

Food Security and Nutrition in an Urbanizing World SUMMARY NOTE

Rapid urbanization has widespread implications for food security, nutrition, agriculture value chains, and livelihoods. On 6 June 2017, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), together with [SNV](#) Netherlands Development Organization and [Welthungerhilfe](#), organized a one-day workshop on [Food Security and Nutrition in an Urbanizing World](#) in Brussels, Belgium to explore in depth the challenges and opportunities of urbanization from a variety of perspectives. Organized on the eve of the European Development Days, the workshop brought together over 100 multidisciplinary participants from the public and private sector, nongovernmental and civil society organizations, academia, and development institutions.

Robert Ridolfi, Director of Sustainable Growth and Development at European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, opened the workshop calling for research into urbanization and food systems to lead to direct impact through a set of recommended investments to improve the urban food system.

Keynote addresses delivered by Brave Ndisale, Strategic Programme Leader for Food Security and Nutrition at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Gerda Verburg, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, raised important issues regarding the gap between the rich and the poor, urban food production, and food safety and quality – issues that were revisited throughout the day. Both speakers urged urban and rural dwellers to recognize and improve the roles and services each area plays and provides for the other; the development of local solutions for reducing the divide between the urban rich and the urban poor; and the sharing of lessons learned across cities at both the national and regional level.

The importance of rural-urban linkages was further explored during the launch of IFPRI's annual flagship [Global Food Policy Report](#), which this year focuses on rapid urban growth and how food systems can be reshaped to benefit both urban and rural populations. IFPRI Director General, Shenggen Fan, discussed the unique food security and nutrition challenges faced by the urban poor, including an increased burden of both malnutrition and obesity due to changing diets and easier access to unhealthy foods, limited access to basic services, and vulnerability to income and price shocks. In considering the opportunities that urban growth can create, Fan stressed the need to build better urban-rural linkages for improved food systems. For example, investments in infrastructure and intermediate towns that target processing and storage facilities, quality rural and feeder roads, and information and communication technology can build connections and create hubs of economic activity benefiting both smallholders and city dwellers.

Welthungerhilfe, a German organization for development and humanitarian aid, organized a session that disentangled selected myths on urban food security. Professor Emeritus Einhard Schmidt-Kallert debunked the myth that migrants make once-in-a-lifetime decisions to permanently leave their rural dwellings to settle in urban areas. Rather, most of the migrants contributing to the Global South's rapid urbanization – who have become more female and involve more families – tend to be non-permanent and retain social ties and economic linkages to their rural base. Rodney Mushongachware, Market Linkage Advisor of Zimbabwe's Agricultural Partnerships Trust (APT), challenged the perception that imported foods are of better quality than locally produced foods and disputed the assumption that smallholder farmers do not have the capacity to supply urban markets. Zimbabwe, which is experiencing a 2.3 percent annual urbanization growth rate,

imports most of its horticulture and fruits from South Africa, despite about 70 percent of the country's 15.6 million inhabitants being engaged in agriculture. A European Union-funded project, however, has equipped small-scale farmers with the skills to not only successfully shift away from cotton production (the country's cash crop) toward horticulture but to also make critical linkages to urban markets – demonstrating that with adequate investment, strengthened urban-rural linkages can have win-win outcomes.

Dutch development organization SNV organized a session on the challenges of urbanization and presented case studies of scalable approaches. Citing examples from Nepal, Cambodia and Kenya, Eelco Baan, SNV's Senior Advocacy Officer for Agriculture, highlighted high food losses, poor food safety, distrust among supply and demand side actors, and the exclusion of small and medium-sized farmers from value chains as significant barriers to economic growth. He stressed the importance of partnerships and leveraging investments to overcome these barriers. Clement Onyango, Director of Kenya's Consumer Unity & Trust Society Africa Resource Centre (CUTS ARC), and Rikki Agudah, acting CEO of the Society of Crop Agribusiness Advisors of Kenya (SOCAA), emphasized the need to increase awareness among consumers and strengthen their capacity to drive demand for safer foods and lobby for higher standards and accountability.

IFPRI organized a session on agricultural value chains and informal markets. Bart Minten, Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI, discussed how cities are reshaping food systems and transforming value chains. This transformation – driven by “urban diets” – is increasing productivity through increased investment in technology and modern inputs (including mobile phones, fertilizers, and improved seeds) and the growth of midstream and retail sections of the value chain (such as cold storage, rice mills, and supermarkets). Delia Grace, Program Leader for Food Safety and Zoonoses at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), exposed misconceptions of informal markets – including that myth that informal markets are risky while formal markets are safe. In Vietnam for example 100 percent of the pork samples from supermarkets failed to meet the country's food safety standards. Grace also demonstrated the strength of the informal sector in developing countries, projecting that by 2040 informal markets will remain as prominent in East and South Africa as they are today, representing a greater share of the food marketing system than both formal markets and subsistence production. As urbanization reshapes food systems and markets, Grace cautioned that focusing solely on formalizing informal markets – rather than professionalizing informal markets – could have an unintentional anti-poor and anti-women effect.

A panel discussion brought together varied perspectives from the CGIAR consortium, public sector, donor community, and academia on how to enhance urbanizing food systems for improved food security and nutrition. A common theme among the reflections was inclusivity, with specific attention being drawn to the growth of intermediary cities. Urbanization is taking place predominantly in intermediary cities, rather than in large or megacities, where connections to rural areas are maintained. Understanding better the unique role intermediary cities play in urban architecture offers a potential pathway for inclusive growth and enhanced food systems.

Welthungerhilfe CEO, Till Wahnbaeck, SNV Managing Director of Agriculture, Andre de Jager, and IFPRI Director General, Shenggen Fan, closed the event calling for increased partnerships and greater commitment to openness to tackle the multidimensional food security and nutrition challenges associated with urbanization. Priority actions must include investing in scaling up proven successes; strengthening accountability mechanisms to ensure that food systems are inclusive (particularly of women and youth), climate resilient, and business friendly; and improving communications with stakeholders, including mayors and city and regional planners.