



Habitat III Cross-Cutting Expert Group Meeting

“Integrating Food into Urban Planning”

12 May 2016, United Nations, New York City

Preliminary summary

Context: In an effort to formally support the intergovernmental process leading to the Habitat III Conference, FAO convened on 12 May 2016 an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) with support from the Habitat III secretariat. The EGM was attended by representatives from UN member states, academic institutions, civil society, local governments and of the UN system. The experts discussed the important relationship between agricultural and food systems, food security and nutrition on the one hand and sustainable human settlements on the other. This multi-stakeholder forum reviewed the zero draft of the Habitat III outcome document “New Urban Agenda” with the objective of identifying key gaps and to develop proposals in this regard.

This preliminary summary highlights some of the key findings of the EGM, which will be further elaborated in a forthcoming full report of the meeting. The summary of findings is provided to serve to inform the first round of intergovernmental negotiations in New York from 18-20 May.

The “New Urban Agenda” may have different ways to consider integrating the findings provided below into the zero draft. As one example, the EGM participants agreed on the importance of introducing food in the current draft after the paragraphs on “land”, under the section “Planning and Managing the Urban Spatial Development” of chapter “B. Effective Implementation”.

Key Findings:

Food is a determinant of quality of life

- ***From production to consumption, food affects all.*** The 2030 Development Agenda clearly recognizes the centrality of food security, nutrition and sustainable agricultural development as essential elements of a transformative agenda to eradicate poverty and to reduce inequality at all levels. Although food is referenced in several sections of the zero draft, it is not reflected in the holistic approach necessary to address urban food insecurity and malnutrition and to enable food systems to contribute to healthy, sustainable and resilient cities. Urban food security must be addressed in an inter-sectorial, multi-actor and multi-level governance approach that encompasses farm to fork to waste management.
- ***Access to appropriate food and nutrition is fundamental for healthy living in urban areas.*** City dwellers are increasingly experiencing the “double burden” of under and over nutrition leading to epidemics of both communicable and non-communicable disease including a rise of obesity, hunger and other health issues with greatest impact on the urban poor, especially women and children. Planning for the cities we want and need must involve planning for healthy food environments that stimulates sustainable food consumption.

Food is a challenge and an opportunity

- ***Food insecurity and malnutrition in urban settings is linked to poverty.*** A greater share of the world’s undernourished population now live in cities or peri-urban areas, and the percentage is likely to grow. The estimated one billion people living in informal settlements (UN-Habitat) are particularly vulnerable to hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. Urban poor families may spend up to 80 percent of their income in buying food and are especially vulnerable to price shocks and employment instability.



Poor urban neighborhoods often have fewer food markets, whether formal or informal, limiting access to nutritious, affordable food.

- ***Food is an engine of the urban economy.*** Cities are hubs of economic opportunity at local, regional and national levels. Food systems are critical sources of formal and informal employment, for both men and women, and provide significant income in cities and beyond. In addition, a large and solid web of services emerges from and around urban food markets and agricultural service businesses, especially in small towns and intermediate scale cities.
- ***Food systems are an essential element of urban and territorial planning and design.*** Urban planning, from neighborhoods to national levels, is a key tool to operationalize the linkage between SDG2 (food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture), SDG10 (inequality) and SDG 11 (inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities). Integrating food into urban planning can result in: i) making food more accessible to the urban poor and reducing overall inequalities in access; ii) improving functionality of food markets and distribution through spatial planning of cities and territories; iii) better connectivity between urban and rural areas; iv) improving the use of urban and peri-urban agriculture; v) reducing greenhouse gas emissions due to transport; and vi) improving urban and territorial ecology through better use and management of land, water and waste.

Food is a pillar for sustainability

- ***Urban food systems are especially vulnerable to crises.*** Unplanned urbanization has significantly increased the vulnerability of populations to price shocks and natural disasters, which can be made worse by climate change. Emergency preparedness and response targeting the urban and peri-urban should be considered in urban food security programs as part of wider urban and territorial resilience and planning efforts as directed in SDG 11.a.
- ***There can be no sustainable urban development without stronger rural-urban partnerships and more and better investment in the sustainable development of rural areas.*** This should include investment in rural people, and in wider rural economies that encompasses human settlements of all sizes in a way that makes better use of the rural-urban nexus.
- ***Integrated territorial planning and development has the potential to strengthen urban-rural linkages*** and be a significant element of implementation of strategies that sustainably connect urban markets with agricultural and other rural economic activities to generate broad based economic growth, decent jobs and livelihoods opportunities, reduce regional disparities and promote income equality.