

What can cities do to make their relations with rural areas more sustainable?

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The context: food consumption and urbanisation

- An increasingly and rapidly urbanising world, but with large regional differences
- Changing diets driven by higher incomes but also growing constraints (especially for poor groups) > double burden of malnutrition
- Diverse and segmented food systems, reflecting changing production and distribution systems
- Climate change impacts whole systems

Rural transformations, food production and consumption

- Growing number of rural net food buyers – both middle-class and poor groups
- Changes in food production: urban demand benefits mainly perishables (efficient access to markets is critical)
- Agriculture a declining % of rural incomes (for positive and negative reasons)
- Equitable and sustainable rural development is supported by diversified local economies (access to non-farm employment)

Spatial relations between urban and rural areas

- Spatial flows and the importance of proximity: urban demand supports family farming – but mainly of perishable foods
- Use and management of natural resources is critical– but boundaries (and governance) are often unclear
- Proximity (short chains) makes sense!
- But it can also deepen rising sub-national inequalities and rural food insecurity in ‘lagging’ regions

Sectoral rural-urban relations

- Rural development is not only about agriculture (but often based on it)
- Local processing and transformation supports diversified local economies and poverty reduction
- Stronger rural-urban linkages help reduce regional inequalities
- If 'urban' is not only cities but networks of urban centres that include small towns, a focus on the nature of food systems (and their location) makes sense!

Governance and institutions

- Food security and natural resources as public goods – require public interventions of two kinds
- Municipal engagement with procurement, distribution and production in urban and peri-urban areas (short chains)
- System/networks with multiple actors and institutions that cut across boundaries and spaces, and regional/territorial approaches
- A different architecture for the governance of rural-urban relations?

How to achieve more sustainable rural-urban relations?

- Context-specific – urban centres are diverse, and so are rural areas
- Better understanding of rural transformations and regional disparities
- Understand the differences between staple and perishable food systems
- Focus on low-income groups and inequality
- Build alliances of local institutions, both urban and rural

Thank you!