



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



City Region Food Systems

Building sustainable and resilient city regions



:: Why should cities actively engage in food and nutrition security?

Cities and towns around the world continue to grow at different rates and increasingly bear the costs of food and nutrition insecurity. Cities often view themselves as having a limited role in ensuring access by all their inhabitants to sufficient, adequate, affordable, nutritious and safe food. Factors that limit their access include volatility and rapid increases in food prices, disruption in food supply due to natural disasters, and climate change effects.

International Initiatives and Declarations

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.

Milan is coordinating the process of developing an Urban Food Policy Pact, engaging 40 cities worldwide in building food systems based on the principles of sustainability and social justice.

City Region Food Systems (CRFS)

Knowledge platform.

A multi-stakeholder collaborative partnership on CRFS launched a Call for Action to increase awareness of the value and importance of city region food systems [CRFS]; develop and exchange knowledge on how to protect, support and further develop CRFS; and catalyse further action.

Seoul Declaration.

In April 2015, 96 mayors signed the Seoul Declaration that calls on cities and other stakeholders to “encourage sustainable urban food production projects and resilient city region food system programmes”.

Cities can build more sustainable food systems to prevent and reduce food wastes, provide decent livelihood opportunities for rural, peri-urban and urban producers, promote sustainable ways of food production, processing and marketing; and ensure food and nutrition security for all consumers and value chain actors.

Food system policy and planning has not been the main focus of cities. However, cities and metropolitan governments are increasingly and actively taking part in local, national and international dialogues on food systems and the future of urban and nutrition security.

:: Why should cities look beyond their own administrative boundaries?

The food system of any city is a hybrid – it combines different means of food provisioning and consumption. Some cities mainly rely on urban, peri-urban and nearby rural farms and food processors, while others depend mostly on food produced and processed in other countries or continents. **Food systems link rural and urban communities** within a country, across regions and sometimes between continents. Consequently, cities and urban food supply systems play an important role in shaping their surrounding and more distant rural areas. Land use, food production, environmental management, transport and distribution, marketing, consumption and water management are of concern in both urban and rural areas.

A city region food system (CRFS) approach provides a critical lens for analysis while supporting on-the-ground policy transformation and implementation. Working at city region level can leverage the complexity of rural-urban linkages to a practical level by making food the common denominator. This implies that broader issues (i.e. human rights, climate change and resilience) can be addressed in a more focused manner.

Improved city region food systems will help achieve better economic, social and environmental conditions in both urban and nearby rural areas.

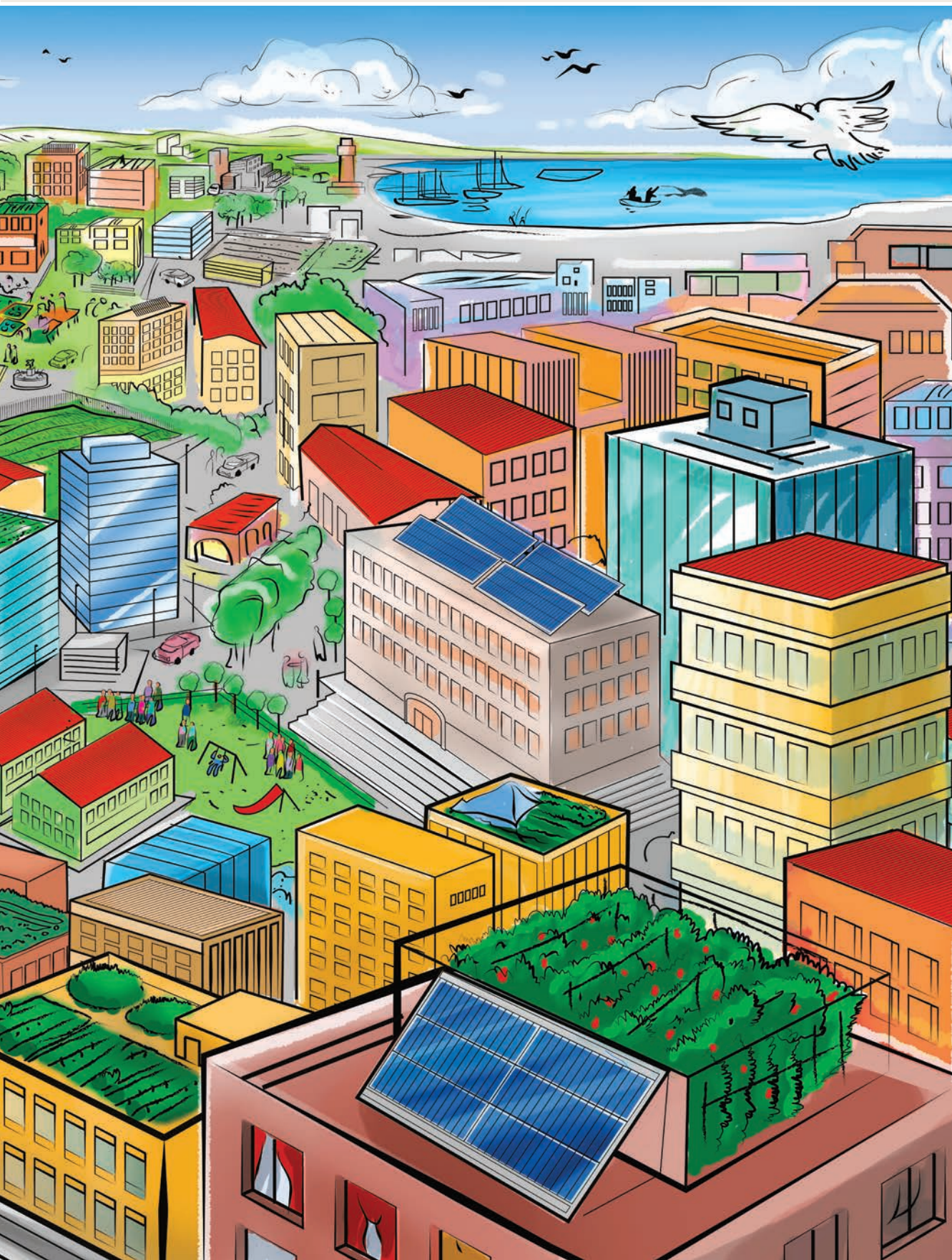
- Access to affordable and nutritious traded foods from local and regional producers will improve consumer food security and nutrition and will enhance transparency in the food chain.
- Access to markets and support to alternative markets (i.e. farmers' markets, community supported agriculture) will improve livelihoods of both small-scale and larger scale producers.
- Local and regional food hubs and shorter value chains, and more broadly, efficient and functioning agricultural supply chains that link hinterland producers to market systems, can contribute to sustainable diets, reduce food waste along the chain and stabilise livelihoods in distribution, processing and manufacture of food and fibre products.
- Water, nutrients and energy can be resourced, recovered and reused in agricultural production.
- Participatory governance structures are created to include stakeholders from multiple sectors from both urban and rural areas.



Food systems link



rural and urban communities



:: What does an ideal sustainable and resilient city region food systems include?

An ideal sustainable and resilient city region food system:

- Increases access to food. Both rural and urban residents have access to sufficient, nutritious, safe and affordable food. It supports a local food culture and sense of identity.
- Generates decent jobs and income. It provides a vibrant and sustainable food economy with fair and decent jobs and income opportunities for small-scale producers and businesses involved in food production, processing, wholesale and retail marketing, and other related sectors (such as input supply, training and services) in rural, peri-urban and urban areas.
- Increases resilience. It aims to increase resilience against shocks and lessen the dependence on distant supply sources.
- Fosters rural-urban linkages. It connects food, nutrient and resource flows across urban and rural areas (i.e. the use of urban organic wastes and wastewater as resources in the urban agro-food system) and prevents/reduces food wastes. It harnesses more integrated urban-rural relations, strengthens social relations between consumer and producers, and promotes the inclusiveness of smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups across the supply chain.
- Promotes ecosystem and natural resources management. It promotes agro-ecological diversity and protects urban ecology/ecosystems. The ecological footprint of the urban food system is minimised from production to consumption, and it lowers greenhouse gas emission in food transport, processing, packaging and waste management.
- Supports participatory governance. It fosters food policy and appropriate regulations in the context of urban and territorial planning. It also fosters transparency and ownership of the food chain.

:: How can city regions improve their food systems?

A growing number of cities/city regions have already realised the importance of their food system and their responsibility towards it. The development of a resilient city region food system requires political will, the use of available policy and planning instruments [infrastructure and logistics, public procurement, licences, land use planning], the involvement of different government departments and jurisdictions [local and provincial], and new organisational structures at different scales [municipal, district etc.].

Integrated city region food strategies cross different policy domains. One of the key challenges is to organise the administrative and political responsibility to implement an urban food strategy.

Cities around the world are responding with different options. These vary from creating a municipal department of food, designating the planning department responsible for food, or establishing a food policy council.

Food Policy Councils

Belo Horizonte, Brazil. In 1993, the Secretariat for Nutrition and Food Security was established to carry out programmes aimed at providing access to food and increasing agricultural production within the city and its surrounding rural areas. The programmes [i.e. free food distributions, school meals, subsidized food sales and the regulation of prices in food markets] are guided by a Council for Food Security, representing municipal, state and federal governments, labour unions, food producers and distributors, consumer groups and other NGOs.

Source: World Future Council, 2009

Toronto, Canada. In 1991, the Toronto Food Policy Council was established to advise on food policy issues. The TFPC advises on emerging food issues, promotes food system innovations and facilitates food policy development. It connects people from a diverse range of sectors to develop innovative policies and projects, and provides a forum for action across the food system.

Source: www.tfpc.to

:: Why carry out a city region food system assessment?

Each city region is unique. It has its own specific characteristics, challenges and solutions. It is important that city regions assess their food dependencies, identify weaknesses and potential pressure points, and where possible, develop targeted strategies to improve their food systems.

The CRFS approach provides an opportunity for city regions to engage with other cities and international organisations to map and assess their own food system and to plan specific interventions that address local key issues and needs.



For more information:

**FAO's Food for Cities Programme:
Building food secure and resilient city regions**

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