

Food security and Nutritional Impacts of Urbanization and Rural Transformation on Lower Income Groups

Background

1. In 2016, as part of its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW), CFS held a Forum on Urbanization, Rural Transformation and Implications for Food Security and Nutrition “to reach a better understanding of the issues at stake, identify key areas for policy attention and possible roles for CFS”. This provided a first opportunity for CFS stakeholders to exchange views and practical experiences on the challenges, opportunities and positive outcomes that they have seen as a result of more integrated rural-urban approaches.
2. As a follow-up to the forum, in 2017 experiences and effective policy approaches were compiled in a document which was presented at CFS 44 in 2017. On that occasion, the Committee agreed that CFS should continue its work in 2018 to carry out further exploratory work through two intersessional events in order to determine at CFS 45 the feasibility of working towards policy convergence to support governments and other stakeholders at the national and local level in addressing food security and nutrition within the context of changing rural-urban dynamics.
3. The two agreed focus areas for the intersessional events are: i) *the food security and nutrition impacts of urbanization and rural transformation on lower income groups (smallholders, landless, net food buyers, informal sector traders, low income urban consumers) and how to address them and their root causes;* and ii) *promoting youth and women engagement and employment in food systems across the rural-urban continuum, including linking producers to markets.*

Rationale

4. Governments and the international community have traditionally tended to focus on urban and rural development as separate ‘sectors’ and challenges, usually through the lenses of sectoral progress and to the detriment of the rural sector. In the last period the adoption of various CFS policy outcomes, as well as of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, have marked a significant and unprecedented shift towards de-constructing the rural-urban dichotomy, and reframing the policy environment around a more holistic approach to integrated policies.
5. Urbanization and rural transformation present both challenges and opportunities for achieving food security and nutrition - through the development of agriculture and food systems, including the following (or lack thereof):
 - a) Achieving productivity increases (in agriculture and/or a shift to other sectors) as a result of access to urban consumers, improved technologies, inclusive investment or increased capacity;
 - b) Employment/income generation through involvement in agriculture and food systems, and non-farm activities, as well as closer proximity to markets and integration into value chains;
 - c) Access to more diverse products, including nutritious but also sometimes to less nutritious food;

- d) Access to quality natural resources such as land, water, air and biodiversity (safe, healthy, and productive); and
- e) Access (or lack thereof) to quality services, financial resources, infrastructure and information;
- f) Land management and land tenure safety in urban, peri-urban and rural areas;
- g) Integrated territorial planning approach strengthening small and intermediate towns and their functions.

6. It is impossible to address one of these areas without impacting one of the other areas. There is general agreement that sustained economic growth is difficult to achieve without urbanization. Similarly, the transformation of rural areas stimulated by interactions with urban centers can deliver positive impacts in terms of access to services and higher incomes, and help contribute to more sustainable urbanization and strong linkages between urban, peri-urban and urban areas. Urbanization however can also mean that certain areas are left behind, create pockets of poverty and oblige people to escape from their areas of origin in search of better living conditions if linkages with rural areas are not strengthened. It is only by addressing the root causes behind the push factors (forced migration and people's mobility as a result of food insecurity and malnutrition, crises, conflicts, shocks) that it will be possible to break the vulnerability cycle and take full advantage of the opportunities presented by urbanization and rural transformation.

7. Though poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition remain concentrated in rural areas, there is also a need to better understand these challenges in urban areas. The most inequitable outcomes of urbanization and rural transformation will occur when the same social groups are excluded and further marginalized. These are often low-income groups, including those that face social exclusion for reasons such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, religion, or social class. All of such groups face the risk of being excluded from opportunities afforded by greater access to services and infrastructure, employment and income generating opportunities and access to nutritious foods emerging from access to locally produced food in rural areas that are not linked efficiently with urban consumers.

8. Vulnerable and marginalized individuals and communities in rural and urban areas often include individuals employed in informal sectors, occupied in temporary jobs, newly established settlers (including refugees and internally displaced people), landless or land scarce households, indigenous peoples, agricultural workers, female headed households, youth and children, elderly, disabled, and sick, and low income and resource poor households. Each of these individuals/groups are made more vulnerable by crises including natural disasters, civil unrest, and the outbreak of disease but also price fluctuations and precarious working conditions. Identifying vulnerabilities of individuals or groups, and how they differ in rural and urban areas, assists with how best to include all in designing policies that are able to address their needs. However, the lack of disaggregated and localized (fine-scale) data and the greater mobility of people between/within rural-urban areas makes it difficult to identify and target interventions to the most vulnerable.

9. The 2017 process within CFS in the context of the 2016-17 MYPoW to collect experiences and effective policy approaches was useful to inform stakeholders about the record of existing policies, programs and practices that support better rural-urban linkages for FSN. However it also revealed a number of knowledge gaps and the necessity to focus on issues of economic and social equity for



those who are most marginalized in decision making process and who suffer disproportionately from food insecurity and nutrition challenges. While strengthening rural-urban linkages showed to benefit some people, many were not in a position to exploit arising opportunities, programs and policies.

10. From a policy perspective, it is of critical importance to identify the vulnerabilities and capabilities of groups and individuals and understand how they differ in rural and urban areas. It is equally critical to understand and alleviate the constraints in realizing the potential of agricultural and food systems along the urban-rural continuum. Finally it is important to understand how interlinkages and vulnerabilities are likely to evolve in the context of ever-changing rural-urban dynamics. In this way it will be both more efficient and equitable to design policies that address local and wider needs of people in both urban and rural areas, also by including these populations in the policy-making processes, and in the design on implementation strategies at local, national, regional and international levels.

11. The process is linked to a number of interrelated SDGs including SDG 2 on eradicating hunger and malnutrition and increasing smallholder incomes and productivity, 8 on promoting sustainable economic growth and productive employment, 10 on reducing inequalities, and 11 on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

First Intersessional Event – 6 April 2018 (all day) – Red Room, FAO Headquarters

12. The first intersessional event, taking place on 6 April 2018, will represent an opportunity to explore and discuss the food security and nutrition impacts of urbanization and rural transformation on lower income groups (smallholders, landless, net food buyers, informal sector traders, low income urban consumers) and how to address them and their root causes, including structural challenges and barriers and effective policy approaches.

13. Based on the outcomes of the work carried out in 2016 and 2017, the event should contribute to integrate additional knowledge and new research findings, focusing on issues where CFS has a particular value to add, recognizing there are many institutions working on the topic and new knowledge being generated.

14. The preparatory work, the contributions provided and the discussions taking place during the intersessional event will inform the expected 2018 plenary decision on the feasibility of future CFS work towards policy convergence on this matter.

Format: An informal interactive dialogue is desirable for this event, which should ensure that experiences, successes and lessons learnt on addressing the specific needs of low income groups are shared.

Outcome: A Chair's summary will be prepared for each of the two events, followed by an overall Chair's summary which will be informally shared with CFS stakeholders before its submission to CFS 45 with the purpose of facilitating an informed discussion around the CFS added value and feasibility of a policy convergence exercise.

Next Steps



15. The intersessional events will be organized with the support of the Technical Task Team (TTT) set up in 2016 and seeking input from the HLPE Steering Committee. They will build on the outcomes of the work carried out by CFS in 2016 through the Forum on Urbanization, Rural Transformation and Implications for Food Security and Nutrition, and the work of the OEWG in 2017 to compile experiences and effective policy approaches in addressing food security and nutrition in the context of changing rural-urban dynamics.

16. This concept note, once finalized by the Bureau in consultation with its Advisory Group, will guide the work of the TTT which will be responsible for the selection of the technical materials for the event and the identification of the ongoing work and the international organizations that are presently working on topics related to food security and nutrition issues and which might provide substantial contributions to this CFS workstream.