

Private Sector Mechanism

Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation – V0 draft of the HLPE-FSN

PSM Comments – January 25, 2024

Introduction

PSM thanks the HLPE-FSN for the V0 draft Report on strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation and for the opportunity to share its views on the draft.

Guiding Questions

- 1. The V0 draft introduces a conceptual framework informed by key principles established in previous HLPE-FSN reports (HLPE, 2017; HLPE, 2020).**
 - i. Do you find the proposed framework effective to highlight and discuss the key issues concerning urban and peri-urban food systems?**
 - ii. Is this a useful conceptual framework to provide practical guidance for policymakers?**
 - iii. Can you offer suggestions for examples to illustrate and facilitate the operationalization of the conceptual framework to address issues relevant for FSN?**

Response:

The report effectively highlights the profound impact of urbanization on food security and nutrition, emphasizing the increasing urban population, especially in developing countries. This comprehensive approach provides a valuable foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities in urban and peri-urban food systems. It is a long overdue discussion and assessment of how urban and peri-urban agriculture can significantly contribute to food and nutrition security and will help to demonstrate how we accomplish multiple SDG's through these innovative collaborations. It is a useful conceptual framework for policy makers new to the subject and issue areas, however there should be greater emphasis in the language and descriptive overview of the opportunities and threats. Focusing on examples of already successful agricultural collaborations taking place across the urban and peri-urban landscapes will help readers visualize the impacts of edible landscapes at all scales and dimensions.

Some additional areas to be covered are:

a) Demographic Shift and Pressures on Food Systems

The report should explicitly address the impact of growing youth migration to urban areas, recognizing it as a pivotal demographic shift. Comprehensive coverage of the issue should encompass the implications of this migration on urban and peri-urban food systems, emphasizing the need for strategies to meet the heightened demand for food in urban areas in the context of limited urban agricultural land. Moreover,

heightened demand in urban areas also results in a reduced ability in rural areas to meet such increases.

b) Inequalities and Vulnerabilities in Urban Food Systems

While the report rightly emphasizes inequalities between physical access in urban food systems, additional attention should be given to the vulnerabilities exacerbated by lack of transportation, basic service access, inadequate housing, and land disparities, especially in urban slums and peripheral areas. The report should provide insights into how these factors contribute to the fragility of urban food systems, particularly in disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

c) Resilience to Climate Change and Sustainable Practices

The report should delve deeper into strategies required for urban and peri-urban food systems to build resilience to climate change impacts. This includes a comprehensive exploration of sustainable urban agriculture practices, with specific recommendations for initiatives such as providing land access, composting facilities, education to residents for local food production and access to renewable low-cost energy. Further, the report should address how urban agriculture can support biodiversity as an important aspect of climate resilience.

d) Circular Economy Principles and Collaborative Initiatives

Policymakers should be urged to advocate for resource efficiency through integrated solutions that reduce waste and energy consumption. As per the FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda, optimized supply chains and circular bioeconomy contribute to a reduction of food losses and waste in urban centers. The report should provide concrete examples of circular economy principles within urban and peri-urban food systems and recommendations for fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

e) Water Management and Waste Reduction Strategies

A more detailed examination of strategies balancing urban water needs with agriculture is essential. The report should include specific recommendations for efficient water management in urban and peri-urban areas. Furthermore, a comprehensive exploration of food waste reduction strategies, recycling, and resource reuse should be provided to address both environmental and economic concerns.

f) Governance, Policies, and the Food-Energy-Water Nexus Approach

The report should emphasize the significance of effective governance, regulations, and policies in addressing urban and peri-urban food system challenges. A specific recommendation is to elaborate on the practical implementation of the "Food-Energy-Water Nexus" approach, providing policymakers with actionable insights to make informed decisions.

g) Incentives, Monitoring, and Data Collection

Policymakers must play a proactive role in fostering collaboration and incentivizing sustainable practices. The report should provide specific recommendations for policymakers, such as strategically locating urban food hubs to reduce transportation energy consumption, promoting water-efficient farming practices, and providing financial incentives or grants for businesses and individuals adopting sustainable

practices. Robust data collection and monitoring systems should be emphasized for evidence-based policy decisions.

- 2. The report adopts the broader definition of food security (proposed by the HLPE-FSN in 2020), which includes six dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization, stability, agency and sustainability.**
 - i. Does the V0 draft cover sufficiently the implications of this broader definition in urban and peri-urban food systems?**

Response:

The report provides an in-depth exploration of urban and peri-urban food security and nutrition and contributes to the understanding of urban and peri-urban food systems by offering a comprehensive definition. The broader definition of urban and peri-urban food systems acknowledges the intricate factors influencing food production, distribution, and consumption in urban areas, this expanded perspective brings several implications by encompassing physical aspects like agriculture and logistics and considering social, economic, and environmental dimensions. It underscores the need for holistic and interdisciplinary approaches to address the challenges of urban food systems, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and adaptive governance. Moreover, it recognizes the potential for innovation and the development of resilient, sustainable, and inclusive urban food systems that can improve food security, reduce environmental impacts, and enhance the overall well-being of urban populations.

However, the report's definition needs to refer to farmers who actually produce the food whether on a roof top, a vacant lot or inside a re-configured sea container.

- 3. Are the trends/variables/elements identified in the draft report the key ones to strengthen urban and peri-urban food systems? If not, which other elements should be considered?**
 - i. Are there any other issues concerning urban and peri-urban food systems that have not been sufficiently covered in the draft report?**
 - ii. Are topics under- or over-represented in relation to their importance?**

Response:

There are excellent and far ranging parts of the draft report which cover many of the difficulties of producing, processing and selling food in an urban environment. These go a long way towards exposing some of the weaknesses and chronic problems inherent in city after city. It is good to note that the report demonstrates that there can be no one size fits all system for these transformational suggestions. The experience of the COVID19 pandemic and the multistakeholder collaboration which ensued to get food to those in need, can be used to illustrate some of what is going right with urban and peri-urban agriculture and rural agriculture and our food system and where there are vulnerabilities and significant areas of improvement for greater resilience. Showcase examples of industry adaptation and innovation under crisis.

The need for critical infrastructure for growing crops and livestock was not well covered. Water, soil, energy, cooling, cold storage, transportation pest control, and skilled labor, these are vital for perishable fruit and vegetable production at any scale.

Additionally, there is a limited discussion on urban governance power. The report acknowledges the paradox of cities having significant impact on food systems while simultaneously holding limited direct power over them. Expanding on this aspect, including specific examples or case studies, could provide more practical insights into how urban governance can effectively influence food systems despite these limitations.

While the report addresses the positive impacts of urbanization, it tends to generalize these benefits. A more nuanced discussion acknowledging the variable impacts of urbanization across different regions and contexts, especially the disparities between developed and developing countries, would provide a more balanced perspective.

Considering the increasing impact of climate change on food security and agriculture, the report could place greater emphasis on how urban and peri-urban food systems are affected by and can adapt to climate change. This includes discussing strategies for resilience in the face of extreme weather events, changes in crop yields, and shifts in agricultural zones, which are crucial for future-proofing urban food systems.

While urban and peri urban food systems have the potential to provide local communities with access to local food production and strengthens local economies by supporting family farmers and other local businesses, one of the biggest challenges is space and land use for production. In this regard, it is important that the HLPE report address the need for creative use of public spaces. This can include the acceleration of the safe conversion of land use from non-agricultural to agricultural purposes, for example by making the land use histories of urban spaces publicly available and making soil testing resources more easily accessible. Additionally, there should be clear legal frameworks for the use and transfer of vacant lots and public land for agriculture and investments in the unique needs of urban agriculture, including sustained soil remediation and improvement processes.

On the issue of taxation, taxing or subsidizing a single food or ingredients may not lead to an improvement in diets, since people can increase consumption of other similarly less nutritious items. It is important to fill the research gap on the impact of taxes and subsidies. All policies should be research and evidence-based. Food choices are generally not very sensitive to price changes, and food choices have many available substitutes which are not controlled for dietary impact (e.g., consumers may avoid a high-sodium packaged food because of a tax but choose to eat high-sodium food from a street vendor, with no impact on improving health).

The FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda demonstrates how the framework's guiding principles; rural- urban synergies, social inclusion and equity, resilience and sustainability, food systems interconnections, contribute to all 17 SDGs. the linkages between the SDGs and urban and peri urban food systems should be more clearly articulated.

- 4. Is there additional quantitative or qualitative data that should be included?**
 - i. Are there other references, publications, or traditional or different kind of knowledges, which should be considered?**

Response:

Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach. One key element for inclusion is how to empower local communities to participate in food production and decision-making. Support community-based organizations, cooperatives, and urban farming initiatives.

The good recommendations in the report speak to the need for an accessible catalog of all the best practices and innovative collaborations taking place around the world.

5. **Are there any redundant facts or statements that could be eliminated from the V0 draft?**

6. **Could you suggest case studies and success stories from countries that were able to strengthen urban and peri-urban food systems? In particular, the HLPE-FSN would seek contributions on:**
 - a. **evidence-based examples of successful interventions in urban and peri-urban food systems with the principles behind what made the process work;**
 - b. **efforts made to enhance agency in urban and peri-urban food systems;**
 - c. **efforts made to enhance the right to food in urban and peri-urban settings;**
 - d. **examples of circular economy and urban and peri-urban food system and climate change adaptation and mitigation, preferably beyond issues of production; and**
 - e. **examples of national and local government collaboration on urban and peri-urban food systems.**

Response:

Farm to Family Food Box projects; Farm to Food Bank projects; Edible Landscape projects at all schools and universities; Farm Academies for newly arrived immigrants with agricultural background; Veterans to Farmers projects; Youth Farm projects from FFA to 4-H and international equivalents.

Multiple agency collaboration and budget contributions that achieve multiple benefits from environment, health, hands-on education, cultural sharing and training; waste to energy; climate resilience.

Getting food from the farm to the table and all the support and infrastructure needed to accomplish that day after day is a challenge and the report should address how to build resilience in the form of infrastructure from food safety to invasive pests/species protocols. Looking at new interventions and innovations from the top down and from the bottom up that can receive funding streams from unusual partners and collaborators and cross agency investment in annual budgets could be examined as ways to address these challenges.

There are several case studies and success stories from countries around the world that have successfully strengthened their urban and peri-urban food systems. These examples showcase various approaches and strategies that can serve as inspiration for other regions facing similar challenges. Here are a few notable ones:

1. **Singapore's Vertical Farming:** with limited land available for agriculture, Singapore has invested in vertical farming and high-tech urban agriculture.
2. **Milan, Italy's Food Policy:** Milan implemented a comprehensive Food Policy in 2015 that focuses on sustainable food systems, urban agriculture, and reducing food waste. The policy includes initiatives like the "Milan Urban Food Policy Pact," which encourages cities worldwide to adopt sustainable food policies.
3. **Copenhagen, Denmark's Food Sharing:** Copenhagen has embraced food sharing initiatives, where surplus food from restaurants, supermarkets, and wholesalers is redistributed to those in need.
4. **Portland, Oregon's Urban Green Spaces:** Portland has prioritized the creation of urban green spaces, including community gardens and urban farms. These spaces provide opportunities for local residents to grow their own food, fostering a sense of community and promoting sustainable food production within the city.
5. **Kigali, Rwanda's Urban Agriculture:** Kigali has promoted urban agriculture as a means of improving food security and reducing urban poverty. Initiatives like "Hinga Weze" support small-scale urban farmers, providing training, resources, and market access.
6. **New York City's Green Carts:** New York City launched the "Green Carts" program, which encourages the sale of fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods. Street vendors receive licenses to sell healthy produce, increasing access to nutritious food options in urban areas.
7. **Toronto, Canada's Local Food Procurement:** Toronto has implemented policies to support local food procurement for public institutions, such as schools and hospitals. This has boosted demand for local agricultural products and strengthened the regional food system.
8. **Mumbai, India's Urban Farming:** rooftop and balcony farming initiatives have gained traction..
9. **Circular Agriculture in Rotterdam:** Rotterdam embraces circular agriculture practices, such as using food waste for urban farming and employing aquaponics. This not only reduces waste but also enhances climate resilience through sustainable practices.