

URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES Newsletter

8th Edition | December 2024



EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear reader,

Welcome to the 8th edition of the UN-Habitat newsletter on urban-rural linkages! The latter half of 2024 has been a dynamic period, marked by significant milestones and advocacy efforts to advance the crucial topic on urban-rural linkages. This has been made possible through collaboration with diverse partners.

In this edition, we provide a comprehensive overview of the progress made since the 7th edition of the newsletter. We begin with a synthesis of the urban-rural linkages discussions at the recently concluded 12th session of World Urban Forum, highlighting key messages, takeaways and outcomes. This is followed by a summary of UN-Habitat's contribution to partner-led events, showcasing the shared commitment to strengthening urban-rural connections.

The newsletter also features insights from two key partners who share their perspectives on advancing integrated territorial development. Finally, we look ahead to upcoming opportunities and initiatives to keep the momentum going as we close the year.

Thank you for your continued interest and support in promoting urban-rural linkages for sustainable development.

Enjoy the read.

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In this issue



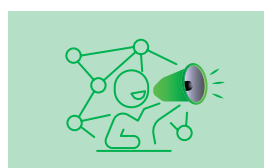
Urban-Rural Linkages @ WUF12



UN-Habitat at Key partner Events



Partner Perspectives



Stay updated



Urban-Rural Linkages @ WUF12

The 12th World Urban Forum (WUF12), held in Cairo from 4–8 November 2024, returned to Africa after two decades, focusing on the theme “It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities.” This landmark event emphasized community-led solutions for sustainable urban development, with housing as a central pillar in addressing global challenges like climate adaptation, rising living costs, and affordable public services.

Certainly, urban-rural linkages and its thematic components was a mainstay at WUF12 featuring in the main plenaries, dialogues, side events and even the urban expo, where different partners exhibited their works, for example showing their progress on urban-rural linkages and regeneration. Working with several partners, UN-Habitat through PLGS contributed to partner-led events covering a wide range of thematic areas on URL.

Through these more than 7 URL-related events add 5 bilateral consultations held, more than 200 participants were engaged, and now have more knowledge and capacity to implement efforts that enhance urban-rural linkages in their contexts. These events also enabled bilateral and informal consultations which not only established new partnerships but provided window to strengthen existing partnerships.

^ A WUF12 participant at the Shanghai University pavilion © UN-Habitat



It All Starts at Home:
Local Actions for
Sustainable Cities
and Communities



SNIPPET OF URL EVENTS AT WUF12

Tuesday 5th Nov

- » Journal Launch - Urban Regeneration. Producing Knowledge on Sustainable Urban and Rural Transformation (Organized by Shanghai University)
- » Beyond & between - launching the global compendium of Peri-Urban-Rural Linkages (Organized by the Manchester University under the Pericene Initiative)

Wednesday 6th Nov

- » Spatial co-visioning and stakeholder engagement in the urban-rural interface. Methods, tools and processes. (by Technical University of Berlin)
- » Linking Agrifood Systems to Urban Development: A collaborative roadmap for achieving collective impact (co-organized by FAO, ICLEI and UN-HABITAT)
- » Nature, Land, and Cities: What nature positive cities look like in the Arab region (Organized by UNCCD)
- » Launch of Launch of Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages-Key Highlights Booklet
- » Urban-rural linkages: experiences from Bamako and Ouagadougou

Tuesday 5th Nov

a. Journal Launch - Urban Regeneration. Producing Knowledge on Sustainable Urban and Rural Transformation (Organized by Shanghai University)

The session highlighted how urban regeneration and rural revitalization complement each other by addressing shared challenges, such as land degradation, economic disparities, and access to services, across the urban-rural continuum. UN-Habitat showcased its extensive work on urban-rural linkages and its flagship Urban Regeneration Programme, emphasizing the critical role of integrated regeneration strategies in fostering inclusive, sustainable, and resilient communities.

UN-Habitat then joined Shanghai University in launching the Urban Regeneration Journal: Producing Knowledge on Sustainable Urban and Rural Transformation. This collaborative effort underscores the shared commitment to advancing urban-rural linkages and regeneration as interconnected pathways for achieving sustainable development.

The journal showcases compelling case studies and perspectives on rural revitalization and urban regeneration, practical examples and lessons for practitioners and policymakers. A call for case studies was announced, inviting contributions that span urban and rural contexts, with a focus on best practices that strengthen territorial cohesion. The session also featured the World Cities Day and the Shanghai Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities, highlighting the collaboration between UN-Habitat and the Shanghai Municipal Government.



WUF12 participants at the Journal Launch-Urban Regeneration © UN-Habitat

b. Beyond & between - launching the global compendium of Peri-Urban-Rural Linkages (Organized by the Manchester University under the Pericene Initiative)

The event focused on the role of peri-urban areas in the urban-rural continuum, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that arise from their interactions and flows.

Discussions focused on the ecological, social, and economic aspects between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, with UN-Habitat’s Urban-Rural Linkages (URL) Programme offering insights on integrated approaches to bridge these divides.

The Peri-Urban Rural Linkages Compendium, highlighted during the session, features global case studies, including Chennai’s bioregional approaches and Egypt’s focus on food security, land use, and governance among others.

Panel discussions tackled land conflicts, smart city integration, and urban food resilience, emphasizing the need for collaboration, technology, and equity in addressing peri-urban

Wednesday 6th Nov

c. Spatial co-visioning and stakeholder engagement in the urban-rural interface. Methods, tools and processes. (by Technical University of Berlin)

This training session focused on the urban-rural interface, exploring tools, and processes for spatial co-visioning. Participants engaged in hands-on activities aimed at mapping urban-rural linkages, defining development goals, and proposing strategies for sustainable integration.

The session emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement and spatial interpretations to address the challenges and opportunities within the urban-rural continuum.

UN-Habitat showcased how urban-rural linkages aligns with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscoring the potential for integrated territorial development to drive broader social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Participants also explored specific case studies and strategies, drawing connections to regional and local contexts to inform the planning and implementation of urban-rural linkages.



Launch of the compendium on peri-urban rural linkages © UN-Habitat



d. Linking Agrifood Systems to Urban Development: A collaborative roadmap for achieving collective impact (Organized by FAO)

This event focused on financial strategies to support agrifood systems, building on insights from the Urban Agrifood Systems Global Workshop hosted by FAO and ICLEI in September 2024.

UN-Habitat underscored the vital role of urban-rural linkages in fostering resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems.

A key takeaway was that city governments often prioritize concerns such as sanitation and housing, over food systems, despite their fundamental role in urban sustainability.

The key outcomes included the urgent need to integrate food systems into municipal budgets, the importance of integrated governance across urban and rural sectors, and the promotion of public-private partnerships.

Additional strategies like blended financing, capacity development for local authorities, and awareness-raising on the vital link between food systems and urban development were fronted as essential to driving long-term, sustainable solutions for cities and rural areas alike.

e. Nature, Land, and Cities: What nature positive cities look like in the Arab region (Organized by UNCCD)

The session explored the role of urban-rural linkages in achieving land neutrality through

integrated land use planning, ecosystem restoration, and nature-based solutions (NBS).

Panelists emphasized the convergence of land, biodiversity, and climate mandates, highlighting the importance of community engagement, capacity development, and inclusive planning. Discussions addressed challenges in implementing NBS, particularly in the Arab region, stressing collaboration, education, and financing to foster sustainable urban development and create new economies.

Initiatives like the G20's goal to reduce land degradation by 50% by 2040 were showcased, alongside tools such as the recently launched primer on Urban-Rural Linkages and Land, co-authored by UNCCD and UN-Habitat.



^ Nature, Land, and Cities: What nature positive cities look like in the Arab region (Organized by UNCCD) © UN-Habitat

f. Launch of Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages

An informal gathering hosted by UN-Habitat brought together key urban-rural linkages (URL) partners to reflect on the progress, challenges, and opportunities in integrating urban and rural strategies.

The session provided a platform to share Key Highlights from the Global Trends and Insights of Urban-Rural Linkages report, discussing the implications of these findings for policy development and practice.

One key takeaway was the need to build strong partnerships and ensure youth involvement in advancing URL initiatives, recognizing their central role in rural-urban transitions.

Friday 8th Nov

The session concluded with a collective agreement on the necessity to prioritize youth-driven solutions as part of the broader effort to foster sustainable urban-rural development.

Additionally, it was agreed that the complete report would be disseminated widely, with all partners encouraged to share it within their networks to enhance the impact and reach of the findings.



a. Urban-rural linkages: experiences from Bamako and Ouagadougou

This event focused on the theme of urban-rural relations, particularly in the context of 'metropolitanization', in Greater Bamako and Ouagadougou. Discussions highlighted the critical role of integrated territorial development, with a focus on public participation, water management and waste recycling issues as central to the urbanization process in Mali and Burkina Faso. The conversation emphasized how these elements are intertwined in fostering sustainable, inclusive growth in rapidly growing urban areas.

The session concluded with the launch of a publication titled "Greater Bamako and Urban-Rural linkages", presented by the Minister of Urban Planning and Housing, Territorial Planning, and Population, Mali. This event also underscored the importance of fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration to address the urban-rural challenges and ensure sustainable metropolitan growth.

UN-Habitat at Partner Events

Continuous collaboration is a key pillar of achieving milestones on urban-rural linkages.

UN-Habitat has participated in various partner-led events, using these opportunities to continuously advocate for stronger urban-rural linkages, for balanced territorial development.

Nakuru county participants after the training session © UN-Habitat
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a. Enhancing capacity of policymakers on urban-rural linkages- CURLA, University of Nairobi (5th and 6th September 2024, Nakuru, Kenya)

Under the ongoing collaboration with the University of Nairobi, the Centre for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa (CURLA) organized a capacity development session for Nakuru County officials, Kenya.. Government officials, planners, environmentalists, land surveyors and senior county officials gained valuable insights into the vital role of urban-rural linkages and how their work impacts these interconnections.

The session emphasized strategies that would enhance a territorial approach to development in Nakuru. UN-Habitat contributed by showcasing global case studies on urban-rural linkages, offering relevant insights tailored to Nakuru’s developmental context. In addition, UN-Habitat customized the urban-rural linkages training course specifically for the attendees, equipping them with practical tools to contextually strengthen territorial development and foster sustainable growth across urban and rural areas.



b. Leveraging Local and Traditional Food Markets, alongside Public Food Procurement - June 24-26, 2024, Rome, Italy

This technical workshop at the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome focused on leveraging local and traditional food markets and public food procurement to enhance access to nutritious food. It explored strategies for integrating these markets into

sustainable food systems, with a strong emphasis on urban-rural linkages for food security. UN-Habitat contributed by showcasing the spatial dimension of food systems, presenting how urban planning can connect rural producers to urban consumers. UN-Habitat

also emphasized on policies and infrastructure to support this flow. The event provided a platform for stakeholders to share innovative solutions and best practices for improving food availability through localized markets and procurement strategies.

c. Second General Assembly of the World Farmers Market Coalition – July 11-13, 2024, Rome, Italy

UN-Habitat contributed to the discussions at the second general assembly of the World Farmers Market Coalition, emphasizing the pivotal role cities play in promoting sustainable, resilient food systems.

One of the key topics was fostering partnerships to enhance farmers' markets within urban areas. UN-Habitat highlighted best practices on how cities can create enabling environments for farmers' markets, linking rural producers with urban consumers and boosting local economies.



One of the key topics was fostering partnerships to enhance farmers' markets within urban areas.



The importance of inclusive policies and integrated urban-rural strategies was underscored as a means to improve food security, economic opportunities, and urban resilience.

The event provided a platform for exchanging ideas and reinforcing the critical connection between urban spaces and rural livelihoods.



Food exhibition at the WMFC General Assembly © WFMC



d. Urban Agrifood Systems Workshop – September 9-11, 2024, Rome, Italy



Hosted by FAO and ICLEI, the workshop focused on strengthening urban agrifood systems for inclusive and sustainable development. UN-Habitat emphasized the critical role of cities in fostering resilient and equitable food systems that bridge urban-

rural divides, highlighting the importance of integrating agrifood systems into urban planning. Discussions addressed key challenges such as food insecurity, land use, and climate change, with cities positioned as catalysts for sustainable solutions.

The workshop provided a platform for knowledge exchange among stakeholders, including UN agencies, with UN-Habitat reaffirming commitment to advancing integrated planning and policies that enhance both urban and rural areas.



e. International Conference of the Urban Rural Assembly Project – October 1-2, 2024, Berlin, Germany

The conference focused on advancing the dialogue around urban-rural linkages and how these connections can be leveraged to address pressing global challenges such as migration, urbanization, and climate change. UN-Habitat's participation included presenting its urban-rural linkages framework and advocating for integrated territorial development strategies that promote sustainable and inclusive growth. This event was a milestone in developing collaborative actions between urban and rural



f. Grand Bamako Launch – October 8-9, 2024, Bamako, Mali

UN-Habitat also supported the conceptualization of the Grand Bamako initiative in Mali, which was launched in October 2024. This campaign aims to promote sustainable urban-rural linkages in Bamako, focusing on land use, housing, and basic services. UN-Habitat provided technical assistance in framing the initiative's goals and aligning it with broader regional and global urbanization objectives. The launch gathered key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, NGOs, and local communities to discuss how to build a more inclusive and sustainable urban-rural connection in Mali and other regions of Africa.



Launch of the Greater Bamako and Urban-Rural Linkages © Grand Bamako

g. UN-Habitat Contribution to the Annual Meeting of the Global Diet and Activity Research Network – November 10- 15, 2024, Johannesburg, South Africa

This annual meeting marked the closing of a significant project focusing on the intersection of urbanization, food, and health outcomes.

The key question raised was: What's next for the network? UN-Habitat emphasized the importance of translating research into actionable tools like policy briefs and capacity-building materials that are accessible to local communities. UN-Habitat also stressed presenting findings in simple, context-specific language to support grassroots decision-making.

By ensuring data informs urban and rural policies, UN-Habitat seeks to bridge the gap between research and practical implementation.

This approach fosters ongoing engagement, capacity-building, and evidence-based solutions in urban planning, food systems, and public health.

The meeting highlighted the need for research to have a lasting impact by making it relevant and usable for all stakeholders.

h. Urban-Rural Linkages at UNCCD COP16 (6th Dec 2024, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

During the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), UN-Habitat and UNCCD co-hosted a governance-themed day featuring eight action events and the first official Mayors' Forum at a UNCCD COP. The event Urban-Rural Linkages: Tools and Governance Frameworks for Action marked the launch of the Primer on Urban-Rural Linkages and Land.

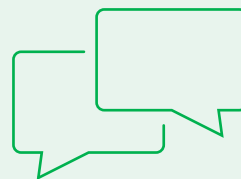
Keynotes highlighted biodiversity, urban planning, and the importance of engaging local and regional governments. A panel discussed circular economies for waste reuse, community-driven landscape partnerships, and bioregional governance.

The Primer was endorsed by UNCCD and the Mayors' Forum, with UN-Habitat's Executive Director emphasizing its role in promoting land restoration, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience in alignment with the New Urban Agenda (NUA). These themes were integrated into the Riyadh Mayors' Call for Engagement, the Riyadh Action Agenda, and COP 16 outcomes.



In their own words: partner perspectives

This section highlights two insightful contributions: First, an article on “Leveraging Innovation for Africa’s Nutritional Future”, which provides a comprehensive overview of the progress and impact, implemented by the FoodLAND initiative. Secondly an indepth interview with RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems sheds light on their perspectives regarding urban-rural linkages.



Leveraging Innovation for Africa’s Nutritional Future

By **FoodLAND : Food and Local, Agricultural and Nutritional Diversity**



The **FoodLAND project**, funded by the European Union (EU) under the Horizon 2020 programme, was established to develop, implement and validate innovative, scalable and sustainable technologies.

The aim was support the nutrition performance of local food systems in Africa, while strengthening agro-biodiversity and food diversity as well as diversity of healthy diets.

The FoodLAND project hosted by University of Bologna, Italy, is comprised of 27 partner organizations from Africa and Europe.

The nexus between agrobiodiversity, food diversity and healthy and diverse diets plays a crucial role in the development of resilient and nutrition-sensitive food systems. Indeed, several factors determine the personal behaviour and choices every person in the food value chain makes, starting with the farmers, going through the processors, and ending with the consumers.

Lack of access to information and knowledge, excessive aversion to small risks, fear or

aversion to novel foods (food neophobia), among others, can influence the behavioral changes. In this project, a network of **14 local Food Hubs was created in six Northern and Eastern African countries paired with 14 cities.**

At the Food Hubs, relevant actors and organizations including smallholder farmers, food processors, SMEs, authorities, researchers, and NGOs come together to develop or enhance the organizational, technological, cultural, and operational conditions enabling local food supply chains improvement, as well as to strengthen the nutrition-responsive agrobiodiversity and food diversity in the area.



FoodLAND researchers at the SIDEA conference © FoodLAND

Currently, the project is in the final phase of its four-year duration (2020-2024).

From the outset, FoodLAND took a **bottom-up approach**, basing all developments on the motivations, needs and choices of local producers and consumers. Through surveys of more than 4,000 smallholder farmers, 6,000 urban consumers and 2,500 rural consumers, as well as experiments to track their behaviour, the project built up a detailed picture of the nutritional needs of urban and rural populations, understanding the socio-economic, production conditions and individual factors that determine the choices of smallholder producers and processors, and rural and urban consumers.

Decades of shifts in food systems have taken place in all the African countries studied in the project, which have led to a concerning rise in specific forms of malnutrition, juxtaposing problems like stunting and food waste (although this is reducing in many countries) with escalating rates of obesity and overweight.

The nutritional recommendations put forward by FoodLAND aimed to bridge the gap between existing food behaviours and optimal nutrition.

Partners in each country focused on different population groups, according to the needs they found in their research, from women in the reproductive age and children in their first 1,000 days to elderly people, also including adults and adolescents in some cases.

The **entire consortium of 27 partners** from Europe and Africa has worked closely together to develop, implement and validate 12 technological innovations, including organisational and technological innovations for both vegetable and fish farming and food processing systems, and 17 novel local food products, ranging from fresh, dried and processed vegetables and fish to composite flours and therapeutic foods.

Similarly, FoodLAND's nutrition experts have come up with a comprehensive set of distinctive 360 nutrition recommendations that are relevant, appropriate and feasible to implement in order to combat the various forms of malnutrition prevalent in each of the six countries namely Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

On the innovation side, FoodLAND has developed a range of easy-to-implement and low-cost **technological innovations** that have been developed and validated in the various Food Hubs established in the six African countries. Innovations for primary processing include biodegradable mulching for preserving soil conditions while reducing the agronomic use of plastics and tailored hydroponic systems appropriate for marginal, small-scale farmers having limited area and/or poor soil quality.

Primary and secondary processing technologies have also been developed to help in post-harvest and post-processing phases, being systems for passive cooling, solar drying, packaging using biofilms, or extrusion and baking, this latter useful for preparing ready-to-eat healthy snacks.



Training session on dehydration and drying systems for women farmers of Jendouba, Tunisia © FoodLAND



Survey and interview with smallholder farmer in Tanzania © FoodLAND

All innovations were initially developed in a food hub and then validated or re-tested in other hubs to see if they were appropriate for the target areas and adapted to local needs.

The novel foods produced by the technologies, ranging from products with improved nutritional properties to dried vegetables with longer shelf-life or snacks made from fish, among others, have been validated and then prototyped for the market.

In this final phase all FoodLAND partners are committed to disseminating the knowledge generated.

This will be done by attending scientific conferences to present the project results and by organising local dissemination events in the local areas or counties where the Food Hubs are located in Africa. Some of the sustainability actions going forward include:

1. Farmers are being trained to be able to implement the innovations,
2. the novel food products are being displayed in the dissemination events,
3. nutritional recommendations are also being disseminated to make communities aware of the importance of healthy diets.

To sum up, FoodLAND is in a dynamic phase in which all the efforts made to produce useful technologies, improved food products and tailored nutritional advice must reach their final users and have a real impact on African societies.

As the project wraps up, it is time to look forward with the hope of contributing to increasing the diversity of food production and consumption in Africa. This is the ambition for which FoodLAND was conceived and which it has pursued since its inception.



FOODLAND has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement (GA No 862802),

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Visit our website for further information:

<https://foodland-africa.eu/>



Video about the current stage of the project



Video about the nutritional recommendations



Farmers' field day in Ethiopia © FoodLAND

Insights on urban-rural linkages from the RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems

By **Dr. Jess Haliday**, Chief Executive of RUAF CIC

a. How does RUAF define urban-rural linkages, and why are these linkages essential for sustainable development?

We define urban-rural linkages in terms of flows of people, goods, food, money, waste, natural resources, and ecosystem services between built-up urban areas and their surrounding peri-urban and rural hinterlands – in both directions.

To give some examples: food is transported from rural areas to processing sites, and onwards to urban markets – while money passes back through the value chain to farmers; much of the workforce travels into cities from peri-urban suburbs, using road or public transport networks; reservoirs, often formed on natural waterways in rural areas, store and channel water to meet the needs of cities; urban waste may be sent to landfill or recycling centres out of town; industrial processing plants may release air pollution or toxic effluent that contaminates soil and waterways; and so on.

The effective management of these flows through partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation is fundamental to sustainable development, to ensure that decisions made to benefit one area do not have unintended negative impacts elsewhere.

b. In what ways does urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) contribute to strengthening urban-rural linkages?

The production of food in and around cities has numerous multifunctional benefits. The most obvious is helping to meet the provisioning demands of cities through shorter, localized supply chains and, in return, supporting farm livelihoods. UPA also benefits the wider local economy by stimulating development of value chains and job creation, both for input

supply, such as seeds and fertilizer, as well as post-harvest processing, transportation or distribution, and vending. These activities take place across rural, peri-urban and urban areas.

Direct sale of produce at farmers' markets can educate city dwellers about the food system and where their food comes from and can create interpersonal connections with farmers based on mutual support and shared values. It can also motivate people to get out of the city to spend leisure time in the countryside, supporting their physical and mental health.

UPA can boost biodiversity in otherwise built-up areas, reduce urban heat islands, assist in flood management in some locations and, through the production and use of compost, reduce the amount of organic waste sent to rot in landfill sites on city peripheries, where it emits greenhouse gases and can contaminate groundwater with toxic leachates.

c. What are the main challenges you see in fostering effective urban-rural linkages, and how can these challenges be addressed?

A major challenge is the perception of cities as modern spaces that are best served by industrial, globalized supply chains, while rural lifestyles and diets are seen as old fashioned. The two tend to be seen as separate spheres of existence, rather than intrinsically connected and inter-dependent.

As a result, policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders tend not to be mindful of the full impacts of their actions and activities across the urban-rural continuum.



There is a need for outreach and awareness-raising by regional authorities to continue bridging this cognitive gap.

Another consequence of this flawed perception is inadequate funding for rural infrastructure. Scarce public transport, poor roads, dilapidated warehouses, unreliable energy supply, poor internet connectivity – all these can make it hard to establish functional links and impede the movement of the workforce and flow of goods. National governments and development agencies must recognize the need to channel more investment to rural areas as well as urban, for the benefit of both.

d. **How has RUAF engaged communities in urban-rural linkage initiatives?**

RUAF introduced the Multi-stakeholder Policy-making and Action Planning (MPAP) approach over 15 years ago, and we deploy it in all our projects.

MPAP informed the participatory pillar of the City Region Food Systems programme, jointly developed with FAO since 2015. Each city or city region forms a multistakeholder platform made up of stakeholders from across government, private and community sectors. Stakeholders develop a shared vision of what they would like their food system to look like 5, 10, or 20 years down the road, jointly determine priorities, and conduct action planning.

Meaningful community engagement is essential to ensure that residents identify their own needs and shape the agenda. Interventions – whether policies or practical actions – must have the buy-in of people who will be affected, especially marginalized groups.

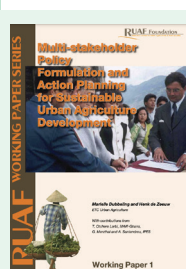
e. **What are some best approaches that RUAF has identified in promoting urban-rural linkages?**

Territorial or city-region governance is crucial for promoting urban-rural linkages. Functional territories that span urban, peri-urban and rural areas typically include parts of several local government jurisdictions. Officials from each local government, as well as non-governmental stakeholders, need to collaborate, share knowledge, and implement decisions together if they are to avoid counteractive efforts and unanticipated negative impacts.

These governance processes may take place in multistakeholder platforms, but it is also advisable for officials – both elected and civil servants with a technical role – to be in continuous contact with their counterparts in neighbouring local government areas across the rural-urban continuum, as well as those at the regional level. This is known as polycentric governance.

f. **Looking ahead, what trends do you foresee impacting urban-rural linkages, particularly in the context of climate change and urbanization?**

The climate emergency is having – and will continue to have – a profound effect to urban-rural linkages. Unforeseen shocks and incremental stresses are increasing in frequency and intensity, with devastating impacts on farmers and other food system stakeholders who lack resilience capacities. Rising temperatures are placing water resources under extreme pressure in drought-prone regions, while biodiversity is decreasing rapidly. Climate migration is contributing to the general urbanization trend, along with youth seeking economic opportunities in cities rather than following their parents into agriculture, which is seen as tough and unrewarding. This means that there is a depletion of the rural workforce and shrinking capacity for food production.



Multi-stakeholder Policy-making and Action Planning (MPAP)



Meanwhile, agricultural land in peri-urban areas and greenbelts is eyed for development to accommodate the urban population swell. In Africa and Asia in particular, vast new conurbations are formed when multiple smaller urban areas are joined up by development in the once-green areas between them.

The sale of farmland to developers has a significant impact on peri-urban agriculture and associated urban-rural linkages, including natural resources and ecosystem services; land that is concreted over no longer serves as a carbon sink. As the land base becomes fragmented, certain types of agriculture may no longer be possible – for example, in places where livestock farming can only be practiced a certain distance from human habitation.

It can also mean depletion of infrastructure to support the farm sector, with fewer and farther between services like equipment dealers, abattoirs and grain elevators.

g. **What message would you like to convey to policymakers and practitioners regarding the importance of urban-rural linkages based on emerging trends and opportunities available?**

Do not take development lightly. Once prime agricultural land is built on, it is gone forever. Prioritise existing housing stock and brownfield sites wherever possible.

Proactively **foster resilience of city region food systems.** This means identifying the most vulnerable stakeholders and assets, and building their capacity to prevent, anticipate, adapt, absorb the impacts of shocks and stresses.

This applies at the farm level, where production can be decimated, but also in storage facilities, transportation, processing, markets – at all food system nodes.

Make **circularity mindsets** the norm. Harness the nutrients from waste streams and put them to use. Compost from organic waste is the most obvious, but grey water and various processing by-products can also be used.

Create **opportunities for young people** to see the multitude of opportunities there are in the food system, particularly in smaller towns that are closer to the countryside that often serve as ‘staging posts’ in supply chains between rural and urban areas. Not all food jobs are precarious, hard work on the farm; there are lucrative opportunities throughout supply chains. If people can make a viable living in the countryside and small towns, they do not see the need to take the next steps into the big city.

Among practitioners, smallholder farmers may not have the capacity to meet the needs of urban markets single-handedly, so **foster cooperation** to be able to serve urban markets collectively – such as agricultural cooperatives or hubs, either to serve consumer markets or for public canteens. The spirit of cooperation – getting to know each other – is also fundamental to community resilience. When one actor suffers a setback, others can fill the breach and help them get back on their feet.



Jess Halliday is Chief Executive of RUAF CIC and coordinator of the RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems (www.ruaf.org). She is a specialist in urban food systems governance.

Jess received her PhD in food policy from the Centre for Food Policy, City University London in 2015.

Stay Updated

Global Case Studies Hub- Coming Soon!



Exciting news! Soon, you will be able to access an interactive global repository featuring case studies collected by UN-Habitat accompanying the printed compendiums of case studies on urban-rural linkages. This comprehensive resource will provide valuable insights into successful urban-rural linkages and development strategies from diverse contexts. More details coming soon!



5th Compendium Call
for Contributions –
Urban Policy Platform

Call for Case studies on urban-rural linkages- Deadline extended!

You are invited to submit your case studies on this topic. The case studies will be included in the fifth edition of the Compendium of Inspiring Practices of the Urban-Rural Linkages to Advance Integrated Territorial Development, Special Edition on Intermediary Cities, to be published in 2025.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The 5th Compendium of Inspiring Practices on Urban-Rural Linkages, Special Edition on Intermediary Cities

Deadline Extended: 14th February 2025

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Revamped Urban-Rural Linkages Course Coming Soon!



We're thrilled to announce the Urban-Rural Linkages online course is being relaunched with updated modules and enhanced content, drawing from insights gained through 15+ capacity-building workshops. This revised course offers a deeper, more practical understanding of urban-rural linkages, tailored to real-world experiences. Stay tuned for its upcoming release and get ready to expand your knowledge and skills in urban-rural development!

PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES NEWSLETTERS



Issue 1



Issue 2



Issue 3



Issue 4



Issue 5



Issue 6



Issue 7



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