Food systems will play a central role in delivering the sustainable development agenda.

With the majority of people already living in urban areas – not only in large metropolitan areas, but also in secondary cities and small towns – a greater focus on urban planning as a way of influencing food systems development will be critically important.

Until recently, urban planners have paid little attention to food systems, emphasising ‘traditional’ urban priorities such as public transportation and decent housing. However, since the beginning of the current millennium, major national associations of urban planners have started to notice this scarce attention to food, which, ironically, was the magnet for creative city planning just a couple of centuries ago. National governments across the globe have now acknowledged, through the New Urban Agenda, the importance of local governments in achieving the 2030 Agenda, with food and good nutrition being a core element. Local governments, often with limited resources, have started to promote food system planning as an important entry point to ensuring improved well-being through availability of and access to proper nutrition for all city dwellers.

In 2018, we can safely say that significant momentum has gathered for a book that addresses, for the first time, how food systems thinking can be best incorporated into the planning of urban areas.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has increasingly become a catalyst in multilateral governance mechanisms on urban sustainability and in helping sub-national governments to foster resilient and sustainable food systems. However, the growing demand for this assistance warrants more effective attention to what good food systems planning means. This requires a careful study of successful examples of urban and food systems design and planning, under different social, economic and environmental backgrounds. This is both to generate a clear understanding of the local situation and to provide a
sound basis for food system planning that pulls together urban planning and food system expertise. This book aims to provide a guide for the food system planner by bridging these two fields.

The book is the result of an extensive search to identify the best examples from across the world. A call for abstracts produced more than 200 submissions, which were carefully analysed by our editors. This publication presents examples from both developed and developing countries, with the objective of sharing essential knowledge about urban food planning which can be applied in different contexts and will withstand the test of time. The selected cases highlight that, although each urban and territorial scenario is unique when it comes to urban food planning, many of the challenges and potential solutions share similarities.

In its role as a knowledge broker, FAO relies on partnerships and alliances to deliver the best possible guidance on emerging global issues. For this reason, FAO teamed up with the Development Planning Unit of UCL and UCL Press, to publish these case studies on the innovations in food systems planning and on how to implement sustainable urban food planning.

Improved access to and utilisation of food is essential to current and future generations. With cities at the centre of our civilisation, it will become increasingly critical for food to be centrally reflected in the planning of urban areas. It is hoped that this publication will motivate city officials and their technical teams, urban planners and related professionals to view food as central to a truly systemic approach, and to contribute to the understanding of the different factors involved in the inclusion of food in all urban planning efforts.

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