



25
June
2025

24th

Community of Practice

ORGANIZERS

Policy Legislation and Governance Section (PLGS)
& Urban Basic Services Section (UBSS)

Advancing Urban-Rural Linkages for Resilient Food Systems

.....

KEY MESSAGES

[Watch the recording](#)



Objectives

The session was set up with the following **objectives**:

- Discuss how strengthening urban-rural linkages through local, traditional, and farmers' markets contributes to both food systems resilience and climate adaptation/mitigation.
- To exchange policy-relevant experiences and field practices linking local food systems and climate action through integrated urban-rural approaches
- Identify key messages to inform UN-Habitat and partners' contribution to **UNFSS+4, CFS 53 and COP30**, particularly on sustainable urbanization, inclusive food systems, and climate resilience.

The session brought together participants from a wide range of sectors, UN agencies, international organizations, local governments, market actors, development agencies, academia, and civil society, creating a rich space for dialogue and cross-sectoral learning.

Speakers



Ann Trevenen-Jones (PhD)

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)



J. Robin Moon (PhD)

World Farmers Markets Coalition (WorldFMC)



Giaime Berti

Resilient Local Food Supply Chains Alliance (RLFSC)



Sharon Gil

Cities Lead, UN Environment Program (UNEP)



Dennis Andaye

Team lead, Regional Coalition for Farmers Market, MAMi project, Kenya



Furaha Abwe (PhD)

Urban Planning for community Change in Tanzania



Sensasi Boney

Advocates for Public Spaces in Uganda



Remy Sietchiping

UN-Habitat, PLGS



Grace Githiri

UN-Habitat, PLGS

Key Messages

Below is a synthesis of the **key messages** from the session:



- » **Urban-Rural Linkages are central for Resilient Food Systems:** Strengthening urban-rural relationships across the food system—from **production to consumption and waste**—is essential in addressing challenges like climate change, land degradation, urbanization, and inequality. **Urban and rural areas are interdependent**, and food systems provide a practical, multi-lever transformative entry point for systemically reinforcing these linkages. Food systems must thus be inclusive, healthy, sustainable, and rooted in **local social and ecological realities including realities of those facing fragility or crisis**.



- » **Food Markets and Local Food Systems are Anchors of Inclusion, Equity and Economic Vitality:** **Local food markets**—whether farmers, **traditional, digital, informal or formal**—serve as critical hubs of **economic, social, and cultural exchange**. They are places which facilitate routine, close and more equitable **connections between producers, retailers and consumers**; as well as supporting shortened supply chains, prosperous livelihoods, while also fostering **inclusion for women, youth, and smallholder farmers**. In **crisis-affected areas**, markets can also serve as safe, stabilizing public spaces; and in times of social, economic and/or environmental polycrisis they have proven to be places of locally driven, social protection. Strengthening these systems requires investment in both **hard infrastructure** (e.g., sanitation, water, storage) and **soft infrastructure** (e.g., digital tools, financial services, empowered local agency and local governance).



- » **Environmental Sustainability and Circular Food Systems:** **Reducing food loss and waste is essential for aligning food systems** with social, economic and environmental goals. Solutions such as composting, effective food redistribution, and waste-to-energy models can valorise waste through multiple, diverse pathways of opportunity into resources – thereby contributing to circular economies with co-benefits like better access to healthy diets, green job creation and climate mitigation. These interventions must be **integrated into local and national food strategies** and be supported by consistent, quality data collection, innovative, “fit for purpose” climate finance, integrated land use planning, and urban-rural governance.



- » **Territorial Approaches for Systemic Resilience:** Over-reliance on industrialized and fragmented food systems limits resilience. A shift toward **territorial and regional food systems**—grounded in self-reliance, mutual support, and **coordinated governance**—is needed. **Balanced relationships between urban centres and their surrounding rural areas** should be prioritized, **avoiding the marginalisation of rural territories**. **Food policy councils** and other **multistakeholder** mechanisms can serve as essential tools for **territorial coordination** connecting local governments, communities and landscapes.



» **Empowering Local Initiatives and Communities:** Locally led initiatives—particularly those involving **women, youth, and smallholder farmers**—are vital to **strengthening territorial food systems**. Case examples from **Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda** highlighted how **local projects improve livelihoods, build trust, and increase access to affordable, nutritious food**. Supporting these efforts requires targeted **financing, policy alignment, and recognition of informal actors and networks** that form the backbone of local food systems.



» **Elevating Local Voices to the Global Stage:** **Global policy dialogues** need to be **inclusive of local realities**. Local experiences across territories are where sustainable development intersects with **operational and cultural knowledge**. Upcoming platforms such as the UN Food Systems Stocktake (UNFSS+4), CFS 53, the Milan Pact Global Forum, and UNFCCC COP30 present strategic opportunities to **advocate for the value of urban-rural inclusive food relationships and equity** and ensure that grassroots perspectives are incorporated into national and global narratives of food systems transformation at scale.



» **Financing and Enabling Innovation at the Local Level:** Effective transformation requires investing in **localized food system innovations**. This includes innovative “fit for purpose” **financial support for smallholder farmers, informal and formal market and last mile food vendors, local enterprises, and market infrastructure and basic services**, as well as **digital solutions** that can enhance traceability, logistics, and access to real-time market data. However, **technology must be complemented by physical infrastructure and human capacity development** to ensure equitable outcomes and avoid deepening digital divides.



» **Systems-Based and Integrated Food Governance:** Food systems must be approached as **cross-cutting and interconnected with other governance** “sector” and development areas—from spatial planning to public health, climate adaptation, mobility, and economic inclusion. **Policies and strategies** need to reflect the interconnected flows of goods, services, people, and knowledge **across urban and rural territories**. Social innovation and participatory governance approaches can help create inclusive, adaptive systems responsive to local needs.



» **Policy Coherence and Government Leadership at All Levels:** **Governments at all levels—local, national, and regional**—play a central role in **shaping inclusive and climate-smart food systems**. Policy coherence, strategic investments in infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks that legitimize diverse food market forms are needed. **Ensuring strong urban-rural coordination and embedding food governance into broader territorial planning** is key to long-term sustainability and equity.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi, 00100, Kenya

<https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/urban-rural-linkages/>

www.unhabitat.org

X | @ : UNHABITAT

UN-HABITAT WORLDWIDE | UN-HABITAT

www.urbanpolicyplatform.org

X | @ : @UNHABITAT_PLGS

UNHABITAT PLGS

Watch the recording

