

Strategies, Methods and Outlook

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Chapter 4: Urban food systems strategies



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Extract

For much of the last century, food remained largely off the agenda of city planners and policy makers. Municipal officials viewed food production as a rural issue and food availability a private sector concern (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 1999). With the exception of conventional planning functions like the location of terminal markets or food production facilities, the planning literature ignored food and planners had neither the mandate nor the academic training to address urban food issues (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000). Within the past several years, this has changed rather dramatically as cities have engaged in food systems planning and policy making. While the objectives, scope and design of food plans, policies and programs vary from place to place, officials no longer ignore the food system because it is increasingly understood as essential to public health, social equity, economic development and environmental sustainability. Cities are attempting to connect municipal domains that are related to food but which have traditionally been divided into discrete administrative agencies that have not considered food to be their responsibility (Wiskerke 2009). A number have reached beyond municipal boundaries with policies to procure food from regional producers and develop processing and distribution infrastructure to support regional farmers. Others have targeted particular policy issues, such as modifying zoning ordinances to accommodate urban agriculture (Hodgson et al. 2011; American Planning Association 2007; Pothukuchi 2009) or creating incentives for the sale of fruits and vegetables in low-income neighborhoods (Mukherji and Morales 2010; Hodgson 2012).

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Urban agriculture is not the solution to our food system crisis, but it is and will continue to be an essential component of how every country, region, and city restructures their food system to make fresh food supplies more available, resilient and ecologically friendly. It is my deeply held belief that just like energy, transportation and internet access, the processes of food production and distribution are integral parts of the urban ecosystem. Cities must start supporting urban agriculture in targeted ways that work with the urban agriculture industry to transform our current food production and distribution systems into smarter, more localized, and more resilient networks. Discussion. Leave your comment below, or reply to others. Sustainable food systems are those food systems that aim at achieving food and nutrition security and healthy diets while limiting negative environmental impacts and improving socio-economic welfare. Sustainable food systems are therefore protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as human well-being and social equity. As such they provide culturally acceptable, economically fair, affordable, nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy foods in a way that balances agro-ecosystem integrity and social welfare. With this definition we recognize that: Delivering affordable, nut Sustainable Food in urban communities URBACT network focuses on developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems. The urban population tends to be out of touch with agricultural production, and the city food culture increasingly moves towards fast food, processed foods, distributed by large centralised supermarket chains that are not rooted in the life of city neighbourhoods. Many consumers, especially, those with low incomes, eat too little fruit and vegetables because of the cost but also because it is not part of their culture and habits. For example, waste reduction strategies have an impact on cleaner, healthier local environments while contributing to overall waste reduction at urban and regional level. Recycling and composting can achieve similar impacts.