



Building Sustainable Agriculture for Food Security in the Euro-Mediterranean Area: Challenges and Policy Options

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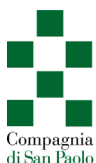


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12.

The Cross-national Coordination of Urban Food Policies in the Euro-Mediterranean Area: The Urban Food Policy Pact Initiative as a Model for Enhanced Food Security in the South Mediterranean Region

Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi and Cecilia Emma Sottilotta

INTRODUCTION

“Food security” is a multifaceted concept, lying at the crossroads of different fields. In the last few decades, it has come to the fore as a major source of concern for international, national and local policy-makers and scholars worldwide. In the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2010-11, food security has also gained further relevance in the context of Euro-Mediterranean relations (e.g., see IPEMED 2010, Hadj Nacer et al. 2013, Ayadi and Sessa 2013:4). In fact, as we shall see shortly, building sustainable agriculture for food security in the southern Mediterranean is (or rather, should be) a strategic top priority for domestic governments in the region as well as for the European Union. Before outlining the specific challenges which lie ahead within the framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations, however, it is timely to provide some preliminary conceptual clarifications. The objective of the first Section is to circumscribe the subject of the analysis by clarifying what it is meant here by “food security” and reviewing the main indicators used to assess micro and macro food security. The second Section explores the relationship between urbanization and food security. The third Section provides a snapshot of the current situation of urbanization and food security in the Southern Mediterranean region, with an eye to the main strategies implemented so far to cope with food insecurity at the urban level. Sections 4 through 6 describe the Urban Food

Policy Pact, the City of Milan's strategy in promoting wide participatory networks of municipalities for building sustainable food security. Section 7 explores the challenges and opportunities for the development of an enhanced form of decentralized cooperation directly engaging cities along the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean.

12.1 CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT OF FOOD SECURITY: AN OVERVIEW

A multidimensional and somewhat elusive concept, according to the definition adopted by the 1996 FAO World Food Summit Plan of Action, food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.¹ Thus, there are at least four dimensions to food security as defined by FAO: 1) availability of food; 2) stability of food supply over time; 3) access to available food; and 4) safety/quality of the available food supplies. Maxwell and Slater (2003:532) attribute the paternity of the contemporary concept of “food security” to Sen's work on poverty and famines (1981), which for the first time switched the attention from “food policies” in general to the issue of access/entitlement. In tracing the evolution of the concept, they recall three more definitions of food security: 1) “A basket of food, nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, procured in keeping with human dignity and enduring over time” (Oshaug 1985); 2) “Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (World Bank 1986); and 3) “A country and people are food secure when their food system operates efficiently in such a way as to remove the fear that there will not be enough to eat” (Maxwell 1988). Apparently, the definitions recalled epitomize the very diverse approaches vis-à-vis the establishment of conceptual boundaries for food security: for some, this catch-all term also encompasses culture and human dignity, others focus on the aspect of empowerment in terms of active, healthy life for the individual, while another crucial distinction also emerges, that between “micro” and “macro” food security, depending on whether the analysis hinges on the household or national level. Conceptual conundrums inevitably translate into

¹ For the full text of the Plan of Action see <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/W3613E/W3613E00.HTM>.

problems of measurement, as there are indeed many different ways to measure food security. As Pinstруп-Andersen (2008:5) points out, while measures of food security on the macro (i.e., national and global) level tend to look at the “supply side of the food equation”, with the risk of overlooking the fact that measuring availability is not the same thing as measuring access, on the micro level problems arise when it comes to accounting for different preferences of households with a given level of income and facing a certain set of food prices.

Macro food security is normally framed in terms of domestic demand, supply and market prices. As we shall see in the next section, proxies used to measure vulnerability in terms of macro food security include food-balance-sheet-derived indicators such as the value of food imports over total merchandise export, the cereal import dependency ratio, food and live-stock production indices, variability of food prices, dependency on food aid, political stability and absence of conflict (for a comprehensive overview, see Pangaribowo et al. 2013). However, food security in this sense should not be confused with food self-sufficiency, although the two terms are obviously intertwined. In fact, while the first is a broader concept, referring in particular to the overall availability and stability of food resources (e.g., also including those deriving from external trade and aid), the latter looks at the ability of a given country to produce food domestically. In some cases increasing food self-sufficiency can boost food security.² India, for instance, reduced its food insecurity by developing its domestic food grain production from 130 million tonnes in 1980 to over 240 million tonnes in 2010 (FAO 2011b:1). Nonetheless, it must be stressed that increasing domestic production is just one among various strategies available. According to the specific situation of a given country, for instance, it could be preferable to switch national resources from the production of food to that of goods for which that country has a comparative advantage on the global markets,³ or to implement a mixed strategy.⁴

² It should be noted, however, that there is a considerable difference between promoting food self-sufficiency by raising trade barriers to shield domestic production and, e.g., boosting domestic production to improve productivity. On the subject see Warr (2011).

³ Looking at the case of Egypt, Scobie (1981) finds that subtracting arable land from the cultivation of exportable cotton and switching it to the cultivation of wheat would increase food self-reliance but indeed decrease food availability, because the country has a comparative advantage in the cultivation of cotton.

⁴ Discussing the case of Bangladesh, Deb et al. (2009) suggest that the country should target self-sufficiency in rice production to satisfy domestic demand in normal production

The focus of “micro” food security is on the individual households, rather than on the country as a whole. Frankenberger (1992) draw a distinction between “process indicators” and “outcome indicators”, whereby the first refers to food supply and access, while the second tries to capture food consumption (see Table 12.1 below). Indicators derived from household expenditure surveys (HES) are widely used and include household daily food energy availability per capita, household diet diversity, and share of total household expenditure on food (Smith and Subandoro 2007). Measuring household food security is challenging in many respects, e.g., in terms of availability, adequacy and comparability of the data collected. It is indeed difficult to find a single template for a comprehensive assessment of food security to be applied to conduct cross-country comparisons.

Table 12.1. Indicators for micro (household) food security

Process Indicators		Outcome Indicators	
Reflecting Food Supply	Reflecting Food Access	Direct	Indirect
Meteorological data, information on natural resources, agricultural production data, agro-ecological models, food balance sheets, information on past management, information on markets and institutions, regional conflict and its consequences.	Strategies to cope with stress (assets, risk-minimizing strategies to assure some level of production, loss management, community inequalities, coping strategies patterns).	Household budget and consumption surveys, household perception of food security, food frequency assessments.	Storage estimates, subsistence potential ratio, nutritional status assessments.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Frankenberger (1992).

Customized methods and indicators are needed in order to meet the specific challenges posed at the sub-regional or local level. For instance, in analysing three food-security case studies, Egypt, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Tunisia, Smulders et al. (2013:33) call for the use of sub-national data-sets to ensure a thorough understanding of local contexts.

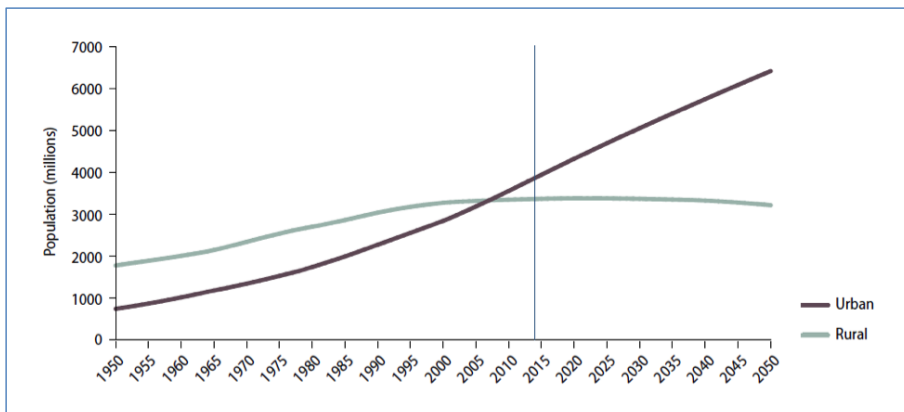
years, while in case of natural disaster or any other major events disrupting production, food security will depend on the international market and buffer stocks.

12.2 FOOD SECURITY AND URBANIZATION

Today, more people live in cities than in rural areas globally. Urbanization, defined as the share of a nation's population living in urban areas, has been growing constantly worldwide since the 1950s (see Figure 12.1). While currently 54% of the world population is made of urban dwellers, according to UN projections by 2015 only one third (34%) of global population will be rural, while two thirds (66%) will be urban. It is indeed an impressive shift, considering that the figures in the mid-20th century were approximately the reverse (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2014).

Cities are hubs of trade, industry, growth, knowledge-sharing and innovation. As stressed in the Medellin Declaration of the Seventh World Urban Forum, "Cities, as economic and productive innovation spaces, provide opportunities for improving access to resources and services, as well as options in the social, legal, economic, cultural and environmental fields" (United Nations 2014). Yet, the negative impacts of urbanization on agriculture and food security often receive more attention than the potentially positive ones. In this respect, it must be stressed that the source of possible negative externalities is not urbanization *per se*, but rather its mismanagement and the general lack of good "urban governance" (Pierre 1999).

Figure 12.1. Urban and rural population of the world, 1950-2050



Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2014:7).

The impact of urbanization on food security is manifold. A first aspect to highlight is the complex interaction between urbanization, poverty and socio-political unrest. As the share of poor urban residents has increased

over time (Ravallion et al. 2007), it comes as no surprise that the “food riots” that erupted in more than 20 countries worldwide in 2007-2008 were a predominantly urban phenomenon (Bush 2010:121). The positive correlation between a country’s level of urbanization and the odds of food riots was confirmed by empirical analyses (e.g., Berazneva and Lee 2013). Second, the social structure of households is generally different in the urban context vis-à-vis the rural one, with a normally higher ratio of children to adults, which puts more pressure on an income earner’s capacity to guarantee food security (WFP 2002:6). Third, in the urban context food is mostly purchased rather than produced directly, which makes urban dwellers more vulnerable to food price volatility and to negative variations in the employment rate: in order to afford food, urban residents need stable sources of income, yet they often work for low wages in informal or temporary jobs (IFPRI 2002, Satterthwaite 2004). Fourth, as widely recognized by policy-makers and scholars (IFRC 2007, World Bank 2010, Ziervogel and Frayne 2011, Verbyla et al. 2013), food security in urban areas critically depends also on the existence of adequate infrastructures such as piped distribution/transportation networks, and the provision of services such as health, education and shelter. Fifth, in the urban context where informal, community-based safety nets are weaker, access to official safety-net programmes plays an important role in ensuring food security (Ruel et al. 1998). Sixth, as cities expand, agricultural land is converted to residential or industrial use, which results in the crowding out of peri-urban agriculture and shift of agricultural production to less productive areas (Matuschke 2009:5). In this sense, it should also be considered that urban expansion produces changes in land value around the city, which in turn often results in land left vacant as the owners anticipate possible future gains from selling it or devoting it to non-agricultural uses (Satterthwaite et al. 2010:2815). Seventh, local authorities generally play a crucial role in urban waste management, a major problem in developing countries (Sefouhi et al. 2010) and one whose negative impact on agriculture and the environment is certainly relevant.⁵

⁵ Acknowledging the relevance of this issue, in the last few years the World Bank has intensified efforts in terms of financial support for solid waste management projects, e.g., with an Integrated Solid Waste Management Project in Tunisia (2007) and a Municipal Solid Waste Sector Development Policy Loan in Morocco (from 2008 onwards). A World Bank-backed Municipal Waste Management Project in Algeria was planned in 2003 but was subsequently dropped, while a Regional Solid Waste Management Project in Mashreq and Maghreb Countries launched in 2003 was financed by the European Commission, exe-

An in-depth analysis of each of the dimensions mentioned above would go beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, the complexity of the challenges they imply clearly emerges even at a superficial glance, suggesting that local authorities can play a pivotal role in the elaboration and implementation of food policies. In fact, the peculiarities of the urban dimension of food security call for a more integrated management of food policies, recognizing the specificities of each context but considering urban, peri-urban and rural systems as a *continuum* rather than separated realities. In promoting such a holistic approach to food, agriculture and cities, the FAO recommends the diffusion of “multi-level food system governance” (FAO 2011a), which means introducing innovative forms of participation in the elaboration and implementation of local food policies. As urban food demand is often satisfied through the external market rather than local supplies, local policy-makers can help shape alternative supply routes relying on supply chains which involve all the relevant stakeholders on the territorial level (municipalities, businesses, farmers, civil society in general).

Montague (2011) identifies four major clusters of activities by which local government can address the barriers to food security: a) urban planning in terms of land use, business mix and built environment; b) urban food production, including urban farms, community garden initiatives and domestic food production; c) peri-urban agriculture, e.g., boosting the preservation or retention of agricultural land in the peri-urban areas; and d) regulatory and fiscal powers, meaning that the local authorities can shape and apply byelaws in many spheres, from urban and peri-urban agriculture to food safety and marketplace outlets.

The growing shift in the attention of international policy makers toward the urban dimension of food security is epitomized by the recent launch of several initiatives in this sense, such as the 2012 United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) Statement on the Nutrition Safety of Urban Populations,⁶ the FAO’s Food for the Cities Multidisciplinary Initiative,⁷ the World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Cities Project, and the UNDP ART Initiative (Articulation of Territorial Networks for Sustainable Human Development).⁸

cuted by the World Bank and hosted by the Tunisian Solid Waste Management Agency (ANGED).

⁶ See UNSCN statement on *Nutrition Security of Urban Populations*, September 2012, http://www.unscn.org/en/announcements/other_announcements/?id=804.

⁷ See <http://www.fao.org/fcit>.

⁸ See http://europe.undp.org/content/geneva/en/home/partnerships_initiatives/

The trend towards the devising of holistic solutions combining issues such as urbanization, migration and food security is also epitomized by localized initiatives such as the one proposed by the World Vegetable Center research institute and funded by the Australian International Food Security Research Center and involving four African cities, namely Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa, Lilongwe and Maputo, with the creation of “peri-urban corridors” of production outside the cities.⁹ Another relevant example is the four-year “Cities Farming for the Future” programme run by the RUAF Foundation with the specific purpose of changing the attitudes of the local stakeholders and authorities of the cities involved vis-à-vis urban agriculture, for better policy-making.¹⁰ What is important to underscore here is that a fruitful implementation of all of the activities mentioned can be boosted by means of city-to-city decentralized cooperation, whose potentialities in terms of knowledge dissemination and best-practice diffusion have started to be recognized over the last few years. In 2002, for instance, following the signing of an agreement with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the FAO launched its Decentralized Cooperation Program (DCP), which found immediate application with encouraging results.¹¹ The activities carried out by the Municipality of Milan (see Section 4) represent a notable example of how this kind of cooperation can contribute to setting up a sharing “learning environment between and across local/regional jurisdictions and their respective associations, both urban and rural” (FAO 2011a:32-3).

To sum up, considering that the complex and intertwining issues revolving around food security require multilevel governance, there are many ways in which the role of local authorities can be pivotal. However, this in turn requires that they have the capability, resources and legitimacy to enact this role. The formal allocation of powers and competences to local authorities largely depends on the constitutional and administrative arrangements of a country, aspects which are not easy to modify in the short term. Yet, it cannot be excluded that a *de facto* empowerment of

art-initiative.

⁹ For a description of the project, see van Vark (2013).

¹⁰ For the full text of the project’s final report, see <http://www.ruaf.org/projects/cities-farming-future-programme-cff>.

¹¹ For instance, in the cases of the Rome-Kigali Alliance for horticulture, Milan-Dakar’s Cooperation on micro-gardens, and the partnerships developed by the City of Montreuil (France) with the Yelimané area in Mali and the Hai Duong province in Vietnam. See <http://www.fao.org/tc/tcp>.

local authorities and substantial policy change can be conveyed by means of targeted decentralized cooperation projects that build awareness and fill knowledge gaps among local and even national policy-makers.¹²

12.3 URBANIZATION AND FOOD SECURITY IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AREA

Having outlined the main issues on the subject of food security and how it can be framed in terms of urban challenges, it is timely to turn our attention to the current situation in the Southern Mediterranean area. As highlighted in the first Section, building accurate tools to measure micro-food security is not an easy task, especially when the purpose is to carry out a cross-country comparison. Following Breisinger et al. (2010), we use the Global Hunger Index (GHI)¹³ to provide a rough idea of household food security in the Southern Mediterranean countries. Looking at the evolution of the GHI as an indicator of household food security, it is possible to notice an improvement in 2013 with respect to the past, with all of the countries under analysis scoring less than 5 along the dimension considered (see Table 12.2 below).

Still, it must be stressed that, as the GHI is a raw indicator of food security, more in-depth analyses may yield different results. In fact, the share of food expenditure in total income in Southern Mediterranean Countries (SMCs) is relatively high, i.e., 35 to 55%, which evokes exposure to food crises, such as in 2007-08, and price volatility (Camanzi et al. 2013). Indeed, a much less reassuring picture emerges also when we look at indicators of macro food security such as the cereal import dependency ratio or the value of food imports over total merchandise export.

¹² See for instance Hooton et al. (2007), a study on local policy change in Uganda showing that policy change at the local level ended up stimulating change at the national level.

¹³ The GHI presents a multidimensional measure of national, regional and global hunger based on the combination of three sub-dimensions: Proportion of Undernourished, Prevalence of Underweight in Children and Under-five Mortality Rate. The average of these three sub-dimensions results into a 100-point scale on which zero is the best score (no hunger) and 100 the worst. Values lower than 5 reflect low hunger, values between 5.0 and 9.9 reflect moderate hunger, values between 10.0 and 19.9 indicate a serious situation, values between 20.0 and 29.9 are alarming, and values of 30.0 or higher are considered extremely alarming. See von Grebmer et al. (2012).

Table 12.2. Global Hunger Index for Southern Mediterranean countries 1990-2013

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2013
	(data from 1988-92)	(data from 1993-97)	(data from 1998-02)	(data from 2003-07)	(data from 2008-12)
Algeria	7.0	7.7	5.3	<5	<5
Egypt	7.0	6.2	5.2	<5	<5
Libya	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
Morocco	7.8	6.9	6.2	6.5	<5
Tunisia	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5

Source: von Grebmer et al. (2013).

Figure 12.2 (in the Appendix) provides a snapshot of the cereal import dependency ratio in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Libya, Algeria and Tunisia fare particularly poorly, with Morocco and Egypt doing better especially in the last few years and clustering around a 30-50% ratio together with other Northern Mediterranean countries, among which France unsurprisingly scores the lowest.

The value of food imports over total merchandise export reflects another facet of macro food security, conveying information about a country's overall ability to pay for food imports through the export of merchandise. Figure 12.3 (in the Appendix) summarizes the situation of Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia between 1992 and 2011.

It is interesting to contrast this indicator with the cereal import dependency ratio. First of all, it is possible to notice a trend towards convergence in the last few years. Moreover, Algeria and Tunisia fare better than Egypt and Morocco.

It must be noted that, especially for Algeria, a low score reflects high reliance on exports of gas and oil to pay for food imports. In this respect it should also be recalled that, while under most circumstances oil-exporting countries are more insulated from increases in food commodities than non-exporters, if oil prices decrease and food prices increase (e.g., in the case of a major drought at a time when oil prices are particularly low), oil-exporters will be less able to finance imports in case of future price shocks (World Bank, FAO and IFAD 2009).

Considering that today the Southern Mediterranean area, one of the most water-scarce and dry regions in the world, is extremely exposed in terms of climate change, the overall picture is one of definite vulnerability. Against this backdrop, a first glance at the urbanization dynamics in

the Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries reveals a substantially homogeneous situation, with the notable exception of Egypt whose share of rural population appears to be larger and constant (see Figures 12.4 and 12.5 in the Appendix).

As a matter of fact, the positive urbanization trends in the Euro-Mediterranean area are strikingly similar, epitomizing the expansion pressures faced by cities in SMCs (see Figure 12.4 in the Appendix).

Of the 190 million people added to the population of the Mediterranean area in the 1970-2010 period, 163 million live in towns: urban population (i.e., towns exceeding 10,000 inhabitants) increased 1.9% per year during that time span, from 152 million to 315 million, with an estimated total of 385 million by 2025, and more than 74% of this growth took place in the south and east, where urban growth from 1970 to 2010 averaged 3.1% a year (GRID-Arendal 2013). In light of the complex interplay between urbanization and food-related issues (see Section 2), it clearly emerges how any forward-looking strategy for ensuring food security in SMCs needs to take into account the urban dimension.

The Arab uprisings strongly brought this point to the attention of domestic and international policy-makers, as the need to feed “a hungry and potentially volatile population close to the centres of power”¹⁴ came to the fore as a major political priority.

Another crucial issue emerges in this respect with regard to the role of local administrations. As already discussed, the local governments can indeed play a pivotal role in ensuring food security in the urban context. Yet, in order to do so, they need to be actively involved in strategic planning and policy-making. This means that at least some extent of fiscal decentralization in the government structure is required in order for the local authorities to have the power and legitimacy necessary to take the lead in local policy-making. But is this the case in the SMCs? In general, it can be said that the public administration system in the region is highly centralized, with more or less complex webs of deconcentrated field offices of line agencies: most decisions are taken at the central government while the role of subnational authorities is circumscribed and focused on carrying out centrally made decisions (Tosun and Yilmaz 2008:7).

Existing empirical evidence suggests that, other things being equal,

¹⁴ Scott Drimie’s remarks at the conference on “Migration, Urbanization and Food Securities in Cities of the Global South”, 26-27 November 2012, Cape Town, South Africa. See the conference report: <http://www.afsun.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/conferencereportforweb.pdf>.

the larger the share of a country's population living in urban areas, the less centralized should be the state and local sector (Oates and Wallis 1988:14). Still, as is the case for the MNCs, urbanization does not automatically trigger decentralization (see Figure 12.5 in the Appendix). Critical issues hindering decentralization and local governance in SMCs encompass long-term historical legacies (such as the centralizing tradition of the Ottoman Empire) as well as socio-political factors such as patronage (Anderson 1987). Thus, even after the Arab uprisings, the margin of manoeuvre for local authorities to take part in the formulation of food policies is limited by structural constraints.

This is clearly in stark contrast with how food policies can be handled at the local level in EU countries, under the principle of subsidiarity whereby in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union acts "only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level".¹⁵

It is not surprising then if among the strategies¹⁶ adopted by SMCs in the last few years to tackle food security issues, it is very difficult to find initiatives specifically devoted to and carried out by cities. Eventually, as effectively summarized by Jari (2010:26), "for decentralization to be effective and local authorities' institutions to become more autonomous, it is necessary to give due attention to revenue generation and appropriate fiscal reforms and not just administrative and political decentralization". Ambitious administrative and fiscal reforms would be needed to reach such an objective. Nonetheless, as past experiments of decentralized cooperation have shown (see Section 2), a process of empowerment can be triggered even in absence of large-scale institutional reforms if local governments are actively involved in the cross-national formulation and implementation of food policies.

Recently, actions auguring an enhanced role of local governments have started to gain momentum in the wider Mediterranean region. In 2013, an

¹⁵ See the Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, art. 5.3.

¹⁶ Strategies to cope with food insecurity include land grabbing, i.e., the acquisition of farmland in developing countries by other countries seeking to ensure their food supplies (see Braun and Meinzen-Dick 2009), agricultural policy reforms to spur productivity, such as those implemented in the 1980s in many MENA countries, as well as the introduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in order to protect the national producers (see Breisinger et al. 2010:20).

initiative supported by the Arab Urban Development Institute, the World Bank and the Center for Mediterranean Integration brought together mayors and ministers of urban and local administration from Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and the Palestinian Territories to discuss urban governance issues. In 2012, the main outcome of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM)¹⁷ plenary session held in Bari, Italy, was a call for the extension of the Covenant of Mayors,¹⁸ a pact to fight global warming, to the South Mediterranean region (see Section 5). Such initiatives suggest that the urgent need for local authorities to play a pivotal role in meeting global challenges is starting to surface in the policy agendas of both European and South Mediterranean countries.

While for the reasons outlined above the MNCs today seem to be fertile ground in this sense, it should be noticed that to date no specific initiative has been undertaken to cement Euro-Mediterranean relations by fostering decentralized cooperation on food security issues. Building a solid network of Euro-Mediterranean cities for food security would allow these cities to devise and carry out concrete projects. In this sense, the City of Milan provides an interesting case study on how local authorities can pursue active policies to raise awareness on the territorial dimension of food security. Thus, in the next sections, we will provide a detailed account of Milan's experience as an example of food policy planning by a municipal government. The main objective of this case study is to exemplify the steps that need to be undertaken in order to promote a process with relevant ramifications in terms of cross-national cooperation.

12.4 ADVOCATING GLOBALLY FOR URBAN FOOD POLICIES: THE ROAD TO EXPO 2015 MILAN

Over the last few months Milan has rapidly become one of the most active cities in advocating for the promotion of sustainable urban food policies

¹⁷ ARLEM is a forum for political debate and an integral part of the governance structure of the Union for the Mediterranean, representing its territorial dimension.

¹⁸ The Covenant of Mayors is the first European Commission's initiative directly targeting the local authorities and their citizens to take action against global warming, whose signatories commit to go beyond EU objectives in terms of CO₂ emissions reduction. See <http://www.eumayors.eu>.

worldwide. Such an effort is closely connected with the major international event the Italian city is to host in 2015, Expo 2015 Milan. In March 2008 Milan's candidature was chosen by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE)¹⁹ as the venue for the 2015 edition of the Universal Exposition.

The themes chosen for the Expo address several of the nutrition and food security challenges discussed above. In fact, participants have been asked to focus on the issue by selecting one of the following 7 sub-themes: Science for Food Safety, Security and Quality; Innovation in the Agro Food Supply Chain; Technology for Agriculture and Biodiversity; Dietary Education; Solidarity and Cooperation on Food; Food for Better Lifestyles; and Food in the World's Cultures and Ethnic Groups.

Despite the political turnover at the head of the Municipality, which shifted in June 2011 from Letizia Moratti's centre-right coalition to Giuliano Pisapia's centre-left one, the initiative has been strongly supported by the new administration. In order to fully deploy the potential of the theme and to capitalize on the large number of Expo participants – more than 140 countries, setting a new record – the City administration launched its most ambitious international initiative early in 2014, to be implemented through a proactive, participatory approach directly involving partner cities all over the world.

On 6 February 2014 at the C40²⁰ Cities Mayors Summit in Johannesburg, mayor Pisapia announced the initiative, stressing the health, social and economic benefits of a new approach to nutrition. In Johannesburg, Pisapia presented the dual path chosen by Milan's administration: firstly, the development and implementation of a food policy for Milan – following the lead of other cities such as London, Toronto and Melbourne – while engaging other major cities of the world to focus on their food system and to use it as an analytical dimension to measure their sustainability, equity and livability, just as Milan was starting to do. The results of the process were to be included in a "Milan Protocol" whose signing ceremony would be held during the Expo 2015 semester. The second objective, which represents the focus of our analysis, is to widen the networks Milan is already

¹⁹ BIE is the intergovernmental organization in charge of overseeing the calendar, the bidding, the selection and the organization of World and International Expos.

²⁰ Created in 2005 by former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) is a network of 69 cities taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For further information see <http://www.c40.org>.

part of: its twinning and cooperation agreements,²¹ Eurocities²² and the C40 itself. In fact, its involvement within the C40, whose Europe Regional Direction is currently hosted in the City of Milan's International Relations Office, was a primary source of inspiration for Milan's network-building activity.

Advocating for an urban approach to food policy through these networks was considered as a first step towards a wider, participatory network of partners – both local governments and research institutions – to maximize positive spillover for the widest possible numbers of citizens in the world. The planetary dimension of such an approach is often reiterated in Milan's public information, which links it to the actions of the UN system – in particular FAO and WFP – and to global debates over development issues, such as the definition of the new post-2015 Millennium Development Goals.

12.5 THE URBAN FOOD POLICY PACT

The Municipality of Milan wished to create, during EXPO and indeed the whole of the year 2015-16, an open space for discussion, particularly at the city/territorial level and involving several key actors, to assemble guidelines on the issues of food development policy and sustainable pathways towards local best practices to guarantee food security and sovereignty.²³ The Milan Protocol has been conceived as the main ini-

²¹ For a list of Milan's Twin Cities, see http://www.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/ist/it/amministrazione/internazionali/Accordi_gemellaggio.

²² Eurocities is the network of major European cities created in 1986 by the mayors of Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam. Now including 130 cities in 35 European countries, Eurocities addresses a wide range of policy areas affecting the day-to-day lives of Europe's citizens. For further information see <http://www.eurocities.eu>.

²³ The concept of *food sovereignty* as opposed to food security refers to “the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production”. This definition was elaborated by the Peoples Food Sovereignty Network, an international network of social movements, small-scale farmers, workers, environmental and consumer organiza-

tiative of the City administration on this topic. Renamed the Urban Food Policy Pact (UFPP), it has been designed as a participative global effort to define and adopt a common standard regarding food security and nutrition at the urban level. It can also be defined as a “territorial approach to the food systems”, being conceived to address the issue of nutrition and sustainability in the urban context, first and foremost in the middle income countries.²⁴ The main purpose of such an initiative is to develop solutions for the new patterns of hunger, as well as to determine the best path towards a more equitable and sustainable way of urban living. In order to achieve this goal, the Pact has been presented as a tool to harmonize all rules and best practices linked to food production, distribution and consumption at the urban level, define new motivating targets and monitoring indicators, and support all mayors in their daily work to make their cities more resilient to both hunger and CO₂ emissions. For this reason, Mayor Pisapia, through the Municipality’s International Relations department, invited a first group of cities with which Milan had close ties to join Milan in this project and consider the idea of starting a process that may lead to the elaboration of a food policy for their own territory.

In building its network of partners, Milan divided the cities into two groups, according to their level of implementation of food policies. The most experienced cities, like London or Melbourne, have been involved in a permanent advisory group that may support Milan and other cities willing to capitalize on their good practices and their advice.

The first step was extending an invitation to the fellow administrations to identify a representative to participate in preliminary consultative activities to get acquainted with other cities’ experiences on how to build a food policy, and to set out a framework for the Urban Food Policy Pact. These preliminary activities consist of three or four “webinars” and one meeting, to be held in London. The official kick-off of the UFPP project took place on 30 September 2014: on that date, the City of Milan held an introductory online webinar to provide participating cities with an overview of the project and propose a roadmap for subsequent steps. To date, thirty municipalities²⁵ have joined the network, allowing participants to

tions, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on food sovereignty issues (see Patel 2009).

²⁴ It is interesting to recall that the Southern Mediterranean countries fall within this category, making the UFPP a suitable example of a network including them.

²⁵ They are: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bilbao, Bogotá, Boston, Chicago, Curitiba, Daegu,

share and discuss best practices, goals and challenges and ultimately to determine a common standard for urban food policies.

The editing of the Pact will hinge on four main themes: a) the creation of three international working groups (Nutrition, Access to Food, and Environment); b) the definition of issues to be addressed; c) a first drafting of the Pact expected to take place in February 2015 in London; d) the adoption of the final version of the document to be presented to other cities in October 2015 in Milan at an international event for the signature of the Pact.

The process initiated by the City of Milan benefits from previous experiences of local authorities using a pact to formalize their commitment towards certain shared monitorable objectives. The three main examples – directly recalled during the first webinar – are the Covenant of Mayors, the Mexico City Pact on “Global Cities Covenant on Climate”²⁶ and the Compact of Mayors.²⁷

The most important source of inspiration, the Covenant of Mayors (see Section 3), was launched by the European Commission after the adoption, in 2008, of the EU Climate and Energy Package. It represents the mainstream European movement involving local and regional authorities in the fight against climate change.²⁸ The Covenant represents an encour-

Dakar, Frankfurt, Gent, Hanoi, Hong Kong, London, Malmö, Maputo, Medellin, Melbourne, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Niamey, Osaka, San Francisco, São Paulo, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, Turin, Toronto and Vancouver.

²⁶ The Mexico City Pact was launched at the World Mayors Summit on Climate that was held in Mexico City on 21 November 2010. The Pact has been signed by 338 cities around the world, which committed to 10 action points, including the reduction of local greenhouse gas emissions, the promotion of partnerships and city-to-city cooperation and the involvement of civil society in the fight against climate change. The text of the Pact is available online at <http://www.mexicocitypact.org/docs/el-texto-originalEN.php>.

²⁷ Launched at the UN Climate Summit held in New York on September 2014, “The Compact of Mayors is an agreement by city networks – and then by their members – to undertake a transparent and supportive approach to reduce city-level emissions, to reduce vulnerability and to enhance resilience to climate change, in a consistent and complementary manner to national level climate protection efforts”. See The Compact of Mayors Action Statement, <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/action-areas/#cities>. Signatory networks are: ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, C40 Climate Leadership Group and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

²⁸ The Covenant’s signatories committed to “go beyond the objectives set by the EU for 2020, reducing the CO2 emissions in our respective territories by at least 20%, through the implementation of a Sustainable Energy Action Plan for those areas of activity relevant to our mandates”.

aging experience epitomizing the ability of local governments to successfully network and advocate on a cross-national level in order to better achieve common goals.

12.6 BUILDING THE URBAN FOOD POLICY PACT: TOOLS AND PARTNERS

In fostering and nurturing an international consensus on a standard for urban food policies, the City of Milan has deployed a number of policy instruments. Apart from the above-mentioned ICT-based global consultation, Milan is managing an international campaigning and advocacy initiative. Through the EU-funded “Food Smart Cities for Development” project, Milan will coordinate a network of 12 municipalities in Europe, Africa and Latin America.²⁹ The European Commission recently granted its financial support (almost 2.7 million Euros) to the project, through its DEAR (Development, Education and Awareness Raising) programme.

Apart from building partnerships with local authorities, the City of Milan has sought to involve the wider not-for-profit sector based in its territory. The Food Smart Cities for Development project is in fact being implemented in cooperation with several NGOs, including the World Fair Trade Networks and Expo dei Popoli, an umbrella organization including NGOs and other civil society organizations working together on the implementation of the “*Forum dei Popoli*” (People’s Forum), which in June 2015 will gather in Milan dozens of international thematic networks working on food sovereignty and environmental justice. By convening these actors, the City of Milan aims at further involving and informing European citizens on development challenges and opportunities and on issues of nutrition at the local and global level.

Moreover, the activities implemented by the City of Milan benefit from a wide involvement of academia. The Expo Scientific Committee, created by mayor Pisapia in October 2012, is in charge of directly organizing or supporting a number of research and didactic activities, such as conferences, workshops, advocacy and awareness raising activities on the Expo theme “Feeding the Planet-Energies for Life”. Chaired by professor Claudia Sorlini, former dean of the Agriculture faculty of the University of Milan,

²⁹ Milan, Barcelona, Bilbao, Brugge, Gent, London, Marseille, Medellin-Antioquia, Thessaloniki, Turin, Utrecht.

the Committee includes representatives of each of Milan's universities, the Lombardia region, EXPO 2015 SpA (the company in charge of managing the Exposition) and the Italian Pavilion, as well as the Municipality.

Identification of Milan's own food system criticalities, challenges and opportunities, as well as the definition of a participatory process aiming at the choice of priorities, is being implemented through the collaboration of a renowned banking foundation, Fondazione Cariplo, which has an historical relationship with both academic and non-for-profit sectors of Milan and the Lombardia region. Territory, welfare, education, environment and health are the focus of Fondazione Cariplo's task, the results of which will be discussed and integrated by Milan residents before being eventually adopted by the Municipality. A third initiative, Laboratorio Expo,³⁰ has been implemented by Expo SpA (the company managing the Exposition) together with the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation. Laboratorio Expo consists of a network of universities of Milan and Lombardy and national and international institutes, formed to offer to the public high-level meetings and educational initiatives that explore specific topics linked to the Expo 2015 theme. The result, expected by 2015, is the publication of a report with recommendations for a more sustainable future.

Last but not least, the City of Milan, together with the Chamber of Commerce of Milan, Lombardia Region and Expo SpA, created the Milan Center for Food Law and Policy on 17 February 2014. Conceived as a tool to study, under a comparative approach, foreign, European and international food law, the Center aims at the creation of a close partnership with the UN and the EU, in order to define and support the adoption of an international covenant on "granted food", a shared framework of minimum international standards to be protected by law. This goal is expected to be implemented starting from 2015.

12.7 MILAN'S UFPP AS A MODEL FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

With the aim of stressing the common historical and cultural legacy of Euro-Mediterranean countries, the Mediterranean region will have its own

³⁰ See <http://www.expo2015.org/en/project/laboratorio-expo>.

pavilion at the Expo, called the “Bio-Mediterraneum Cluster”. It will host 11 countries: Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, San Marino, Serbia and Tunisia, with the *Regione Siciliana* (the regional administration of Sicily) coordinating the activities of the shared areas of the Cluster. The concept for this Cluster is based upon the cuisine of the Mediterranean; it sets out to celebrate the richness and variety of Mediterranean cuisine and present the social aspects of food all over the region: meals as a highly valuable aspect of social and cultural life, marked by ancient convivial rituals around the table – a bonding practice where differences such as age are surmounted. The similarities among participants are thus not limited to their shared climatic conditions – and therefore common local resources such as wheat, olives and fish, cooked in many different ways. “The Mediterranean culture is the bearer of alternative – and original values compared with those that have led society so far”, declared Ezechia Paolo Reale, Councillor of Agriculture for the Sicily Region.³¹ The Cluster will provide the opportunity to highlight an essential feature of the traditional Mediterranean diet: its reliance on sustainable agricultural biodiversity, primary cause of its healthfulness. Such an initiative exemplifies the existence of a fertile ground for decentralized cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The development of a territorial approach, such as the one advocated by Milan in the Southern Mediterranean, might help meet the demands expressed by citizens of the SMCs during and in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Increased political accountability, a closer connection between citizens and administration, and higher responsiveness by the government vis-à-vis the demands of the citizenry would be enhanced if local authorities had a say in shaping food policies. Unsurprisingly, food prices represented a recurring element in demonstrations, e.g., bread quickly became one of the symbols of Tunisian revolution. A territorial approach to food systems, based on a participatory and scientific process of identification of urban food policies, would provide a tailored answer to the new patterns of food deprivation in the region – like elsewhere – while assuring a more equitable and sustainable way of urban living. It could provide shared, resolute answers to the great challenges currently faced by countries in the region, linked to the urbanization patterns described above as well as to increasing sophistication of food production and in-

³¹ See www.expo2015.org/en/food--tradition--mediterranean-diet--sicily-to-manage-the-bio-mediterraneum-cluster.

tensive cultivation and breeding which, although valuable from a strictly economic standpoint, threatens to endanger the biodiversity equilibrium.

A territorial approach could also address the widespread demand for a new legitimacy based on territorial and personal proximity, after decades of political power spreading from a “centre” perceived as increasingly distant and unable to tackle citizens’ everyday needs. Its success would be therefore linked to the ability of city administrations to advocate for the importance of a food policy, nurturing the participation of citizenship in all stages of the process in order to define and implement a tailored approach to the project. Despite the importance of food and nutrition in each individual’s life, it would certainly be an error to assume that all kinds of food-related initiatives would be perceived as relevant for the population, whose formal and informal groups could on the contrary advocate for another agenda, should their contribution not be sufficiently taken into account. Starting from this awareness would help such projects avoid one of the main causes of failure of large-scale cooperation initiatives: the lack of popular backing, potentially causing the initiative to be set aside for electoral and consensus-building reasons.

Moreover, effective urban policies need sufficient funding to be correctly implemented. As already stressed, local government expenditures across the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region are the lowest in the world, for example only 3% in Jordan, 5% in Tunisia and 17% in Morocco (Bousquet 2013). Up until now, food policies have been an expression of the traditional highly centralized political structure, as in the case of Egypt’s National Food and Nutrition Policy and Strategy (2007-2017), developed by the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population and primarily implemented through a Nutrition unit within the Ministry and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Nutrition (UNICEF 2012).

Nevertheless, the strong willingness of mayors to commit to such a goal could partially overcome these limitations, as has indeed happened in the framework of other international networks of cities. An example is the introduction of child and youth policies in several cities of the region, thanks to the advocacy and coordination provided by a partnership between the World Bank and the Arab Urban Development Institute³² based in Riyadh, the technical and scientific arm of the Arab Towns Organization³³ (Al-Salloum et al. 2009).

³² See <http://www.araburban.com>.

³³ See <http://www.ato.net>.

Mediterranean coastal cities have also managed to implement effective cooperation initiatives in the framework of Medcities/Medcités,³⁴ a network created in Barcelona in November 1991 in order to foster partnerships on urban environmental issues. The network has proved to be a useful framework in the preparation for EU-funded projects such as USUDS,³⁵ launched in October 2011 to foster the creation of three new Urban Development Strategies in the cities of Sousse (Tunisia), Saida (Lebanon) and Larnaka (Cyprus) and to establish three Knowledge Transfer Centres based in the cities of Málaga (Spain), Al Fayhaa (Lebanon) and Sfax (Tunisia).

Another implication of a territorial approach to food security based on Euro-Mediterranean decentralized cooperation should also be considered. The process of building and effectively implementing a shared food policy could eventually represent a powerful tool for those advocating for a substantial rethinking of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). While creating little more than 1.5 % of EU total GDP, the agricultural sector still receives around 47% of the EU budget and is responsible for the highly criticized destruction of food produced in excess in order to avoid price dropping. Among possible reform solutions, it is worth mentioning Rodolfo Helg's recent contribution, which is based upon an analysis of Mediterranean food production. Helg's "tomato solution"³⁶ proposes the full liberalization of the import of agricultural goods from Southern Mediterranean countries, in order to strengthen those countries' economies while creating more jobs and thus reducing the extent of migration flows to European countries. This solution could also benefit European consumers – thanks to lower market prices – without affecting high standards of production in the Northern Mediterranean countries, thanks to their specificity, geographical indication and high quality. The solution would however be very hard to implement for political reasons, as Helg himself acknowledges, due to the costs related to a necessary conversion of certain crops in countries with influential agricultural sectors such as France, Italy and Germany.

Having defined the means to tackle such challenges, the Urban Food Policy Pact and Milan's international networking and advocating strategy will provide a model for how to eventually boost the empowerment of

³⁴ See <http://www.medcities.org>.

³⁵ See <http://www.usuds.org>.

³⁶ See Rodolfo Helg's presentation at the conference "Innovazione, Sviluppo e Democrazia nel Mediterraneo" held in Milan on 10 October 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbB0vpUNJWM>.

local government in the SMCs and raise awareness among both local governments and populations on the urgent need for a broader understanding of sustainability, whereby economic policy is implemented with an eye for socio-cultural and environmental specificities. In sum, the Urban Food Policy Pact model offers a tool to cope with the challenges of a high level of urbanization – an urgent issue in the Mediterranean basin. Unlike the majority of international networks, the proponent – although deeply committed – is not an expert in the field, and its invitation to other local authorities follows a participatory approach, which is almost impossible to be perceived as “imperialist”, “charitable” or “indulgent” by the national and local authorities of developing countries. As such, it could represent an effective stimulus for engaging partners in the process. The non-binding nature of the project should not diminish its impact, in particular with regard to its awareness-raising potential. The territorial approach outlined by Milan combines short-term, concrete actions taking place within a longer-term vision, both relying on the participation of citizens. Such an approach therefore has the potential to go beyond the common pattern of North-South cooperation, often lacking one of these two aspects, and to meet the specific needs of the region. A comparison between the stalemate of most top-down partnership initiatives in the Euro-Mediterranean region – starting from the Union for the Mediterranean – and the success of participatory, on-the ground activities – such as the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Institute’s Young Arab Voices³⁷ or the Goethe Institut’s Cultural Innovators Network³⁸ – serves to show the concrete feasibility of Milan’s proposal, which counters the two main visions about the future of food: increasing scarcity of food resources causing geopolitical turmoil vs. technological progress able to provide a quality nutrition for all. It foresees a future where the action of local governments relies on and benefits from the collaboration of a population well aware of the crucial importance of a fully sustainable food system.

CONCLUSION

The task of achieving food security in the Euro-Mediterranean region poses a number of urgent challenges. The Arab uprisings of 2010-11,

³⁷ See <http://www.youngarabvoices.org>.

³⁸ See <http://www.goethe.de/cin>.

one of whose main triggers was the region's reliance on food imports and the rising prices of agricultural goods, constitute a clear example of the close ties connecting food crises and socio-political disruption. In the SMCs as elsewhere, fast-paced urbanization intertwines with food security issues, magnifying them. Such complex challenges call for multi-level governance and in particular for an active involvement of local authorities in the elaboration and implementation of food policies. Yet, the highly centralized structure of the public administration system in the Southern Mediterranean region makes it difficult for local governments to play a relevant role in this sense. If specifically designed to engage Euro-Mediterranean cities, experiences such as the Urban Food Policy Pact promoted by the City of Milan could engender a *de facto* empowerment of local government across the region and boost positive synergies for the development of sustainable and integrated regional food security strategies.

A number of obstacles need to be overcome, including, but not limited to, the need to adapt the EU's CAP to the specific challenges characterizing the Euro-Mediterranean region. Yet, past – and present – experiences suggest that adopting a territorial approach might prove extremely fruitful in terms of enhanced food security, as well as cementing relations between the Southern and the Northern shores of the Mediterranean.

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