

Food transitions: 2015 update

The focus of our consumption change initiative is on ‘food transitions’: sustainable consumption policies across the rural-urban divide. For effective policymaking, we argue that narratives of food security and ‘inclusive green growth’ must adapt to the evidence base on how consumption and urbanisation are transforming food systems.

Food and nutrition security is high on the policy agenda. There is concern about producing enough food to feed the growing numbers of consumers who live in urban areas (half of the global population) and about dietary changes attributed to urbanisation and economic growth.

But policy narratives on food security and ‘inclusive green growth’ often overlook factors that shape dietary choices and restrict access to food for low-income groups in both urban and rural areas. They neglect the growing numbers of people in rural areas who buy more food than they sell, and the increasing food and nutrition insecurity of many urban dwellers. They also fail to consider the dominant role of the informal food trade in ensuring access to food in many low- and middle-income countries.

Within the next four years

Together with partners and civil society, we will build on our efforts to contest outdated food security and growth narratives. We aim to stimulate a shift towards policies that drive positive links between urbanisation, food and nutrition security, and reduced environmental hazard, for rural and urban low-income groups.

To do this we will:

- Generate evidence, in partnership with citizen groups, to challenge the dominant voices on food consumption, food security and inclusive green growth
- Highlight policy innovations that target consumption and food security, often spanning production and consumption and across urban and rural areas
- Link what we know to action at local and global level with an alliance of partners.

Over the next 12–18 months we aim to:

- Conduct at least two regional workshops and produce at least five papers on elements of urbanisation, consumption and rural transformation in partnership with IFAD and local organisations
- Consolidate a ‘network of networks’ that spans urban and rural contexts and can create the critical mass of knowledge needed to shift the dominant narrative on consumption and sustainable development. This is based on our inception meeting (December 2014), and includes partnerships with IFAD and Hivos, and outreach to potential donors
- Identify at least two locations where change can be achieved for food security through evidence-based policy and practice
- Identify important policy moments at local and global levels, map the key audiences to address at each, and — with partners — take opportunities for timely input
- Support civil society organisations to generate evidence for lobbying and advocacy, focusing on rural and urban low-income groups and the link between consumption and food security (who is consuming what food, and why; where that food comes from, and why). We will co-produce at least two policy and evidence-based papers and associated visual material
- Put in place a process for monitoring and improving our impact.