

2.2 City region food strategies

Local Food Markets

What problem is your solution addressing?

With 54% of the world's populations now living in cities, they have become epicenters of food consumption. Yet all too many cities struggle to create food environments where the ingredients of healthy and sustainable diets are available, accessible, and affordable. Cities similarly export environmental impacts when unsustainable food consumption relies on imports or suffer the consequences of environmental degradation when unsustainable production practices are undertaken in close proximity. For example, the poor air quality to which millions of inhabitants of the Punjab are subjugated to with the burning of rice straw, or increased cost of water purification due to contamination.

Food deserts in many cities drive under consumption of fiber rich foods (fruits, vegetables, pulses/legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds), - a growing problem across society in both high- and low-income countries. The number of hungry people is also increasing globally. For many low-income families, healthy foods are unavailable, unaffordable, inaccessible, or inconvenient. Proximate environmental impacts of unsustainable production similarly disproportionately affect the poor who may have less access to clean air and water. Urbanization, or migration to cities frequently exacerbate a growing trend towards the consumption of convenient, lower-cost, high sugar, salt or fat, ultra-processed foods.

Concurrent with a shift toward inferior diets centered around convenience and lower cost, is an underutilization of indigenous knowledge, practices and technologies. Communities generally have a vast array of indigenous knowledge that is favorable to the supply, quality and safety of food and can therefore make a direct contribution to food security and environmental sustainability. However, mainstreaming of knowledge transfer increasingly ignores the importance of local knowledge and experiences in solving local problems.

How does your solution address the problem?

City Region Food Strategies – or city region Food Markets - are a critical tool for creating local demand and markets for fresh, healthy food. Proactive city region food strategies create enabling environments for healthy and sustainable dietary practices by ensuring the availability, affordability, access and information on healthy foods, particularly those that pertain to local and indigenous food systems. Indeed, these often characterize the “flavor” of the region. At the city level, a growing number of mayors, and their offices have engaged to assist the provision of more fresh food across the supply chain. Notably actions undertaken by cities with food strategies include:

- Supporting farmer transitions to nature positive food practices (e.g. Paris and the water board supporting organic agriculture, the City of Sacramento working with farmers to halt rice straw burning)
- Offering low/subsidised rents to either young farmers, or market holders and providing favourable lands or locations in and around the city to support local food production and consumption.

- Favoring direct public procurement for city schools and offices from farmers, and markets within the city region and thus creating markets that support healthy local economies, reward nature positive production practices, target the production of healthy foods, and increase transparency in supply chains.
- Cities create urban food environments where healthy and sustainable foods become the default, rather than the rare option including shared spaces for food focused events such as food tasting sessions in food markets, running cooking courses/demonstrations for the public, and providing recipe sheets to take away. The structuring of such markets, the types of foods provided, and nature of the cookery lessons and other resources would benefit from the input of local and indigenous groups who have place-based knowledge and experience to share.

City-Region food markets, from production to consumption do not intent to fully substitute trade, but become powerful forces to bridge the growing social, economic, and environmental rift between urban and rural environmental communities. Demonstrated actions by a growing number of cities working to create markets for healthy foods produced sustainably however, have demonstrable impact, support local food sovereignty, and increase local identity. It is important to note that solutions around local food are not purely related to ‘food miles’ – in fact, the climate impacts of eating locally rather than globally are insubstantial on their own to warrant wholesale food system restructuring. It is these multiple other benefits that are most relevant. Cities are microcosms of food systems. City-region food systems have simplified the search for systemic solutions, from production to consumption, with health, environment, and inclusion as highly relatable and valuable goals to both municipal leaderships, and its citizenry.

Is this a new solution or an existing solution that needs scaling?

Existing solution that needs scaling and standardizing.

Which organization/s, institution/s or group of individuals are associated with this solution?

Policymakers (government), private sector, famers/fisheries, cities, and consumers (individuals) from multiple organizations (C40, IPES Food, ICLEI, FAO, UN Habitat) have championed City Region Food Strategies and markets. A growing number of cities have joined the Milan Urban Food City Policy Pact, or have signed on to the Good Food Cities. Many have engaged in comprehensive public consultations, developed published strategies, and/or invested in specific interventions across production to consumption (and often including food loss and reuse).

If selected as a game-changing solution, how will you leverage the UNFSS to scale your solution?

The UNFSS could set up a ‘demonstration city region fresh food market’ with regionally specific sections to highlight the location specificity, opportunity, and cultural diversity around food, and the cross-cutting relevance of local markets, from production to consumption that increase the access, availability, and affordability of healthy fresh foods from sustainable, and proximate production. . A large number of cities, from a diversity of regions have sharable strategies, practices, and experiences in creating regional food environments, markets, and demand. This existing experience can be used to: (1) encourage other cities to development their own strategies, (2) create an outlet for youth to engage in local government, and (3) scale impacts from local to global. Diverse cultures could also be represented via city relevant activities within city region food markets, celebrating regional cuisines, music and dance – to

further enhance the user experience and demonstrate the potential for such markets to act as local community hubs.

Policy makers with local agency (such as city mayors) will be invited to pledge to support such City region food markets. Indeed many already have as demonstrated in the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. The pledge could be based on suitable metrics as outlined in the MUFF or other emerging city efforts to create regional food markets, and healthy/sustainable food environments.

Is this idea applicable to a particular geography, demography, landscape or other type of setting (e.g. high- or low-income countries, aquaculture)? If so, please specify

Highly applicable to cities across all geographies due to a growing lack of access and/or availability of healthy and sustainable foods in many neighborhoods, and low availability and affordability of lands, including for women and youth, entering food production at a local level. with more relevance to low-income communities in High Income Countries, and Low-Income Countries more broadly. Women, rural communities, and youth might be particularly relevant focal groups for local production, marketing, and consumption patterns.

Source and process

- Tailor Quinn, Tailored Food. WS1 member 'Designing and launching nutritious, delicious, local food products in partnership with local nutrition entrepreneurs affordable to families living in poverty'.
- World union of Wholesale markets through the public survey 'Develop and invest in more fresh food street markets around the world. Make fresh food retail markets more dynamic (with life cooking, possibilities of eating there), like a "Happy Saturday activity for Families".'
- Salome Bukachi, Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya. WS1 memembr 'Preserving traditional climate-friendly food and campaigning traditional food consumption AND Promoting the use of indigenous technical knowledge in food production and processing'.
- Milan Urban Food Policy Pact: <https://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org>
- C40 Good Food Cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/good-food-cities>
- Example Paris Food Strategy: https://www.api-site.paris.fr/paris/public/2018%2F9%2FENG_Abrege_StratAlim.pdf