

SARA POLICY NOTE | JULY 2023

# Creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems in Southern Africa

Urban food systems in Southern Africa are shaped by a number of interconnected policies that affect how, where, and by whom food is produced, processed, transported, stored, sold, bought, consumed, and disposed of. Although some of these policies are not directly linked to food, they still play a critical role in ensuring food security for urban residents.

**Understanding the interconnectedness of these policies and their influence on the urban food landscape is vital for policymakers and urban planners aiming to establish resilient and equitable urban food systems.**

This policy note highlights key policies that affect urban food systems in Southern Africa and explores the pivotal role of urban planners in shaping these systems, emphasizing the importance of inclusive representation and stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes.



**Resilient and equitable urban food systems** are diverse and have the capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses throughout the entire value chain, from production to consumption and waste management, while ensuring fair and sustainable access to safe, nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for all residents within an urban area, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, or geographic location.

# How do policies shape urban food systems in Southern Africa?



**Agricultural policies** enhance local food production, including urban agriculture, and reduce dependence on imports.



**Trade policies** can impact food availability and affordability in cities, for example through tariffs, quotas, and regulations.



**Land use and zoning policies** govern the spaces where food is produced, sold, and purchased.



**Food retail policies** determine which types of retailers are established and allowed to sell food in cities.



**Infrastructure and public transportation policies** affect how and where food is distributed and sold, and how urban consumers access their food.



**Food safety and quality regulations** shape the quality and variety of foods available to urban populations and ensure that food is safe to eat.



**Nutrition policies** promote access to nutrient-rich and culturally appropriate food and raise awareness about healthy eating habits.



**Social protection policies**, including public food assistance programs, help to ensure food security among the most vulnerable urban residents.



**Waste management policies** improve public health and sanitation in urban areas by ensuring that food and other waste is properly collected, handled, and disposed of.




**Energy policies** determine people's access to critical energy sources such as electricity and gas, which directly affect cooking, lighting, and refrigeration.



**Climate change adaptation and mitigation policies** address the impacts of climate variability and extreme events on food production, processing, storage, distribution, retail, consumption, and waste management.





# What role can urban planners play in creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems?

Often, food is not considered when urban policy and planning decisions are made. However, urban planners can play a significant role in creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems in Southern Africa. By incorporating food considerations into their policy and planning decisions, urban planners have the opportunity to shape the physical and social environment of cities and improve the availability and accessibility of safe, nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food to urban consumers. Here are some key roles urban planners can undertake:

## 1 Integrated Urban Food Systems Planning

Urban planners can integrate food systems planning into urban development plans and policies by collaborating with relevant stakeholders, such as local food producers, processors, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers to understand their food system needs, preferences, and challenges. This form of public-private collaboration can promote food-sensitive urban planning. By strategically locating different elements of the food system within the urban fabric, planners can improve the resilience and equity of urban food systems.

## 2 Sustainable Transportation and Food Distribution

Planners can design transportation systems that facilitate the efficient movement of food from production areas to consumers. This can involve considering the design and location of roads, bicycle lanes, bus stops, and pedestrian walkways that prioritize the transport of fresh food and enhance consumer access to food retailers. Planning for cold storage facilities, food aggregation centers, and distribution networks can also be integrated into urban planning processes to minimize post-harvest losses and improve food supply chains.

### 3 Food-sensitive Infrastructure Planning

Investing in and upgrading market infrastructure such as toilets, water points, lighting, shelter, stormwater drainage, and waste management facilities can enable vendors to sell food more safely and efficiently to urban consumers. Urban planners can also consult with street vendors about their needs and incorporate their ideas into projects that improve the functionality, security and aesthetic appeal of street vending activities. For example, this may include constructing vending kiosks, stalls, or mobile vending units and providing training on health and safety practices to street vendors.

### 4 Land Use Planning

Urban planners can allocate land for city- or community-led markets to ensure that all households have reasonable access to markets as cities continue to grow. Land can also be allocated for agricultural purposes, including community gardens and urban farms. Planners can work together with communities and businesses to identify spaces within cities that have the potential for market development and food production, and promote mixed-use developments that incorporate space for food-related activities. Planners can also incorporate zoning regulations that support local food entrepreneurs, such as allowing for small-scale food processing and direct sales to consumers.



### 5 Access to Food Retailers

In addition to planning and investing in food-sensitive transportation and infrastructure, urban planners can address food access challenges by considering the location and proximity of traditional open-air markets, retail shops, and supermarkets to residential areas. This could include strategies like incentivizing local shops to open in underserved neighborhoods. Planners can also develop clear guidelines and regulations for street vending and strategically designate specific areas within urban environments, including in residential areas, where street vending activities can take place legally and safely.

### 6 Climate Resilience

Urban planners can incorporate climate resilience strategies into urban development plans through green infrastructure projects like rainwater harvesting tanks, green space development, and solar lighting, among others. Additionally, by integrating the voices of community food producers, distributors, retailers, and consumers into urban food policy-making, urban planners can effectively gain insights from those most likely to be negatively impacted by climate change.





# Equitable representation in urban food systems policy and planning

Ensuring representation and giving people a voice in decision-making processes is paramount to achieving resilient and equitable urban food systems. The following steps can help:



## Inclusive Policy Formulation

Holding consultations, public hearings, and participatory workshops to actively engage diverse stakeholders, including urban farmers, street vendors, market committees and vendors, local business owners, consumers, and relevant civil society organizations during the policy formulation stage can increase inclusivity and ensure that different perspectives contribute to shaping policies and strategies.

committees, task forces, or working groups that include representation from diverse groups who have a stake in urban food systems. Regular meetings and consultations can be organized to ensure that these stakeholders have a voice in decision-making processes.



## Stakeholder Engagement

Policymakers and planners can establish platforms for ongoing dialogue and engagement with various stakeholders. This can include establishing formal mechanisms such as advisory



## Capacity Building

To facilitate effective participation, training programs on topics such as advocacy, negotiation skills, and understanding policy processes should be pursued and a wide range of participants should be invited. Capacity building empowers individuals and groups to effectively express their needs, concerns, and suggestions during discussions with policymakers.



### Access to Information

Ensuring that all stakeholders have access to clear and relevant information is vital for meaningful participation. Policymakers should strive to provide transparent and easily accessible information regarding policies, regulations, and decision-making processes related to urban development and food systems. This can be done through public websites, information centers, or community outreach programs.



### Recognizing Informal Food Systems

It is important to recognize the role of informal food system actors (street vendors, small-scale food processors, and open-air market vendors) within the broader urban food system and provide opportunities for them to share their perspectives, experiences, and challenges directly with policymakers and planners. This can be done through dedicated forums, town hall meetings, or inclusion in relevant trade associations or networks.



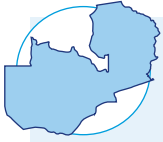
### Regular Review and Evaluation

It is important to periodically review and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and the inclusiveness of decision-making processes. This review can involve seeking feedback from stakeholders, assessing the impact of policies on different groups, and making necessary adjustments to ensure continued representation and inclusivity.



By implementing these strategies, policymakers can create a more resilient and equitable environment wherein food producers, processors, distributors, vendors, consumers, and other stakeholders have a seat at the table, enabling their voices to be heard and considered in shaping policies and decisions related to urban food systems.





## CASE STUDY: ZAMBIA

# Meet Mutinta as she navigates Choma's urban food system



"After a long day working as a maid for a wealthy family, Mutinta is waiting to catch a bus to her home in Chandamali, an unplanned area in Choma where she lives with her four children. Mutinta is grateful for her job - since the outbreak of COVID-19 and decrease in the Kwacha's value, her family has struggled to make ends meet. It seems like jobs are harder to get and food is more expensive than ever before.

Mutinta boards her bus and thinks about what she will prepare for dinner. She has some maize meal left in the big bag that she bought from the supermarket last month, so she will make some nshima, but she needs to ration it until payday arrives - another week from now. She will stop at the open-air market near her neighborhood for onions and tomatoes, and possibly some kapenta if she can get a good price from the vendor. Without refrigeration in her house, Mutinta goes to the market almost every day to buy fresh food and to the small tuck shop next to her house for items that aren't sold in the market. She enjoys meeting her friends who work as vendors, and some of them give her mbasela - a little extra.

During the bus ride, Mutinta notices street vendors selling small quantities of maize meal, fruit, and vegetables. Although sometimes she buys from them, today her mind turns to the vegetable garden she started in her backyard. The leafy greens will be ready to harvest soon, although the sweet potatoes and pumpkins need more time. Mutinta's children helped her plant the garden when schools closed due to the pandemic, and she used funds from a social cash transfer program to purchase the seeds. Mutinta is grateful her children are back in school, where they

receive lunch, but it is challenging for her to maintain a garden without their help due to the time and effort required.

The bus driver turns the radio up louder, and the presenter is talking about climate change, which he explains is when natural weather patterns shift and events like drought, flooding, and pests occur more frequently. Mutinta understands that one reason that the price of maize meal and other food is going up is because the rainy season is not as reliable as it once was, which has led to poor harvests. Her brother, who farms in Kabwe rural, has struggled with poor rains and fall armyworm infestation. Mutinta hopes he can still provide her family with dry beans and ground nuts, as they rely on these food transfers during lean times when they cannot afford meat or fish.

Mutinta arrives home and begins preparing the evening meal for her family, sighing as she reflects on the day. She knows that the challenges she faces are shared by many others in her community and beyond. She hopes that the people with the power to make a difference will."





# SARA's work towards building equitable resilience in Southern Africa

Since 2022, the Southern African Resilience Academy (SARA) has supported collaborative working groups to pursue inter- or transdisciplinary synthesis research under the guiding theme of “**Building equitable resilience in Southern Africa**”.

This is in line with SARA's role as a convening and support space for researchers and practitioners working across Southern Africa to engage around pressing resilience and development challenges in the region.

SARA is an initiative of the Global Resilience Partnership (GRP), with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The academy's goals are to strengthen existing expert networks, expand collaboration, and facilitate the co-production of policy and practice-relevant knowledge.

Through its links with other regional networks, SARA aims to contribute directly and meaningfully to regional and global policy discussions around resilience and development, and elevate the Southern African voice in international fora.

SARA is coordinated by the Centre for Sustainability Transitions (CST) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. It is co-funded by the South African Research Chair in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience.

#### For more information on SARA, contact:

Albert Norström – [albert.norstrom@su.se](mailto:albert.norstrom@su.se)  
or visit [bit.ly/SAResilienceAcademy](http://bit.ly/SAResilienceAcademy)

#### For more information on GRP, contact:

[info@globalresiliencepartnership.org](mailto:info@globalresiliencepartnership.org)  
or visit [www.globalresiliencepartnership.org](http://www.globalresiliencepartnership.org)

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Produced by: KANDS Collective  
– [hello@kandscollective.com](mailto:hello@kandscollective.com)



#### WORKING GROUP:

### Building Equitable and Resilient Urban Food Systems in Southern Africa

Urban food systems in Southern Africa comprise a hybrid mix of food sourcing opportunities from formal and informal food retailers, urban agriculture and food sharing. Despite this diversity, many low- to middle-income urban households experience high rates of food insecurity due to a lack of sufficient and stable income to purchase adequate amounts of safe and nutritious food. This is as a result of economic pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, food price shocks linked to disrupted food supply chains, and the impacts of climate variability on regional food production.

To mediate such pressures and shocks on urban food systems, an urban food systems approach is required that looks beyond agricultural production and embraces the diversity of urban food environments, using urban planning to shape how households equitably access and afford food.

This working group is assessing the resilience and equitability of urban food systems in Zambia and Southern Africa more broadly, to identify strategic urban planning opportunities in order to promote resilient and equitable urban food systems in the region.

#### Contact:

**Mr Allan Chilenga**, Agriculture Research Officer, Ministry of Agriculture (Zambia), Zambia Agriculture Research Institute  
– [allan.chilenga@zari.gov.zm](mailto:allan.chilenga@zari.gov.zm)

**Ms Dorcas Kabuya**, Ministry of Agriculture (Zambia), National Agricultural Information Services (NAIS) – [domucar10@gmail.com](mailto:domucar10@gmail.com)

#### Additional working group members:

**Dr Julia Davies**, Arizona Institute for Resilience, University of Arizona

**Dr Corrie Hannah**, Arizona Institute for Resilience, University of Arizona

**Dr Jordan Blekking**, Department of Geography, Indiana University

**Dr Jane Battersby**, Environmental and Geographical Science Department, University of Cape Town

**Dr Percy Toriro**, University of Zimbabwe

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