



---

**Solutions from the Land<sup>i</sup> (SfL) Farmer Leaders' Perspectives and Recommendations on V0 draft of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) report on urban and peri-urban food systems**

**Topic:** Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation – V0 draft of the HLPE-FSN report #19

**Submitted by A.G. Kawamura on behalf of SfL.** A.G. is a produce/specialty crop grower and shipper; Former Secretary, *California Department of Food and Agriculture*; Founding Partner, *Orange County Produce, LLC*; *Indian Wells, CA*.

1. The V0 draft introduces a conceptual framework informed by key principles established in previous HLPE-FSN reports (HLPE, 2017; HLPE, 2020). Do you find the proposed framework effective to highlight and discuss the key issues concerning urban and peri-urban food systems?

Yes, the long overdue discussion and assessment of how urban and peri-urban agriculture can significantly contribute to food and nutrition insecurity will help open the global imagination on how we accomplish multiple SDGs through these innovative collaborations.

Is this a useful conceptual framework to provide practical guidance for policymakers?

It is a useful conceptual framework for policy makers new to the subject and issue areas, however it falls short in diluting the actual role for agriculture and for farmers by reducing their inclusion in most of the language and descriptive overview of the opportunities and threats.

Can you offer suggestions for examples to illustrate and facilitate the operationalization of the conceptual framework to address issues relevant for FSN?

Focusing on true proof of concept examples of already successful agricultural collaborations taking place across the urban and peri-urban landscapes helps people fully visualize the impacts of edible landscapes at all scales and dimensions.

2. The report adopts the broader definition of food security (proposed by the HLPE-FSN in 2020), which includes six dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization,

stability, agency and sustainability. Does the V0 draft cover sufficiently the implications of this broader definition in urban and peri-urban food systems?

The broader definition provided by the “six dimensions” of food security seems to exclude the key aspect of any food system...who produces the food, how and with what resources? Pretending there are “actors” who are going to fill this role ignores the actual predicament of where are the real “farmers” who can actually grow out a crop whether on a roof top, a vacant lot or inside a re-configured sea container.

3. Are the trends/variables/elements identified in the draft report the key ones to strengthen urban and peri-urban food systems? If not, which other elements should be considered?

There are excellent and far-ranging parts of the draft report which cover many of the ‘bureaucratic’ difficulties of producing, processing, and selling food in an urban environment. These go a long way towards exposing some of the weaknesses and chronic problems inherent in city after city that has no sense of its food future...or an imagined ideal about what its food future might be. It is at least refreshing to note that the report is less prescriptive and seems to understand that there can be no one, best system for these transformational suggestions. And yet, the fact that the writers of the report are stuck with a negative framing of the food system as it exists is worrisome. The idea that fast food cannot be happy food. The complaint that processed food is poor for the health. The encouragement of food police. These types of exhortations that we need an urgent “radical transformation” of our global food system fails to acknowledge that we are already experiencing an urgent, radical transformation of our food system in a remarkable span of time and that it has been going quite well, despite some mistakes and good intentions that have created foreseen and unforeseen problems (like food deserts) going forward. We can use the COVID pandemic to daylight so much of what is going right with urban and peri-urban agriculture (rural agriculture too) and our food system and where we have vulnerabilities and significant areas of improvement for greater resilience. Showcase examples of civil society and industry adaptation and innovation under crisis.

Are there any other issues concerning urban and peri-urban food systems that have not been sufficiently covered in the draft report?

The need for critical infrastructure for growing crops and livestock was not well covered. Water, soil, energy, cooling, cold storage, transportation pest control, and skilled labor. So many of these are vital for perishable fruit and vegetable production at any scale.

Are topics under- or over-represented in relation to their importance?

Some topics seem very over-represented, specifically the multiple references for funding support for more studies, more measurements, more ‘thinking’ about the problems that we have faced for centuries. What is under-represented is that that funding for non-

productive activity could go a very long way to build out the capacity and talent to end food/nutrition insecurity. Why not focus on replication and scaling up of successful models creating greater and more immediate impact with available and new funding?

4. Is there additional quantitative or qualitative data that should be included?

What more do you need to know? That kids with a lousy diet are health risks...that kids that come to school hungry are not the best students...that babies that are nutrient deficient will suffer irreparable damage both cognitive and physical (stunting). How many more grants and dollars will be used for job security for an army of non-productive but very well-educated individuals?

Are there other references, publications, or traditional or different kind of knowledges, which should be considered?

The good recommendations in the report speak to the need for an accessible catalog of all the best practices and innovative collaborations taking place around the world.

5. Are there any redundant facts or statements that could be eliminated from the V0 draft?

If the goal is to create a guidebook/roadmap that might help accomplish multiple SDGs within the urban/peri-urban landscape...through an edible landscape re-thinking of the resource base that exists in cities, then there are quite a few redundant passages that seem more focused on what's already obvious and what's perceived to be wrong with the food system.

6. Could you suggest case studies and success stories from countries that were able to strengthen urban and peri-urban food systems? Yes...In particular, the HLPE-FSN would seek contributions on:

- a) evidence-based examples of successful interventions in urban and peri-urban food systems with the principles behind what made the process work;

Farm to Family Food Box projects; Farm to Food Bank projects; Edible Landscape projects at all schools and universities; Farm Academies for newly arrived immigrants with agricultural background; Veterans to Farmers projects; Youth Farm projects from FFA to 4-H and international equivalents.

- b) efforts made to enhance agency in urban and peri-urban food systems;

Multiple agency collaboration and budget contributions that achieve multiple benefits from environment, health, hands-on education, cultural sharing and training; waste to energy; climate resilience.

- c) efforts made to enhance the right to food in urban and peri-urban settings;

The right to food comes with an assumption that you have an abundance of food...or enough food for everyone. Yes, the challenge of calories versus nutrition is the expanding focal point of food system strategies...as we look to embrace concepts of food as medicine and the food/health nexus. The more daunting challenge is getting food from the farm to the table and all the support and infrastructure needed to accomplish that day after day. That's where this report seems to fall short in daylighting the reality that farming or gardening is not easy and quite unpredictable if we haven't built in more resilience in the form of infrastructure from food safety to invasive pests/species protocols.

- d) examples of circular economy and urban and peri-urban food system and climate change adaptation and mitigation, preferably beyond issues of production; and

Another area that is barely described or mentioned is the incredible opportunities to re-imagine the 'urban forest' and urban landscaping that mostly looks nice, is costly and creates tons of biomass and employment for an army of folks who might otherwise be farmers & farmhands.

- e) examples of national and local government collaboration on urban and peri-urban food systems.

Plenty of new interventions and innovations from the top down and hopefully from the bottom up that can receive funding streams from unusual partners and collaborators. Cross agency investment in annual budgets could 'radically' shift to create more (yes measurable) 'bang for the buck'.

---

<sup>i</sup> The mission of Solutions from the Land, a farmer-led organization, is to inspire, mobilize and equip agricultural, forestry and fishery leaders to advance pragmatic, proven and innovative agricultural solutions that benefit producers, the public and the planet in a new era where sustainably managed farms, ranches, fisheries and forests are at the forefront of resolving food system, food and nutrition security, energy, environmental and climate challenges to concurrently achieve global sustainable development goals (SDGs).