

HLPE Consultation on report scope “Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation”

Contribution of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food

Dear HLPE Steering Committee and the Project Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to [comment on the report's scope](#) “Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation”.

Overall, we find the proposed scope comprehensive enough to analyze and discuss inclusive, sustainable, diverse and resilient urban and peri-urban food systems. We however believe the following issues deserve a stronger focus:

1. **A systemic approach** linking the different yet important challenges already identified in the scope: the role of informal markets and the institutional neglect of those, geographical decoupling of food production & consumption, land access and rights in urban food environments, role of extreme weather events in urban food production, urban and peri-urban areas as spaces of dynamism but also inequalities, expansion of highly processed foods and reduction in food access to healthy and sustainable foods, role of policies and regulation. These and other issues are mentioned, but the scope yet does not point on how to address them in a systemic approach, including the interlinkages between those;
2. **Gender, equity, and intersectionality:** it is important to more strongly explore the role of gender with the above mentioned issues, including which specific actions are needed to address them. Gender intersected with age is known as a driver of inequality in accessing urban lands for food production (Tejada, 2018), and working women in low-income households are more likely to opt for convenience foods making them more vulnerable to the aggressive marketing of highly processed foods (Baraldi et al., 2018; Neri et al., 2022). These are just two examples on how addressing gender is crucial to maintain an equity focus on the report;
3. **Changing urban diets and loss of biodiversity:** stronger focus could be given to the consideration of the evolving food cultures and indigenous foodways that shape urban and peri-urban food systems. As cities become increasingly cosmopolitan, the mix and loss of cultures plays a significant role in shaping urban and peri-urban food environments. Additionally, urban areas are characterized by pervasive marketing and advertisement of ultra-processed foods and sugary beverages, which has a profound impact on human health and contributes to the loss of biodiversity. To address these challenges, it is important to reflect on the roles of policies, food corporations, and media in shaping dietary transitions and to consider the ways in which urban populations can be encouraged to demand locally grown products and promote crop diversity;
4. **The need to decolonize how we think of urban and peri-urban food systems:** particularly in the case of Sub-saharan Africa, which is pointed as one of the regions for focus on the report,

urban farming in often *"reduced to a function of poverty alleviation and food security"* (Shannon et al. 2020, p.6). This contrast to other regions, while more constantly urban and peri-urban food production is recognized as relying upon a number of services provisions, from spaces of leisure, to political activism and citizen engagement, to provision of ecosystem services;

5. **The role of food banks and public procurement:** there is a need to more comprehensively assess the role of these institutional responses to the food poverty of millions of urban and peri-urban dwellers. Food banks increasingly play a role in curbing hunger and reducing food loss and waste. However, there are concerns about the long-term relevance of food banks, also in relation to the potential of corporate capture and dependency on highly processed foods instead of healthy and nutritious foods. Public food procurement - public purchasing programmes, school feeding programmes - are now strongly recognized as one of the most important social protection policies that can operate synergistically along the rural-urban conundrum. The report could go deeper into analyzing under which models food bank, public procurement, social and solidarity kitchens, and policies targeting the most vulnerable can operate in synergy and making the right to food a reality for those who need it most;
6. **Urban planning and access to land and water:** the report could deeply explore one of the well-known challenges in urban and peri-urban systems: governance and allocation of land to agriculture versus house development, particularly in many expanding African cities. Urban food systems are rarely conceived in relation to urban planning, rather on the contrary, urban farming seems to be seen by urban planning as "a practice either to be discouraged or ignored" (Redwood, 2008, p.5), viewing "the city as separate and distinct", and relegating "urban agriculture to a position of being a minor economic sector at best or irrelevant at worst". The same bias is applied to water allocation in cities. Water infrastructure and policies are siloed and prioritize sanitation over irrigation. Shannon et al. (2020) highlights the risk of urban planning being directed away from urban space, where urban agriculture is relegated to an institutional limbo between rurality and urbanity, thus excluding several urban livelihoods from city lifestyles.

More specifically responding to **(B) - good practices and successful experiences** - the following cases could serve as inspiration for the writing team. The references can also support addressing some of the specific questions raised at **(C)**:

- On public procurement, the extensive experience of City Food Councils/Municipal Food Councils - can be a lever of change. Examples abound, particularly in Latin America, i.e., Lima Food Council, municipal Conseas in Brazil, Food Council of Bogotá. Others in the Global North (GA, 2022): i.e. the City of Barcelona and the "Barcelona Challenge" prompts city leaders in Spain and globally to act across the food-climate nexus; the German city of Nuremberg leverages public procurement meeting a minimum levels of organic and regional foods and ingredients; Dijon Metropolis carries a good coupon scheme while inviting citizens to play an active role in food systems transformation. The coupons offer disadvantaged families the opportunity to buy their preferred fruits and vegetables in partnership with community grocery stores and local food banks. Similar examples are connected to the signing of the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#) (MUFPP);
- On food banks (GA, 2021), Lagos Food Bank Initiative (LFBI) was set up to feed vulnerable people in Africa's largest city - Lagos. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, LFBI was the only food bank given government permission to operate throughout the lockdown, mobilizing its networks through the COVID-19 Emergency Food Intervention Plan (CEFIP). A key aspect, in addition to providing immediate hunger relief, the LFBI provides empowerment and nutritional programs that address the systemic drivers of food insecurity;

- On citizen engagement and right to food (GA, 2021), FoodShare which was founded in 1985 by the City of Toronto with the aim of finding systemic and long-term solutions to poverty and food insecurity. They applied a food justice lens to their pandemic response, partnering with community agencies and grassroots groups to ensure its alternative food infrastructure reached communities most in need;
- On social gastronomy (GA, 2021), Gastromotiva Solidarity Kitchens aims to use the power of food to promote social inclusion and reduce food waste. The initiative provides culinary training to individuals from vulnerable communities and uses surplus food from markets and supermarkets to prepare nutritious meals for those in need. The initiative cleverly readapted during COVID-19, boosting its support to vulnerable communities;
- On COVID-19 responses (GA, 2021), the Municipality of Quito implemented a series of measures to ensure the continuity of food supply and distribution, including the creation of a digital platform to connect farmers with consumers and the distribution of food baskets to vulnerable households. They also provided support to local farmers and small businesses to adapt their operations and reduce food waste, highlighting the importance of building resilient food systems that can withstand shocks such as pandemics and climate change, and the role of local governments in fostering collaboration and innovation to address these challenges;
- Also on COVID-19 responses and coping mechanisms with a right to food approach (Paganini and Weigelt (2023) highlight examples from Cape Town and Nairobi that looked at the role of informal sectors as solution spaces for resilience and networking building, and as spaces of social innovation and social capital building. Their report points to five pathways for urban food system transformation that bring out-of-the-box and innovative institutional thinking.

We thank again for the opportunity to comment on this report and we remain at your disposal for any further clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Global Alliance for the Future of Food

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