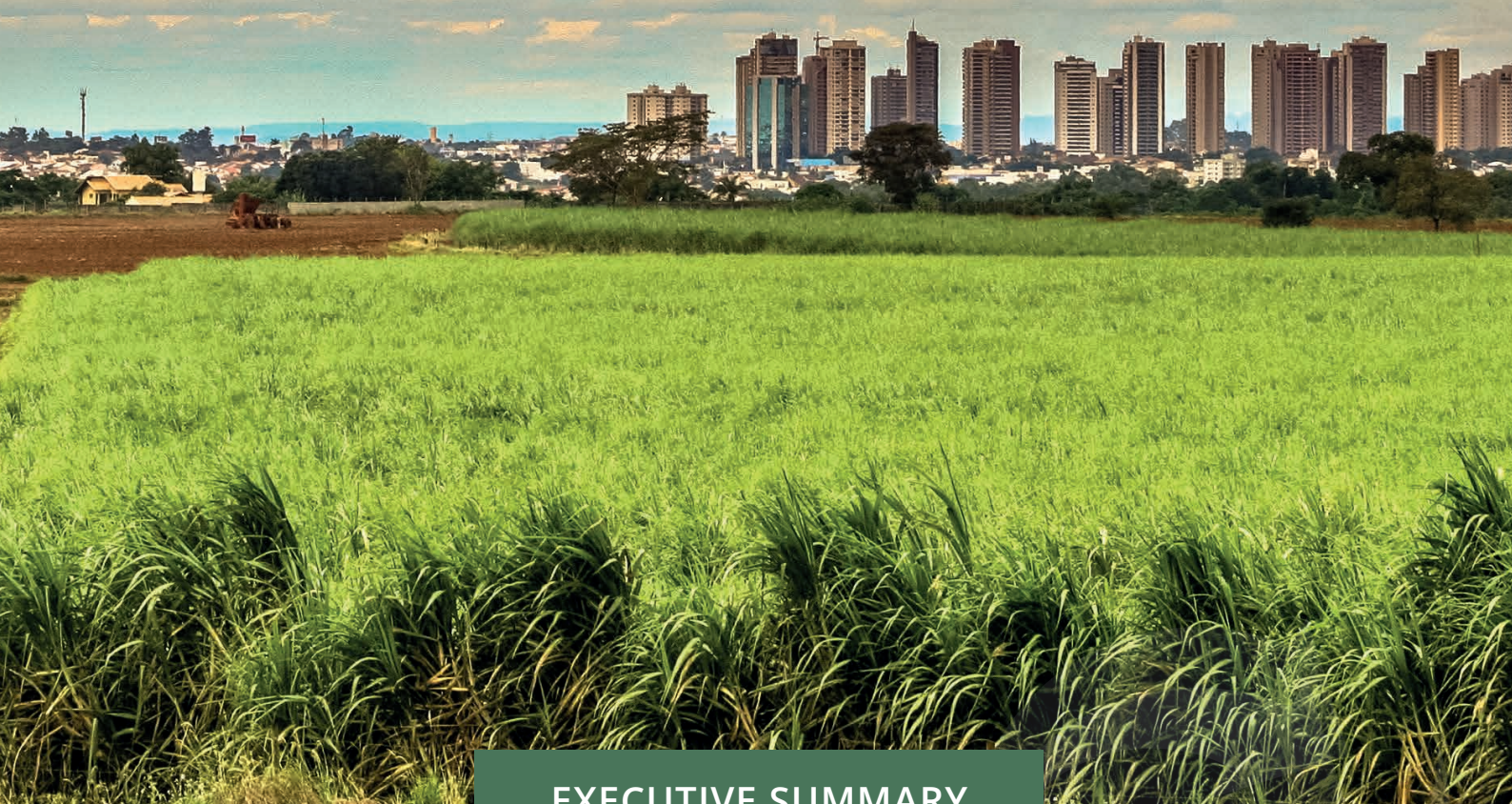




WHAT MAKES URBAN FOOD POLICY HAPPEN?

Insights from five case studies



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



According to the United Nations, 54% of the world’s population were living in urban areas in 2016. This figure is predicted to rise as high as 66% by 2050. Cities will play an increasingly important role in addressing the challenges associated with global food systems, such as ensuring access to decent, nutritious food for all, mitigating climate change, combating the obesity epidemic, protecting rural livelihoods, and building infrastructure and resilience.

The need for cities to take a lead in sustainable food systems has been recognized at the global level, through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ‘New Urban Agenda’ adopted by the UN Habitat III conference in 2016. It has also been acknowledged by hundreds of cities around the world that have moved to develop and deliver **urban food policies** in the last two decades.

Urban food policies are concerted actions on the part of city government to address food-related challenges. They usually target specific concerns (e.g. obesity, food waste), although they can bring benefits in several policy areas. Some are deliberately designed to address multiple food systems challenges, which requires coordinated working between city departments and policy areas, and the establishment of novel governance structures.

FIGURE 1 – MULTIPLE ENTRY POINTS FOR URBAN FOOD POLICY



Good practices in urban food policy are being documented and shared among cities through initiatives such as the 2015 Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, the C40 Food Systems Network, the EUROCI-TIES food working group, national inter-city networks, as well as a growing number of publications and conferences.

The present report adds to this growing knowledge base through in-depth analysis of how urban food policies have been initiated, developed, adopted and implemented in five cities around the world. Applying a political economy lens, the report asks the following questions:

1. What factors have enabled urban food policies to be developed and delivered?
2. What are the barriers to developing and delivering these policies?
3. What can be learned from these experiences for cities at different stages of policy development about how to harness the enablers and overcome barriers to make change happen?

The case studies

I) BELO HORIZONTE (BRAZIL): TACKLING FOOD SECURITY FOR TWO DECADES THROUGH A STATE-LED ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEM

The city of Belo Horizonte is renowned worldwide as a pioneer in city-level policy to address food insecurity. In 1992, it established a dedicated food agency within city government, known as **SMASAN — the Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security** — and devised an integrated set of policies and programmes that amount to a state-led alternative food system to ensure everyone in the city could access quality, nutritious and safe food. Belo Horizonte's approach to food security is remarkable in that it has endured for 25 years with its core principals intact. While changes in political leadership have led to declining influence over the city agenda, SMA-SAN's longevity is attributed largely to its institutionalization within city government, a cadre of civil servants who have played a crucial role in upholding the core principals, and institutionalization of the right to food at the federal level, leading to supportive federal policy frameworks.

II) NAIROBI (KENYA): ENABLING URBAN AGRICULTURE THANKS TO CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISM

As in many East African cities, urban agriculture has been a fixture of life for many poor residents of Nairobi since the late 1970s and 1980s. Yet for many years the city government was vigorously opposed to it, and farmers' efforts to feed their families were regularly disrupted by law enforcers on public health and land ownership grounds. **The Nairobi Urban Agriculture Promotion and Regulation Act 2015** represents a major u-turn in attitudes to urban food production at the city level. It came on the back of sustained civil society efforts to unify and amplify the voices of urban farmers and to build supportive relationships with national civil servants. Moreover, institutional change following the adoption of Kenya's constitution in 2010 led to the devolution of agriculture and reassignment of civil servants who were supportive of, and knowledgeable about, urban agriculture to the newly-formed Nairobi City County Government.

III) AMSTERDAM (THE NETHERLANDS): TAKING ON THE STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF OBESITY

Childhood overweight and obesity is a problem for Amsterdam — and particularly for lower income and immigrant families. The city takes the view that when people are unable to maintain a healthy weight of their own accord it is the (local) government's job to help them. Moreover, childhood obesity is not seen solely as a public health matter, but under the **Amsterdam Approach to Healthy Weight** all departments are required to help prevent obesity by addressing the structural causes and to return children who are already obese to a healthy weight. In so doing, the city has worked to identify and deliver what it can do within its powers, and taken a different approach to obesity to the national government level. To enable learning by doing, and to provide sound evidence to support continuing political commitment across electoral cycles, impacts are continuously monitored, and adjustments made to the policy where necessary.

IV) GOLDEN HORSESHOE (CANADA): PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR CITY REGION COOPERATION

In the rapidly urbanizing region around Toronto, the viability of the food and farming sector is under threat. **The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Plan** is a ten-year strategy to address challenges faced by the sector and to ensure it remains a major contributor to the local economy. The Plan, and the Alliance that oversees it, provide a platform for cooperation between urban and rural areas and between the seven municipalities that make up the Golden Horseshoe, all of which have made a political and financial commitment to it. The Plan has brought a range of food system actors around the table — although not all views on the future of agriculture can easily be reconciled. The Golden Horseshoe experience underlines the value of building collaborative practice within a city region, establishing clear terms of reference and mediation tools, and forging innovative governance structures to manage the complexities of food system planning at the urban-rural interface.

V) DETROIT (USA): OBTAINING NEW POWERS TO REGULATE AND PROMOTE URBAN AGRICULTURE

As jobs, tax dollars and residents have slowly drained out of Detroit over the last 60 years, urban agriculture has provided seeds of revival, putting vacant land to use and bringing fresh food to many neighbourhoods. Through the 2013 **Urban Agriculture Ordinance**, the city moved to regulate and support this burgeoning activity, but first it had to negotiate with state actors and the farm lobby, as previously authority over all agricultural activities, in both urban and rural areas, fell under the Michigan Right to Farm Act. Detroit's experience illustrates the pivotal role played by individuals with legitimacy in both urban planning circles and the food growing community, as well as the necessity of altering the policy process to enable participation of actors with divergent views. With take-up of the new permits still low, this case study also underlines the challenges of delivering a policy that truly engages and inspires the confidence of those it intends to benefit.

How change happens

What insights can be drawn from these experiences about how to make change happen? From the case studies, the analysis identified 15 factors that frequently played a role in enabling policies to be developed and delivered.

FACTORS THAT ENABLE THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF URBAN FOOD POLICIES

ENABLER 1

Background and baseline research supports the design of urban food policies that address relevant challenges, are relevant to the needs of intended users, and are effective and achievable.

ENABLER 2

Monitoring of impacts and collection of data throughout implementation provides inputs that enable gradual improvements to policy and evidence of efficacy which helps secure ongoing political commitment.

ENABLER 3

Continual or regular review and renewal of policies enables them to be adapted to take on board learned experiences and new data.

ENABLER 4

Having the requisite powers and responsibilities enables city governments to innovate without constraints and take initiatives as they see fit.

ENABLER 5

Supportive policy at the national level provides helpful institutional structures, programmes and accompanying budgets, paving the way for effective development and delivery of urban food policies.

ENABLER 6

Embedding policies in a strategic institutional home — i.e. a department or other entity that provides channels of influence to decisionmakers — promotes awareness and engagement within government and increases the likelihood that the policies will endure.

ENABLER 7

The establishment of a dedicated governance body to oversee urban food policies helps lock in multi-actor collaboration and promote accountability — although effective bodies can take a variety of forms.

ENABLER 8

Sustained engagement of multiple city government departments allows for urban food policies to be written into other departments' plans, unlocks partnership opportunities and increases access to target groups — thereby laying the ground for effective implementation.

ENABLER 9

Multi-actor, multi-sector, inclusive policy processes help to mobilize resources, increase problem-solving capacity, promote public-private partnerships and bring a variety of important perspectives to the table, particularly when previously marginalized groups are included.

ENABLER 10

Acknowledgement and careful management of conflicts and ideological differences throughout the policy process significantly boosts the prospects of building consensus in policy development and smooth delivery.

ENABLER 11

Securing some funding from city government helps to ensure a minimum of implementation and a degree of ownership of urban food policies.

ENABLER 12

Securing additional funding from other sources — including from partnering city departments, national governments or external partners — enables full implementation; careful management of funds ensures value for money.

ENABLER 13

When funding comes without strings attached — i.e. without restrictive conditions that require the policy to conform to other agendas or to the needs of the funding body — the objectives of urban food policies are more likely to be reached.

ENABLER 14

Political commitment of city government is crucial for an urban food policy to be considered as such. Leveraging that commitment, such as by institutionalizing the policy within city strategies, can build legitimacy and promote engagement across departments.

ENABLER 15

Sustained political commitment across electoral cycles is key to building continuity and allowing complex issues to be addressed over a longer timeframe.

THE REPORT ALSO IDENTIFIES KEY INSIGHTS INTO HOW CITIES AT VARIOUS STAGES OF FOOD POLICY DEVELOPMENT CAN HARNESS THESE ENABLERS TO MOVE THE PROCESS FORWARD IN THEIR LOCAL CONTEXT:

1) MONITORING AND LEARNING.

There is great benefit in collating or gathering data on the food challenges faced by the city, both at the outset and in relation to the policy's impact, so as to inform gradual policy improvement ('learning by doing').

How to do this? Where there are time and cost limitations, the involvement of academic experts may be helpful. Establishing clear indicators is also crucial to ensuring that new data are collected, and that progress and outcomes can be monitored on a regular or continuous basis throughout implementation. In addition, it is helpful to learn from the solutions other cities have put in place and to regularly review the effectiveness of approaches taken.

2) LEVERAGING CITY POWERS.

It is important to identify and leverage the powers the city has to address the food challenges at hand.

How to do this? This includes, first and foremost, looking at the services that the city already delivers (e.g. school meals, waste management, education, social welfare, etc.) to see how the food policy can be incorporated for little additional cost by changing working practices. It can also be helpful to audit all the powers or policy levers that exist at the city level, across all policy areas — whilst identifying the limits so as to avoid wasting time and resources on issues that are outside of the city's control. Lastly, where higher-level policies constrain or counteract local policy the city can lobby for change, and where the city lacks the authority to implement the policy it wants, it can seek to negotiate new powers.

3) ENGAGEMENT ACROSS GOVERNMENT.

The engagement and active involvement of all relevant city departments is crucial for developing ambitious, integrated policy that yields synergistic outcomes on multiple fronts.

How to do this? It can be necessary to make a strong case for the relevance of food to each department's core agenda, drawing on research and providing training in order to break down prejudices. It can also be helpful to find small ways to cooperate initially, and then expand to larger partnerships once the benefits are established. In addition, establishing an institutional home that makes a clear statement about the policy's strategic importance or provides channels of influence may promote awareness within city government and can help ensure it is taken seriously. Finally, a governance body that promotes accountability and efficiency ensures input from a wide range of actors — including those from multiple city departments — and provides rules of engagement.

4) INCLUDING EVERYBODY.

Involvement of communities, civil society and actors from across the food system facilitates development of policy that is relevant to needs and has a broad support base to help with implementation.

How to do this? To ensure wide involvement, it can be helpful to start forging trusting relationships with potential participants as soon as possible, to carry out an 'inventory' of desirable actors or organizations, and to draw on professional networks to invite them. As for involving communities, one way is to hold public meet-

ings or consultations to listen to the perspectives of people who will be most affected by the policy. While participatory policy processes, by their very nature, include actors with conflicting interests and ideologies, this need not be problematic if the conflicts are acknowledged and managed through skilled leadership, facilitation or mediation.

5) USING FUNDS WISELY.

It is vital to obtain sufficient funds for implementation, and to make optimum use of them.

How to do this? Some core funding from city government is important to enable a minimum of implementation. To obtain this, it can be helpful to point to the potential multiple benefits across city agendas that make the policy good value for money. It is usually necessary to secure additional funding from other sources, however, such as national programmes, charitable foundations, other city departments' budgets, and private sector or civil society partners. Whatever the source, the agenda and interests of the funder should be considered, in case there are restrictions attached to how money can be used. Streamlining with other city programmes avoids duplicate spending, and close continual monitoring of outcomes ensures no funds are wasted on ineffective actions. Lastly, where funds are perpetually short, there may be creative ways to work towards objectives without requiring funds, such as incorporating the policy into existing service delivery.

6) SECURING POLITICAL COMMITMENT.

There is a fundamental need to obtain, leverage and sustain political commitment to the policy.

How to do this? Political champions who make the case for a policy by framing it around city priorities are very helpful for obtaining commitment. Thereafter, as part of implementation, commitment should be leveraged by writing the policy into city strategies, both over-arching and relating to specific policy areas. This helps to institutionalize the policy and provides protection against electoral change. Other ways of promoting sustained political commitment, particularly across electoral cycles, include: using data from monitoring and evaluation to show value; establishing co-governance with non-public sector organizations so the policy is not tied to a single politician or party; retaining a dedicated cadre of civil servants so as to uphold core values and transfer information; and courting positive publicity so that the policy is associated with the city's reputation.

Where next for urban food policy?

While the five cases profiled in this report offer interesting insights, there is clearly scope to go further — both in terms of what cities can do and in terms of building the knowledge base on urban food policies.

If cities are to make a lasting, structural contribution to addressing the spectrum of food issues associated with urbanization, or to make meaningful progress towards meeting the SDGs, they need to become more innovative and ambitious. It may therefore be essential to **progress from single policies to more deliberately integrated policies** that take stock of all the food-related issues in the urban context and all the policy levers at a city's disposal. It is also clear that there are numerous lessons that can be learned by cities when they **look outward to other urban food policy initiatives** in their own countries and regions, and elsewhere in the world. **Deeper cooperation between cities and the research community** can also pave the way for a shift from reporting of practical experiences to the proactive problem-solving that is required to facilitate more ambitious urban food policies.

There is also a need for **more interconnected food policymaking between the local, national and international levels**. At present, these 'vertical' disconnects mean that there is a risk of undermining progress, and opportunities for mutual support are missed. There is also a

need for research into **innovative governance arrangements**, in order to understand how to facilitate meaningful participation among different social groups. In particular, as seen through the case studies, it is crucial to understand how **private sector involvement** can be facilitated without compromising the desired outcomes and the participation of other sectors and actors who work in different ways.

The case studies also raise questions about **territorial integration at the urban-rural interface** and how to build thriving City Region Food Systems - questions that must be further studied. In particular, more must be known about how neighbouring municipalities can best work together, and what governance models are relevant for **middle-sized and smaller towns** as well as major conurbations and capitals. There is also a case for better evaluation of the impacts of urban food policies, including the development of **targeted indicators** that enable benefits to be clearly attributed to the policy initiative in question. Several efforts to develop indicators and monitoring frameworks are underway by organizations and networks, including FAO Food for Cities, RUAF, the Nordic Cities EAT Network, and the UK Sustainable Food Cities Network. It is vital that the outputs of this work be transmitted to cities — in both the global North and South — for it enable them to 'learn by doing' and ultimately strengthen urban food policy design and delivery.

