

Cover photo: Watermelons being offloaded from boats in the port of Sadar Ghat in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2008. Food demand is shaped by food environments, such as the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food.

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FOREWORD

The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) is the science–policy interface of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which is the foremost international and intergovernmental platform dedicated to food security and nutrition (FSN).

Today, more than half of the world population live in cities and this will likely reach 70 percent by 2050. This rapid demographic shift presents significant challenges for FSN and requires specific policies and actions. Moreover, over 70 percent of the world's food is consumed in urban areas. Thus, urban and peri-urban food systems have the power to shape the entire food system of their countries.

Against this background, the CFS requested that the HLPE-FSN explore the issues surrounding urbanization and rural transformation and their implications for FSN. This report responds to that request. The right to food has been the overarching principle guiding the development of the report, ensuring that every analysis and recommendation is grounded in the fundamental necessity of guaranteeing adequate and affordable food for all, without undermining social and environmental sustainability.

The report shows that, of the 2.2 billion moderately and severely food insecure people in the world, 1.7 billion live in urban and peri-urban areas. Indeed, urban and peri-urban areas are places of considerable challenges, including youth unemployment, lack of infrastructure, high levels of inequality, political instability and vulnerability to epidemics, conflicts and environmental hazards. On the other hand, these areas are also the epicentre of nutrition transition and offer economic opportunities and innovations.

As most of the food that feeds cities comes from beyond local borders, it is essential to consider the broader spectrum of logistics, transport, processing, wholesale and retail. This report provides a comprehensive overview of food systems in urban and peri-urban areas and their strengths and their challenges. It also discusses the food environment; that is, the institutional, economic and social context in which urban consumers make decisions about food. The report also highlights the many different types of urbanization in the various regions of the world.

Cities are already emerging as centres of innovation in food policy, demonstrating their potential to transform broader food systems. The action of municipalities must be developed in synchronization with governance at the regional and national levels. The report calls for a change in the governance process of urban and peri-urban food systems. Recognizing the prevalence of food and nutrition insecurity in urban and peri-urban areas, decisions must involve all the actors of the food systems, including informal ones. Clearly delineating mandates and responsibilities over the urban and peri-urban food systems will ensure not only better coordination but also accountability. This report provides guiding principles and actionable recommendations for policymakers to improve FSN in urban and peri-urban areas by reorienting their food systems towards better nutrition, environmental sustainability and agency.

This report, like all HLPE-FSN reports, was developed through a scientific, transparent and inclusive process that involves extensive consultations and integrates diverse forms of knowledge and expertise, followed by a rigorous peer review process. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all the experts who helped us in this long process, including the members of the HLPE-FSN Steering Committee, among them, Hilal Elver, convenor of the oversight group for this report, and the specialists from many other institutions worldwide who provided valuable feedback on earlier drafts of the report.

On behalf of the HLPE-FSN Steering Committee, I extend my gratitude to the experts who drafted the report, led by Jane Battersby. Their dedication and impressive contributions, made pro bono, were instrumental in shaping this comprehensive analysis of urban and peri-urban food systems as a compelling call to action. Special thanks go to the peer reviewers whose careful reading and insightful suggestions have significantly enhanced the final document. Finally, I

would like to thank the HLPE-FSN Secretariat, and especially Paola Termine, for their tremendous support throughout the writing of this report.

This report is dedicated to the current and future residents of cities and peri-urban areas, some yet unbuilt, predominantly in Africa and Asia. I hope that this report will inspire the CFS policy recommendations and influence the way policymakers and stakeholders in cities work on food systems transformation. The decisions we make today on urban and peri-urban food systems and development will shape food security trajectories for future generations.

Akiko Suwa-Eisenmann
Chairperson of the HLPE-FSN

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SUMMARY

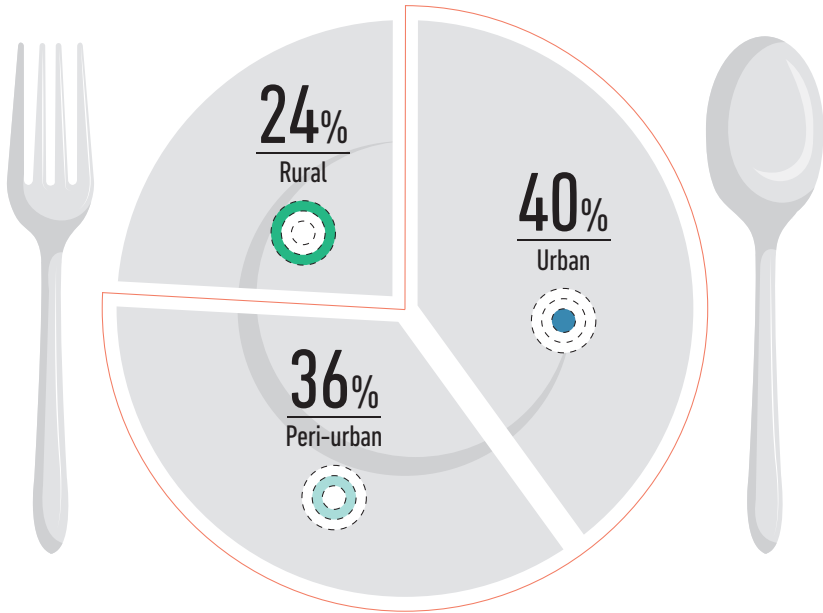
Over 60 percent of the world's population lives in urban areas and rapid urbanization is causing shifting geographies. **Currently, 1.7 billion of the world's 2.2 billion people experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity live in urban and peri-urban (U-PU) areas** (Figure 1). Although urban areas have a lower prevalence of stunting compared to rural areas, further disaggregation of urban areas by poverty shows that urban poor have very high stunting rates, as high as those in rural areas. The ability of U-PU residents to realize their right to food is a critical challenge, particularly in the context of climate change, political instability, increased inequality, internal conflicts and rapidly increasing urban populations. National food security and food system policies have neglected U-PU food security and nutrition (FSN) and largely ignored the role of local governments in shaping food systems and FSN outcomes. **There is an urgent need to redirect food security and food system policy and investment to address this growing challenge.**

Recognizing this, the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) determined that an in-depth analysis of U-PU food systems was needed to ensure that the right to food, and food security and nutrition in all its six dimensions (HLPE, 2020), are met. To this end, the CFS requested that the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) develop a report culminating in a set of focused and action-oriented policy recommendations on strengthening U-PU food systems in the context of urbanization and rural transformation, as a key means of achieving the CFS vision,¹ (CFS, 2009) SDG 2 and an array of other SDGs, including SDGs 1, 10 and 11.

This report, *Strengthening U-PU food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation*, developed by the HLPE-FSN, is based on the outcomes of the CFS Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Urbanization, rural transformation and implications for food security and nutrition,

¹ According to the Reform document of the Committee on World Food Security, "The reformed CFS as a central component of the evolving Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition will constitute the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings. The CFS will strive for a world free from hunger where countries implement the voluntary guidelines for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security." Committee on World Food Security (CFS), Reform of the Committee on World Food Security, U.N. Doc. CFS:2009/2Rev. 2, October, 2009, Rome (also available at <https://www.fao.org/4/k7197e/k7197e.pdf>).

FIGURE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF MODERATELY AND SEVERELY FOOD-INSECURE POPULATION ALONG THE RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM, 2022



Source: FAO. 2023. Suite of Food Security Indicators. In: *FAOSTAT*. Rome. [Cited 27 February 2024]. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>

and on recent literature and policy debates. Drawing from this report, CFS will develop policy recommendations on U-PU food systems, taking into account the specific needs of diverse rural and urban contexts and the linkages between them.

In light of these objectives, this report: (i) assesses the existing situation and identifies the main bottlenecks in achieving food security and nutrition in U-PU areas; (ii) highlights the linkages between U-PU food systems and other systems, such as water, energy and mobility, and their impact on achieving food security and nutrition; (iii) investigates the ways in which U-PU food systems can be transformed and made more equitable, accessible, sustainable and resilient through interventions in food system activities and food environments; and (iv) lays out policy recommendations that take into account multiple actors and policy levers.

The report includes eight chapters. **Chapter 1 provides the rationale for focusing on U-PU areas, explains the conceptual underpinnings of the report and presents the theory of change.** The chapter demonstrates that over three-quarters of the world's food-insecure population lives in U-PU areas. It describes the important influence that formal and informal power structures, policies and legislation have on U-PU food insecurity, leading urban residents to have different levels of realization of the right to food and differential access to urban services and infrastructure. It further describes the need to reinforce the fundamental right to food and the right to the city – meaning equitable and inclusive access to goods and services for a decent life – as essential for tackling unequal food access. Given that food insecurity in U-PU areas is shaped by economic, political, spatial and social processes within and beyond these areas, the chapter also highlights the need for specific interventions designed and implemented by both national and local governments.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how the process of urbanization shapes food security, dietary choices, nutrition and food systems governance in U-PU areas. It **highlights the importance of understanding the context of a given urban or peri-urban area** in terms of location, size and degree of informality when developing policy and governance responses. This chapter draws particular attention to the ways that U-PU areas concentrate vulnerabilities along several dimensions which impact food security, including climate related challenges, conflict and inequality. It calls for **improving U-PU resilience as a critical entry point for improving U-PU FSN.**

Chapter 3 outlines the challenges and opportunities presented by key U-PU food system activities to improve U-PU food security and nutrition. The activities addressed are: food production and trade; midstream supply chain activities, including transport, logistics, processing, and wholesale; downstream activities, including retail and service (both market and non-market food sources); and loss and waste. Given that U-PU food systems include elements, activities and actors operating within and beyond U-PU areas (from rural hinterlands to distant countries), they are complex to govern. The chapter highlights the **importance of maintaining food system diversity, including traditional and informal components, to ensure food system resilience and food security and nutrition.** This requires identification and management of both synergies and trade-offs (for instance, between food safety and food affordability) across these diverse components.

Chapter 4 uses the entry point of the food environment to demonstrate how food consumption patterns in U-PU areas are shaped by the interactions of the food system with other systems, including housing, water and energy, and by socioeconomic status. U-PU diets and food-sourcing strategies vary significantly, not only by income but also by other individual and household characteristics. The chapter demonstrates that the **factors shaping food choice within U-PU food environments extend beyond food-system issues and, therefore, require a broader suite of interventions**. These include addressing time poverty, energy poverty and infrastructure deficiencies, as well as employment and livelihood stability.

Chapter 5 provides data on the state of U-PU FSN. These FSN outcomes are framed as consequences of the systemic issues addressed in chapters 1 through 4. It highlights the high prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition in U-PU areas. **Food insecurity is unevenly distributed within U-PU areas, with slums and peri-urban areas having the highest incidence and women, children, marginalized ethnic groups and migrants disproportionately affected**. Food safety challenges concentrate in poor U-PU areas. Although urban diets are typically more diverse than rural diets, they are typified by higher consumption of ultra-processed foods and food away from home.

Considering the findings presented in previous chapters, **Chapter 6** provides an analysis of the governance challenges and opportunities associated with U-PU FSN. It finds that **the complex nature of U-PU food systems makes it essential to work through multilevel, multisectoral, multilateral and multi-actor governance processes within and beyond the state**. This may include national governments co-developing food security strategies with local governments, development of multidepartmental food working groups at local government level and food-policy councils. The chapter notes the need for contextual governance responses and the need to take particular care to avoid reinforcing power asymmetries common in multi-actor platforms.

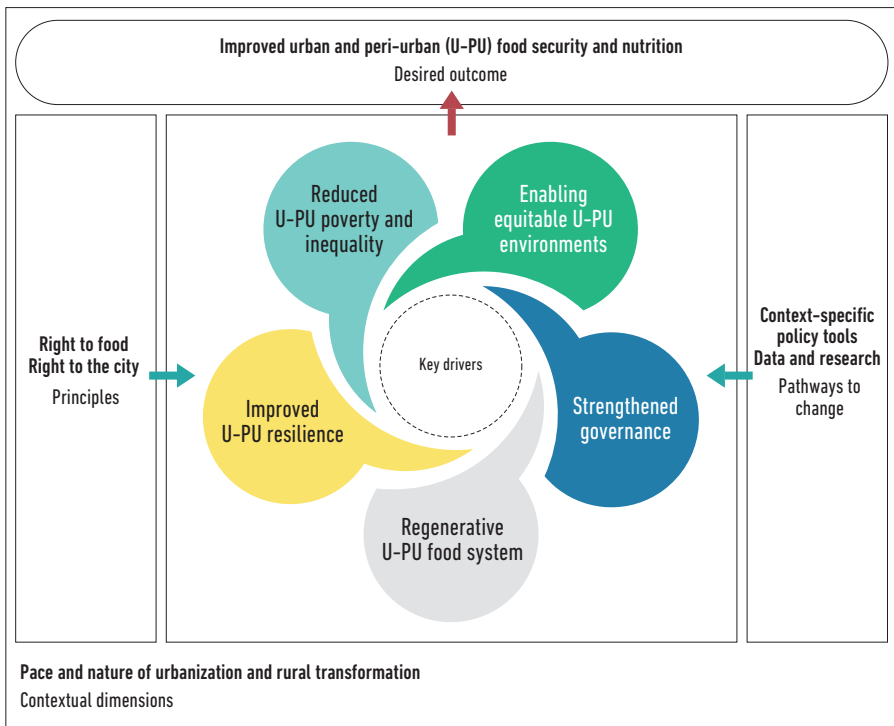
Chapter 7 presents **six clusters of policy instruments, which when combined can form integrated strategies. These are: regulatory policy; fiscal tools; transfer instruments; market policies; investments; and behaviour change policies aimed at shifting the preferences and decisions of the population**. The chapter provides examples of good practice in urban food governance. These policy instruments provide the governance entry points that frame the report's **recommendations in Chapter 8**.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The report’s theory of change (Figure 2) argues that in the context of urbanization and rural transformation, improving U-PU food security and nutrition across all six dimensions requires addressing food system drivers as well as other interacting systems and drivers of FSN outcomes.

The direction of change across each of these drivers must be informed by the principles of the right to food and the right to the city. The report identifies five interacting drivers of change within U-PU contexts to shape FSN outcomes. The nature of these

FIGURE 2
THEORY OF CHANGE FOR IMPROVED URBAN AND PERI-URBAN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

interactions and the relative importance of each driver is context specific, and pathways to change must be via context informed, integrated policy tools. This requires a commitment to improved data gathering and disaggregation and research for FSN to better understand U-PU FSN drivers and outcomes. This will support evidence-based decision-making as well as monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes.

The first driver of change is strengthened U-PU food systems. Informed by the underlying principles of the theory of change, actions to strengthen food systems should be based on building food systems that are equitable, just and inclusive; productive and prosperous; participatory and empowering; resilient; regenerative and respectful to ecosystems; and healthy and nutritious.

The second driver of change is the development of more equitable U-PU environments. This focuses on addressing the long-term structural drivers of unequal FSN outcomes. Actions should focus on redressing spatial, economic and infrastructural inequities in U-PU areas which undermine FSN.

The third driver of change is reducing poverty and inequality for residents within U-PU areas. This focusses on addressing the immediate impacts of the structural inequalities described above experienced at the individual and household level. Actions at the individual and household level should focus on multidimensional poverty, social protection and livelihoods.

The fourth driver of change is strengthened governance of food systems and other systems in U-PU areas. Actions should focus on national governments' acknowledgement of and respect for the mandates of local/city and subnational government in shaping food systems; providing support to local governments to enable them to act on these mandates; providing investment to address the challenge of weak and fragmented local government; and investing in multilevel, multilateral and multi-actor governance processes.

The final driver of change is improved U-PU resilience. Resilience is understood as the ability to resist, absorb, recover and reorganize in the context of shocks and crises. The impact of shocks and stresses is asymmetric across people and places. Actions to increase resilience in U-PU food systems and other systems should redress asymmetric vulnerabilities and impacts at the same time as building system-wide resilience.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this report aim at improving all dimensions of U-PU FSN and ensuring consistent and affordable access to healthy diets, particularly in the event of shocks. This depends on strengthening U-PU food systems and related non-food systems, which requires appropriate governance and policy approaches, informed by the U-PU context. Given the nature of U-PU food systems and the many factors driving their transformation, efforts to govern such systems should be multilevel, multisectoral and multi-actor, and should be informed by the principle of reinforcing fundamental rights to food and to the city.

Given that food-system activities within U-PU areas are governed by different levels of government and take place along the rural–urban continuum, mechanisms for alignment across levels of government are essential to ensuring policy coherence and effective resource use. Multilevel governance approaches are therefore essential. Similarly, food system and FSN outcomes in U-PU areas are shaped by factors beyond the food system and therefore require multisectoral governance approaches. Finally, actors from within food systems must be included in governance processes to enable them to be active agents in transforming food systems. It is essential that these multi-actor processes have principles of equitable inclusion embedded within them.

The right to food and the right to the city should be integrated in all measures addressing food insecurity in U-PU contexts. This means: recognizing interrelated, interconnected and indivisible human rights; recognizing the obligations of states, local authorities and the private sector and the rights and responsibilities of civil society; implementing human rights, specifically the right to food, in order to transform U-PU food systems at the local level; and integrating human rights-based approaches in city-level governance, for instance in statutes, planning and programmatic documents.

Policy initiatives should uphold the right to food and other human rights, such as the right to life, health, water, education and adequate housing, which in the urban context can be articulated under ensuring the right to the city. Specific measures should include access to spaces for cultivation in the city, public participation in the design and use of urban spaces and the provision of public spaces for food vendors.

A central consideration for those making use of these **recommendations is that they should be considered through the unique context of the urban/peri-urban setting, in terms of the size and location of the setting, existing infrastructure, the age, other demographic and socioeconomic status of the residents, and fragility to conflicts and other crises.** The degree of decentralization, intergovernmental political economy, strength of civil society and strength of public service represent other distinguishing factors that necessitate policy differentiation. Further, different policy instruments should be used in combination to develop integrated strategies.

It is essential to support and strengthen local and territorial aspects of U-PU food systems, with particular attention to small-scale and informal actors. However, it is important to note that many U-PU residents, particularly those most vulnerable to food insecurity in many low and middle-income countries, will continue to depend on food from elsewhere. It is therefore important that trade and supply chain policies be directed towards increasing access to healthy diets for U-PU residents. Further, policies to localize the system should be mindful of the impacts of U-PU food system interventions on people and places outside of U-PU areas. Therefore, trade policies that undermine local food systems should be discouraged. These policies must be embedded in a broader understanding of how and to what degree growing corporate concentration in the global food system affects the capacity of U-PU governments to deliver healthy diets to their residents.

Maintaining and increasing diversity within U-PU food systems (diversity of retail types and locations, of modes of access to food, of pathways from production to consumption, of sources of food and of types of food) is essential to ensure food security and nutrition for U-PU residents and to build systemic resilience to shocks. **The crucial role of informal-sector actors in providing vulnerable U-PU residents access to affordable food, particularly in the context of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), must be carefully assessed and addressed.**

Central to this is the need to improve food safety across all food system activities, while ensuring the mitigation of trade-offs between promoting food safety and regulations and the potential negative impacts on informal segments and actors within food systems.

These broader considerations underpin the following recommendations.

A. URBAN AND PERI-URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS FOR FSN

Interventions in U-PU food systems should be oriented towards creating food systems that are: equitable, just and inclusive; productive and prosperous; participatory and empowering; resilient; regenerative and respectful to ecosystems; and healthy and nutritious. This requires action across all components of food systems.

1. Production: Local governments, together with other subnational government actors (provincial, county, etc.), should formulate and encourage provisions to protect and promote sustainable food production that applies agroecological principles and other innovative methods, in urban and peri-urban areas, through:

- land-use zoning to protect urban agriculture, livestock and fishing activities;
- prioritizing access to land, water, innovation and technology, and finance to projects that support urban livelihoods, address the needs of the most food-insecure and promote sustainable practices;
- support for territorial systems and shorter supply chains to facilitate market access to urban and peri-urban producers and increase accessibility of fresh produce for U-PU residents; and
- partnering with civil society and research organizations to provide extension services to U-PU farmers and producers, promoting regenerative and nutrition-sensitive practices.

2. Trade: National governments, together with local government actors, should work to ensure that trade regulations and policy are oriented towards increasing access to and affordability of healthy diets, with a particular focus on poor families, protecting U-PU populations from the increasing availability and targeted marketing of unhealthy foods and protecting the interest of small-scale and informal operators. This will include the following actions:

- Include local government in national dialogues on food-trade policy to raise awareness about the specific needs and contributions of U-PU food systems to the national economy and to FSN. Strengthen the capacity of urban food-policy actors to engage with trade- and investment-policy stakeholders.
- Consider the implications of trade policies on poor and food-insecure U-PU consumers.
- Assess the role of the informal-sector in cross-border trade and integrate provisions in policy to support and protect cross-border trade from harassment and extortion.

3. Midstream: Addressing the midstream activities (storage, processing, transportation and wholesale) in urban food supply chains is essential for creating equitable and efficient food policies that benefit all stakeholders in the supply chain. National and local government and private sector actors should work together to:

- encourage both public and private investment in infrastructure, logistics, innovation and technology, and capacity-building in the intermediary sector of urban food value chains, particularly for fresh and perishable foods;
- foster diversity of midstream food actors through mechanisms to support small-scale and informal-sector actors, including the development and maintenance of public food infrastructure (for example wholesale, traditional and digital markets), and ensuring fair supply chain practices to redistribute value;
- ensure that food systems' planning codes and regulations include informal processors operating in U-PU areas; and
- support wholesale markets to strengthen connections with small-scale producers, leveraging them to increase access to affordable, diverse and healthy diets.

4. Markets and retail: National and local governments, in accordance with their respective functions, should:

- strengthen different types of markets and retailers (wholesale, traditional, wet, weekly) in U-PU areas to enable access to healthy and affordable foods and promote livelihoods of food systems' workers;
- protect and sustain traditional markets, incentivizing investment in infrastructure, operations, logistics, innovation and technology, and access to water and energy, and fostering closer links between traditional markets and small-scale food producers and local communities;

- work with market traders and street vendors to improve food safety by (i) creating an enabling environment (where local and national authorities support food safety through investment in basic infrastructure, policy and regulation, capacity building and monitoring and surveillance activities); (ii) providing appropriate training and technology for value chain actors; (iii) providing incentives for behaviour change;
- incentivize the sale of healthy and sustainable food, while disincentivizing unhealthy food and food that is harmful to the environment, through appropriate legal and regulatory instruments, such as taxes and subsidies, warning labels, food licenses, preferential trading locations for vendors selling healthy food and zoning restrictions on the marketing and sale of unhealthy foods;
- provide incentives for the establishment of outlets for healthy foods in underserved areas, encouraging food retail diversity;
- prioritize, together with private sector actors, support for innovation and technologies for small businesses and projects that connect consumers to smallholder farmers through apps and delivery services, such as community-supported agriculture (CSA) programmes; and
- promote behaviour change towards healthier food consumer choices through targeted education and awareness raising, informed by the structural drivers of food choice, which can include front-of-pack labelling, public education campaigns and taxation of unhealthy foods.

5. Public procurement and non-market initiatives: In addition to strengthening markets, non-market food sources and enablers, such as public procurement, community kitchens and remittances, should also be supported and developed for the benefit of the most vulnerable population groups and to provide buffer in times of crises. National and local governments should:

- invest in nutrition-oriented public procurement programmes, specifically targeted at vulnerable populations within U-PU populations;
- prioritize local, agroecological and small-scale farmers in public procurement programmes, particularly within school feeding programmes and programming aimed at nutrition in the first 1 000 days;
- develop local by laws that support the decentralized development of food banks and community kitchens, as well as deferral of surplus food to food banks,

community kitchens and other food distribution programmes, informed by principles of dignity and agency; and

- strengthen the role of civil society organizations in providing food aid in times of crisis, harnessing their capacity to reach vulnerable populations.

6. Food loss and waste: Local governments, in collaboration with market associations, private sector actors, resident associations and individual establishments, should strive towards minimizing food loss and waste. This could be achieved by:

- providing supportive infrastructure (shading, cold storage units) and access to innovation and technology to informal-sector actors to increase fresh food access, preserve vitamins and minerals in perishable foods, and reduce food loss and waste;
- providing restaurants with guidelines, training and resources to reduce food waste;
- creating awareness among consumers to reduce food waste; and
- promoting and supporting circularity through composting, biogas digestion, using food waste to feed livestock, donating surplus food to food redistribution programmes, etc.

B. URBAN AND PERI-URBAN NON-FOOD SYSTEMS THAT IMPACT FSN

Food security and nutrition are affected not only by food systems, but also by related systems such as health, education, housing, water, energy, infrastructure and finance systems. In U-PU areas spatial inequality and unequal access to services are important drivers of poor FSN outcomes. It is critical to adopt a holistic approach with policies targeting key actions in these other systems in order to address U-PU poverty and inequality.

National and subnational government, together with private-sector actors and civil society organizations should:

- ensure that infrastructure investments, including for transport, are equity sensitive and are inclusive of informal-sector actors and food-insecure consumers;

- explicitly integrate food into urban planning, including incorporation of food sensitive planning and design principles;
- integrate food trade infrastructure in transport planning to facilitate the sale of healthy meals to commuters;
- incorporate food security planning into housing and zoning policy;
- establish financial mechanisms, such as microcredit or subsidies, to assist small-scale producers and food-system actors in acquiring inputs and technology;
- incentivize investment towards low-income residents and neighbourhoods for the provision of water, sanitation, waste management and reliable energy to enable healthy diets, safer food handling and washing, and the preparation and cooking of meals at home;
- enhance decent work and employment in U-PU food systems, including by providing childcare spaces within traditional markets, promoting occupational safety and health and guaranteeing labour rights;
- strengthen urban health services (including neonatal and infant nutrition guidance and prevention diagnostics) for FSN outcomes;
- acknowledge temporal variation in U-PU food insecurity and frame social protection policies and programmes to be responsive to periods of heightened food insecurity;
- develop and invest in social protection programmes targeting specific U-PU contexts; and
- promote nutrition in health services, particularly for women of childbearing age and pregnant and breastfeeding women, and in paediatric services, informed by the lived experience of U-PU residents.

C. URBAN AND PERI-URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR FSN

Addressing U-PU FSN requires shifts in governance approaches at the national and local levels, recognizing the prevalence of U-PU food insecurity. This recognition should drive investment and governance approaches that are inclusive of subnational governments and incorporate a broad range of voices from civil society, research institutions and the small-scale private sector. It is essential to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of concentration in food supply chains on urban livelihoods and to promote the accessibility and affordability of diverse, sustainable

and healthy diets in urban areas. This entails promoting policies that foster competition and diversification within these supply chains.

National governments should:

- increase financing and capacity of local and urban governments, particularly in LMIC contexts, to tackle urban food system challenges, and identify and promote innovative approaches for mobilizing resources (such as municipal bonds), while also ensuring sufficient municipal staff with holistic skills to address food-system challenges;
- include local and subnational government in the development of national policies that are relevant to the food system, inclusive of agriculture, nutrition, environment, gender and trade policy; and
- ensure financing is adequate and coherent with municipal mandates.

National and local government should:

- identify the mandates of different levels of governance in shaping FSN and food systems in U-PU areas, and ensure that U-PU food system policy is multilevel, multisectoral and multi-actor;
- clearly delineate the mandates and responsibilities over the urban food system across different tiers of government and other sectors (health, education, urban planning, infrastructure, etc) to ensure accountability for action to urban residents (including through stakeholder mapping to assess responsibilities, available instruments, and financial and human resources); and
- ensure coherence and coordination of policies and programmes within urban departments and across levels of government and sectors, including through urban food strategies; joint, integrated food-policy offices and strategies; coordinated urban food units; or multistakeholder platforms.

National government, local government, civil society organizations and private sector actors should:

- develop inclusive multi-actor platforms to encourage the active participation of local communities in decision-making processes, including through building their capacity to effectively engage and addressing inherent power imbalances; and

- build capacities of urban food system actors (especially the underrepresented, such as traditional market trader associations and consumer associations) to enable stronger representation.

D. URBAN AND PERI-URBAN RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

U-PU food systems, and U-PU areas more broadly, are increasingly vulnerable to shocks and crises. The impacts of these are unequally experienced and often increase U-PU inequality. There is a need for proactive planning to reduce vulnerabilities and increase systemic resilience. Resilience planning should be informed by the lived experience of vulnerable populations, should include civil society organizations, and should make use of practices with proven impact on household and community resilience.

National and local government should:

- develop U-PU food system resilience plans and establish contingency planning and early warning systems for fragility and shocks;
- identify critical food infrastructure to be prioritized in times of crisis, and populations and areas most vulnerable to food insecurity in times of disaster and shocks;
- embed resilience thinking into urban planning and design;
- include food system support in disaster-response funding plans at all levels, from national to local;
- maintain and enhance food-system diversity – in terms of sources, supply chains and retail typologies – to bolster systemic resilience, considering the impact of U-PU food system decisions on resilience in rural hinterlands and beyond;
- integrate food into climate-adaptation plans.

E. DATA, RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE FOR FSN

There is a need for more granular, U-PU specific FSN data and research. Evidence-based decision-making needs targeted data collection, management, analysis and dissemination across food system actors and system interactions.

National and subnational government, in partnership with academia and civil society, should:

- develop U-PU specific FSN data tools;
- add a specific food security module to city household surveys;
- invest in information technology and digital systems to improve the evidence base for policymakers and food system actors to plan, prioritize, design and track food system activities;
- ensure finer grained disaggregation of data (along the urban–rural continuum, city size, intra-city), to allow analysis of intersectional vulnerability;
- incorporate qualitative data into U-PU food policy;
- use geographic information systems, remote sensing, digital tools and participatory mapping to identify areas most vulnerable to food-system disruption to inform long-term planning and crisis response;
- invest in monitoring and evaluation of food policies and programmes, including non-food specific impacts (such as economic development and environmental sustainability); and
- invest in and learn from city food networks as a mechanism for sharing knowledge and training and for increasing local government voice in national and international policy spaces.

In an era in which almost 80 percent of the global population resides in urban and peri-urban (U-PU) areas, understanding and addressing the complexities of U-PU food systems is more critical than ever. This groundbreaking report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) challenges prevailing narratives, revealing that over three-quarters of the world's food-insecure population lives in urban and peri-urban regions, and that U-PU areas are epicentres of multiple burdens of malnutrition.

The report provides an in-depth analysis of the unique challenges and opportunities in these areas. It shows how U-PU areas have a profound impact on food systems, influencing production, distribution and consumption patterns worldwide. The report emphasizes the need for equitable, accessible, sustainable and resilient food systems, for the realization of the right to food.

The report also stresses the importance of multilevel, multilateral and multi-actor governance and highlights the intricate linkages between food systems and other critical systems related to water, energy and mobility. With action-oriented policy recommendations, this report is an essential tool for policymakers, researchers and stakeholders dedicated to ensuring food security and nutrition in the context of rapid urbanization.

