



Forthcoming IPES-Food report

What drives urban food policy: Lessons learned from five case studies

Cities are emerging as major players in forging equitable, resilient and sustainable food systems. Increasingly, city governments around the globe are using their powers to address pressing food-related problems, such as food and nutrition insecurity and obesity. Moreover, through integrated, cross-departmental action, they are using food to help resolve wider issues, including environmental challenges, health and social inequalities, poverty, poor infrastructure, and a sluggish economy.

While there is an existing, growing body of knowledge on *what* can be done in cities to improve food system outcomes, we know a lot less about *how* it can be done.

A forthcoming report on urban food policies from the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) examines how food policies have been developed and delivered in several cities of the Global North and the South. The main questions it addresses are:

- What have been the factors that have driven policy forward?
- What are the barriers to putting these policies in place and how have they been overcome?
- What can be learned from these experiences for addressing the multitude of food-related challenges in cities today, from waste to obesity, climate change to food safety?

On the basis of interviews and extensive review of existing documentation of five urban food policies, this report will answer these questions by examining the interplay of different political and economic interests, different sectors and different levels of governance that come together to shape these policy pathways. We call this the ‘political economy’ of policy-making.

Although there are many differences between the cases, the report draws broad lessons for maximising opportunities and overcoming barriers. The intention is to provide a useful and inspiring resource for policy makers, advocates, civil society and the private sector.

Five recommendations for developing and delivering urban food policies

1. Develop strong inter-sectoral actor networks to serve as channels for policy influence and the basis for partnerships.
2. Forge partnerships between municipal departments and external organisations to provide co-governance, and resources and capacity for implementation.
3. Establish formal governance and terms of reference to ensure all actors know what is expected of them and are held accountable.
4. Conduct research and monitor impacts to demonstrate efficacy, and to identify and remedy unexpected impacts.
5. Focus on areas of local government control and influence -- but seek synergies with the national level where possible.

Five examples of urban food policies

Amsterdam takes on the structural causes of obesity

The Amsterdam Approach to Healthy Weight is a policy that aims to eradicate childhood obesity, which disproportionately affects lower income and immigrant families. It seeks to address the structural causes of overweight within the urban milieu, including the food environment. While programme delivery involves a spectrum of city departments and non-local government organisations, at the community level there was little interest in addressing obesity while families faced more immediate financial and housing-related problems. Consequently, programme leaders adapted their approach to address lifestyle in tandem with income-related issues.

Nairobi's U-turn on urban agriculture

The Nairobi Urban Agriculture Promotion and Regulation Act 2015 is designed to facilitate urban agriculture in the Kenyan capital. Until recently Nairobi's local government vigorously opposed urban agriculture; civil society built supportive relationships with national civil servants over several decades, while training city farmers and giving them a voice. The situation changed when agriculture was devolved to the County level, and pro-urban agriculture civil servants were re-assigned to Nairobi. New national legislation requires Counties to devise a regulatory framework for urban agriculture

Golden Horseshoe's city-region food plan

The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Plan is a ten-year strategy to ensure the economic viability of the sector in Canada's Golden Horseshoe, the rapidly urbanising region around Toronto on the shores of Lake Ontario. It is an example of inter-municipal cooperation, having been adopted by seven local governments including large cities and rural communities. With many actions hinging on the urban-rural interface, reconciling the different perspectives of actors on each side has required open-minded mediation and willingness to adapt procedures.

How we selected the case studies

The report's authors deliberately selected case studies that would make for interesting political economy analysis. Moreover, the selection includes a mix of single policies or legislation, policies shared between several municipalities, and integrated programmes with formal governance structures. They illustrate a range of entry points for urban food policy, including food and nutrition security, local economy, public health, and urban regeneration. Some are implemented by local government from the top-down; some came about in response to bottom-up community advocacy; while others were driven by farmers or other food system actors. All, however, have the explicit and formal support of the local government.

Belo Horizonte's commitment to the universal Right to Food

Belo Horizonte's Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security (SMASAN) has created a state-led alternative food system that aims to ensure that everyone can access decent, nutritious and safe food. It was created by the former Mayor, and civil society and the private sector serve as programme partners and have roles in governance. SMASAN's influence has declined with political leadership changes, but civil servants defend its core principles, and the policy benefits from supportive federal framing.

Detroit's pursuit of local authority over urban agriculture

Detroit's Urban Agriculture Ordinances are instruments of the city's pro-urban agriculture policy, enabling it to control food production on its turf. Drawing up the ordinances was problematic as the planning department faced barriers from state legislation that removed its local authority over farming-related matters. It negotiated with state-level authorities and the powerful farm lobby to work out an administrative fix that was approved via an unusual -- and controversial -- process.

*The full report will be published by IPES-Food in early 2017. It will be circulated via the IPES-Food newsletter and via social media: [@IPESfood](http://www.ipes-food.org/newsletter)
For more information please contact Nick Jacobs nick.jacobs@ipes-food.org,
Corinna Hawkes corinna.hawkes@city.ac.uk, or Jess Halliday jess@jesshalliday.com*