

# URBAN AGRICULTURE MAGAZINE

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## Food Policy Councils



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## Cover

Cover photos: In 2017, Fundación Alternativas and the Municipal Food Security Committees of La Paz, Sucre and Tarija hosted an event where urban actors from five departments of Bolivia came together to design an Urban Agenda for Food Security. Photo by Fundación Alternativas

# Food Policy Councils: Lessons on inclusiveness

Jess Halliday  
Carmen Torres  
René van Veenhuizen

**The governance of food systems is changing. Where once food supply was a matter of top-down planning for national governments, often heavily influenced by market forces, today food systems governance at all levels – from the international to the local – is shifting to more participatory and inclusive forms.**

A growing number of cities and regions – in countries in all income bands, all around the world – are forming Food Policy Councils (FPCs) and similar groups known by other names, such as multi-stakeholder food forums/platforms, food policy networks, food boards, food coalitions, food partnerships, and food labs. These groups bring stakeholders together to share perspectives on food systems challenges, to develop innovative solutions, and to influence food-related policy and planning. They are driven by a desire to transform food systems, making them more sustainable, healthy and just, and ensuring that the needs and interests of those who form the backbone of food supply chains (small-scale producers, processors, distributors, and citizen consumers) are not overlooked.

This issue is a collaborative effort between RUAF and Hivos (see box). RUAF has a long track record in facilitating multi-stakeholder policy formation (1). Hivos supports initiatives that connect diverse food system actors, including actors who are often left out of policy processes, like informal vendors, women and vulnerable groups (see: [www.hivos.org/program/sustainable-diets-4-all](http://www.hivos.org/program/sustainable-diets-4-all)). Several frameworks and programmes emphasise the importance of participatory policy development, one of these being the City Region Food Systems toolkit, developed by RUAF, Laurier University and the FAO (see earlier issues of UA Magazine) (2). The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, now signed by 200 cities (3), includes a recommendation on governance change to “enhance stakeholder participation at the city level through political dialogue, and if appropriate, appointment of a food policy advisor and/or development of a multi-stakeholder platform or food council, as well as through education and awareness raising”.

*As of May 1, 2019, Hivos is the host of the secretariat of the RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems. Hivos is now part of the RUAF network. Both Hivos and the RUAF Global Partnership see great added value in this collaboration. Hivos has a rich track record of programmes in sustainable food systems and inclusive food governance and can count on networks, connections, and partners, as well as programmes worldwide to build and scale sustainable and inclusive city region food systems.*

*Current RUAF projects continue and new projects are being developed. The RUAF website will change its look and feel. We will continue to publish UA Magazine; the 2020 issue will focus on gender in urban food systems (see back page).*

[www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

Resources drawing lessons from FPCs to date have largely focused on high income countries, particularly North America (see further reading page 50-51). As the movement towards inclusive, multi-stakeholder food systems governance for cities and city regions gathers momentum, there is a pressing need to document and systematise experiences of city food systems governance from around the world.

In this issue of UA Magazine, we explore the experiences of FPCs and similar entities, with a particular focus on their approach to inclusiveness, documented impacts, and challenges faced.

## Approach to inclusiveness

Most FPCs in this issue seek to include a spectrum of stakeholders from across the food system, such as farmers, distributors, processors and vendors. There are also often representatives from different municipal departments or programmes, and from different levels of government (such as regional officials). Other non-governmental stakeholders are civil society organisations, NGOs, and citizen representatives, trade unions, research and academic institutes.



Food strategy meeting in Leuven. Photo by Jelle Goossens (Rikolto)

Some FPCs are instigated by civil society groups that seek to engage local government actors; others are created through local government procedures. Some, such as the Bristol Food Policy Council, come about as a result of both top down action by government and bottom-up community action. Stahlbrand and Roberts, in their contribution on Toronto (page 11), reflect on 30 years of experience with adapting and including top-down and bottom-up forces that “we are no longer talking about food policy in the abstract, but food policy that engages with the city as a living and breathing force in its own right”. They provide six pillars of critical food guidance that shape the evolution of food policy councils.

Sometimes, though, FPCs struggle to involve stakeholders whose presence would be helpful. In Flanders (page 18), connecting to farmers is a major challenge, as they produce primarily for the global market and struggle to connect with local food issues. In Berlin, the mostly white, middle-class, educated membership of the *Ernährungsrat* is actively trying to reach out to socio-economically disadvantaged groups and minorities, since unless they are involved in developing an alternative food system it will not meet their needs.

The Sustainable Diets For All (SD4All) multi-actor initiatives in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia (page 24-31) show that conducting stakeholder analyses on a continuous basis – rather than as an on-off exercise – helps ensure the

right people are around the table, and in particular actors who are heavily involved in the food system but often invisible, such as informal street food vendors, and women in farming, food processing and preparation.

Another approach to inclusivity is the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (TYFPC), a grass-roots organisation of 16 to 30-year-olds, many from social groups that have historically been excluded from food policy decisions. With two seats on the Toronto Food Policy Council, the TYFPC brings youth perspectives on the future of food to a forum of highly experienced, but often older generation, experts (page 13).

### Challenges

Acknowledging the challenges faced by FPCs, and learning how others have addressed them, is fundamental for the movement to flourish.

One challenge is identifying the *right moment to set up an FPC or to formalise an existing informal group*. In cities RUAF has collaborated with, including Quito (page 21), formalisation of a multi-stakeholder group occurs with the adoption of the food strategy. This is a logical moment for formalisation of the food strategy steering groups in Leuven and Flanders also, as their role shifts from strategy development and advocacy to coordinating implementation and monitoring progress (page 18).

A second challenge for nascent FPCs is determining the *ideal structure and institutional home*, as highlighted by Raychel Santo in the article on page 8 Berlin's *Ernährungsrat* (page 37) is resolutely independent, allowing it to set its own priorities. In South Tyrol, on the other hand, as an unelected body the FPC has struggled to achieve social and political acceptance (page 45). In Nairobi, meanwhile, the stakeholder forum sits outside local government and has been held back by the perception that it is dependent on the FAO, which led the project under which it was founded (page 35).

A third challenge is *incorporating as a legal entity*. This step is crucial for an FPC to secure funding and hire staff, instead of relying on voluntary labour. Raychel Santo finds that there has been a shift away from independent, unincorporated FPCs in North America in the last three years, in favour of incorporation either within local government or an existing non-governmental organisation (see page 8).

A fourth is *shifting the scale* at which an FPC operates. The Mayor of Castel de Giudice wishes to enlarge the scope of the FPC to cover a wider territory beyond the municipal borders – yet communication of the medium to long-term benefits of doing so to sceptical local administrators is difficult, as they are often focused on short-term emergencies (page 40). In the United Kingdom, the emergence of a city-region government level is enabling FPCs to shift to a wider scale, as seen in the article on Greater Manchester (page 49) that cites similar city-region food partnerships in Leicestershire, East Midlands and London, and official recognition of city-region food partnerships from the national Sustainable Food Cities Network.

A fifth and final challenge is promoting *durability of the FPC over the long term*. As mentioned above, survival requires financial stability, but it also requires transformation of governance and perception so as to normalise food as part of the regular policy agenda. Some FPCs respond to this challenge by enshrining food policy in municipal laws (see the article on Quito, page 21, and on Nairobi, page 35). Others ensure that the governance of food policy does not reside solely with the local administration but is shared with civil society, as in Antananarivo, where the FPC is not a municipal entity even though the City Council plays a key facilitating role (page 29), and in the food change labs, where transferring ownership to participants ensures their commitment.

### On-going documentation to support mutual learning

Many of the articles in this issue bear testament to the positive impact of FPCs, ranging from CONSEA-Rio's success in prompting changes to school feeding to support local farmers (page 42), to the influence of the Fort Portal Food Change Lab and "coalition of the willing" over the review of the Kabarole food and production ordinance (page 24).

Yet as Karen Bassarab reports, a large proportion of FPCs (in North America) conduct no monitoring or evaluation, even though tools exist to assess achievements, organisational capacity and social capital, which would enable them to



Urban farmer in Antananarivo. Photo by Carmen Zuleta Ferrari

evolve and adapt and thus become more inclusive and effective.

Keeping a record is conducive to shared learning and mutual inspiration. Sometimes exchanges happen with the support of national networks and research institutes, like the Sustainable Food Cities Network in the United Kingdom and the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future in the United States. Some exchanges cross country contexts, such as that between Arusha in Tanzania and Antananarivo in Madagascar (page 31). Others even span continents, like the decade of exchanges between the Toronto Food Policy Council and NEFSALF in Nairobi, two cities that, while vastly different, share the common problem of reconciling the supply of nutritious food with regulations on food safety.

The experiences in this UA Magazine demonstrate that FPCs (and similar entities) everywhere have lessons to share – no matter whether they were founded 30 years ago or just last year, or what part of the world they are in. The magazine is a first step towards collating experiences in city food systems governance. We hope it will stimulate discussions and new working relationships, and especially encourage FPCs to document their experiences, both positive and less so, on an on-going basis so that others can learn from them.

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# The Development of Food Policy Councils in North America

Mark Winne

*The Pittsburgh Food Policy Council welcomes PA Secretary of Agriculture Redding to exchange on workforce development in urban agriculture. Photo by Amanda Dezulovich, Center for a Livable Future, Food Policy Networks Photo Contest, 2016*

**Food policy councils and similar coalitions that seek to improve the food system through organised public policy action have a history stretching back over 40 years in North America. Their initial growth was slow and their impact spotty, but by the turn of this century, against the backdrop of a rising food movement, supportive technical assistance providers, increased appreciation of food systems and public policy, and a surge in citizen participation and democracy, the number and impact of food policy councils has soared.**

From the very first cases in the late 1970s, the numbers and strength of food policy councils (FPCs, also known by several other names such as “food councils” and “food system networks”) grew in fits and starts until rapid acceleration started to happen in 2007. As of 2017, according to the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF), there were 341 food councils in North America.

An understanding of the historical context and the forces behind the evolution of FPCs will strengthen local and state (subnational) food system and policy work in North America, as past experiences can inspire and instruct present-day food policy advocates. It will also support emerging FPCs around the world in overcoming barriers and adapting to changing contexts.

## The firsts

The unlikely birthplace of food policy councils was the eastern Tennessee city of Knoxville. Robert L. Wilson, a faculty member of the University of Tennessee’s Graduate School of Planning, convened a team of students in 1977 to consider the role of local governments in the “food system”, a term

that had little currency then. The following report excerpt (1) can be read as a prescient declaration of the importance of food systems as well as a call for action by municipalities: *Food is...an important urban support system with a complex system of supply, distribution, and consumption...but in the past has not been an area of concern for the planning profession...[T]he group considered the possibility of establishing some kind of public oversight of the local food supply and distribution function. One assumption here is that before public action can be initiated, those with responsibility for maintaining the public interest must understand the system.*

The report led to the establishment of the Knoxville Food Policy Council by the City of Knoxville in 1982, the first such food entity in North America. In 1990, the Toronto Food Policy Council would become the first major North American city food policy council. The *last first* of note is the establishment of the State of Connecticut Food Policy Council, which in 1998 became the first state (or provincial) food policy council. The FPC in Hartford, Connecticut’s capital city, pre-dates it, however, having been created in 1993; today it is the world’s third-longest continuously operating FPC.

While this early period of FPC innovation should be regarded as a sea change in the way that non-governmental food advocates worked with subnational governments, further growth would fall into the doldrums until the whirlwind period that began in 2007.

## A slow-burning trend

Ken Dahlberg once observed, “No state or local government has a ‘Department of Food.’” As a professor of political science at Western Michigan State University, Dahlberg was interested in the functions of local government, which typically included planning, health, education, public safety, transportation and economic development. Given the centrality of food to human life and an emerging



*Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Youth Advocacy Day.* Photo by Rhode Island Food Policy Council, Center for a Livable Future, Food Policy Networks Photo Contest, 2017.



*An urban farmer testifies before a City of Minneapolis Council Committee to advocate for changing the urban agriculture policy.* Photo by Michelle Horovitz, Center for a Livable Future, Food Policy Networks Photo Contest, 2015.

understanding of food systems, he wondered why food did not have its own secretariat within local and even state governments. In the US, state governments scattered food functions among several departments, but there was never an organised and coordinated approach. From the mid-1970s, food as a local issue was beginning to be recognised as farmers' markets and community gardens sprouted up across the urban landscape, and later as food banks mushroomed in response to shockingly high levels of domestic hunger. But other than the occasional municipal grant or a routine regulatory act (e.g. granting a permit for a farmers' market), local government was indifferent to food as a legitimate municipal function.

In an attempt to test the potential of FPCs, Dahlberg and others participated in a US Conference of Mayors' project to support or establish food policy councils in six cities in the mid-1980s. Only one of the six, Knoxville, continued to operate uninterrupted after the project's conclusion. The other five – Philadelphia, Charleston (South Carolina), Kansas City (Missouri), Onondaga County (Syracuse, New York area), and St Paul (Minnesota) ceased to function, though St Paul, Philadelphia, Syracuse and Kansas City would be reincarnated at different intervals over the next 25 years. The reasons for the failure of this project have been well analysed by Ken Dahlberg (2), but two general factors plagued these pilots, as they would future attempts to develop FPCs: the food movement itself was still evolving and did not yet understand and embrace the multiple connections within the food system; local and state governments did not see food as a priority concern, particularly during times of municipal stress.

### Rapid growth

There were only an estimated 20 to 25 FPCs in North America by the year 2000 – about the same number of new councils that the CLF identified as forming in 2017 alone. Approximately 60 FPCs existed in 2007, and by 2017 the number had grown to 341 (3). What explains this avalanche of new FPCs? One could posit a logjam theory of growth, in that there was so much pent up demand that it was only a matter of time before the dam broke. There is perhaps some truth to that, but it is more likely that the antecedents are a combination of factors including networking, the

diversification and growth in the larger food movement, the discourse on food democracy, a convergence of dietary health, food security, and climate change concerns, and the growing importance of public policy in promoting sustainable and equitable food systems.

Food movement activists have generally demonstrated an interest in networking. Whether it has been farmers' markets, farm to school, or food banking, to name just a few, knowledge and experience are transmitted freely across semi-permeable membranes that separate food sectors and communities.

This "knowledge sharing" would become more formalised when the non-profit Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) established its Food Policy Council Project in 2007. With some online resources, the first of its kind national FPC forum (about 200 people attended), and other forms of training and technical assistance (for example, the project produced a manual called *Doing Food Policy Councils Right* that proved to be a popular training tool), CFSC supported the expansion of FPCs across North America.

Shortly after CFSC shut down its offices in 2012, its food policy council functions were transferred to the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, which added new resources including greater communication technology and programming to develop and strengthen FPCs. While it is impossible to assign causality between the work of CFSC, CLF and the nearly six-fold increase in FPCs over the last ten years, it must be assumed that the provision of an array of resources and direct assistance made a substantial contribution to their proliferation.

Related to networking was the vast expansion in size and diversity of the food movement, an expansion which itself was fuelled by the rise (and documentation) of food insecurity, obesity and diet-related illnesses, and the desire for more local and sustainably produced sources of food. While the extent of this has been documented elsewhere (4), by the early 2000s many locales had at least one farmers' market, food bank, farm to school programme, community/urban garden, nutrition education initiative, and some effort to promote the use of the 15 USDA nutrition programmes (e.g. SNAP, formerly the food stamp programme). And it was not just the programmes that

mattered, it was also the non-profit organisations, government agencies and for-profit food businesses that managed and lobbied for these programmes. In many of these places, informal networking among these stakeholders would lead to coalition building and often to the formation of a food policy council.

The rise of food as a specialised area of public concern – previously limited to the federal government in the US (e.g. the Farm Bill) until the 1980s – was finding clear expression in state and local governments. Two surveys over the past seven years documented a substantial quantity of enacted state legislation and municipal engagement with respect to food issues (5). The role that food policy councils played in shaping these policies may be open to debate. But as difficult

as it is to separate “the dancer from the dance”, it is safe to assume that organised, local food interests played a significant part in the policymaking process.

*We invite you to join the conversation about all things food policy council at [www.foodpolicynetworks.org](http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org). You can sign up for the e-mail list, find various resources in our database, locate other FPCs across the US and Canada with our directory, connect with researchers who can help you evaluate your work, share your story, request technical assistance, and problem solve with peers.*

Mark Winne

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# Changes in the Organisational Structure of Food Policy Councils

Raychel Santo

**The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future analysed data from the last three years of an annual census (3) of food policy councils (FPCs) in the US and Canada about how FPC structures have changed over time.**

There are three main types of structure that an FPC is likely to adopt: 1) unincorporated/independent, 2) embedded in an institution, or 3) incorporated independently as a non-profit or charity organisation. In 2018, the most common structure type in the US and Canada was embedded in an institution, usually a charity organisation or in government. The distribution of structures of FPCs varies with the age of the council and has changed over time. With each of these structure types come trade-offs in the advocacy capacity, credibility and resource availability of a council.

A variety of factors play into how an FPC decides to structure itself, including its mission and goals, membership composition, available funding and resources, and the social and political climate of the jurisdiction it is working in (6). Its structure may also influence what the group works on and how effectively it can do so. For instance, a government-embedded FPC might be well positioned to provide policy recommendations or advice to government agencies and elected officials, but may be restricted in lobbying around specific policies. Government-embedded FPCs may receive substantial financial or human resources support from government, but that support is also vulnerable to changes in elected officials and priorities of the local administration. A grassroots coalition may have more flexibility to lobby for policies, but because it does not have a fiscal sponsor, it

might be difficult to obtain funding without fiduciary oversight (7). Groups organised as an independent charity organisation or embedded within a non-profit organisation may have an easier time obtaining funding from foundations because they are legally recognised organisations. However, completing the requirements necessary to legally incorporate can be onerous.

For these reasons and more, groups often spend a lot of time deciding how to structure themselves and, over time, how they may modify their structure to better fit their needs. The form of an FPC needs to be able adapt to fluctuations in membership, resources, context and priorities. This flexibility helps FPCs to remain responsive to community needs and be more efficient and effective in their operations.

In the past three years alone, we have observed some notable differences in the structures of FPCs; they have shifted towards more institutionalised structures. In 2015, the most common type of organisational structure was an independent grassroots coalition, with 41 % of councils having that structure compared to 21 % or fewer having the other structures. In 2018, councils were more likely to be housed within a non-profit (34 %) or embedded in government (26 %) than be a grassroots coalition (20 %).

We are still exploring the dynamics involved in the transformation and adaption of FPC structures, but current trends indicate that, at least in the US and Canada, there is increasing institutionalisation of FPCs. This institutionalisation may be a result of greater awareness of the importance of local and regional food systems or the credibility of food policy councils as spaces for democratic control over our food systems.



*Representatives from 28 food councils in North Carolina meet at the 2017 Statewide Food Council Gathering.*  
Photo by Marcello Cappellazzi, Center for a Livable Future, Food Policy Networks Photo Contest, 2017.

# Food Policy Councils Finding Their Way to Financial Stability

Anne Palmer

**As early as 1988, Clancy identified eight critical elements for successful food councils, which included funding for staff and projects. Decades later, funding remains a significant challenge for most councils. The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future's (CLF) 2018 census of US and Canadian FPCs found that 68 % of them have an annual budget of under \$10,000.**

However, the lack of financial support has not slowed the growth of new councils – the number rose from around 60 identified groups in the US in 2007 to 341 in 2017. Notable differences in the levels of funding for FPCs can be found when looking at factors such as structure and age. Not surprisingly, FPCs that are housed in a non-profit (44 %) or are a non-profit (56 %) reported budgets of over \$10,000, likely due to fiduciary capacity. Twenty-seven percent of FPCs in government also report budgets over \$10,000. When CLF examined the age of the FPCs and their funding levels, it was found that a larger percentage of groups that were over 10 years old had budgets of over \$100,000 compared to groups that were under 5 years old. Further, as FPCs evolve, they may seek a more formal structure, such as that of a non-profit, that allows them to fundraise more aggressively. In addition, the longer an FPC has operated the more likely it is to develop relationships with various stakeholders including funders and become an integral part of the food system landscape.

Outside of in-kind contributions, which most FPCs receive, private and community-based foundations are playing an increasingly important role in supporting the work of FPCs.

Allocations from a government budget and government grants also support a sizable number of efforts, especially in Canada.

In making the case to donors, FPCs can point to several functions that are appealing:

- 1) FPCs play a convener role, bringing together people from various sectors to work collaboratively on projects and providing a forum for learning about different sectors.
- 2) When executed effectively, FPCs serve as a community voice by building community capacity to advocate for greater equity in the food system.
- 3) FPCs' technical expertise has proven to be a valuable asset for governments that lack specific knowledge or skills in food system related topics.
- 4) Finally, FPCs provide an overarching perspective on a complicated system by conducting food system assessments, developing food plans, working with institutions on food-related policies and recommending policy actions that promote equity, health and sustainability.

It is worth bearing in mind, however, that most donors are reluctant to support policy and advocacy work because the bulk of the resources are dedicated to a staff position, a line item that many funders would like to eliminate. Projects, on the other hand, appear to be doing something, even if that something is weakly evaluated and provides little in the way of systemic change. Thus, an FPC must make the case that investing in someone's time to organise advocacy activities for policy change is a worthwhile investment.

# Forming a Habit of Measuring and Monitoring

Karen Bassarab

**Monitoring the work of a food policy council, from capturing internal organisational processes to tracking advocacy activities and policy outcomes, is important for understanding whether efforts are advancing change toward more resilient, equitable and healthy food systems. Measuring progress is also important to demonstrate the value of a collaborative, multi-sector stakeholder model.**

The work of FPCs is multifaceted and extends beyond food systems change. The food system is the lens through which FPCs focus on advocacy and civic engagement, networking and partnership development, equity and inclusivity, and education and community readiness. Although these functions might not rise to the top of the list of variables to monitor, they are significant because FPCs contribute a lot more to the greater community.

Still, according to the 2018 census of FPCs in the US and Canada, only 5 % of councils reported monitoring and evaluation as one of their top three organisational priorities. While not a priority, around 12 % of FPCs do have a method of evaluation (and even more have conducted a community food assessment although we do not have exact numbers). Several factors contribute to monitoring and evaluation not being a priority or even an activity of FPCs: young age of the council, knowledge about monitoring and evaluation, capacity and processes to

collect and track data, and funding for evaluation (8). We see from the 2018 census that as councils mature, there is a slight increase in prioritising monitoring and evaluation.

Assessment is one way for FPCs to form a baseline from which to measure their progress – and it does not have to be a burdensome task. Many FPCs are already doing some form of assessment through a process of collecting information about the infrastructure and needs of the current food system. There are also tools to help FPCs assess their organisational capacity, advocacy capacity and the policy landscape of a jurisdiction. The Food Policy Council Self-Assessment Tool is a publicly accessible survey to assess organisational capacity (leadership, formal structure, inclusivity), social capital (relationships, knowledge, credibility), and council effectiveness (synergy, impact). Another assessment tool is Get it Toolgether, which helps FPCs to reflect on their current advocacy performance and learn about opportunities to further work on food policy. Lastly, the food policy audit is a tool for food policy councils to inventory existing policies of a local jurisdiction related to the food system (9). The tool does not evaluate the policies, but it can help to inform the policy priority decisions of an FPC.

Collecting and tracking data can be done at any time, even during the formation of an FPC. Collecting data helps form the story, and sharing the data helps to tell the story. Sharing data and reporting on progress to funders, policymakers and the general public can build the credibility and validate the work of an FPC, even among its members.

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# Making the shift from policy to critical food guidance

Lori Stahlbrand  
Wayne Roberts

**Food policy councils have always been an open-ended journey rather than a fixed destination. Each word in the term “food policy council” can be understood and defined according to the particulars of people, place and time. The experience of the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), the first food policy council to be hosted by and embedded in the government of a major city, confirms that “policy” is one of the words that requires continuous interpretation. In this adaptation from a forthcoming book chapter, we identify a shift among food policy councils from a focus on policy to a focus on what might be called “critical food guidance”. We define critical food guidance as being about capacity-building and providing opportunities for civic engagement on an on-going and meaningful basis.**

When the TFPC was established in 1990, the word “policy” had a specific meaning. It referred to a comprehensive government alternative to charitable foodbank responses to widespread hunger and food insecurity resulting from de-industrialisation during the 1980s and 1990s (Blay-Palmer, 2009). Since then, in the views of the authors, the consensus around that original understanding of policy has eroded in the wake of 30 years of relentless neoliberalism and government austerity.

TFPC staff and membership have adapted to these two “top-down” forces, as well as two other more positive “bottom-up” ones – the rise of energetic, imaginative, knowledgeable, but disparate food movements that have provided much of the real leadership on the food file; and the rise of a growing nexus and co-evolution of both food and city. We are no longer talking about food policy in the abstract, but food policy that engages with the city as a living and breathing force in its own right.

In the excerpt below, we outline the six pillars of critical food guidance that we believe are shaping the evolution of food policy councils. These pillars flow from a new understanding of civic action to protect the food systems of cities and the planet. We bring the perspective of Canadian food policy practitioners and staff leads of the Toronto Food Policy

Council. Wayne Roberts staffed the TFPC from 2000-2010. Lori Stahlbrand was the staff lead from 2017-2019.

## Six pillars of critical food guidance<sup>1</sup>

**1 Food is at the centre of the planetary crisis.** We live in an era of environmental breakdowns. People increasingly refer to the “climate crisis” and “climate emergency”. “Climate change” understates the direness and urgency of the challenge. Food is and will be in the eye of the developing storm. The climate emergency will change what foods can grow where, as irregular and unpredictable patterns set in for drought, floods, heat, frosts and pests. To make matters worse, the climate emergency is one among several spiralling breakdowns. Crises are looming because of declines in biodiversity and in pollinators, responsible for so many foods. Ocean ecosystems and fisheries are strained by overfishing, plastic waste and acidification. Soil is being degraded across the planet. Food is not just the victim of crises. “Food is implicated in the most important health, environmental, economic, social and political challenges of our time,” the Centre for Food Policy in London declares (Hawkes & Parsons, 2019). The food system produces almost one third of all GHGs. It is heavily reliant on fossil fuels in the form of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, as well as fuel for machinery and long-distance transportation. It plays a role in loss of biodiversity and the destruction of habitat to make way for monoculture crops. Agriculture is the largest polluter of fresh water. More than 30% of the food produced is wasted. By 2050, plastic waste in our oceans, much of it food packaging, will outweigh all the animal life in the sea. There is also massive social displacement and food insecurity accompanying this break-down. The United Nations estimates only 11 years remain in which to prevent irreversible damage from climate change. The first piece of critical food guidance is to acknowledge that food is at the centre of the planetary crisis.

**2 Cities are where the planetary crisis is coming home to roost.** Cities are already confronting the first signs of the planetary crisis. Roads, sewage systems, electrical grids and other city infrastructure cannot take the pounding of today’s unpredictable weather. Unprecedented heatwaves are creating public health emergencies. Rapidly increasing urban populations mean traffic jams are getting worse, as is air pollution. Displacement and rural depopulation contribute to a lack of jobs and affordable housing. The resulting economic polarisation is creating larger inequities, social unrest and political polarisation. At the same time, cities are coming into their own as a global force to be reckoned with. As they



Photo by Lori Stahlbrand

take a larger role in international climate leadership, cities will increasingly champion food as an indispensable tool to prevent social and environmental calamities.

**3 Food is multifunctional and can solve many city problems.** Multifunctionality was first associated with agriculture, referring to the fact that agricultural production can produce ecosystem services and social benefits beyond the production of food and fibre. But thinking of food more broadly as multifunctional is a bedrock of critical food guidance. There are two reasons for this. One is that multifunctionality opens food to the economies of scope, not the economies of scale. Scale economies mean food producers are on a treadmill of producing more to keep their prices down so they can sell cheap. Scope economies mean part of the value of a green roof comes from harbouring endangered pollinators, part of its value comes from keeping rain on the roof to be soaked



Proclamation of first Urban Ag Day in Toronto in 2017.

Photo by Lori Stahlbrand

up by plants rather than rushing down a flooded street, part of its value comes from cooling the city air with evaporation, and so on. Producing food becomes just one of many benefits of the green roof. Secondly, multifunctionality means food can be a lever for addressing multiple non-food problems of cities that no other sector of the economy can match. For example, a community garden stores carbon and rainwater, makes use of compost from food waste, helps feed several families, supports physical and mental health, provides a safe outlet for youthful energy, builds skills, increases food literacy, and creates opportunities for social inclusion and newcomer integration. Food is key to the “wealth of relations” or social capital formation on which cities depend for cohesion and sociability, especially as the world faces greater social displacement in the form of immigrants and refugees than ever before (Wooster, 2019). Food’s multifunctionality means that the question to be answered is “What can food do for cities?”

**4 Civic engagement is essential, and food policy councils are a pivotal tool.** City bureaucracies, organised in silos, are not well designed to take advantage of the multifunctionality of food. Yet cities need solutions for the complex inter-related problems they are facing such as developing resilience in the face of shocks and stressors caused by a planetary crisis. Food policy councils are a form of deliberative democracy, providing a tool for tapping into citizen expertise from the civil society and business, as well as from community-based grassroots organisations and engaged citizens. As it becomes more difficult to develop and fund government policy, community-based solutions in the form of pilots, programmes and partnerships will become more important, and provide proof of concept for risk-averse cities fearful of major policy initiatives. Food policy councils enable government of, for, and by the people, by treating food as a “whole of government, whole of society” multifunctional issue (Dubé, Addy, Blouin, & Drager, 2014).

**5 Solutions must be place-based, and food is a place-maker.** Every city is different. Cities have different strengths and weaknesses. The geography of a city – whether river or seaside, at high or low elevation, temperate or tropical, sprawling or compact – will play a role in determining how it will be affected by the planetary crisis. The history of a city will influence how it responds to challenges, and what institutions it can rely on or needs to change. The social make-up of a city will determine the mix of cultures and the level of social cohesion. Critical food guidance is about highlighting and amplifying these unique characteristics. Place is one of the prominent issues that fell off the agenda when food’s contributions were narrowly defined around supply chains and nutrients. It is what led William Rees, originator of the concept of the ecological footprint, to argue that “the most food secure populations by the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be those populations that have deliberately chosen and planned to re-localise as much of their own food systems as possible” (Rees, 2019).

**6 Action must be people centred.** People-centred food policy – as distinct from supply chain-centred policy or nutrient-centred food policy – is well suited to cities. If cities are to claim and chart their own course on food initiatives, they need a unique and unifying concept that relates specifically to local and city government needs, mandates, jurisdictions and capacities. People-centred food policy fits that bill. Cities and food specialists are beginning to recognise that cities need food because of what food uniquely does for people in cities. People-centred food policy and programmes deal with the people side of food. It addresses how food brings people together, how it shapes popular culture, how it supports people’s exploration of different cultures, how it addresses loneliness, how it speaks to mental health and well-being, how it gives people a sense of belonging; how it can help at-risk youth and how it can be used by cities to engage citizens in supporting complete streets, green roofs and walls, urban agriculture, urban forestry, thriving restaurant districts, agro and culinary tourism, horticultural therapy, and ultimately the best shot at food security in a world facing climate chaos. This is food policy at home in the city.

Lori Stahlbrand, PhD, is a Professor of Food Studies at George Brown College in Toronto. Wayne Roberts, PhD, is a writer and consultant on food and cities. Both Lori and Wayne have been staff leads at the Toronto Food Policy Council.

1) For complete references, please see the full book chapter.

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## Giving Youth a Seat at the Food Policy Table

Jess Halliday

**Founded in 2009, the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (TYFPC) was the world’s first entity dedicated to ensuring 16 to 30-year olds have a voice in food issues. Melana Roberts, Chair from 2014 to 2019, spoke to Jess Halliday about the importance of the youth perspective and diversity, and how TYFPC members are helping to bring the model to other cities.**

### What exactly is the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, and what does it do?

“The Toronto Youth Food Policy Council is a grass-roots organisation, although we report to the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) at their meetings. We have our own mandate and structure, with a chair or co-chairs, a vice chair, an executive, a fund-raising arm and three committees: the

education committee, the advocacy committee and the networking committee. The 16 council members are students and young professionals between the ages of 16 and 30. We conduct an application process annually for open roles on the council, and members usually serve three terms.

“Our role has evolved over time. Today it is best encapsulated as working to engage, inform and mobilise young people around food and food policy issues. There is a two-pronged approach to realise that goal.

“One part is creating platforms and opportunities for young people to have a seat and space at policy tables themselves, and to share their experiences and perspectives on the many challenges we are facing in our food system.

“The other part is helping young people to integrate into the wider food network locally and regionally, to build networks and relationships. It is a way for them to identify career pathways, to experience leadership opportunities, and to hone their skills.”



Melana Roberts at the premiere screening of the film, *10 Billion: What Will We Eat Tomorrow?*

### Can you explain the interface with the TFPC and the benefits of the relationship?

"Today, we have two seats on the TFPC. Usually the TYFPC co-chairs or the chair and vice chair hold those seats. Also, for the last couple of years there has been a paid liaison position between the TYFPC and the TFPC, so we have been able to work very closely with the TFPC and Toronto Public Health to move different issues forward.

"The benefit for the TFPC is that youth have a very distinctive and different perspective – whether you are thinking about the average farmer being over 50, or young people being extremely concerned about climate change, or a whole generation of people who are very interested, engaged and committed to understanding where their food is coming from — young people see things differently. We are building on the shoulders of food leaders who have come before us, and by having young peoples' voices at that table we are shaping a more diverse, just and sustainable view of what the future can look like in Canada.

"Through the liaison position we have overseen the social media for the TFPC, and that has been a key engagement space to cultivate conversations and bring a whole generation of people into these issues. There has also been a real shift in how things are done, like interactive maps for food planning and increased technological inputs to better use and understand information."

### What are some of the recent achievements of the TYFPC?

"One of our biggest achievements is that 10 years later we're still around and more engaged than ever! We started out as an entirely unfunded group but in recent years we have been successful in securing a number of large grants from local actors to undertake our own work.

"We were the only youth-led organisation invited to the government-led civil society national food policy consultation in Canada that was launched in 2017, and have

been very engaged in that process.

"We are also regularly asked to play an informing role, ranging from providing feedback to the City on how they should provide grants to unincorporated grass-roots groups, to being the only youth-led group in the City of Toronto to participate in government's dialogue on the first regional food strategy. I have also been asked to speak on food policy issues and youth engagement in universities, at events and in the media.

"Some huge accomplishments are not even about us. In Berlin they are working on developing a Youth Food Policy Council, modelled after our work, and recently some government officials visiting from South Korea were also thinking institutionalising a similar model in their government system. We have had conversations with actors from Slovenia, Japan and from other cities in Canada, like Vancouver and Montreal, who are interested in establishing a youth arm. We are a model that people see a lot of value in."

### How do you ensure that the TYFPC is inclusive, that young people from all social groups and minorities have a voice or are represented?

"This past year has been the most diverse council we have ever had. We post the jobs in spaces where diverse youth – geographically, ethnically, culturally – are going to see them. We really draw on local community actors. We do our best to prioritise groups that have been historically excluded from food conversations; in Canada this means Indigenous Peoples, racialised communities, immigrants and people living on a low income.

"Every year we receive applications from upwards of 50 people, so it is very competitive. The selection process is merit-based but we don't limit someone's ability to apply if they haven't completed a university degree or don't have a high school diploma. We often receive applications from people with high qualifications, who have trained as doctors or nurses for example, and yet we select other applicants over them because we see an opportunity to create innovative food leaders.

"I am also very proud that for the last five years we have had an anti-oppression policy that ensures we are an inclusive, diverse and equitable space for young people. The policy covers matters like the kind of spaces we hold our meetings in so as to ensure they are accessible, and providing a nutritious, culturally-informed meal at every one of our meetings. By ensuring our spaces meet these basic criteria we are doing our part to make food-systems issues accessible to all."

Jess Halliday

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#### More info

Toronto Youth Food Policy Council website [www.tyfpc.ca](http://www.tyfpc.ca)

Facebook @TorontoYOUTHFoodPolicyCouncil

Twitter @TYFPC

# A Hybrid Food Policy Board for the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area

Arnold van der Valk

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Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA) houses two food councils: one, the Food Connect Foundation, represents provincial and municipal governments (minus the municipality of Amsterdam) and large companies in the region, while the other, Food Council MRA, is a network of citizens' initiatives and green entrepreneurs. The organisational divide mirrors a divide between the conventional food system and alternative food networks, but there are reasons for optimism about prospects for cooperation.

With 2.45 million inhabitants, the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area is a prosperous region, where consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of their diet on public health, the environment and income distribution. Amsterdam Metropolitan Area covers 32 municipalities totalling 2,580 square kilometres, i.e. 6.2 % of the territory of the Netherlands. The city of Amsterdam is an economic and demographic magnet. Between 2020 and 2040, the population of the municipality of Amsterdam is expected to grow substantially from 880,000 to 1,042,200. In addition, the region also receives more than 10 million visitors every year (OIS, 2018).

The Amsterdam Metropolitan Area is an important food region in the Netherlands. Many large food processing companies are situated there such as Koninklijke Verkade BV, Cargill, Ahold and ADM, as well as many start-ups. In the open space between the cities there is a large diversity of agricultural companies, with world players in seed potatoes and seed breeding located there. In IJmuiden there is a large fishing port with associated facilities such as a fish auction and processing companies. The region also houses a conveniently located large seaport and the largest airport in the country. Due to the presence of an amalgam of different cultures and a large student population, the MRA is a testing ground for new food concepts. There are many social initiatives in the field of nutrition.

Policy memorandums published by the provinces of Noord-Holland and Flevoland (2018) and the City of Amsterdam (2007, 2014) raise important questions and issues regarding food in the metropolitan region. How can the region feed the growing population in a sustainable way? How can the ecological footprint of the food supply be reduced? How can food-related traffic movements be limited? How can food waste be reduced? How can the



Photo by Arnold van der Valk

health issue of overweight be addressed? How can awareness of sustainable handling of food be stimulated among consumers and governments?

## Regional and local initiatives

In 2007, inspired by the example of other cities such as London and Toronto, Amsterdam City was one of the first regions in Europe to conceive a food vision under the motto "Testing Ground Amsterdam". The 2007 memorandum was endorsed by provincial, regional and municipal authorities, and although it was a top-down initiative by the City of Amsterdam, the food vision was applauded by citizens' initiatives and NGOs in the fields of environment, public health, education, allotment gardening and social work. Banks and companies also showed interest. Some civil initiatives and NGOs involved received modest subsidies from local governments for food education, farm visits and research.

After the successful implementation of the 2007-2012 Testing Ground Amsterdam pilot, in 2012 the Amsterdam City Council decided to draw up a new food vision building on the same foundations. The idea of the new vision was to offer more room for participation by civil initiatives. Among other things, the Testing Ground policy had sparked the establishment of a number of local food initiatives. Rabobank Amsterdam, a giant in the agri-food business, also joined in the debate. In 2014, a new food vision was adopted by the City of Amsterdam shortly before local elections. Due to a political landslide, however, the main political sponsors of the food policy in Amsterdam, the Green Left Party and the Labour Party, lost power. The new government simply cherry-picked certain parts of the vision, such as the policy to reduce overweight and support for edible green and community gardens in residential neighbourhoods, while other intentions, such as the establishment of a food council



*Food Council MRA meeting in 2017. Photo by Arnold van der Valk*

for the municipality, ended up on the shelf. After the most recent local elections in 2018, the political situation in the city changed drastically again, this time in favour of the left-wing parties. The new municipal government has announced that a food strategy will be published in 2019, building on the 2014 food vision. The strategy will introduce implementation devices at city and neighbourhood level.

The 2014 Amsterdam Food Vision was not endorsed by the provincial authorities of North-Holland and Flevoland, or by the other 32 municipalities in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area authority. MRA opted for a separate food policy and a regional Food Cluster under the aegis of the Amsterdam Economic Board. The Economic Board is incorporated in the regional authority and distributes resources from national government and the provinces for the promotion of the regional economy, transport and housing. The Food Cluster is an example of cooperation within a so-called triple helix association, a typically Dutch institutional arrangement including government, industry and educational institutions (1).

In the meantime, between 2007 and 2019, civil food initiatives spent most of their energy on achieving concrete goals, such as setting up communal gardens, creating food banks and organising exhibitions and conferences, rather than consulting and lobbying in the political circuit. In addition, between 2008 and 2014, many initiatives came to a halt due to budget cuts. The survivors focused on obtaining the remaining funds available from the government and philanthropic institutions. Many civil initiatives perceived like-minded parties as competitors in the struggle for scarce resources rather than as potential allies (Kuhlmann, 2017).

### **An emerging food council**

In 2015 Edible Amsterdam together with the cultural centre Pakhuis de Zwijger managed to bring together a wide range of citizen food initiatives, NGOs, food start-ups and research institutes under the motto "Prototyping the Food Council". Sadly, this initiative collapsed due to a lack of financial resources and manpower.

In retrospect, citizens' initiatives in the City of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area only achieved their first substantial successes in 2013 and 2014, in a process of

citizen participation as a run-up to a Food Vision conceived by the City of Amsterdam. Unsalaries staff, such as the then chair of the Edible Amsterdam Platform, played a key role in this. They convened meetings of representatives of civic initiatives, NGOs and public officers, wrote draft texts and interacted with local politicians. One of the recommendations in the 2014 Amsterdam Food Vision was to create a Food Policy Board for maintaining international contacts. Despite that no action was taken by Amsterdam Council (2), but during the consultation process many personal contacts were established and new insights emerged. So far this fermentation process has resulted in the formation of two proto food councils in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area.

### **The birth of twins**

In the course of 2016, 2017 and 2018, a network grew of individuals, NGOs, and businesses and advocacy groups who are committed to a transformation of the food system in the City of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (Ilieva, 2017; Renting, Schermer & Rossi, 2012). Consisting of academics, students, civil servants and social entrepreneurs, the core group has found a home within the newly established Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS).

In the spring of 2017, members of this advocacy group were invited by the province of North Holland to participate in the making of a new regional food vision for the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (Thijssen, 2017). This was in line with the advocacy group's plans to organise an international conference on food policy in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region and draw up a regional food charter. The province and the advocacy group joined forces and set to work on organising a conference 'Food flows in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area' with financial support from the provinces of Noord-Holland and Flevoland and from Rabobank Amsterdam. During the congress, which took place in December 2017 in Amsterdam, Food Council MRA was launched as a platform and a regional food manifesto was signed by the provinces, the bank and a number of companies and research institutions involved.

Food Council MRA is currently an informal network and has no legal status. In the Dutch legal system, the lack of legal status is an obstacle to receiving financial contributions

from government institutions. For the provinces and Rabobank this was a reason to prioritise the establishment of an alternative organisation fit to acquire legal status instantly and represent the regional food network. This was based on a 2012 Rabobank study on the shortcomings of the existing global food system and the need to think about regional food production. The title of this study, Food Connect, became the name of a foundation and a website. In the course of 2018, a quartermaster funded by the Province North Holland and Rabobank was appointed, and a series of actions were set in motion to (once again) put food on the agenda of the Amsterdam Economic Board and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. The Foundation Food Connect was launched in February 2019.

The role of Food Council MRA remained unclear for some time after. This has been due to lack of regular income and doubts about the size and legitimacy of the network. During 2018 and 2019 the founders of Food Council MRA, all volunteers, have devoted themselves in with great energy to strengthening the Council as a platform and as an action centre. An effort is being made to establish an association and a cooperative with legal status. The association accommodates the platform, which plays a role as an advisory body to the Food Connect Foundation. The cooperative provides a playing field for enterprising members looking to invest in sustainable projects.

Food Council MRA is perceived as one half of twin organisations. The Food Connect Foundation and the Food Council MRA Association were born at about the same time but are different. The Food Council's goal is to make the voice of citizens' initiatives and green entrepreneurs heard as a counterweight to the dominance of agri-business and government in the current food system.

### A hybrid food policy council

The Amsterdam Metropolitan Area therefore currently falls within the remit of two food councils. One, the Food Connect Foundation is a vehicle of provincial governments and some municipalities (but not the Amsterdam municipality: the City of Amsterdam recently expressed intentions to establish a municipal food council). The other, Food Council MRA, functions as a network of citizens' initiatives and green entrepreneurs without legal status.

The dichotomy reflects the traditional distinction between the conventional industrial global food system and alternative regional and local niche food networks. Yet there is reason for optimism about cooperation in the future. This optimism is grounded on the expressions of support from both organisations for a radical regional food manifesto. Recently representatives of each organisation have taken up duties on the board of the other organisation. Exploratory talks between the boards of both organisations have identified common ground for setting up a shared advocacy platform, fundraising, common consultancy and the establishment of a regional community of food practice. Competition, distrust and exclusion are gradually turning into a basis of mutual trust, inclusion and cooperation. Within the extended network, an organic growth process is taking place under collective leadership. In the absence of substantial resources in both platforms, there is (still) no need for a hierarchical leadership and strict control – the more so for creativity, honesty, openness and enthusiasm (Van der Valk, 2018).

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#### Notes

1. The triple helix is a traditional notion in Dutch governance, reflecting traditional power structures, but it has raised criticism from civil society representatives because citizens' initiatives are excluded from the multi-stakeholder platform.
2. More recently, the 2019 provincial elections have created a new space for deliberation about some kind of integrated regional food policy. However, the City of Amsterdam, the most powerful player, has not yet joined the struggle for a regional food policy.



# Local Food Strategies in Flanders

Michael Moulaert

Photo by Stad Gent

**Local food strategies in Flanders, Belgium, are on the rise. After Ghent launched its ‘Gent en Garde’ in 2013, other cities followed suit and started working on a participatory approach towards local food strategies. For example, Bruges developed its ‘Food Lab’ in 2014; and both Bruges and Ghent are members of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.**

In Flanders local food strategies are a relatively new phenomenon for local governments, and they are opening up doors. They tend not to be confined to purely production and consumption issues, but typically look at a broad range of topics. As a result, cooperation between different departments and a local food policy coordinator (if any) is becoming easier, for example contact with the local agriculture department (direct selling from farmers), spatial planning (city gardens) or education (healthy food at school).

Because this involves a fairly new approach for municipalities, local food strategies represent an ideal living lab for experimenting with new participatory methods involving a broad group of different stakeholders. The cities of Ghent (250,000 inhabitants), Leuven (100,000) and Hoogstraten (20,000) have all recently involved stakeholders and citizens in creating local food strategies, each with five to seven common goals (such as reducing food waste, promoting direct farm links, focus on vulnerable groups) and can now share their (largely positive) experiences.

A recent interactive workshop on “how to start a local food strategy”, organised by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities and the Flemish Government, attracted about 100 participants, including local policy makers,

citizens, representatives of NGOs, farmers and entrepreneurs. The large attendance numbers and participants’ enthusiasm are proof of the importance of and interest in local food strategies in Flanders. Besides facilitating the process of a local food strategy, local governments in Flanders are also initiating more tangible actions, for example arranging access to land. These are the first steps toward promoting a different type of agriculture among the citizens of Flanders.

A big challenge facing Flemish cities and regions is the need to connect better with traditional farmers who produce on a larger scale. It is more difficult for them to directly contribute to a local food strategy when they produce primarily for the global market, but it is possible for large-scale producers to also be incorporated into bigger projects that benefit the local community. In the “Tuinen van Stene”, a 37-hectare agricultural park in Ostend, traditional agriculture is combined with community supported agriculture, nature, recreation, bike and hiking paths, and the park offers blue services as it serves as a water buffer.

Flanders has hundreds of local food initiatives, such as allotments, food waste platforms and farmers markets, but these are far removed from professional large-scale food producers. Local food strategies and farming could be enhanced by directing European agricultural funds to clusters of cities and municipalities so they can create regional food strategies and develop direct farm links. This would make farmers less dependent on the world market and large companies, and strengthen local food policies.

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# Gent en Garde

Katrien Verbeke

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**Ghent is a middle-sized city in Belgium that has taken a proactive stance in developing a food policy for the city and putting it into practice. A food policy council has been set up to lead the way in a participatory manner. It has taken time to build the policy, from formulating goals, through quick wins, to more structural and larger projects requiring high investments. Now, the food policy is finding its way into the different domains of the city's ambitions. Through these participatory approaches, initiatives are being co-created and co-developed with various relevant stakeholders. This participatory process is key to ensuring success.**

In 2013 the City of Ghent launched 'Gent en Garde', a food policy that includes five strategic goals to pave the way for a sustainable food system for Ghent. The goals were formulated based on the results of various stakeholder discussions, input from the city administration and negotiations resulting in political consensus. The five strategic goals set are:

1. A shorter, more visible food chain
2. More sustainable food production and consumption
3. The creation of more social added value for food initiatives
4. Reduce food waste
5. Optimum reuse of food waste as raw materials

Inspired by experiences from other cities, the City of Ghent set up a food council. The Gent en Garde food policy council numbers about 25 members from various sectors: agriculture, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and commerce. The entire group comes together at least three times a year. The policy group acts as a sounding board for the city's policy on food, making recommendations on new or existing projects, proposing new ideas, discussing the city's strategic vision and acting as a major ambassador to help promote the city's vision on sustainable food production and consumption.

Ghent's food policy council has increasingly taken the lead in recent years in formulating and steering the city's food policy, translating it into operational goals and actions. Through intensive working groups, various stakeholders have played a key role in developing the city's current and future food policy plans.

One working group translated the strategic goals into operational goals. After its work was completed, two other working groups started putting the specific operational



*Gent en Garde Kitchen Brigade. Photo by Stad Gent*

goals into practice. One working group focuses on scaling up short food supply chains in and around the city. Another working group tackles urban food poverty with a broad range of civil society organisations.

Exchanges with food councils in other cities and a masterclass with Toronto and Nairobi (in collaboration with RUAF) have given the food council inspiration on how to further evolve and how to strengthen its work.

After discussions during a strategic meeting at the beginning of 2018, the food council was allotted an annual budget from the City of Ghent. In 2018 and 2019 this money has been used to finance innovative projects that can apply for funding through a competition, in which the food council serves as the jury.

Since the beginning of 2019, the food council has been revising its composition in order to bring in new stakeholders from the local food system. Next on the agenda is the development of indicators and targets for Ghent's food policy. Ghent's food council is constantly evolving and operates in a flexible way. This allows the council to modify its mandate, its way of working, and its activities and budget along the way, in order to maximise its potential.

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# Leuven 'Food Connects'

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**Leuven is characterised by a broad range of activities related to sustainable food production and consumption, ranging from farmers' markets and a zero-waste grocery store to projects to reduce food waste. All these initiatives are relevant in the pursuit of a carbon neutral future, but without an integrative framework these remain small individual projects.**

In order to boost the sustainability of its food production, distribution and consumption, Leuven needed a local food strategy. In late 2017, the "Local food strategy for Leuven" project was launched in collaboration with the City of Leuven, Boerenbond, KU Leuven, Rikolto, Leuven 2030 network, Riso Vlaams Brabant and many other stakeholders. This fits with Leuven's ambition to become a climate neutral city by 2050.

A local food strategy is a collectively developed policy, with a clear mission and goals, working towards a more sustainable food and agriculture system. It provides answers to crucial challenges in all parts of the food chain: production, consumption, processing and distribution. In Leuven, a local food strategy was elaborated from the bottom up, with the participation of many different stakeholders in the local food system (see below for more details). This was an important precondition for developing a strong set of seven broadly supported strategic objectives:

1. Promoting healthy and sustainable food
2. Bringing consumers and producers closer together
3. Making space for sustainable food production
4. Investing in sustainable agriculture
5. Making sustainable food products accessible to all
6. Preventing food loss and re-use of surpluses
7. Stimulating innovation for sustainable agriculture and food

The Leuven Food Strategy was welcomed by the new city councillors and is now thoroughly embedded in the new political agreement for the next 6-year policy period.

It was an explicit choice not to put the development of a local food strategy in the hands of a small group of experts. Instead it was decided to build it from the bottom up, in line with the DNA of changemaking in the city of Leuven. All relevant stakeholder groups – producers, consumers, policy makers, retailers and distributors – were invited to give their input for the local food strategy.

This happened during three stakeholder meetings, each hosting 50 to 70 participants on a voluntary basis. During these workshops the strategic and operational goals were



*Food strategy meeting.* Photo by Jelle Goossens (Rikolto)

determined, along with concrete actions. The whole process, from initiation to publication, took about six months.

This unique process resulted in a rich local food strategy, developed and supported by a broader food community. The positive vibes of the Leuven Food Strategy are also giving an extra boost to several new initiatives: Voedselteams (food teams) that link farmers to consumer groups, and the network of community supported agriculture; healthy and sustainable food in schools; and preparing a distribution platform through which local products and food leftovers reach vulnerable groups. More work needs to be done, in particular to improve connections with the surrounding municipalities.

The current challenge is the operational phase. The city is preparing a steering mechanism that guarantees vibrant and balanced implementation of the different strategies. Several departments of the city's administration are involved and we hope there is sufficient budget for a dedicated city officer to be assigned the role of coordinator. An advisory council for food and agriculture has been established, and its members represent and have good connections with the different stakeholders related to food and farming. This group should be able to come up with ideas and resources for the implementation of the strategies, give support to upcoming initiatives, stimulate a wide range of institutions and companies to participate in concrete initiatives, and organise cross-sector reflection.

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# From Urban Gardens to the Agri-Food Pact of Quito

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**The agri-food system of the city-region of Quito, the capital of Ecuador, is highly dependent, vulnerable and diverse, three characteristics that marked the process of formulating an agri-food policy, which required the contribution of a wide range of actors.**

Quito's agri-food system is *dependent* because a large part of the food consumed in the municipality comes from other regions of the country and abroad. Quito only produces 5 % of the total amount of food consumed there; if we add the production of the province of Pichincha, which surrounds the Municipality of Quito, the figure rises to 12.7 %. Over 80 % of the food that enters Quito does so along two routes. From the south, the cities of Ambato and Santo Domingo de los Colorados (in the central and southern highlands and on the coast respectively) provide 62 % of the food consumed in the capital; another 20 % comes from the north (the border with Colombia and the north coast).

Quito's agri-food system is *vulnerable* because the regions that provide food to Quito face increasingly extreme weather events, such as heavy rains and droughts, which greatly affect production and, therefore, the availability of food in Quito. In addition, agricultural practices do not make good use of common goods such as water and soil and are therefore not sustainable or create resilience in the productive system, jeopardising a continuous supply of food. In addition, the risk of volcanic eruptions means that falling ash, lava flows and landslides threaten road access and food production itself.

Finally, Quito's agri-food is *diverse*, with very different socio-economic and cultural dynamics in the north, centre and south of the city, in both urban and rural areas of the district and province. There is no single agri-food system in Quito. Several agri-food subsystems coexist, each with particular characteristics and dynamics and not always known and connected to each other. This makes it necessary to address specific aspects and think about particular solutions for the different territories.

## From urban agriculture to agri-food policy

The Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito has a long history of promoting urban and peri-urban food production. In 2000, with the support of the Habitat Urban Management Program for Latin America and the Caribbean, the municipality began promoting urban gardens that were quickly consolidated in the Participatory Urban Agriculture Program. Currently, AGRUPAR covers 1,400 urban orchards that occupy approximately 40 hectares of urban, peri-urban



*The agri-food strategy of Quito.*

and rural areas (tracts of land of less than 7,500m<sup>2</sup>) located in the areas of greatest poverty and chronic child malnutrition (under 5 years old), with the participation of more than 4,500 farmers every year, mostly female heads of household. Since its creation, AGRUPAR has promoted organic agro-ecological production (in 2007 it achieved organic certification based on Ecuadorian regulations for organic production, endorsed by IFOAM), local and regional markets (an average of 900 *Bioferias* per year) and healthy and responsible consumption.

The hypothesis that guided the participatory formulation of food policy is that cities that maintain urban agriculture programmes over time will be better able to promote sustainable agri-food policies. This is because, as it is a practice that goes beyond agroecological production and sustainable consumption, urban agriculture, unlike garden programmes, incorporates issues such as social and economic inclusion in the political debate and public management. The systemic approach questions – from a perspective of rights, global commons and the search for the common good – the asymmetries of power that sustain the current agri-food system. Based on the human right to food and the right to the city, Quito's food policy considers food as a political and cultural act and not as a commodity.

Over the years, the urban agriculture policy has become an agri-food policy, with the support of several actors, including RUA. In 2016, the Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito joined the RUA Global Partnership and, that same year, Quito signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). In addition, Quito is a member of the C40 sustainable food systems group, CityFood Network and Metropolis (participating in the pilot project "Surplus Food Network" 2018).

In October 2017, commemorating the signing of the New Urban Agenda, the city launched its resilience strategy. One of

the pillars of this strategy, a solid and recursive economy, requires the strengthening of the productive sectors, the development of capacities and the strengthening of the human capital of the city, and the promotion of the food economy as axes of development. The Quito food system, including its urban gardens, plays a prominent role in the strategy. Urban agriculture and food were also incorporated into Vision 2040, a document that contains the city's urban development perspective for the next 20 years. And, more recently, urban agriculture, along with other aspects of the food system have been included in the update of the Quito Climate Action Plan. Finally, urban agriculture is an indicator of "Healthy Municipality" for Quito (certification granted by the Ministry of Health), and has begun to be incorporated into some special plans for intervention in vulnerable areas and rural production (although still at the analysis level), one of the territorial planning instruments of the municipality.

### The process of participatory policy formulation

Following the RUAF methodology, Quito developed its agri-food policy in three phases:

#### Phase 1. Agri-food system analysis

The process began in June 2015 with the definition of the conceptual framework, a work plan and the creation of a local research team with support from RUAF. In 2016, this team used the city-region food system approach to conduct the agri-food system evaluation. The evaluation considered two main areas ("feeding rings") formed by the metropolitan district and the province of Pichincha. In this phase an exhaustive review of the available statistical and administrative information and the review of previous studies were carried out. This allowed the identification of critical problems and the development of a SWOT analysis to agree on local priorities in the construction of agri-food policy. The results were presented to some key stakeholders.

One of the main problems that had to be overcome was the lack of information (national and non-local scale, outdated or non-existent data, institutions that did not share information). As the agri-food system had never been analysed in depth, the team had to fill information and knowledge gaps. To do this, interviews and workshops were held with key actors in the system, who contributed their (often conflicting) views, and their demands and needs were incorporated into the debate. The main results will be published this year.

#### Phase 2. Food on the public agenda

At the beginning of 2017, a broad and diverse group of actors linked to the agri-food system of the city-region of Quito was convened to build a timeline and a map of actors identifying the path of change in which the policy would be anchored and the various institutions and organisations interested in collaborating. Initially, a multi-stakeholder platform was formed, consisting of 24 institutions and organisations, including the Municipality of Quito, various ministries, Pichincha province, food companies, farmer and consumer organisations, universities, cooperative organisations and various civil society organisations. The multi-stakeholder

platform was formed as a space for the exchange of opinions and collaborative construction of agri-food policy, consolidating, over time, the Quito Agri-Food Pact (PAQ).

Five working groups were formed around the pillars identified by the PAQ:

- Management of food resources for the future
- Food and nutritional security and sovereignty
- Inclusive food economy and urban-rural links
- Waste management
- Governance

During this phase, 16 participatory workshops were held. One of the main challenges was working in groups and thinking about the pillars in a systemic way, maintaining their non-linear interrelation, as part of the food chain. Between March and September 2018, the PAQ drafted the Agri-food Charter of Quito that was signed on October 2, 2018 at the Habitat III+2 event (a follow up to the 2016 Habitat III conference in Quito). The team's capacity for dialogue and consultation allowed actors that started from apparently opposing positions to come closer, even reaching agreements. All interested parties had to yield in their initial positions to agree on a common text. The process was led by the Municipality of Quito with support from RUAF and Rikolto.

The charter was signed by the members of the PAQ, including the national and provincial government, food industries, farmer and consumer organisations, universities and various civil society organisations. Through social networks, almost 2,000 people and organisations have supported the actions contained in the charter. In parallel, the PAQ designed and implemented a communication strategy to help disseminate the charter and the different achievements of the policy, transforming food into a municipal political agenda issue.

#### Phase 3. Formulation of agri-food policy

In May 2018, the policy formulation process was intensified with the preparation of an action plan to strengthen the agri-food system of Quito, which was the main input for the design of the agri-food strategy. Both documents articulate strategic activities, with their indicators defined in line with those applied by the MUFPP. For its preparation, working groups were formed which held a total of 57 meetings, 16 workshops and 14 interviews with government partners and other actors in the agri-food system. As part of this strategy, more than 40 maps were prepared using geographic information on Quito's agri-food system available on the municipality's open data platform.

As part of the activities planned in the agri-food strategy, the Municipality of Quito, with the support of RUAF, is developing the resilience strategy of the food system of the city-region of Quito. This is based on an innovative methodology, specially designed by RUAF in alliance with the resilience management of the Municipality of Quito. Quito was selected by the MUFPP for the development of a pilot project that seeks to implement the indicators of the Milan Pact.

This will provide greater clarity about the operation of the



*Signing the Agri-Food Charter of Quito. Photo by CONQUITO, 2018*

system, its vulnerabilities and its response capacity, consolidating the different instruments of the policy and providing a strategic vision to the agri-food system.

### The challenges to forming the council

Since May 2019, Quito has a new mayor, whose government plan entitled the “Efficient Food Program for Quito”, mentions the food bank, municipal canteens, a well-fed childhood, healthy and quality food, and the food and nutrition security plan as challenges for the municipality. This is evidence of the new administration’s sensitivity to developing a sustainable and resilient food policy.

Four years since the process began, the main challenge facing Quito now is to consolidate its agri-food policy by passing a mayor’s resolution (one of the legal possibilities) that officially recognises the achievements made to date, including the establishment and institutionalisation of a council for the PAQ.

The decision to form a council of the PAQ and not a municipal council acknowledges the PAQ as a legitimate forum for participation in the formulation and implementation of the agri-food policy of the city-region of Quito. By seeking official recognition within the municipal structure, it is hoped that the agri-food policy will become anchored in the city and among its actors, and not exclusively in the municipal government. It is worth remembering that building the public policy vision in a participatory manner has given the city a broad vision strengthened by the energy of all the institutions and organisations that make up the PAQ.

It is expected that the council, once formed, will work on a draft municipal ordinance based on the agri-food strategy prepared by the PAQ and presented to the public by the Secretary of Productive Development and Competitiveness.

As an advisory space for the mayor and the municipal council, the council will use a public policy approach to make the agri-food system of the city-region of Quito more

sustainable and resilient. It will also contribute to consolidating the multi-stakeholder, intersectoral and transdisciplinary character that characterised the entire process of formulation and implementation of the PAQ, and this will require articulation between various secretaries and coordination with the provincial and national governments.

Quito’s agri-food policy faces three challenges today. First, the PAQ must further disseminate the food charter and the agri-food strategy to citizens using different formats and media to promote healthier food environments.

Second, the PAQ must develop new strategies that incorporate the concepts that guided the charter and the food strategy into the debate on agri-food policy, encouraging new actors to join the process. This is important since food is an arena where various interests, often conflicting, intervene.

Finally, the PAQ together with the Municipality of Quito must sensitise and add to the process of preparing public policy for the councillors who were elected to represent the citizens and who will be responsible for formally approving the mayor’s resolution. The coming months will see a lot of debate and, hopefully, will consolidate the vision of food governance that the PAQ has built and promoted since its creation.

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# Food Change Labs Transform Local Food Systems in Uganda and Zambia

Mangiza Chirwa  
Immaculate Yossa

**To support citizens in shaping a green and inclusive food systems, the NGOs Hivos and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), in cooperation with local partners, have set up several food change labs in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These food labs have been developed under Sustainable Diets for All (SD4ALL), a lobby and advocacy programme that harnesses citizen voices for healthy, diverse, nutritious and sustainable food systems.**

A Food Change Lab (FCL) is a participatory innovation process that aims to better understand problems in the food system, build coalitions of change, generate solutions, and test them on the ground. The process is ideal for addressing complex issues which encompass a myriad of actors, facets and policies. It is designed to promote systemic change, shifting food systems towards more inclusivity and sustainability. Though following the same process and principles, the labs in Zambia and Uganda had their own unique set-up and content focus, leading to a rich pallet of results.

*The food change lab and food policy council concepts are similar in that both are multi-stakeholder platforms but they differ mainly in the process and methodology they use for attaining desired outcomes. The food change lab is a problem-solving process where a multi-stakeholder alliance moves through different phases – from problem identification to ideation and prototyping of solutions.*

## Zambia Food Change Lab

The Zambia Food Change Lab began in Chongwe District at the local level. It was set up in 2015 to address the problem of limited diversity on Zambian farms and in local diets. The Chongwe Food Lab soon evolved into the Zambia Food Change Lab in 2016, which was broader in scope and looked at national challenges in the Zambian food system. This occurred after adding partners with a national focus and realising that agricultural policy issues were quite central to achieving change in the local food system. The national-level lab developed a food system map to identify challenges and opportunities for change in production, consumption, processing and access to food. From this mapping, they formed four prototype groups to address selected challenges where points of leverage had been identified. The four groups, whose members were from the national lab, focused on



*Cooking demonstration by Orugali women. Photo by KRC*

production diversification, youth empowerment, awareness creation and informal sector support, led by Hivos partner organisations with expertise in each thematic area.

One of the key achievements of the awareness group (led by the Consumer Unity Trust Society) was to form a partnership with the Lusaka City Council to work together on food issues concerning the city. This has enabled the formation of the Lusaka Food Policy Council (FPC) that will coordinate the efforts to address challenges within the Lusaka food system.

## From local to national level

The lab's journey, from its early days as the Chongwe Food Lab (local level) to the Zambia Food Change Lab (national level), and the initiative to form the Lusaka FPC, was a rich learning experience marked by different interventions at the two levels. While both labs addressed food and nutrition issues, the Chongwe lab interventions were more concrete and easier to link with outcomes. For example, in its efforts to address unsustainable land management and deforestation, the Chongwe Food Lab participated in various activities involving community awareness and reforestation. This resulted in community leaders introducing penalties for anyone found cutting down trees, as well as capacity building in reforestation through Hivos funding to Kasisi Agriculture Training Institute, leading to reduced deforestation in the area. Regarding lack of diversity in food consumption, food festivals and food dialogue meetings resulted in community radio programmes aimed at creating awareness of the nutritional value of local crops and food that are currently disappearing. Furthermore, a book on the value of local food

	Chongwe Food Change Lab	City Region Food System
Food System Assessment	The assessment was specific to a local area (rural) and identified local priority issues for Chongwe.	The assessment for the city region was broader in scope involving the identified cities and the nearby peri-urban/rural areas. The surrounding districts, responsible for the main food supply of Lusaka, were included in the assessment.
Multi-Stakeholder participation	Involved participation of ordinary community members in identifying challenges and possible solutions. Community members took centre stage, whereas other stakeholders provided expert knowledge in guiding the assessment and strategy build up.	Participation mainly involved key stakeholders across the food sector who had technical expertise in their fields of work. While institutional actors and technical experts took centre stage, ordinary community members were involved as respondents to the research done by the project.
Level of Intervention	Direct intervention actions included community awareness programmes/ information dissemination in the local community (e.g. on effects of deforestation on agriculture production, food festivals to address food diversity consumption, tree planting to combat deforestation, etc.).	Major outcomes were policy recommendations and action plans for government and concerned stakeholders but no direct implementation actions to address identified challenges were taken.
Others	All food lab participants took part in field visits aimed at increasing their appreciation of existing challenges and opportunities within the food system.	The approach used thematic working groups to thoroughly assess specific challenges and come up with strategies and action plans for interventions.

*Contrasts between the two approaches.*

was developed to promote the consumption of selected traditional foods of high nutritional value.

In contrast, within the Chongwe Food Change Lab it has been more difficult to ascertain whether or not claimed outcomes are actually the result of prototype group interventions, as there are numerous players and interventions in the food system at national level. For this reason, the Lusaka FPC will be subsequently created at city level, in order to show outcomes and impact more easily. Local food governance initiatives such as Lusaka FPC using food change labs are a good mechanism to address specific local challenges. For instance, research in Lusaka has shown that more than 70 % of the population acquire their food from informal markets, and yet informal sector players do not take part in policy discussions. The Lusaka FPC provides an opportunity for these neglected groups to make their voices heard. It is often difficult for marginalised groups to access national-level platforms, as these usually attract more formal actors and discussions. Additionally, the Lusaka FPC provides an opportunity to institutionalise the experiences gained from the two food change labs. Institutionalisation entails creating an avenue through which policies and innovations discussed in the policy council find their way to authorities responsible for action. This improves the chances of sustainability beyond the project lifespan.

### **Towards an integrated approach**

It is important to note that food change labs are a form of basic intervention in the food system operating at local community level, whereas food policy councils move one step further as they generally operate at local government level. The majority of food governance interventions in Zambia have been at national level.

In 2015, the Food and Agriculture Organization and RUAF, through the Food for the Cities Program, recognised the gap between local realities and national level interventions and introduced the City Region Food Systems (CRFS) project (See: [www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit/introduction/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit/introduction/en/)). This approach includes linking the city food systems of Lusaka and Kitwe to surrounding peri-urban/rural populations that provide food for the cities. Though both the Chongwe Food Lab and the CRFS used a food system assessment as a starting point to better understand the strengths and challenges faced, as well as multi-stakeholder dialogue to discuss the assessment and build up strategies, there are still some major contrasts between the two approaches. (see figure)

The various approaches are complementary to one another and build up to enhance the performance of the food system as a whole. The findings of the Food Change Lab are used to inform the Lusaka FPC, CRFS and national food system interventions.

Putting ordinary citizens at the centre of the food system requires flexible local structures such as food change labs and local food councils to improve inclusion, but also stimulate further uptake and policy change on the ground that allow these citizens to easily participate. Farmers and informal sector workers are usually forgotten (or not acknowledged) in formal platforms addressing food system challenges, due to factors such as low levels of education and inability to speak in the official national language of communication (English). However, structures such as the food change lab and food policy councils provide a space where the voices of these neglected groups can be heard, which results in more meaningful and effective decision-making and interventions.



*Zambia Food Change Lab participants creating the food system map. Photo by Felia Boerwinkel*

### Uganda Food Change Lab

The Uganda Food Change Lab started in 2015 with the aim of improving diets and the productivity of the local food system in Fort Portal Municipality and Kabarole District, while advocating a more conducive policy environment.

Food and agriculture play a leading role in Uganda's economy, with agriculture contributing 85 % of export earnings and almost 75 % to national employment. However, the country still struggles with food and nutrition insecurity. Undernutrition is widespread, with 36 % of children chronically undernourished or stunted. Malnutrition causes about 45 % of child deaths in Uganda. In an effort to improve the population's nutritional status, the Government of Uganda adopted the Food and Nutrition policy in 2003, comprising a series of multi-sectoral and coordinated interventions focusing on food security, improved nutrition and increased incomes. Owing to the multi-sectoral dimension of the policy, a coordinating body at the national level referred to as the 'Uganda Food and Nutrition Council' (UFNC) was proposed as a legal entity linked with relevant multi-sectoral committees dealing with food and nutrition at the local government level in the country. Sixteen years later, the Food and Nutrition Council has never been established. Despite several initiatives in Kampala (also see earlier UA magazines), the legislative framework has not been established.

In the absence of this council, a number of networks, organised groups and platforms have emerged, the majority citizen-led, to push the food agenda forward. Food and nutrition, natural resource protection, biodiversity conservation and safeguarding the country's food culture have been the topics at the forefront of discussions. The Uganda Food Change Lab was among these convening platforms and, linking to several of these local initiatives, initiated to address the country's key food challenges. These were: (1) the high amount of food and natural resources exported from the region, given the limited local processing and value addition options; (2) the high levels of stunting among children in the region, 41% higher than the national average; (3) the monotonous diet that is high in starch and low in proteins and micronutrients; and (4) the declining production of traditional crops despite their high nutritional value.

Through the food change lab, awareness raising among rural and urban households on diets and consumption patterns takes place regularly. This is spearheaded by a smaller group of actors that emerged out of the lab and referred to as the "coalition of the willing". They have organised community events such as cooking demonstrations showcasing, for instance, how key nutrients may be lost during food preparation, and talks to pass on information to the wider public. Some of the lab's other activities include food fests organised by rural households aimed to popularise the production and consumption of nutritious, indigenous foods, and small-scale farmer mobilisation to set up basic processing facilities to add value to their agricultural products.

The lab's convening organisation, the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), worked with the "coalition of the willing" and the council of elected leaders and the department of production to influence the review of a local policy on food production known as the Kabarole food and production ordinance 2006. The law had been passed but was not being implemented or enforced. KRC saw the review as an opportunity to propose amendments to support the inclusion of more diverse, nutritious and sustainable food in the local food system, in line with Hivos' Sustainable Diets for All agenda.

The most notable results of the Uganda Food Change Lab include stimulation of food diversity in the local economy through indigenous crops, which were previously perceived as inferior and low value crops. The volume of indigenous foods and vegetables planted in gardens and consumed at household level has increased considerably. Additionally, hoteliers are increasingly featuring traditional foods on their menus. Moreover, food vendors were mobilised to form an association, paving the way for their official recognition by the municipality. Lastly, the food and production ordinance was amended in 2018 with input from the lab actors. This amended ordinance is expected to improve agricultural production, food safety and storage, diets, household incomes (including recognising street food vendors as significant food providers for low income earners), the environment, and promote sustainable use of local natural resources.

Overall, the food change lab has provided opportunities for citizens to engage with their leaders and together build consensus on actions that need to be taken to improve their food and nutrition situation. This has led to more pragmatic and effective interventions and results. It is hoped that these examples can be replicated across the country.

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# Designing Holistic Food Systems with Citizen Participation

Maria Teresa Nogales

*CMSAs adopt participatory methodologies to incorporate different voices into policy and investment proposals on people's right to food.*  
Photo by Fundación Alternativas.

**Ensuring food and nutrition security is a complex task that depends on many factors and actors. Since 2013, Fundación Alternativas has been leading the creation of multidisciplinary and multisectoral working groups known as Municipal Committees for Food Security (CMSAs, *Comités Municipales de Seguridad Alimentaria*) in Bolivia.**

Since the 1950s, Latin America has been undergoing a significant process of rural-urban migration and today it is the most urbanised region in the developing world: close to 80 % live in urban areas (1, 2). This percentage is expected to continue growing over the next few years. Accelerated urbanisation entails continuous changes in governance, planning and investment and generates a profound impact on food security and the ability to ensure the human right to food.

Rural migration trends affect domestic food production patterns, as farmers leave the countryside, leading to a loss of ancestral knowledge on traditional food. This transition has also given way to the adoption of monocultures driven by agribusiness and, as such, the deterioration of the environment and the capacity to produce local food to adequately feed and nourish people. The standardisation of food systems has been detrimental to traditional and native

diets worldwide; it has also negatively impacted the environment and global public health (7). Approximately twenty years ago, small-scale local agriculture in Bolivia provided around 75 % of the food consumed in the country (3). Today, Bolivia is increasingly depending on imported food (4). In 2018, processed and basic foods imported specifically for household consumption in Bolivia were estimated at an approximate value of 488 million US dollars. Between 2006 and 2018, food imports increased by 172 %.

In an effort to ensure food security, actions must focus on fostering local, sustainable food systems capable of guaranteeing that all people have reliable access to fresh, healthy and nutritious food. To this end, it is necessary to direct investment to family and indigenous farmers who produce food basket products while caring for the environment. In addition, investments must be geared towards developing infrastructure and communication services that allow better interconnectivity between urban and rural areas and generate market opportunities as a result of efficient supply chains.

Subnational governments, civil society, the private sector and citizens must work together and become involved in designing innovative solutions collaboratively. The Municipal Committees for Food Security (CMSAs) meet on a monthly basis to develop policy and investment proposals to improve food security, and function as advisory bodies to public and private institutions. They bring together a variety

of actors, including representatives from civil society organisations, academia, farmer's associations, traders, food entrepreneurs, civil servants and municipal and departmental officials.

Currently, CMSAs function in La Paz (2013), Sucre (2015) and El Alto (2018). Examples of their efforts include the formulation of laws including the Municipal Autonomous Law 105 on Food Security (La Paz, adopted in 2014), the Municipal Autonomous Law 129 on Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty (Sucre, adopted in 2018) and the Municipal Autonomous Law 321 for the Promotion of Urban Food Gardens in the Municipality of La Paz (La Paz, adopted in 2018). Likewise, a number of policy and investment proposals have been developed, including: Food Security for the Metropolitan Region of La Paz (2015), Food Distribution Centres for the Metropolitan Region of La Paz (2016), National Urban Agenda for Food Security (2017), and Strengthening and Integrating the Local Food Systems of the Metropolitan Region of La Paz (2019).

In Bolivia, CMSAs are promoting and spearheading the country's first urban dialogues on food security and are consolidating themselves as non-partisan, multidisciplinary advisors on food policy and strategy. Their proposals receive public attention and have served to inform government planning documents and agendas including The National Urban Agenda, The National City Policy, The La Paz Departmental Territorial Planning Strategy and The Development Strategy of the Metropolitan Region of the Department of La Paz.

The work conducted by the CMSAs is possible thanks to the continuous participation of the many people and institutions (more than 30 institutions per municipality) that make up each entity. Over the years, members have demonstrated consistency, commitment and responsibility; all of which have fostered increasing public recognition. Working groups such as the CMSAs are a mechanism to bring different actors together to engage in dialogue and conduct analyses in real time about the food systems we want to generate for the future. Importantly, they are designed to ensure the genuine representation and participation of small, medium and large actors, public and private. Likewise, over the years, they have been able to leverage the participation of national and subnational actors who now come together to work collectively, identify shared goals and invest in complimentary strategies.

Importantly, committee member selection has been a critical element from the onset. Genuine engagement from the right mix of stakeholders has proven to be essential to the success of debates and proposals put forth by the committees; likewise, multi-stakeholder representation has increased the credibility of the work conducted. For those looking to engage in similar work, expectations must be set from the beginning: for example, in Bolivia, it was decided that committees would meet on a monthly basis and work collaboratively whereas subcommittees would be organised to address specific issues or challenges. It was also decided

that different levels of government would be invited to participate, through a variety of agencies, but the committees would function as non-government initiatives and would function as non-partisan entities. Undoubtedly, a key factor of the success of the committees has been the continuous support they receive from *Fundación Alternativas*. In this regard, each committee has dedicated staff that plans and organises meetings, guides group analysis and moderates discussions, conducts continuous research on key issues and, among other things, organises advocacy events that take place over the course of each year.

Certainly, there is no single model to improve existing food systems. On the contrary, ensuring they are sustainable and accessible to all people will be the result of the implementation of a myriad of ideas, initiatives and investments. This will require the involvement and collaboration of multiple institutions and citizens.

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# Antananarivo Food Policy Council: Policy as practice

Olivier Andrianarisoa  
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**The Antananarivo Food Policy Council evolved out of a multi-stakeholder platform originally established to enable scale-up of the city's urban agriculture programme. The transition meant widening the platform's focus from production to the whole food system. As the key facilitator, the Antananarivo City Council partners with non-governmental stakeholders to implement projects, safeguarding the initiative from electoral change.**

Madagascar is one of the countries most affected by stunting and undernutrition. Its level of hunger is classed as "alarming" and its capital city, Antananarivo, is experiencing a progressive increase in chronic malnutrition caused by conditions of extreme poverty (Action Against Hunger, 2019).

The agricultural sector is the main employer in Madagascar. However, land fragmentation, low-quality land, poor road and traffic conditions, and limited access to agricultural inputs mean that many rural households can no longer support themselves through the production of adequate food, or reach markets. One result of this has been increased migration to cities as people search for new opportunities, driving up poverty levels in urban areas, which struggle to accommodate new arrivals but, at the same time, remain reliant on diminishing rural food production. In light of this, promoting urban and periurban agriculture is an important means of securing economic, social and environmental well-being for Malagasy cities and their residents.

The Antananarivo City Council (ACC) set up the Urban Agriculture in Antananarivo programme in 2011. With the support of the French Cooperation (Ile-de-France), the ACC worked for almost eight years to achieve two main objectives: (i) the wide promotion and installation of micro-vegetable gardens in vulnerable districts of the city to improve the food and nutritional security of these communities, and (ii) the creation of income-generating activities in the form of fresh vegetable production.

The project began with a pilot strategy to develop vegetable gardens and provided training in three neighbourhoods, covering 30 vulnerable households and three public primary schools. The pilot showed immediate success and by the end of 2011 the number of beneficiaries had risen to almost 100 families. A partnership with the National Office for Nutrition (facilitated directly by the prime minister) introduced

high-value and nutritious crops and trained beneficiaries so that food could be produced more efficiently within small spaces in households.

## Establishing a platform of urban agriculture actors

The ACC sought to up-scale the initiative by setting up a platform of actors engaged in capacity-building and diffusion of urban agriculture know-how. However, the ACC did not have enough human or economic resources to do this, so involving external stakeholders was crucial to the dissemination of urban agriculture practices among interested citizens and organisations. The aim of this platform was to connect actions on nutrition and food security within the community boundaries: each actor would integrate the urban agriculture practice into their own work plan, allowing different actions to happen in response to the communities' needs. The platform was created in 2014, along with the development of an experimental and demonstration site for micro gardening at the municipal nursery. Here, any actors and citizens can receive training in urban agriculture for free, and the site proudly demonstrates the key aspects of the food system, from production to consumption to waste composting.

The platform started coordinating the activities of more than 20 stakeholders involved in urban agriculture within the ACC boundaries (institutional actors, international organisations, civil society organisations and private sector). It supported other development actors by providing knowledge and basic data so they could set up micro gardens. Thanks to the coordinated work of the platform members, the programme is now present in all six city council districts, 24 neighbourhoods and more than 36 training institutions (schools and social centres), and reaches over 18,000 beneficiaries (mainly women and children).



Photo by Paul Currie

### Signing the MUFPP

In 2016, the ACC decided to go further in its commitment to improving nutrition through food and signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). After signing the MUFPP, the ACC team started to define a strategic vision, initially identifying priorities and contributing to defining a food policy action plan for Antananarivo. To do this, a Food Policy Office (FPO) was created within the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Mayor's office. The primary role of the FPO is to facilitate the coordination of the different ACC departments involved in food policy actions (social development, education and nutrition, urban planning and finance). Secondly, the officer will work closely with key stakeholders (public and private actors, CSOs, NGOs, research and academic institutions) to develop joint strategies. Finally, it will lead the data collection needed to monitor policy impacts.

### Expanding the platform into a food policy council

It was not long before the idea of ensuring local food governance led to the necessity of creating the Antananarivo Food Policy Council (AFPC). This new structure would be a natural evolution of the existing urban agriculture platform, orienting its objectives toward the implementation of the MUFPP commitment to consolidating a sustainable urban food system. The platform was very much focused on urban agriculture, and there was a need to expand the work towards a systemic approach to the food chain.

The AFPC action plan would include: (i) creation of an inventory of the current territorial food system using city-region boundaries, (ii) construction of an open database to track the MUFPP's six working areas, (iii) the preparation of a workshop with key food system stakeholders to identify priorities, and (iv) the drafting of a working food policy guideline document to present to potential partners. Within the AFPC, the ACC plays a crucial networking role between actors, and through this it is able to connect city priorities with stakeholder priorities and thus avoid duplicating efforts, enable partnerships and centralise data.

### Policy as practice

Today, Antananarivo is going through an interesting democratic process which means understanding the making of policy as practice. Its main champion, Olivier Andrianarisoa, 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Mayor, describes this process as follows: "We do not locate the policy in the City Council as, if the Mayor leaves, the projects are lost. Rather, we lead and facilitate as the major stakeholder and focus on the projects. We identify stakeholders with high potential and we partner with them, and we fit them like pieces of the puzzle towards a sustainable food system. That's our policy practice and that's our approach."

In addition to traditional rice farming, and the promotion of urban agriculture, the city has partnered with numerous organisations to support agroecological horticulture production, fish farming, poultry breeding, compost production, and use of green charcoal. These activities are expected to contribute effectively to the eradication of hunger and poverty by creating more resilient and



Photo by Carmen Zuleta Ferrari

sustainable farming systems, contributing to nutritious urban food and restoring urban nature. It is not just a matter of localising production, but about integrating disadvantaged communities in the process of creating a sustainable food system. In the context of Madagascar's political uncertainty, this is a very clear approach, which values positive social outcomes and shared ownership over political gains.

The AFPC embodies this ethic of partnering and follows an inclusive approach, which integrates thematic, territorial and stakeholder dimensions of the food system. The AFPC agenda is already in action. Projects address diverse issues, ranging from technical aspects (support to rural-urban linkages, improving food procurement and access to local markets, support to agroecological practices, research on fish farming and poultry breeding, organic compost production, sustainable waste management) to social challenges (school feeding schemes and vegetable gardens, nutritional education in schools and social centres, early childhood development, women empowerment).

The AFPC hopes to ensure synergies between projects and support partnerships among stakeholders so as to guarantee access to funding and project sustainability. The organisation is expected to function within a horizontal scheme, ensuring that the presence of each member becomes crucial. In such a way, the role of the city council is fundamental but not restrictive, so that in the event of an unpredictable political conjuncture, the AFPC should be resilient enough to continue its work towards building safe, nutritious food systems for all.

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# Towards a Safe, Nourishing, Economic and Inclusive Food System for Arusha, based on Partnering

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**This article reflects on a process to develop a food policy with Arusha City Council, which was supported as part of a city-to-city exchange project led by ICLEI Africa, with partners FAO, C4o and RUAF.**

## The Arusha food system

Like many cities, Arusha in Tanzania is primarily dependent on food that is produced outside its administrative borders. The quality of road infrastructure, markets, transportation and other supply chain systems present major challenges to the city's food security, especially for ensuring the safety and nutritional quality of food that is brought into the city. Agriculture is the mainstay of the regional economy, contributing more than 40 % of regional GDP, and accounting for over 75 % of export earnings. Food production in the city also forms an integral part of the food system, whilst also facing numerous challenges, including urban encroachment, protection of farmer's tenure and effective waste management. Given the nature of administrative boundaries, promoting a cross-border city-region food system requires effective and often difficult coordination of numerous stakeholders.

To demonstrate political commitment to improved food security for Arusha, Mayor Lazaro signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) in 2014. Activities such as road construction and maintenance, improvement of storage locations, upgrading of abattoirs, and urban market construction and rehabilitation were and remain high on the list of priorities, though they have been slow to implement due to high capital costs and planning processes. Nevertheless, as part of its commitments, Arusha City Council has focused on social interventions, improving revenue collection to support market function and to lend support to vulnerable groups so that they can participate in food system activities. The council has built strong relationships with multiple actors working towards shaping a sustainable food system, and has requested support in developing an urban food policy.

## City-to-City Food Systems Forum

In April 2018, Arusha joined nine cities from six Eastern and Southern African cities for a City-to-City Food Systems Forum (CtCi). Focused on building capacity, learning and exchanging on city-region food systems, participating cities connected with each other on their shared similarities and

differences. Arusha joined the event having self-identified its most pressing food system issues as being road networks, food system infrastructure, youth and women empowerment, and the need for a dedicated city food policy. As a collective the forum identified seven key food system focus areas for action and intervention:

1. Stakeholder engagement and partnerships
2. Capacity-building, education and skills development
3. Coordination (vertical-horizontal integration)
4. Infrastructure (roads, markets/land, equipment)
5. Governance (management, enforcement)
6. Information (up-to-date data)
7. Funding (internal budget and external sources)

Arusha has been active in many of the above, however, the ultimate objective has always been to tie all of these together by developing and implementing a city-region food system policy – in conjunction with the city's overall master plan.

## City-to-city food system exchange

Phase two of the city exchange aimed to provide in-depth learning. Arusha City Council was partnered with Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo, Madagascar to reflect on the integrated food policy development process that was taking place in Antananarivo (see page 29). The two week-long exchanges, held in late 2018 (12-16 November 2018 to Antananarivo, and 9-14 December 2019 to Arusha) in each city, provided an opportunity for local delegates to visit food system stakeholders working in food production, processing and distribution, as well as sessions for engaged reflection and dialogue.

Despite initial understanding that Antananarivo already had a food policy, this turned out to be not a written document but rather a perspective and a practice by the Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo, in which it acts as a demonstrator of urban agriculture and a facilitator of relationships between food system actors who are contributing to improved food security and environmental sustainability. What is unique about Antananarivo's approach to developing a food policy council is the central role of the Commune in facilitating the council, as opposed to the council being an external advocate for improved food systems. This articulation of 'policy as practice' became a foundational concept throughout the exchanges and when developing a policy process with Arusha.



The exchange delegation, including ICLEI, Arusha City Council and Rikolto East Africa officers visit an agroecological produce market (right). Photo by Paul Currie

The key outcomes of these exchanges were:

- Improved conceptual understanding of Antananarivo's and Arusha's food systems and of the initiatives which each contribute in some manner to food safety, improved nutrition, effective food distribution and economic support of food actors.
- Shared articulation and observation of specific challenges faced in each city, as well as potential ways to address these challenges
- Inspiration from the similarities witnessed between Arusha and Antananarivo, as well as the different approaches taken by each city. While the focus had been on learnings to shape a policy for Arusha, learning went both ways, with Antananarivo finding insight in Arusha's approaches, such as those for revenue collection and waste management.
- A first step towards a stronger relationship between Arusha City Council and Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo.

### Food system values

In framing a policy process with Arusha, the concept of a food policy council remained central. In discussion about how to draw food system actors together in a shared purpose, the Arusha and Antananarivo delegations drafted a set of values for the Arusha food system, to which local food system actors could contribute and commit. The draft value statement for Arusha's food system was jointly conceptualised as a food system that is:

- **Safe** – citizens in Arusha, no matter where they source their food, should be confident that they are receiving food that is safe from pesticide and chemical contamination
- **Nourishing** – no citizen in Arusha should experience malnutrition in any form, least of all our children, who should receive appropriate first 1000-day nutrition and quality food thereafter. Diverse, balanced diets should become familiar and expected features of our food system.
- **Economic** – food production and processing are opportunities for improved employment, particularly for our youth. Our regional food and cuisine should contribute to improved cultural tourism that celebrates the offerings of our city and country.
- **Inclusive** – our food system should ensure that all

The ICLEI-RUAF CITYFOOD network aims to accelerate local and regional government action on sustainable and resilient city-region food systems by combining networking with providing its participants with training, policy guidance and technical expertise. Through the CITYFOOD network, local governments are supported in shaping more sustainable and resilient city-region food systems, with the specific aims of (1) meeting current and future food needs of their populations, (2) integrating vulnerable populations in economic development through food production, processing and retail, (3) aligning environmental management strategies on food, water and energy, and (4) building diverse food systems that are more resilient to climate change and disaster risk.

vulnerable populations, including the elderly, youth, sick, differently-abled or unemployed, are supported so that they have access to good quality food.

- **Improved** through partnering – given the nature of our food system, which crosses multiple functional and political boundaries, we can only build a sustainable food system by partnering with multiple actors across boundaries through a shared vision towards shared success.

Based on the visits in Arusha, and the food system issues prioritised by the delegation, policy priorities were identified. The priorities were then elaborated as policy pathways. The framing of policy pathways fits into the orientation of policy as practice, and may be used as a basis for directing implementation and priority action by Arusha City Council and partner stakeholders, as a step towards building the food policy platform. They were designed with a nexus approach in mind to be fluid and adaptive as new priorities emerge.

Moving forward, Arusha City Council aims to convene food system actors in shaping a food policy council around shared values. These stakeholders would also commit to, and operationalise, the policy pathways.

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# The Prospects for Food Policy Councils in Portugal

**An increasing number of cities are developing their food policy council, yet there are still many countries where this is not happening, or only just beginning. This article describes the development of an active national exchange platform in Portugal.**

According to research done by Johns Hopkins University, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom are the countries with by far the highest number of food policy councils (FPCs) (1). Countries in Europe, such as Germany, also have an increasing number of food policy councils or are in the process of forming them. The specific context and reasons for this early emergence are beyond the scope of this contribution, but part of the explanation is a strong culture of civil society in general and of food movements in particular in these particular countries. A possible explanation can be found in the Eurobarometer “Europeans’ Engagement in Participatory Democracy” (2013), which shows that North European countries have in common a higher participation in non-governmental organisations or associations, compared with Portugal (33 %), which lies below the EU27 average (44 %). The extent to which the allotment garden movement contributed to this has not yet been sufficiently studied. However, we do know that the decades of the 1980s and 90s are of particular interest here, as during this period allotment garden movements were on the decline while food groups were on the rise (2).

*The “Portuguese Non-profit Sector in Comparative Perspective” report (2008) gives an overview of those employed by civil society organisations as a percentage of the economically active population for 38 countries. Interestingly the leading countries, such as the Netherlands, Canada, and Belgium, have more urban agriculture and food groups or movements, while Southern European countries such as Portugal rank well below the average (3).*

Southern European countries, including Portugal, have not fostered food policy councils for historical reasons and because of societal context. This raises the question of how to make food policy councils happen in countries where there is little or no urban agriculture, little tradition of food movements and where members do not participate very actively? The Portuguese initiative of establishing a national platform to share information and best practices among food systems actors is one way to promote food policy councils in urban and peri-urban areas.



Photo by Cecilia Delgado

## Historical perspective

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Portugal was predominantly a rural society with 60 % of the workforce employed in the primary sector (Ferraz, 1975). Portugal’s relatively late industrialisation (partially due the period of dictatorship from 1933 until 1974), as well its neutrality during the Second World War, are part of the reason why formal allotment gardens were not part of municipal policy in the last century. Even Lisbon was surrounded by enough rural and cultivated land to provide food for the relatively few urban residents. However, the slow process of urbanisation began to accelerate in the 1980s, driven by Portugal’s entry to the European Union in 1986. This marks the start of the societal changes and new patterns of consumption in cities that constitute the frame for the expansion of urban agriculture and food systems in Portugal at the beginning of the 21st century, a sector which could be described as emergent today. So far however, no city has started a food policy council, either citizen or government driven.

## Feeding Sustainable Cities

The national platform – Feeding Sustainable Cities (*Alimentar Cidades Sustentáveis*) – started in June 2018. Participation is free, but prospective members have to apply to join. The aim of the group is to disseminate news about relevant events and information and to share best practices among all the actors involved in the Portuguese food system. Before its creation, the lead coordinators carried out several activities, which included group labelling, setting up a discussion forum through the Google Groups platform, and an online survey of members’ priorities and expectations.

The group is dynamic and expanding weekly. It started with roughly 40 members and after 12 months it nearly had 270

members. During this first year over 350 topics were shared by group members. Results from the online survey (November 2018) show that members' priorities are:

1. Sharing national best practices
2. Dissemination of national events
3. Sharing international best practices
4. Extension of the network to other food actors
5. Face-to-face meetings and visits of initiatives
6. Building a resource centre
7. Group promotion via social media
8. Building a glossary
9. Production of online events

In order to develop these activities further a call for volunteers was made. At present nine volunteers are involved, including three coordinators, three women one of whom has a background in academia and NGO work, another in local government, and the third in central government.

*A key accelerator of the city network in Portugal, was when the RUAF Partners met in Lisbon, in April 2018, and facilitated a working session "Urban Agriculture as a component of more resilient food systems" with selected Portuguese municipalities. After a day of sharing information on and experiences of national and international initiatives the willingness to further develop the network started. Barbara Emanuel, RUAF Partner from Toronto Department of Public Health, suggested starting a mailing list. The challenge to further develop the network was taken by the three coordinators mentioned above. A subsequent visit to Toronto in July 2018, and meetings with Lori Stahlbrand and Wayne Roberts, reinforced their understanding of the need to use communication and social media to put food and agriculture into the public agenda.*

Although a relatively new group, Feeding Sustainable Cities can already draw lessons from the on-going Portuguese process:

- The process is facilitated and reinforced by external triggers – the working session with RUAF and Portuguese Municipalities, as well as the visit to Toronto, led to a public commitment to continuing open debate on food and agriculture, fuelled by different voices.
- It needs a lead group to make things happen, plus a community to make sense – with complementary skills and knowledge on the various aspects of what food entails.
- It is hard work – not only logistically, but especially providing the group with new and relevant information. Doing a biweekly best practice file or preparing face-to-face events are additional crucial tasks.
- There is a need to channel financial support and to have a permanent staff in order to ensure long-term continuity; now activities still rely on voluntary work.
- In order to ensure fair representation of actors and sectors a more systematic approach needs to be taken.



RUAF meeting at Fundação Gulbenkian in Lisbon, Portugal (2018).  
Photo by Cecília Delgado

- Breaking the invisible glass wall of limited "member participation" and obtaining exposure, particularly from outside academics, is a continuous challenge for the coordination group. This work is being done through direct email contact, phone calls, or face-to-face meetings, all with the aim of increasing members' confidence and getting them to become more actively involved.

Lessons learned from the Portuguese platform show that food actors are willing to share information, best practices and to be better informed. Hopefully this will lead cities in Portugal to pave their own ways to setting up food policy councils. In the meantime, we would be very interested to know what other cities and countries are doing to fill the gap between informal processes and formalised food policy councils.

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# Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum

Diana Lee-Smith

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**Mazingira Institute founded the Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum (NEFSALF) in 2003. NEFSALF is a platform for public, private and community sectors, as well as a network of urban and periurban farmers. It originated independently of food policy councils elsewhere. But gave rise to similar farmers' networks in other East African urban areas.**

NEFSALF has influenced urban food policy in Nairobi and nationally in Kenya, and continues to do so as an active part of Nairobi City County's efforts to convene a stakeholder forum. Mazingira Institute, a Kenyan NGO, belongs to the RUAF Global Partnership. Useful comparisons with food policy councils elsewhere can be drawn, yet strategies used in a city like Toronto cannot always be usefully adopted wholesale in a city where the vast majority of food is bought and sold in the informal sector at kiosks, by the roadside or over the fence between neighbours. The circumstances are different, yet the basic problem for food planners is the same – reconciling the supply of nutritious food with regulating food safety.

## History

In 1985 Mazingira led a national statistical survey of urban food production in Kenya that showed large numbers of urban households were farming. Mazingira's philosophy as a research and development organisation was always to put research into practice. So when advocacy for policy change bore little fruit, hosting the forum was a logical step; farmers were suffering from lack of support as well as harassment, while trying to feed themselves and others.

After informal meetings with farmers, Mazingira convened a meeting of all players and a model developed of how communities, businesses and government could interact to bring about change. Central government participated, although the City of Nairobi did not. The farmers asked for training, which government extension services agreed to provide. The space was provided by Mazingira and that model continues today, with two courses a year, now focusing mainly on young farmers. Mazingira also provides the food systems input and policy thinking. This worked so well that Nairobi was selected as the pilot for Kenya's National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme in 2006.

Urban farmers in Kisumu, Mombasa and Dar es Salaam copied the model, without any external support, and the latter two organisations survive today. Mombasa's Coast Urban Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum is thriving thanks to collaboration with its county government.



Photo by Mazingira

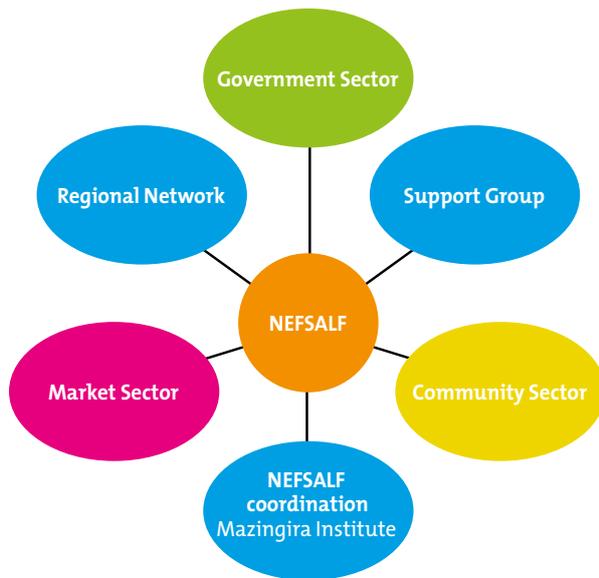
Devolution of agriculture to the counties of Kenya in 2013 was the secret to success at local government level. Central government policy makers had been taking part in NEFSALF meetings and this had fed into efforts to develop a national Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture and Livestock Policy. This failed to get through national top-level decision making in 2010, however. But it influenced the thinking of civil servants.

The policy setback was overtaken by events when Nairobi City County was created in 2013, with a large staff of agriculture, livestock, fish and veterinary experts. Many of these people had been interacting with farmers through the NEFSALF platform and network, as well as through their own extension services. The status of urban farmers was gradually transforming, and in 2015 the Nairobi City County Assembly passed the Urban Agriculture Promotion and Regulation Act, under a policy that guides this law.

## Nairobi City County in the lead

The story now shifts to Nairobi City County as the leader of food policy and consultation in Kenya's capital city, from 2013 to the present, six years later. With support from Mazingira, RUAF and Rooftops Canada, the city held a sensitisation workshop for senior county officials in 2016 and training for its staff and those of related sectors in city government in 2016. The emphasis was on food systems planning, and the role of urban agriculture (according to the Act) within this.

Then in 2017-2018, involvement of food system stakeholders and development of a Nairobi food strategy started, with a



NEFSALF sectoral mix and cooperation map

UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) project Nadhali. Apart from the FAO-led activities, the city itself made strides by renaming the local government sector “Food and Agriculture” and setting up a Food Systems Directorate within the Food and Agriculture Sector.

Nairobi City County Food and Agriculture Sector also continued interacting with NEFSALF and it took new steps to reach out to farmers in low-income informal settlements. The city now provides these farmers with extension support and encouragement. A field day for urban farming took place in late June 2019 in Mathare Valley, a large Nairobi slum. It was led by a youth group trained within NEFSALF, who keep livestock in an area noted for child malnutrition. A point to note is that Nairobi City County is far ahead of most cities in the global North in terms of the size and power of its governmental organisation – 250 professional staff in a sector of local government dedicated to food and agriculture.

The FAO-supported stakeholder forum that grew in 2017-18 did a lot of work on areas of the food system but was not entrenched in local government administration and seemed dependent on the FAO. This was despite the commitment of its members who had formed a core team with strong links to the city. Under a new FAO project 2019-2021, this stakeholder group was renamed Food Liaison Advisory Group (FLAG). Meanwhile the city government has incorporated most of the core team into its sector working group, which advises on budget. Unlike the stakeholder forum, this body is a formal part of local government and only meets when convened by government, which sets its agenda.

### NEFSALF's continued evolution

Following the model created when it was set up, NEFSALF's network members operate independently. They have variously formed “hubs” at different times, to carry out self-organised activities. Mazingira Institute provides a

*The NEFSALF model developed independently of food policy councils. But in 2010-2012 there were exchanges with Toronto Food Policy Council, thanks to project support from Rooftops Canada Foundation. Links have continued with Toronto through their attendance at the training of Nairobi City County employees in 2016 and stakeholder meetings in 2017-18. The Aga Khan Foundation in Nairobi has linked to the University of Fraser Valley in Vancouver, Canada as well, and the current City Food Advisor, a Kenyan seconded to Nairobi by C4o during 2018-19, was trained there.*

space to meet, and advice if needed. The NEFSALF women's hub is the longest-lasting and most successful. It meets monthly and accumulates savings. From that activity, they moved to extending loans, which are managed by the members, all of whom have expanded their enterprises, mostly adding value to food products.

Recently, long-standing members of the NEFSALF network who attend the forum regularly have started a practitioners hub, to counsel younger farmers. Attempts to form a youth hub have not lasted. A sectoral or commodity approach did not last either. A group of rabbit farmers formed a rabbit hub but did not continue formal meetings. Nevertheless, rabbit farming and rabbit meat have taken off in Nairobi, migrating from the informal to the formal sector; a rabbit slaughterhouse has been set up.

The prospects for replicating the organisational model seem good, based on the experience of two other urban farmers' networks so far, but the ability to relate to local government is crucial for the networks, in order to serve members' interests. Mombasa is doing well on this, but Dar es Salaam less so, although they now have some donor support. However, this is a less sustainable path—a policy environment that supports urban farming works better.

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# What's Cooking in Berlin's Food Policy Kitchen?

Dinah Hoffmann  
Oona Morrow  
Christine Pohl

*Meeting of the Ernährungsrat.*

**After years of silence on municipal food policy in Berlin, actors from civil society, academia, industry and the local senate have come together to discuss the current state and future of Berlin's food system, and are developing the city's first urban food strategy. The *Ernährungsrat* Berlin is the citizen-led urban food policy council working towards food democracy and re-localisation in the Berlin-Brandenburg region.**

## The beginning

In 2014, the working group *Stadt & Ernährung* (City & Food) was founded by a small group of people motivated by the lack of urban food policy in Berlin, and the fact that while many residents lack adequate access to good food, feeding this city of 3.5 million has negative impacts worldwide. Together, they set out to work towards a regional food system that works for everyone, consumers and producers alike, without causing irreversible damage to the planet, exploiting resources, or violating human rights.

The working group started to build a network of supporters, leading to a first unofficial *Ernährungsrat* Assembly in May 2015, and regular meetings that laid the groundwork for a civic alliance for food system transformation. From autumn 2015 onwards, a core group of people organised regular assemblies, developed a vision paper defining the goals and principles of the *Ernährungsrat* (1) and a constitution outlining the organisational structure and functioning (2). They also prepared the founding general assembly, where the first election for the speakers' circle took place.

Democratic principles guide the *Ernährungsrat*, which describes itself as an "open movement without official membership", a place where every citizen is welcome who wants to work towards sustainable transformation of the cities' food system.

On 22 April 2016, a little over two years after planting the initial seeds, the *Ernährungsrat Berlin* was formally established. More than 170 people came to the first general assembly meeting to inaugurate the food policy council and lobby for "a sustainable' food and agriculture policy in the region."

## The organisational structure

Early on, agreement was reached that the *Ernährungsrat* was to be a politically independent civil-society led food policy council, autonomous from the city administration and from business interests. The constitution establishes three bodies: 1) the general assembly, 2) the speakers' circle and 3) the working groups (3).

The general assembly is the highest and most public body, and usually meets twice a year, to discuss political demands and agree upon goals. The speakers' circle is made up of 8-14 people who are elected every two years; their task is to follow current debates in food policy, develop the *Ernährungsrat* positions, initiate activities, and take urgent decisions that cannot wait until the next general assembly. The speakers' circle also meets regularly with relevant departments at the city administration and coordinates the search for funding.

1) The German word "zukunftsfähig" is used, which can be translated to either sustainable or viable. The literal translation would be "fit for the future"

Working groups can be established on whatever issues active participants want to deal with, but generally represent the council's priorities. Working groups can work independently from the speakers' circle, but we find that those groups which include speakers and/or a coordinator have functioned better than those without. This is due to the challenges of ensuring long-term commitment and clarity of aims among a shifting group of constituents.

The *Ernährungsrat* began as an open grass-roots movement without formal membership. This lack of a legal status meant that the *Ernährungsrat* could not apply for funding. And it soon became clear that coordinating a movement could not be done with voluntary labour alone. A small non-profit organisation was thus installed to apply for funds that would pay for a coordinator and budget for activities. Participation in the council remains open to everyone.

### Participation and inclusion

The council sees itself as a platform for Berlin's civil society and strives to include the voices of diverse stakeholders in the city's food system. The general assembly is open to anyone who "deals with food", which includes anyone who eats. The *Ernährungsrat* acknowledges that it has been a challenge to recruit artisanal food producers and other small food enterprises, because they often lack time to participate or awareness of the initiative.

The *Ernährungsrat* also struggles with the inclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged groups and minorities. Those attending general assemblies and the membership of the speakers' circle are largely white, middle-class, and with an academic background. The *Ernährungsrat* is actively trying to reach out to groups whose voices are marginalised both in the food system itself and in alliances to transform the food system. They advocate a just food system – one where access to adequate, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food does not depend on income, education, citizenship or ethnicity. For this to become reality, the *Ernährungsrat* believes that the voices of disadvantaged groups need to be included in discussions about food system change, otherwise it is unlikely that an alternative food system will meet their needs.

### Ernährungsrat – outcomes

The work of the still young *Ernährungsrat* in Berlin has led to a number of fruitful outcomes, including the Catalogue of Demands (nine action fields and numerous specific measures for food system change); two community food centres; and the organisation of the Regional Week. In the three years since its formation, the *Ernährungsrat* has become a central contact point for politics and media on Berlin food policy. Together with the Cologne food policy council, they represent the first German-speaking food policy councils and help to inspire others. Across Germany and neighbouring countries, cities and small towns have initiated their own councils or are in the process of doing so. These activities are supported by the *Netzwerk der Ernährungsräte*, a network of German-speaking food policy councils (including Berlin) whose motto is "Food democracy now!"

### Relationship – Berlin Senate and Ernährungsrat

*Despite the very positive developments around food policy in Berlin, the relationship between the Ernährungsrat and the senate remains informal. This differs from other cities, where the food policy council might receive institutional support from the city or be part of the administration. The Ernährungsrat Berlin continues to run primarily on volunteers, without staffing, workspace, or institutional support from the city. The senate recognises and values the much-needed expertise of the Ernährungsrat lobby-group, but there are no formal ties between the two.*

### The local context – green, politicised and entrepreneurial

Berlin is a special place for developing urban food policy. The city has a well-connected food scene and the urban gardening, organic and anti-food waste movements have been active for many years. Furthermore, the capital is a hub for entrepreneurs and an attractive destination for international creatives. Berlin is also the "organic consumer capital" of Europe and boasts 200+ organic shops and supermarkets. The *Ernährungsrat* Berlin grew out these circumstances and aims at bringing together the full range of civil-society and food policy actors who are working for food systems transformation.

Around the same time as the initiation of the *Ernährungsrat* Berlin, the former state secretary for consumer protection signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), committing Berlin to undertake measures for a sustainable food system transformation. As a first act a municipal food council was established, the *Forum für gutes Essen* (Forum for good food). Representatives of the *Ernährungsrat* Berlin attended the events of the Forum as well, but were critical of the lack of transparency, the exclusive membership, and the lack of a clear mission for cross-departmental food system transformation.

In 2016, a new coalition government opened up new possibilities for working together on municipal food policies. The Green Party was voted into the coalition with political champions enthusiastically pushing food policy issues onto the agenda. The coalition agreement includes a clear commitment to collaborate with the *Ernährungsrat* Berlin on developing a food strategy as a first step towards an urban food strategy. In the senate department responsible for justice, consumer protection and anti-discrimination, the Green senator and the state secretary in charge of the subject are on the lookout for and are open to urban food policy proposals. While the work of the *Forum für gutes Essen* tailed off, the collaboration between senate and *Ernährungsrat* Berlin has intensified.

## Challenges and lessons learnt

The insistence on independence seems to cut both ways. Acquiring funding is a major challenge, especially long-term funding instead of the current project-based funding for which annual applications and presentable results are required. But the *Ernährungsrat* Berlin embraces its role of independent watchdog, putting pressure on the government and reminding the senate to comply with their obligations under the MUFPP, as well as promises made in the election campaign and ensuing coalition agreement. Their independence makes them free to advise the senate, but also to criticise approaches and outcomes – even though the majority of their project-funding comes from the senate.

The autonomous and grass-roots structure of the *Ernährungsrat* means that their existence is not dependent on the government coalition in power. In the current political landscape, the *Ernährungsrat* Berlin has been able to use windows of opportunity to put food policy on the agenda. But there is no certainty that the next government will view food policy as favourably. After the next elections in 2021, an independent food policy watchdog might be more needed than ever. While autonomy comes with financial insecurity, the *Ernährungsrat* has opted to diversify their funding sources (e.g. charitable trusts, crowdfunding, private donors), rather than become more institutionalised in the local government.

The challenge of inclusion and representation remains a key concern for the group. To ensure diversity in their structure and the perspectives, the *Ernährungsrat* has conducted direct outreach to marginalised groups and is currently developing an active outreach strategy with a diversity coach. In retrospect, the coordinator of the group says, if she could do all it over again, she would engage a more diverse group of people from the very beginning. Once a homogenous, white, academic core group has established itself to set up a food policy council and define its aims, it becomes more and more challenging to include a diversity of individuals and perspectives. This is a challenge for alternative food movements across the global north (4), where anti-racist strategies are critical for challenging the reproduction of exclusionary white spaces.

Another big challenge for the *Ernährungsrat* is to keep chaos at bay and existing structures effective. The largely voluntary base means that there is regular turnover of active volunteers, working groups are set up but fade out due to lack of regular participation, and time-consuming debates are never finished or – sometimes – repeated a few months after a “final” decision has been taken. One reason the *Ernährungsrat* has so far weathered these challenges is that from the beginning, a coordinator managed contacts and timelines, and kept different working strands together. Furthermore, the *Ernährungsrat* constantly evaluates the different formats to engage participants and regularly adapts them in order to make them more effective and motivating. Only recently for example, a regular “project and campaigns workshop” organised and led by the coordinators was set up, replacing some of the self-organised working groups.

Although the food policy council in Berlin is still very young compared to others in North America, Brazil or England, and insists on their independence from the government, they have already established themselves as a competent partner and actor in the transformation process of Berlin’s food systems. Food democracy, which is at the core of the agenda, stands for a broad inclusion of all, and this is what the *Ernährungsrat* will continue to strive for: to be a representative of the city’s diverse and unique civil society and to make their voices heard.

Previous research on urban food policy councils suggests that the key to “success” is becoming embedded in municipal institutions, thereby gaining secure funding and staff, access to policy makers, and influence across city departments with different priorities (5). However, this is not the path that Berlin is following. Food politics in Berlin will always belong to the grass roots. Municipal-led attempts at food policy in Berlin have largely failed. It will be an agile and resilient organisation that can engage a diversity of stakeholders, weather changes in the political tides, and remain a vital advocate and critical watchdog for civil society. The development and structure of food policy councils should be sensitive to the local context, and value the local knowledge, engagement practices, and passions that are being nurtured in grass-roots spaces. While this generates (at times unwieldy) complexity, we view this complexity as a source of resilience.

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### More info:

- Ernährungsrat Berlin’s webpage: [www.ernaehrungsrat-berlin.de/](http://www.ernaehrungsrat-berlin.de/)
- Senate administration consumer protection webpage: [www.berlin.de/sen/verbraucherschutz/](http://www.berlin.de/sen/verbraucherschutz/)

# The case of Castel del Giudice, Italy

**The Mayor of Castel de Giudice initiated a food policy process as part of a strategy to halt depopulation and promote economic development in this small community. Now the municipality is seeking to enlarge the scope of its food policy council by cooperating with its neighbours to adopt a city region food systems approach.**

Castel del Giudice is one of the smallest municipalities in Molise Region (Italy) and is a typical example of the social and economic marginality of the area. Since he was elected in 2014, the mayor has undertaken a number of initiatives to halt the dramatic rate of depopulation that is affecting not only the village, but also other towns and villages of the region. The territory of the Municipality, has been classified as an 'internal area' according to the definition set by the Italian Strategy on Inner Areas<sup>1</sup>. This national strategy aims to improve the quality of life and economic wellbeing of people living in areas characterised by small towns and villages with restricted access to essential services.

## Food and the territory

Food is one of main assets of the territory, typical products being olive oil, apples, cheeses and traditional meals. However, neither these products, nor the agricultural landscape that accompanies them and the ecosystem services linked to it have ever been valorised. Because of the lack of institutional initiative by the disadvantaged territories and their lack of confidence in economic recovery, these resources had never been integrated into a logic of local development and territorial attractiveness, either by the local population or representatives of the "slow" and sustainable tourism movement interested in pure and pristine areas, such as Castel del Giudice. Furthermore, typical problems related to food in large cities (e.g., access to quality food, urbanisation of agricultural areas, length and complexity of supply chains) did not concern the municipality of Castel del Giudice, or indeed other municipalities located in 'internal' and mountainous areas.

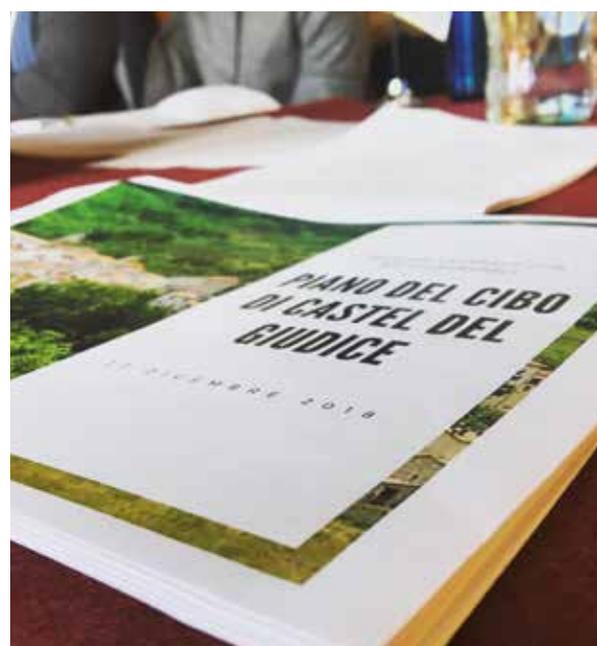
Sensing the potential of local development linked to the promotion of a sustainable food system, the Municipality decided to develop a food policy (*Piano del Cibo*) at the municipal level. Supported by researchers from the University of Molise it started in September 2018, and has already produced some outputs in terms of governance and

dissemination of the food policy principles among the population and stakeholders.

## The process

The steps for the adoption of the food plan by the Municipality of Castel del Giudice and its implementation were agreed together with the working group of the University of Molise and were programmed as follows:

- three meetings with local stakeholders, identified by the Municipality, in order to get to know about the territory, its needs and potential, and gather information on the local agro-food system;
- presentation and sharing with the stakeholders of the draft of the food policy of Castel del Giudice;
- resolution adopting the food policy by the Municipal Council of Castel del Giudice;
- the establishment of a food policy council as a governance structure for the implementation and monitoring of the food policy;
- prioritisation of the specific objectives (macro and micro);
- formulation of a project form for each of the actions, listing indications for the operational development of the actions: resources and pre-conditions, implementation timing, financial requirements and possible sources of funding, priorities with respect to the whole set of actions, expected impacts, output indicators, synergies and feedback between the various actions;
- identification of economic, social and technical partners;
- implementation of the priority objectives.



Draft document of the local food policy. Photo by Ancy Kollamparambil

<sup>1</sup>) The classification of Inner Area is set by parameters based on access to healthcare, education and transportation services. More information on the link: [www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/1.2%20Promoting%20Growth.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/1.2%20Promoting%20Growth.pdf)



Castel del Giudice, Molise. Photo by Ancy Kollamparambil

The food policy for Castel del Giudice was set together with stakeholders, and the mayor was present during all the sessions. Several drafts of the document were circulated among the group, and at the beginning of March 2019, the final version was approved by the Municipal Council. Briefly, the food policy contains four main lines of action, for a total of 17 projects: from social agriculture to short food supply chains, from the valorisation of typical products to sustainable and slow tourism, from food district to environmental measures.

### Lessons

The food policy council is the result of an initiative by a particularly innovative mayor. In the village there were no bottom-up associative movements that pushed for a more sustainable food system. Yet, supported by a preliminary analysis, the administration has decided to invest on food as a lever of local development and way of improving the attractiveness of the territory.

The experience of Castel del Giudice is an example of how university action at the local level can be fundamental to animating the territory and making innovations that a small municipality may not have the resources to do independently. The meetings of the food council in the small municipality highlighted for instance, the need to adapt and “translate” the academic language related to the fast growing and specialist literature on food policies into concepts and actions understandable to the local population. This aspect is important to ensure that the food policy council does not appear as a top-down initiative, but rather an attempt to listen to citizens on a subject that concerns them in everyday life and which, potentially, can revitalise the territory economically and socially.

One of the objectives is now to extend the scope of the food policy and the food policy council to cover a wider territory than the municipality. The flows of material and immaterial resources related to food have a wide-scale effect, and for this reason it is important that the food policy encompasses

rural, per-urban and urban territories in an integrated way. The mayor of Castel del Giudice, together with the university, is working towards involving other neighbouring municipalities through direct discussions and proposals for applying EU Rural Development projects at a wide scale. This is necessary to create synergies in terms of the effectiveness of some actions, such as the organic districts, the food and wine routes, the recovery of abandoned land, and the promotion of short food supply chains.

At the same time, it still seems to be a complex challenge to communicate the medium to long-term benefits of a territorial food policy to local administrators, who are often involved in emergencies and are held back by their scepticism, whether cultural or ideological. Until 1963, the Province of Isernia (to which Castel del Giudice belongs) was part of the same administrative region that includes the neighbouring provinces to the north of the village. Speaking with local stakeholders, we had the feeling that the connections between the provinces provide a possible and realistic opportunity, despite the fact that they are now administratively separated in two different regions. Nevertheless, parochial sentiments and sense of pride still prevent this union from happening. Yet, our experience revealed that, if properly and adequately explained, the benefits of a food policy and the importance of a food council are understood and welcomed as paramount tools for improving the capacity of the territory to attract people, investments and resources.

An agreement between Castel del Giudice and the surrounding provinces could reach a population of around 800,000 people and, therefore, have an impact on a much wider socio-ecological system than the municipality alone. In this context, investing in food districts, local development, sustainable tourism and other topics, is the key to creating a path towards the formulation of an inter-regional policy that covers a territory large enough to allow a significant change in the trend of demographic development.

Even though Castel del Giudice represents a quite isolated case in the region, the intention is to join the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact as soon as the actions have started. Furthermore, the authors are promoters of the Italian Network on Local Food Policies. Castel del Giudice is one of the most recent entries in the network and it represents a pioneering experience in the Centre-South area of Italy, which has the potential to change people’s perceptions about food in marginal and inner areas.

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For further information on the Italian Network on Local Food Policies, see the publication *Food & Cities* (p. 86).  
[www.barillacfn.com/media/material/food\\_cities.pdf](http://www.barillacfn.com/media/material/food_cities.pdf)

# How the Rio Local Food Policy Council is Implementing a National Policy on Food Security

Juliana M. Tângari

**The Food Policy Council of the City of Rio de Janeiro – Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional do Município do Rio de Janeiro (“CONSEA-Rio”) was established by the municipal government of Rio in 2003 through a decree enacted by the mayor, following a recommendation by the federal government. At that time the new national political strategy to fight hunger – Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) – had just started, along with a national appeal to start organising food policy councils in the cities and states of Brazil.**

CONSEA-Rio underwent many changes during the period from its creation in 2003 to its full regulation by municipal decree in 2013. The main goal, which had been promoted by Brazilian social movements since the beginning of the 1990s, was to assure food security through participative policymaking. Originally under the Municipal Department for Social Welfare, CONSEA-Rio gained some independence concerning staff and office facilities. Initially the council had been made up of an equal number of government and civil society representatives, but civil society members came to be in majority and hold the chair position five years later. The initial agenda focused on fighting hunger and food insecurity, and later this was broadened to cover several other food policy issues, including healthy diets and urban agriculture. However, it was not until 2018 that a municipal law was passed that consolidated the council's existence and its powers (3).

Since 2008, one third of CONSEA-Rio's 24 members are appointed by the municipality and the other two thirds are civil society representatives, chosen through a democratic process for a two-year term. At the beginning of each term, civil society members elect one of themselves to chair the council. Members receive no remuneration of any kind. CONSEA-Rio acts autonomously as far its agenda making and decision-making processes are concerned, but has no formal power to make the municipal government carry out its actions. CONSEA-Rio has the authority to request information and data within the public administration and to invite municipal officials to its meetings.

The council's activities are partially funded by the City hall, which provides a 3-staff-member secretariat, rooms for meetings, a web page (4) within the City hall's website, and a limited budget to support two activities: an annual event around the world food day called *Semana da Alimentação Carioca* (“Rio Food Week”), and an open conference every four years to set the council's agenda for the following years. Because the budget is very tight, CONSEA-Rio often has to ask its members and partners for in-kind contributions to support its activities.

*Brazil's federal law on food and nutrition security, LOSAN, requires that food policy should be developed within a governance structure. Cities and states that do not have this structure have difficulty obtaining federal funding for food programmes. LOSAN has 4 main features:*

- *a food policy council (with a majority of civil society representatives) for policy control and policy advice, whose agenda should be guided by:*
- *regular conferences (every 4 years) on food and nutrition security to work as a forum for civil society debates;*
- *a multidisciplinary agency of policymakers for food policy (usually the same ones that represent government on the food policy council);*
- *a comprehensive and coherent 4-year strategy, written by the food policy agency, and based on guidelines set by the food council.*

Until now, Rio has complied only with the first two features. In 2018, a municipal decree authorised the creation of the food policy agency, but so far no steps have been taken to actually establish it so that it is able to develop a comprehensive food policy strategy.

## School feeding programme

One of the main areas of CONSEA-Rio's work is to oversee food policies and programmes, such as the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE). In all Brazilian public schools – whether federal, state or municipal – school meals are free of charge and mostly funded by federal government. Since 2009, PNAE rules that Municipalities and States must spend at least 30 % of the federal cash they receive on purchasing food directly from family farmers, preferably local ones (the PNAE family farmers policy). The policy rationale is well known: a fixed and guaranteed market is a tool to support



CONSEA-Rio National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) meeting in CAMPO GRANDE.

local farmers, and eventually improve local food production (food for feeding people, not food for commodities or energy use). As a consequence, general access to affordable and fresh food should increase, which helps to ensure local food security.

Budgets are high (5) and the 30 % rule is mandatory. Cities and states that do not comply risk losing their entire federal funding for school feeding. Nonetheless, its enforcement depends very much on local governments' drive and officials' support of the rule. Hence, a proactive food policy council can potentially play a decisive role, especially when local farmers representatives hold a seat on it.

Putting a top-down policy into action is not an easy task. To be effective, the policy requires easy procurement procedures that take into account the local family farmers' forms of production and their limited access to the market: prices should not be squeezed, as usually done in ordinary procurement procedures. Knowledge of food seasonality is essential for designing food menus. And special attention is required to ensure widespread public notice of the procurement procedure with a generous deadline for the submission of proposals. Furthermore, in places where farmers' cooperatives are less structured, local governments (especially in big cities) must understand the asymmetry of information and organisation between family farmers and food wholesalers.

Experience has shown that this lack of understanding is a major challenge. It is necessary to really engage numerous actors throughout the process, including education officials, farmers' cooperatives, family farming assistance and general extension agencies, small business support agencies, social movements, academic departments and civil society organisations working on family and local farming issues, and even the department on school feeding at the Ministry of National Education. Otherwise, it will always be easier to benefit from a legal waiver (PNAE Act, art. 14, §2º, II), and allege "impossibility of regular and sustained supply".

In the case of Rio, this process took some time: from 2009 to 2016 not one single banana consumed in municipal public schools was supplied directly by family farmers, local or otherwise. The food supplied to more than 1,500 schools, comprising more than 640,000 students, came from five or six food wholesalers. Due to financial control reasons, food procurement for school feeding is completely centralised under the city's education department. Public schools in Rio are not allowed to purchase food independently. And tenders to supply food are for large amounts of food to be delivered to several schools, which represents a huge logistic challenge.

In addition, Rio's government has given little attention to supporting urban and peri-urban agriculture. The municipality has a gardening programme, *Hortas Cariocas*, which supports around 40 gardens in low-income communities and in some municipal public schools (6), but it pays virtually no attention to the farmers in Rio's west zone (7). The 2011 city plan includes no recognised rural areas, and considers 100 % of the municipal territory to be urban. As such it ignores small-scale farmers and indicates that urban farming and food production within the city are not on the main municipal policy agenda. This is one of the main reasons that Rio's urban farmers fail to obtain the document for family farming issued by the national government (*Documento de Aptidão ao Programa Nacional da Agricultura Familiar – DAP*). And by law, only documented family farmers can benefit from the PNAE family farmers policy.

The truth is that Rio's public officials were aware of the PNAE family farmers policy but were not enthusiastic about it. From 2009 to 2016, there was a firmly held belief that either no local food producers were able to meet municipal schools' food demand within the required logistics, or local producers were not able to comply with Rio's regulation on food safety. Changing that vision and gaining empathy from public officials involved a herculean task.

First, urban and family farmers organisations have held two seats (8) on the CONSEA-Rio council since 2011, and have led



*PNAE meeting in Prosecutor's Office.*

the discussion on Rio's failure to comply with PNAE. Second, consumers' movements (9) and nutrition & health institutions/agencies are also council members, and they have helped to advance the agenda of urban agriculture as a tool for food security. The PNAE family farmers policy has been debated at several meetings and conferences of the food council since 2010, making it one of its top priorities, especially between 2014 and 2016, when a local farmer from the west zone chaired the council.

Towards the end of 2010, CONSEA-Rio and civil society organisations started to map urban agriculture and food education initiatives in Rio, discussing the results in five workshops held in 2011. From 2012 to 2016, Rio Food Week themes were about the opportunities and challenges faced by family farmers wanting to supply food to schools in Rio. The emphasis was always on trying to raise awareness of the policy's importance rather than just seeking sanctions.

Finally, in 2016, CONSEA-Rio turned to the public prosecutor in charge of investigating the causes of Rio's default on this law since 2012, seeking and offering help. The stronger power of the public prosecutor combined with the knowledge of the food council turned out to be a good recipe. The investigation procedure included meetings in which the prosecutor interviewed officials from the education and procurement municipal offices, to assess whether or not the municipality was in breach of the law. Since the beginning of 2017, other voices have also been included: the two family farmers organisations that are members of CONSEA-Rio; the state agency for agricultural technical support; the municipal accounting office; the municipal controlling office; the department for sanitary safety & food safety at the municipal health office; the municipal agency for nutrition and health; and CONSEA-Rio.

It was agreed that a first step that needed to be taken was for CONSEA-Rio to conduct farmers meetings, and that these should take place at the local farmers associations located in Rio's west zone with Rio's officials attending to show government willingness to change. In parallel, CONSEA-Rio articulated directly with the state of Rio de Janeiro branch of the national agency for family farming assistance to set up similar open meetings to discuss DAP for urban farmers, which started in June 2017 and lasted until July 2018, and were attended by several municipal, state and national stakeholders. These would probably have culminated in a review of the regulation on urban family farming, if it had not been for the unfortunate closure of state branches of

this agency by the current federal government in January 2019.

However, by the end of 2017, the municipal education office had published the first call for food through which family farmers could sell directly to the education office, either individually or through cooperative organisations. Food procurement remained centralised through the education office, but quantities and delivery could be adjusted to a specific school or group of schools. Food safety requirements that were designed for wholesalers were adjusted to fit in with family farmers' reality. The food call included all items produced locally, especially in the horticulture sector. Prices are indexed by a public food price index, which is assumed to be trustworthy and is updated every two weeks. Organic products can command up to 30 % higher prices. However, it is still unclear whether the price setting and the delivery method are really going to work.

Local procurement of produce for school food is work in progress and the objectives are far from being accomplished. The small number of local farmers regularly registered and the lack of municipal support for urban food production are big issues that still need to be addressed. Full compliance by Rio's education department (achieving the 30 % purchase share determined by law) has still not been achieved, while other difficulties regarding bureaucratic requirements, delivery logistics and deadlines are yet to come. But the achievements so far represent a great success and underline the importance of the efforts and mediation of the food policy council.

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#### Notes

1. Instituto Comida do Amanhã ([comidadoamanha.org](http://comidadoamanha.org)) is a Brazilian think-tank organisation on urban food systems.
2. Rede Ecológica ([redeecologicario.org](http://redeecologicario.org)) is a Brazilian agroecological social movement.
3. In the Brazilian legal system, a decree is an executive rule, thus weaker than a law, which is a rule enacted by the legislative power. It is not unusual for decrees to be revoked at each government change; it is more difficult for laws to be changed or revoked, and they thus tend to last longer.
4. [www.prefeitura.rio/web/conseario](http://www.prefeitura.rio/web/conseario)
5. In 2017, Rio de Janeiro municipality received more than BRL 75 million (around US\$ 20 million) as a federal cash transfer for school feeding ([www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae/pnae-consultas/pnae-dados-da-agricultura-familiar](http://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae/pnae-consultas/pnae-dados-da-agricultura-familiar)).
6. [www.rio.rj.gov.br/web/smac/hortas-cariocas](http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/web/smac/hortas-cariocas)
7. Rio is much larger than its well-known postcards show. Nearly half of its 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> – known as the west zone – is almost a "city within the city". A lot of rural areas (farms and forest) resisted urbanisation for decades despite the real estate speculation going on. See Fernandez, Annelise Caetano Fraga. *Eu vivo da natureza: resistência e conversão agroecológica de produtores na cidade do Rio de Janeiro*. REDD–Revista Espaço de Diálogo e Desconexão 8 (2), 2014.
8. Those seats were, and still are, occupied by Rede Carioca de Agricultura Urbana– Rede CAU and UNACOOP.
9. This seat was and still is occupied by Rede Ecológica.

# Strengthening an Alpine-Mediterranean Food System in the Mountains of South Tyrol

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**The Food Policy Council South Tyrol (FPCST) was founded in October 2017 as an outcome of an earlier publicly funded civil society project aimed at strengthening the local food system and serves as a central structure for food policy matters in the province. In the coming years, off-shoot FPCs are expected to form in major towns, to tackle locally pertinent issues.**

South Tyrol is an autonomous province of Italy, located on the border with Austria and with a population of about 520,000 people. Around 62 % of them speak German as a first language, 24 % Italian, 4 % Ladino and 10 % other languages. The two largest cities are Bolzano with approximately 110,000 residents and Merano with about 41,000 residents. Local agriculture is dominated by apple orchards, in which roughly 10 % of all apples consumed in Europe are grown, along with milk and wine.

FPCST operates at the provincial level, covering the whole area of South Tyrol because of the relatively small population. In the future, separate food policy councils might be established in the major towns of South Tyrol such as Bozen-Bolzano, Meran-Merano, Brixen-Bressanone, Bruneck-Brunico and potentially Sterzing-Vipiteno.

FPCST is composed of 16 members with professional backgrounds in education, research, gastronomy, agriculture, distribution, cooperatives, nutritional advice, public relations and NGOs. It operates as a working group and has no formal organisational structure. Once a year, it elects from its members a woman and man who represent the council in public. Council members meet every six to eight weeks at the Free University of Bolzano to organise the council's activities. At the moment, there is no public funding and expenses such as website fees are paid through private contributions from its members. Future sources of money that may be secured are public funds in the form of financial support granted by governments at the provincial or municipality levels. Other options are donations from private organisations and citizens, crowdfunding or other fundraising campaigns.

**10 Values of FPCST:** Community - Pleasure - Justice - Health - Participation - Sustainability - Transparency - Environmental protection - Responsibility - Diversity

FPCST's main tasks are:

- participating in policy dialogue with legislative and executive policy organs, where FPCST serves as the voice of local civil society regarding food and nutrition issues;
- conducting public education and information campaigns on food and nutrition topics;
- coordinating activities and initiatives of local organisations and institutions related to food and nutrition.

FPCST's main activities for 2019 are in the areas of health, leisure and food culture, and community catering. The council is organising a recipe award for the pulse-based dish most likely to be adopted in local household cooking. And a conference at the local university has been organised to discuss new solutions to better align community catering with user needs and sustainability requirements. Toward the end of the year, the first South Tyrolean Sustainable Food System Award will be presented. It will publicly acknowledge and highlight the outstanding contribution of an individual or an organisation to the improvement of the local food or nutrition situation.

Future activities include regional circular economy initiatives, and awareness raising on issues related to global markets, biodiversity, urban gardening and edible cities. Once FPCST is fully established, it needs to connect to similar initiatives in the region and to integrate into the European and global networks of existing food policy councils. Such groupings have emerged in the neighbouring cities of Innsbruck, Munich and Milan. They all should collaborate and exchange experiences and know-how in order to create synergies. FPCST also plans to join the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact initiative.

The council's major challenges are achieving social and political acceptance and relevance in the local policy making system. As a civil-society body that has not been publicly elected or appointed, it has to find its place in the public institutional spectrum, based on demonstrated competence, earned trust and achieved work results. Moreover, as with other volunteer initiatives and social movements, maintaining momentum depends very much on individual contributions, energy and time commitments. The local food system urgently needs improving in many ways. Whether FPCST can make a difference remains to be seen.

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## The St Louis Food Policy Coalition:

# For a thriving, equitable, sustainable and local food system

Melissa Vatterott

**St Louis, Missouri is home to approximately 308,000 people, with an additional 2.5 million individuals calling the Metro area home. St Louis is situated in the middle of the United States' heartland, which has long been regarded as one of the main centres of agricultural production and trade.**

Although St Louis remains surrounded by an agriculturally dominated landscape, it has changed substantially over the past century. In 1925, the acreage of table crops (fruits and vegetables for human consumption) grown in the state was 50 % more than today. Despite the abundance of cropland (around 9.9 million acres) in the St Louis Regional Foodshed, over 7.5 million acres are now devoted to growing corn and soybeans for grain, and 9.3 million acres, or 94 % of the region's total cropland are used to grow "food system" crops (commodities processed into foods or as food sources for livestock feed). Strikingly, less than 0.01 % of the cropland within a 100-mile radius of St Louis is used to grow table crops.

Given the current regional food system, it is no surprise that disparities abound in the food environment across the St Louis region. Currently, over 700,000 people in the Metro St Louis region are "low income, have low food access, and live more than half a km. from the nearest supermarket", with more than half of them living in the city (56 %), and 25 % in St Louis County. Furthermore, the City of St Louis and much of the region is markedly racially segregated, with many of the black population residing in the northern parts of the city and county and in the western portion of St Clair County in Illinois. Unmistakably, food access is a racial equity issue in our region, with the majority of black residents having lower incomes, lower vehicle access, and lower access to supermarkets than white residents.



*Logo for the new certification programme for environmentally-responsible farms*

Leading up to and, poignantly, following the fatal police-related shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, many organisations, engaged citizens and elected officials have realised the importance of addressing the institutionalised and systemic racism facing our region and have taken great strides to address these concerns collaboratively. Members of the St Louis Food Policy Coalition and other allies have taken this to heart and are seeking to remove barriers to food production and to establish new food enterprises in areas of limited food access as one way to combat racial inequity in the region.

### St Louis Food Policy Coalition

The St Louis Food Policy Coalition (STLFPC) was formalised in September 2015 after 9 months of outreach and assessment of the food system needs in our region, following the publication of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment's St Louis Regional Food Study. STLFPC has grown from 13 official members to 31 in just a little over three years. Most members are non-profit organisations but there are also a couple of businesses and a few individual members. STLFPC is housed within an environmental advocacy organisation, Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE), making it well positioned to receive support from staff who conduct effective advocacy for policy change. In addition, housing STLFPC within MCE provides a focus on environmental stewardship and environmental justice, which makes it stand out among other councils and coalitions across the United States.

STLFPC has three primary focus areas: 1) removing barriers to urban agriculture 2) increasing access to local, nutritious food, and 3) supporting environmentally responsible farmers within 150 miles of St Louis. Each of these focus areas has work groups that meet as needed. For example, the farmer-focused work group meets twice a month, while members of the urban agriculture work group meet mostly one-on-one with the MCE Food and Farm Director to advance a challenging strategy that allows permanent ownership of land for food production. The entire coalition, including official members and allies, meets quarterly. All are welcome to join to receive updates on the efforts of our three work groups, share important updates about their respective organisation, and network.

### Funding

MCE, as the backbone organisation of STLFPC, received a two-year grant that supported general advocacy related to health equity from a local private foundation. This allowed MCE's Food and Farm Director to spend most of her time on



*Hart Beet Farm in Eolia, Missouri, one of the environmentally-responsible farms in Known & Grown. Photo by Missouri Coalition for the Environment's*

outreach, coordinating work group meetings, and executing most of the work groups' action items between meetings. During this initial two-year period most STLFPC members provided input and feedback on the action items that needed to be moved forward in the work groups and helped recruit new members. During the same period, MCE also secured a federal government grant to hire a full-time person to support the farmer-focused work group specifically and funding to hire an AmeriCorps VISTA – a year-long volunteer – to support the food access work group specifically. This allowed for significantly increased efficiency in executing the strategies of those work groups. At the end of the two-year advocacy grant, the private foundation funded a one-year extension of that grant, allowing the work to continue. After the AmeriCorps VISTA's year of service, another private foundation in St Louis committed to funding a full-time position at MCE to continue the community-led food access work.

The ability to secure private and public grants to hire staff dedicated to moving the STLFPC initiatives forward has significantly increased STLFPC's impact and success. Over the last three years, MCE has also seen STLFPC members step into leadership roles on various initiatives, helping to shift and spread the workload from MCE staff to the broader coalition.

STLFPC and MCE have struggled to secure funding for these projects, as they are affected by the funding priorities for regional infrastructure needs and the execution of long-term projects. This has led to a slower pace for some of the systemic changes identified in the local food system of the St Louis region.

### Work to date and the future

#### *Urban agriculture and livestock*

Over the past three years, STLFPC has been successful in advancing policy change related to urban agriculture in the City of St Louis through the City's Board of Aldermen as a way to improve food access for low income residents and to spur economic opportunity in the city through urban farming.

#### *Food access and community engagement*

Recognising that STLFPC needs community input on our strategies to improve food access, and mindful of the racial makeup of the food access work group compared to the communities with limited food access, MCE conducted a year of community engagement across North St Louis City and North St Louis County to hear from residents about their food environment. The results of this engagement, including the community-backed strategies that came out of the project, are explained in MCE's North St. Louis Listening Session Report, which was published in May 2018.

Currently, the STLFPC food access work group is planning to launch a pilot of a retail audit initiative in partnership with a local university researcher to determine where our community food markets are best suited to expand, and where we can work with existing corner stores to increase the availability and variety of fresh foods.

*After a study by STLFPC, MCE Food and Farm Director and interns conducted a citywide survey in 2016 to learn what agricultural activities residents would like or would not like to see in their neighbourhoods. Based on this survey, which revealed that residents welcomed urban agriculture, including more animals, into their neighbourhoods, and that there is a need for land, a new bill was passed in 2017 on numbers of livestock. In addition, the zoning administrator, defined "home garden," "community garden," and "urban farm" and indicated that the sale of eggs, honey and produce from these spaces is permitted as long as certain requirements are met regarding stand size, placement and frequency of operation. The zoning administrator brought this draft policy memorandum to the building commissioner, who agreed and issued the policy memorandum to permit the measures under his authority. Currently STLFPC is working to figure out how to address the land ownership desire identified in the 2016 survey. MCE hired a 2019 Food and Farm VISTA volunteer to assist with the large task of convincing our local land bank to develop a process where they can sell some of their parcels at an affordable price for food production.*



*Urban Ag Day at the St. Louis Science Center.*  
Photo by Missouri Coalition for the Environment's

### *Food justice*

After the release of the Listening Session Report, STLFPC realised it needed a space for residents to engage and inform STLFPC's work on a consistent basis. As a result, MCE hired a new food justice organiser who was tasked to establish the Food Equity Advisory Board (FEAB). FEAB is a 12-person board made up of community champions from North St Louis City, North St Louis County, and East St Louis in St Clair County, Illinois, who are committed to advancing food justice. FEAB members meet monthly on Saturday mornings in a community meeting space setting. In contrast to STLFPC's quarterly meeting times that occur during workday hours, it was critical to find a time that worked for FEAB members, who all have their own full-time jobs, families and other responsibilities to work around. FEAB works to carry forward the community-informed strategies from the Listening Session Report as well as initiatives/projects they have identified in the community as needing increased support. FEAB members are welcome to attend any STLFPC events and the food justice organiser ensures that FEAB has the opportunity to weigh in and provide input on the work of STLFPC to ensure the projects that are moving forward are really the most effective and needed to support food justice.

### *Farm infrastructure and food hub*

Shortly after the establishment of STLFPC, the farmer-focused work group began talking with farmers about their needs to grow their farm business and reach new markets. It became clear that a central aggregation and distribution point (a "food hub") would be valuable for the region's farmers and would facilitate greater local food sourcing for area schools, universities, restaurants, supermarkets and other institutional buyers. In 2017, MCE hired a new local food coordinator to conduct the detailed analysis needed to

determine which institutions and farmers would get on board with a food hub and how that food hub would need to function to be successful for all parties. STLFPC believed this work was important in order to support environmentally responsible farmers in the St Louis region and to build up the local food economy. Through regular farm visits, semi-annual regional farmer meetings, and additional surveying, three immediate needs became apparent that need to be addressed prior to the brick and mortar food hub being built: development of a communication platform for farmers to communicate about sharing resources and best practices, support to increase coordination between farmers so they can distribute their products more efficiently distribute into St Louis, and identification of existing processing kitchens that could be better utilised to save farm produce from perishing and getting that produce into the hands of smaller institutional buyers.

MCE and the farmer-focused work group will continue to move forward the three immediate needs identified by farmers, while seeking funding to develop needed resources, and working toward the establishment of a brick and mortar food hub in the next five years, after learning from these immediately needed resources.

In addition to better delivery, distribution and processing of produce, farmers indicated early on the need for support with marketing. As a result, STLFPC established a committee to develop a regional certification for farmers who use environmentally responsible, humane and safe practices. This certification was launched in the summer of 2019.

The priorities of STLFPC have been community informed and stakeholder led from the very beginning. MCE has been very fortunate to hire staff who can lead these initiatives forward at a pace that other FPCs may not be able to do with only volunteer committee or work group chair support. We are also fortunate that foundations in the region have recognised the importance of supporting our food system, making it possible for MCE to hire staff and receive federal grants with matching funds from private foundations. Over time, STLFPC members have increased or decreased their involvement depending on their other commitments and the status of the work group initiatives. However, we have always been able to find a core group of members who will regularly meet to keep efforts moving forward.

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#### **Notes**

- MCE's Food Access Story Map [www.moenvironment.org/northstlfood](http://www.moenvironment.org/northstlfood).
- Publication of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment's St Louis Regional Food Study. [www.moenvironment.org/stlfoodshed](http://www.moenvironment.org/stlfoodshed)
- MCE's North St. Louis Listening Session Report [www.moenvironment.org/listeningsessionreport2018](http://www.moenvironment.org/listeningsessionreport2018).

# A city-regional strategic food partnership

Rebecca St. Clair  
Adrian Morley

**This article documents the development of a cross-sectoral food partnership called Good Food Greater Manchester, which aims to act as an umbrella organisation to support and enhance sustainable food activities of the ten metropolitan boroughs of Greater Manchester (UK) while raising the profile of sustainable food across the city-region.**

In Greater Manchester, sustainable food has not played a prominent role in political discourse until relatively recently. Its absence is notable in the Greater Manchester Strategy, *Our People Our Place*, which was refreshed in 2017 following the establishment of a new directly elected mayor for the region. The strategy sets out ambitions for the future development of Greater Manchester around ten key themes but makes no mention of sustainable food at all. Food is referenced only twice, both times in relation to the food and drink manufacturing sector and its role in the local industrial strategy. This reflects a tendency to view food through an economic lens, which may inhibit our ability to take a more holistic approach to food policy that considers other areas of our lives such as health, well-being, social justice and community.



Greater Manchester Strategy, "Our People, Our Place". GMCA 2017

Good Food Greater Manchester was established to move sustainable food up the political agenda and to stimulate a strategic and coordinated plan to address food system issues at the city-regional level. The cross-sectoral partnership has been in existence since 2014 following the publication of an essay written by two of the founding members, Debbie Ellen and Lucy Danger, presenting the case for sustainable food as an important and crosscutting issue that requires strategic leadership across Greater Manchester.

The name of the partnership was decided through a consultation event with a local communications agency and a 'soft' launch event was held in 2016.

Membership of Good Food Greater Manchester currently includes representation from academia, the public sector, private consultancies, and the voluntary and community sector; however there are currently no agreed rules surrounding formal membership procedures<sup>1</sup>. There are no paid roles – for example, the secretary is a voluntary position held by a PhD researcher at the University of Salford and the interim chair is a research fellow who is based at Manchester Metropolitan University, where the meetings are generally held once every two months. The partnership is not an incorporated entity and governance processes, constitution and funding are presently under review by the board.

## Other city regional food boards in UK

The development of Good Food Greater Manchester as a city-regional food board has raised a number of questions surrounding the processes that shape the structure, function and governance of partnerships representing an area wider than city or town. Sustainable Food Cities (1), which provides guidance for a national network of food partnerships from cities and towns across the UK, also supports a small number of partnerships that represent regions, counties and metropolitan areas. Members of the network that cover these larger constituencies include Good Food Leicestershire, Good Food East Midlands, and the London Food Board.

Good Food Leicestershire is housed entirely within Leicestershire County Council, and key support is offered to two particularly active cross-sectoral groups located in two districts within the county (Harborough and Melton). Leicestershire County Council has employed a paid member of staff who is responsible for coordinating and delivering this work and supporting the district groups in the development of their food plans. Good Food East Midlands is led by Public Health England (East Midlands) but has an open network of members and is not housed within a local or regional authority. The network provides opportunities for information exchange and the sharing of best practices across the region through workshops and newsletters. The London Food Board is a high-level strategic board that uses

<sup>1</sup> Specifically, members of the partnership represent Manchester Metropolitan University, Salford University, Sheffield University, the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance, Oldham Council, Tameside Council, Manchester City Council, Sustainable Food Cities, Bolton at Home (GM Housing Providers), the Kindling Trust, Foodsync, Green Futures, EMERGE and FareShare Greater Manchester

its expertise to support the development of the London Food Strategy in an advisory capacity and members are appointed through a competitive recruitment process. Although membership of the London Food Board is not open to the public, there is an associated subgroup called the Boroughs Food Group that is open to any organisation or individual from across the whole of Greater London. The Boroughs Food Group is coordinated by a food policy team based within the Greater London Authority and meetings are held at City Hall. All three food groups have contrasting priorities, resources and structures, suggesting that there is no one-size-fits-all model of governance or membership composition for regional strategic food partnerships.

### Official endorsement

Since the establishment of Good Food Greater Manchester, a number of developments have taken place in the city-region's political context that have helped to shape the evolution of the partnership. During the last two years alone, the mayor of Greater Manchester has hosted two Green Summits (2), which summoned a wide range of

expertise to explore pathways towards a carbon neutral city-region. In 2018, the first of the two Mayoral Green Summits brought together recommendations from a large number of themed consultation events and resulted in the official endorsement of Good Food Greater Manchester. The 2018 summit was followed by the publication of Greater Manchester's Springboard to a Green City Region (3), which named Good Food Greater Manchester as the strategic Food Board for Greater Manchester.

Following its official endorsement, Good Food Greater Manchester has been working with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (GMHSCP) to move the sustainable food agenda forward. The two partnerships commissioned a strategic review of the food landscape in Greater Manchester, which was completed in 2019. The review gathered information from 47 interviews with individuals from a variety of sectors about their existing work, their priorities for action, their capacity to act, relationships with other stakeholders, opportunities and barriers to success and perspectives on governance. The key

## Further reading

### The Importance of Food Policy Councils

Olivier De Schutter (former UN special rapporteur on the right to food, and co-chair of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems) discusses the importance of food policy councils and acknowledges how food policy councils in North America have influenced and inspired the growth of food councils in Europe. De Schutter was at the Frankfurt Congress on Food Councils in November 2018. [www.youtube.be/xaErWSW1ReM](http://www.youtube.be/xaErWSW1ReM)

### Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs: A preliminary analysis of how Canadian cities and regional districts are involved in food system change (2013)

A review and analysis of the work of 64 diverse local and regional municipalities working to improve the food system in Canada, using a mix of municipal policies, programmes and civil-society interventions. [www.tfpc.to/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Report-May30-FINAL.pdf](http://www.tfpc.to/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Report-May30-FINAL.pdf)

### Designing Urban Food Policies - Concepts and Approaches (2019)

Published within the Urban Agriculture Book Series edited by Joe Nasr, Christine Aubry and Eric Duchemin. The book can be downloaded free of charge from. [www.link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-030-13958-2](http://www.link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-030-13958-2)

### Making the case and measuring progress: Towards a systems approach to healthy and sustainable food

A draft toolbox to measure success and make the case for local sustainable food programmes, developed by the UK Sustainable Food Cities Network. The tool is intended to help city governments and communities drive change in the food system at a time of austerity. [www.sustainablefoodcities.org/Portals/4/Documents/SFC%20indicators%20ofinal%20draft%20for%20website.pdf](http://www.sustainablefoodcities.org/Portals/4/Documents/SFC%20indicators%20ofinal%20draft%20for%20website.pdf)

### Los Consejos Alimentarios: Una herramienta municipalista para la transformación del sistema alimentario

(Food Councils: A municipal tool for the transformation of the food system). Guide to food policy councils in Spanish by Ana Moragues-Faus. [www.soberaniaalimentaria.info/images/estudios/consejos-alimentarios-moragues-final-web.pdf](http://www.soberaniaalimentaria.info/images/estudios/consejos-alimentarios-moragues-final-web.pdf)

### Sustainable Food Cities: Getting the Basics Right

An overview of the process of setting up a food partnership and developing a food action plan as well as the process for applying for membership of the UK Sustainable Food Cities Network. The guide is for newly emerging food partnerships and those that have been dormant or operating at reduced capacity for a while and are now being reinvigorated. [www.sustainablefoodcities.org/getstarted/gettingthebasicsright/faq.html](http://www.sustainablefoodcities.org/getstarted/gettingthebasicsright/faq.html)

### Multi-stakeholder partnerships to finance and improve food security and nutrition in the framework of the 2030 Agenda

Report of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, prepared to inform debates at the 45th United Nations Committee on Food Security Plenary Session in October 2018. The report acknowledges the growing importance of multi-stakeholder partners in food governance at different scales, as well as the controversies. In particular, it includes a chapter on the internal conditions and external environment that could help to improve multi-stakeholder partnerships' contribution to food and nutrition security. [www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/hlpe/hlpe\\_documents/HLPE\\_Reports/HLPE-Report-13\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_Reports/HLPE-Report-13_EN.pdf)

### Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned (2009)

Although now a decade old, this assessment was an extensive review of experiences of food policy councils in North America over three decades. [www.foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/DR21-Food-Policy-Councils-Lessons-Learned-.pdf](http://www.foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/DR21-Food-Policy-Councils-Lessons-Learned-.pdf)

findings emphasised the importance of collaboration in the food system and the need for senior policy leadership at the regional level. A sustainable food strategy document for the region was recommended as a way to account for the crosscutting nature of food and ensure that policy agendas align. The proposed next steps from the strategic review are based around the need to organise a leadership and governance process, to include food policy at a strategic level of governance and to organise an event, such as a food summit. The review also highlighted the need for paid staff to coordinate the next steps and to support the development of a 5-year action plan. The partnership aims to address these issues over the coming months through continued collaboration with the GMHSCP.

It is clear that setting up food partnerships can be a lengthy, time-consuming and convoluted process that depends on the goodwill and availability of its members and frequently scant resources. Until funding is secured, Good Food Greater Manchester relies on the continued dedication and enthusiasm of visionary activists, like Lucy and Debbie

mentioned earlier. The recognition and support that Good Food Greater Manchester has received reflects the hard work that has been put into its development and it is well placed to build upon this strong foundation to support sustainable food across the city region.

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2. [www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/green-summit/](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/green-summit/)
3. [www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1317/springboard-report.pdf](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1317/springboard-report.pdf)

**State of the research: An annotated bibliography on existing, emerging, and needed research on food policy groups (2017)**  
[www.foodpolicynetworks.org/food-policy-resources/?resource=938](http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/food-policy-resources/?resource=938)

**The Food Policy Council Self-Assessment Tool: Development, Testing, and Results (2017)**

Measures concepts such as leadership, inclusiveness of council climate, knowledge sharing, member empowerment, and synergy. It can be used to establish a baseline of council function and measure change over time, particularly before and after capacity-building initiatives. [www.assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod\\_clfResource/doc/Food%20Policy%20Council%20Self%20Assessment%20Tool\\_Calancie%202017.pdf](http://www.assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod_clfResource/doc/Food%20Policy%20Council%20Self%20Assessment%20Tool_Calancie%202017.pdf) [article] and [www.unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5u1BKmm1AqKWaN](http://www.unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5u1BKmm1AqKWaN) [tool]

**Get it Together**

This toolkit was developed for any food system group that works (or aspires to work) on policy issues. It can be used to evaluate current performance or learn more about the process of working on food policy using a stakeholder model. If a group wants to gain a better understanding of what the policy process entails but has not worked on policy issues, the toolkit can be used as a guide to aid discussions. [www.jhsph.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6qYZ6idMhnru1BD](http://www.jhsph.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6qYZ6idMhnru1BD)

**Food policy audit tool**

Developed to assist in the food planning process and piloted in a graduate urban and environmental planning course at the University of Virginia. Phase one of the audit consisted of 113 yes-or-no research questions regarding the existence of food-based policy relating to public health, economic development, environmental impacts, social equity, and land conservation; phase two confirmed the validity of phase one's results through a series of stakeholder meetings, which also gave insight into the success of policies and initiatives currently

in place, community attitudes and perceptions, and community priorities for moving forward. [www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/118](http://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/118) [article] and [www.assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod\\_clfResource/doc/Audit\\_Tool\\_10.pdf](http://www.assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod_clfResource/doc/Audit_Tool_10.pdf) [tool]

**Changing the food system takes more than change: Stories of Funding Food Policy Councils (2018)**

Stories from seven FPCs in North America about how they have sought funds to support their work. Also highlights key issues and struggles that FPCs continually face due to changes in funder priorities or grant availability. [www.foodpolicynetworks.org/food-policy-resources/?resource=1301](http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/food-policy-resources/?resource=1301)

**Got Money? Making the Case for Funding Food Policy Councils (2018) webinar**

A virtual roundtable conversation about how to express the value of your work and make the case for support for your food policy council. Hear about why healthcare foundations, private foundations, and public charities are supporting food policy councils. Learn from the experiences of peer FPCs about how to talk about the impact of your work. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpU4TjJPS\\_g&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpU4TjJPS_g&feature=youtu.be)

**Funding Food Policy Councils: Lessons from the Field (2015)**

Webinar: Two funders and a food policy council coordinator talk about how to overcome funding challenges. It examines how policy and advocacy fit into a foundation's mission; indicators of financial sustainability that funders want; and steps to develop and maintain relationships with funders. Learn how one council has worked with funders and attracted support. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvhBl1HPRg&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvhBl1HPRg&feature=youtu.be)

**Funding Food Policy Councils: Stories from the Field (2015)**

How six city, county, and state FPCs have funded their efforts. [www.assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod\\_clfResource/doc/FundingFPCsStoriesfromtheField\\_6-12-15.pdf](http://www.assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod_clfResource/doc/FundingFPCsStoriesfromtheField_6-12-15.pdf)



Empowering changemakers in Tanzania. Photo by Rikolto

#### UA Magazine

*Urban Agriculture Magazine* (UA Magazine) is produced by the RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems, in close collaboration with strategic partners on particular topics addressed in each magazine.

UA Magazine is published twice a year on the RUAF website ([www.ruaf.org](http://www.ruaf.org)).

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

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 and periurban 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](http://www.ruaf.org)).

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- Toronto Food Policy Council (Canada)
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## Upcoming issue: Gender in Urban Food Systems (early 2020)

This issue is a joint effort of the RUAF Global Partnership and the CGIAR research programme on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE)

Gender in the food system has been largely neglected by city officials, economic planners and development practitioners. Adding a gender dimension does not mean considering only women, as men can face inequalities in areas such as educational attainment, dropout rates, criminal activities, violence, and employment. Rather, it shows where certain inequities are present within a city, and considers how to improve the situation for all urban residents. Gender equality is one of the Sustainable Development Goals that cities are striving to achieve through partnership in global networks.

RUAF strives to apply a gender lens in its work and has developed tools and guidelines to bring women into the mainstream of urban food value chains and urban agriculture.

Share your experience and resources or interviews, visual stories, videos or infographics in relation to the following issues:

- Assessment of women's and men's roles, gender inequality, gender-related barriers to participation in urban food value chains, and the opportunities for promoting equality;
- Access to resources, such as land, labour, water finance;
- Gender issues in designing and implementing a new policy or intervention;
- Systematic participatory methodologies in diagnosis, decision making, etc.;
- Gender in the food systems of societies with restrictive social and cultural norms, weak government commitment or capacity to promote transformation;
- Intersectional approaches to gender and the food system that include race, class, ability, etc. as an axis for analysis
- Examples of transformative approaches to gender in urban agriculture and food systems

For more information please contact us at [info@ruaf.org](mailto:info@ruaf.org).