

Enhancing sustainability of rural food governance in the City Region contexts

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Executive summary

The objective of this policy brief is to ensure greater food security and social inclusion for the local population, to validate the new approach of the City Region Food System as a new method for analysing the relationship between the rural and

Issue

Globalization has dramatically increased the cross-border movement of commodities and goods, therefore increasing the complexity of global food supply. In 2008, the world's urban population surpassed the rural one, changing the trend between urban and rural relationships related to food systems (FAO). This has consequently increased urbanization, resulting in some deep socio-economic shifts in rural-urban development. These shifts constitute a major challenge to food and nutrition security, having an effect on rural-urban dynamics (FAO&RUAF,2015) impacting 5.5 billion people who still live within contiguous rural-urban spaces. To address these issues, some studies analyse the composition of a regional food system as a combination of Conventional and Alternative Food Networks (Brinkley 2018, Dubbeling, Carey, & Hochberg, 2016). However, these two networks show discrepancies, resulting in a profound disjunction between rural and urban development in the food system even though the areas remain connected by ecological, social and economic aspects. As a result, the governance of rural-urban context has become more complex and diversified and the rural development policy lacks responsiveness to its needs.

There is a need to rethink the common conception of food systems in regional contexts, in a way in which rural, peri-urban and urban areas are incorporated in the same territorial planning to

urban context, to integrate the triple bottom-line in a sustainability assessment framework.

The policy brief addresses policy makers on three territorial levels: federal, provincial and municipal, in a case suited for the city of Brandon in Manitoba province, Canada.



increase the level of equity in food access and security for local people. The combination of spatial differences and economic diversity should become the focus of a robust formulation of policy framework about rural and urban contexts. From here, the need of a bottom-up approach in which national government provides support for regional and municipal policy makers and stakeholders to implement local strategies (OECD 2016). In order to improve food and nutrition security, urban and rural producers' living standards and environmental quality of the food systems, it is essential to improve urban-rural linkages. In accordance to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nation Capital

Development Found (UNCDF) food security and nutrition policy are closely related to territorial development because they:

“. . . place the functioning of institutions (formal and informal) at the core of development initiatives and require strong local participation and representation in the policy process—implying strong vertical and horizontal coordination—to define local priorities” (OECD/FAO/UNCDF, 2016).

The report encourages a multi-dimensional, cross sectorial, and inclusive participation from all actors across multiple scales, highlighting the need of policy response for better planning food strategies. This approach includes all local food activities that represent an alternative from the global food model, which often sees food travelling long distances before it reaches the consumer. The local food network plays a key role and involves relationships between food

Background information – City Region Food System approach and the Sustainability Assessment Framework

Building a more inclusive and sustainable city region food system means strengthening links and connections between urban and rural dimension. As it was highlighted before, this is possible when implementing a multi-dimensional, cross sectorial, and inclusive participation from all actors across multiple scales. To achieve improved performances in food systems, it will be crucial for actors involved in the decision making process to assess food system's sustainability, defining measurable targets based on common objectives and creating an integrated framework to monitor the environmental, economic and social dimension of sustainability. To do that, adequate parameters based on a *Life Cycle Thinking* approach are needed, resulting as the most rigorous way in assessing the sustainability of a process, a product, or a service. By looking at every stage of the life cycle and by integrating the three dimensions of sustainability in a Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment (LCSA) which combines Environmental Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), Life Cycle Costing (LCC) and Social LCA (UNEP 2011), it will be possible to integrate these parameters

producers, processing industry, distributors, retailers, and consumers in a particular place, where they work together to increase food security and ensure economic, ecological and social sustainability of a community.

The City Region Food System (FAO 2014) approach, thanks to its holistic and integrated nature, could be a helpful analytical basis to enhance food systems dynamics. This approach leads to the idea that public goods management, e.g. environmental resources, needs better transparency and democratic participation (FAO 2015).

The City Region Food System approach fosters a better food policy and appropriate regulations in the context of urban and territorial planning, focusing its attention both on rural and urban context, and on their interactions and linkages.

within the framework of City Region Food System building a strong toolkit for assessing the development level of the food system. It is in fact crucial to evaluate the context surrounding the food system under analysis in order to develop, select and implement regulatory, operational and policy measures able to effectively address specific needs and problems related to that particular territorial context. Below is an example of sustainability assessment framework composed by impact categories and indicators for each of the mentioned sustainability dimensions: environmental, economic and social.

The selection of the impact categories and indicators comes from an iterative process from a literature review to experimental research based on real case studies observation. Starting from a hypothetical inventory of the flows having environmental, economic and social impacts in a City Region Food System, the most significant indicators have been selected on a SMART criteria basis (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-related), concerning food systems in urban and regional contexts, not only related to agricultural production and processing industry but also regarding distribution and retail, food consumption and food waste management. The

result of the process is a set of indicators capable of representing the level of environmental quality

, economic development, food security & access and social inclusion in a City-Region Food System.

Environmental dimension



Air Quality

- CO₂
- PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}
- CO, N₂O, NO_x, POPs
- Heavy metals



Land Use

- Agricultural land surface



Resource Depletion

- Water use (mean)
- Energy use (mean)
- Waste production (mean)



Biodiversity

- Green areas
- Species diversity

Economic dimension



Economic growth

- GDP pro capite
- GDP/CO₂ emissions



Food production

- Local production value
- Product diversity
- Food waste



Market

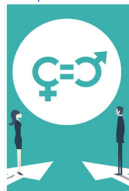
- Food prices
- Local food business
- Local markets
- Workers in food sector
- Touristic activity value
- Activity typologies

Social dimension



Food access & security

- Healthy food access
- Food assistance
- Families under food insecurity conditions
- Family self-sufficiency in food production & production value



Social inclusion in community activities

- Involvement of rural communities
- Participation of vulnerable groups
- Gender equality



Education

- Food education projects
- Consumer awareness



Social acceptance

- Consensus in sustainable CRFS initiatives

Recommendations

Within this framework several recommendations can be developed both for stakeholders involved in regional and local level, including also the public audience **in terms of policy implications and impacts.**

The policy-makers at the regional and local level, the province of Manitoba and the municipality of Brandon, in terms of policy implications should look at:

1. using assessment matrix tool indicators such as the sustainability indicators proposed above, to evaluate the level of efficiency of their local food system.
2. prioritising hotspot interventions based on the social, economic and environmental considerations of the indicators level;
3. understanding the key role that stakeholders (e.g., owners of local markets, owners of local organizations, food producers, logistic sector etc.) should play in this framework to improve the strategic planning of City Region Food System for the Manitoba province: a more inclusive multilevel food governance can improve the horizontal and vertical food system policy and planning;
4. focusing on a place-based approach where food exchanges occur;
5. giving more attention to the role of alternative food networks in ensuring equal food security and access to the local population. The role of local communities in the economic development of rural areas is essential in order to improve the food security level of rural places.
6. In terms of impacts: this approach can help local authorities, and stakeholders to strengthen their understanding of the current functioning of a food system in the context of a city region, within which rural and urban areas and communities are directly linked, including all the pillars of sustainability.
7. The suggested sustainability assessment toolkit for the environmental/social/economic dimensions pushes authorities to develop a strategic framework to improve food security and food accessibility in the rural-urban context giving a framework of assessment.
8. A better coordination and integration between local, provincial and national level of governance can strengthen the City Region Food System Framework.

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