



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**Our world is urbanizing**

**Is food on your agenda?**





**Today, cities are growing exponentially, changing our world beyond recognition.**

If well managed, urbanization can provide plenty of opportunities for urban and rural dwellers: provide jobs, improve livelihoods, reduce inequality and decrease vulnerability to climate shocks. Well planned cities can also increase food security and counteract all forms of malnutrition.

But what happens when rapid urbanization outpaces a city's ability to cope? A city can reach for unsustainable compromises that quickly degrade the natural resources (soil, forests and water) of the surrounding areas, while jeopardising food security and nutrition. Many households in urban areas spend a substantial part of their food basket on cheap, energy-dense or nutrient-poor food and face sanitation conditions that are less than ideal.

Further affecting their health is when people do not have access to green public spaces or the possibility to be physically active. As a result, many may suffer from obesity and other diet-related non-communicable diseases.

Whatever the challenges urbanization poses to food and food systems, each challenge needs to be addressed as part of a holistic approach. A piecemeal approach may relieve some of the symptoms but hardly ever create a lasting change.

**Urbanization** affects every aspect of our food systems, from the way food is produced, to the way it is processed, packaged, transported, marketed and consumed, to how food waste is handled and recycled.

## DID YOU KNOW?



**Half** of the world's **population** resides within or in proximity to small cities and towns



**828** million people live in slums



The world has **31 megacities** with over 10 million inhabitants – megacities are projected to surpass 40 by 2030, 60 percent of the world's **population** will live in urban areas, and by 2050, 70 percent of people will live in urban areas. 90 percent of the increase will be in Asia and Africa



The **footprint** of the city (the number of square kilometres it covers) **will grow** at an even faster rate than the city population.



By 2050, demand for **water** and **energy** will **increase** by 55 percent



Today, **cities** occupy **3 percent** of the **Earth's** surface, but consume 78 percent of energy and emit 60 percent of carbon dioxide



Food systems emit 19-29 percent of the **Earth's** **greenhouse gases** – mostly linked to urban food markets that consume 70 percent of national food supply









# Local governments at the forefront of development

As cities grow, local governments need to keep food and good nutrition high on their agenda, forge new partnerships and mainstream food across traditional sectors. These strategic decisions are essential to assure basic services such as food, water, energy or shelter to all.

How well do local governments' assess and integrate food systems for healthy diets in urban

“Successful urbanization begins with a systems approach”

planning and practices? Do local government policies consider how food is produced and how food production affects the value chain and the health of citizens? To what extent do policies and strategies reflect the fact that improved waste management can also contribute to food security?

**These are some of the areas where FAO can help.**

## FAO FRAMEWORK FOR THE URBAN FOOD AGENDA GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Rural-urban synergies - Space matters
2. Social inclusion and equality - Leave no one behind
3. Resilience and sustainability - Safeguard the future
4. Food system (inter) connections - Integrated perspective matters

# Our work with local governments: some examples

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■ **A systems-approach:** From overall assessments that identify 'hot spots' in food systems, to planning, to mobilizing resources, to implementation, FAO helps governments achieve food security and good nutrition by reinforcing urban-rural linkages and ensuring that sustainable food systems are integrated in a city's urban development.

Local governments in **Nairobi** and **Lima** recognize food insecurity and malnutrition as an urban challenge, particularly in slum areas. Since 2016, FAO has been supporting both cities on food systems planning, shifting from a sectorial approach (focusing just on urban agriculture) to one that is systemic and involves multiple stakeholders. The establishment of multi-stakeholder advisory groups (food governance mechanism) and the identification of "hotspots" have led to an on-going development of the Food Systems Strategy and Action Plan in both cities. Lima has already established a composting centre for one of the central retail markets, and has begun sharing its experience on food systems planning with other cities in the country. In Nairobi, FAO is also facilitating the city-to-city exchange with **Toronto** officials for a more solid development of the food systems planning and policy processes.





■ **A neutral broker to facilitate dialogue:** FAO helps to connect local governments with ministries and across government levels to improve the quality of public services in the cities and the rural landscape around them.

The Sri Lankan government set up a dedicated ministry to implement Megapolis, a large-scale, multibillion-dollar urban development initiative in Western Province, where **Colombo** is located. Thanks to FAO's support, food has become key in broad multi-sectoral planning across urban-rural areas. Once the plans are acted upon, it will reinforce the sustainability of local food systems, generate employment, improve urban and peri-urban farming, and develop shorter value chains, while safeguarding the territory's natural environment.

■ **Linking cities to exchange best practices and concerns:** FAO supports local governments through South-South Cooperation, including city-to-city collaboration and web platforms. To reach out to as many local governments as possible, FAO partners with specialized food and urbanization agencies and local government networks such as C40 Cities, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), United Regions Organization (Oru Fogar), the RUAF Foundation, and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, along with various governmental agencies. Together, we have set up the Urban Food Actions platform where food systems' practitioners share best practices and inspire each other in designing the sustainable urban food systems of tomorrow.

In Cabo Verde, FAO is supporting four cities to boost their economies and urban food systems. The cities of **Espargos, Mindelo, Praia, and Porto Novo** turned to FAO for support in drafting their urban and peri-urban agriculture and forestry municipal master plans. These plans will be carried out in 2018. FAO has trained municipal technical officers, extension workers and farmers to contribute to greener cities and improve food security and nutrition. Likewise, micro-gardens have been developed in Praia, as part of a City-to-City Cooperation initiative with the cities of **Dakar** and **Douala**.

# FAO at the helm of the sustainable food systems approach

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FAO is trusted by governments ranging from the highest level to local municipalities. We provide guidance on how to take a food systems approach in developing their overarching urban development plans. We also offer technical expertise to local governments on the entire food system. With 70 years of experience of working on food systems, FAO is uniquely placed to help cities transition to sustainable food systems and prepare them for a thriving future.

“Policies, plans and actions that guarantee people’s human right to adequate food and freedom from hunger must be interwoven in the urban development agenda”

To respond to increasing demand, FAO has established an *urban taskforce* that is helping local governments and cities around the planet to integrate food security and nutrition objectives into their wider national and international sustainability strategies.

To learn more about FAO’s approach visit <http://www.fao.org/urban-food-actions/en/>.

## How to work with FAO

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The range of services that FAO offers can be tailored to suit a city’s unique set of needs. From supporting a local government’s mandate to providing public services, to planning, to capacity building, to resource mobilization and local economic development, FAO is here to help.

To find out how to work together, contact your FAO representative in your country:  
**[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)**

## SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO DELIVER



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