such as the preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, or Habitat III, due to take place in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016. Similarly, the development of the Post-2015 Agenda and the

The concept of the ‘city region’ has changed the way we think about what is ‘urban’.

Photo: Emily Mattheisen



Cities do not exist in a vacuum and urban and rural linkages must be present in any ‘urban’ goal or plan for development

Sustainable Development Goals, the controversial, corporate-dominated Global Expo in Milan, and local government initiatives including the Seoul Declaration and the Urban Food Policy Pact, all seek to address the challenges that urban areas pose by creating stronger local and regional frameworks.

Although there are many doubts and complications of the process and outcomes (such as the lack of meaningful inclusion of civil society) the Post-2015 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals have had important effects related to urban–rural linkages. Importantly, it led to the streamlining of territorial approaches to governance, also referred to as *city regions*. This is a new concept. The development of Sustainable Development Goal 11 to ‘make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ and the work by groups such as the Communitas Coalition and the City Region Food Systems collaborative has really changed the way we think about what is ‘urban’. They mainstreamed a new conception of the ‘city region’ as a replacement for the ‘city’ as our framework for reference when discussing sustainable urban development. Cities do not exist in a vacuum and this conception makes clear that urban and rural linkages must be present in any ‘urban’ goal or plan for development.

Democratising local food policy

The current development of the Urban Food Policy Pact led by the City of Milan has engaged some 45 cities across the globe to share their experiences, challenges and needs in implementing local food policy. The pact seeks to create a governance framework for city region approaches, as well as participatory decision making directly with civil society and small scale food producers, covering topics including governance, poverty alleviation, sustainable diets and nutrition, food production, supply and distribution, and food waste and loss. This is an important step to answer the question *how* local governments can improve governance and management of rural areas. It also addresses the need for food systems governance to be democratic and participatory, addressing the



Markets in Morocco and Istanbul. Photos: Alberto Rinaldi

critical role of civil society in making those decisions in multi-stakeholder governing bodies at the local level. Food policy councils, collaborations between citizens and government officials, providing a forum for advocacy and policy development to create sustainable and just food systems, for example.

The City Region Food Systems collaborative is currently working together with different cities, civil society and international bodies and processes to advocate for integrated food systems planning or city region food systems. Urban areas are not the exclusive domain of any single set of actors or inhabitants, and rural communities have the right to benefit from urban development and vice versa. Technical solutions to feeding urban areas, as well as climate change, labour, climate change and investment must integrate the rural areas, as well as manage ecosystem services.

Meaningful changes Although there is a resurgence of interest in the topic, stronger urban and rural links are not new. The original commitments in the 1976 Vancouver Declaration at the first UN conference on human settlements (Habitat I), and the Istanbul Declaration signed in 1996 at Habitat II recognised the critical links between rural and urban areas, and the need for balanced and holistic approaches to development. Habitat II went further, declaring that local authorities and general decentralisation of power structures are critical to implement and support these linkages. However, the initial preparations for Habitat III and the continued direction of the UN-Habitat process make clear that these past commitments have been forgotten as they proceed with a solely 'urbanist' agenda. Pressure by civil society actors has resulted in a working group on rural-urban linkages within the Habitat process to closely follow the issues of city region food systems and land use. However, it remains to be seen if this will result in meaningful changes towards a more balanced and integrated urban-rural development.

Looking forwards Looking towards Habitat III and the other emerging policy discussions, 'the right to the city' framework has become an important civil society and local government approach to the management of the city and its rural hinterlands. The right to the city advocates equitable use of urban space according to the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. It is a collective right of the inhabitants of the cities and the surrounding areas, giving priority to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. It is a framework and approach that at its heart, seeks to promote the realisation of human rights and protection of marginalised communities, through participation, respect to the social function of land, property and the city region, and the sustainable management of the commons. This framework also acknowledges the role that social solidarity economy plays in supporting many communities, and it is imperative that these contributions are recognised in international policy.

As we continue to fill and expand urban spaces, it is critical that we reconfigure how we understand these spaces, and how they are governed, how they interact and impact other territories, and how peoples in and around them can lead dignified lives. There are many exciting opportunities, but each also has many challenges and risks. Civil society, from urban inhabitants to rural producers, must play meaningful roles in setting the agenda at the global and local level, and once set, it is up to local actors to implement policies and create real change.

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Members of the AgriCultures Network are working together to advance family farming and agroecology, drawing lessons from farmers' fields, sharing knowledge, and working with social movements for policy change. Here are some of our latest updates.

The Netherlands: building knowledge for healthy soils

In March 2015, ILEIA and others in the Netherlands organised a two day meeting about soils that included a field day with visits to a composting company and several farmers, a movie screening and a conference. Over 250 people attended the event and participated in rich discussions with (young) farmers, policy makers and researchers.

Producers inspired many with their innovative approaches to build healthy soils, for example by not ploughing or by producing local feed for their cattle. Professor Marijolein Visser from the Université Libre de Bruxelles shared the irony that food production currently costs more energy than it provides us. She made a plea for better use of grass and woodlands as sources of biomass as these can enhance soil fertility. "In order to tackle the agricultural crisis," she added, "we have to work together and continuously step out of our little boxes." In his closing remarks, world renowned researcher and film maker John Liu showed how very degraded and barren areas can, within a few years, become covered with trees and plants and provide food security and livelihoods. Clear recommendations were formulated for practitioners, policy and research.

Senegal: IED Afrique and the Global Land Forum

Over 500 representatives of farmer organisations, indigenous peoples' groups, local and international NGOs, research institutes, multilateral organisations and governments gathered in May 2015 in Dakar at the 7th Global Land Forum to share knowledge and experience on land governance. The event was organised by the International Land Coalition and attended by AgriCultures Network member IED Afrique.

The theme of the forum was 'Land governance for inclusive development, justice and sustainability: time for action'. Over a full week, experts focused on the central place of land in the post-2015 agenda and discussed the challenges to inclusive governance and equitable access to land, especially for women and youth, in the current context of land





grabbing. IED Afrique shared tools and mechanisms that can increase land rights security at the local level and improve accountability in agricultural investments through stronger land governance. The Forum also identified transformative practices that promote inclusive development for young people and women.

More updates from the AgriCultures Network at www.agriculturesnetwork.org/news

Italy: International Urban Food Policy Pact

The City of Milan in Italy is leading a process with 45 partner cities around the world to draft an International Urban Food Policy Pact that aims to build awareness on urban food systems, policies and practices and harness political en-

gagement from cities for future actions. The RUAF Foundation forms part of the technical advisory team to support this process, together with the International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture (IPSA) and FAO Food for Cities. A draft of the Urban Food Policy Pact and a 'Framework for Action' has been developed covering recommended actions in areas such as governance, sustainable diets and nutrition, poverty alleviation and social inclusion, (peri-)urban agriculture and improved rural-urban linkages, food supply and distribution, and food loss and waste reduction. The final Pact will be presented in Milan in October 2015. For more information see www.cibomilano.org/en/food-policy-pact/ and contact h.renting@ruaf.org.



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UA Magazine facilitates the sharing of information on the impacts of urban agriculture, promotes analysis and debate on critical issues for development of the sector, and publishes "good practices" in urban agriculture.

UA Magazine welcomes contributions on new initiatives at individual, neighbourhood, city and national levels. Attention is given to technical, socioeconomic, institutional and policy aspects of sustainable urban food production, marketing, processing and distribution systems. Although articles on any related issue are welcome and considered for publication, each UA Magazine focuses on a selected theme (for previous issues, visit: www.ruaf.org).

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This issue was compiled by Henk Renting in collaboration with ILEIA's editorial team.

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