



EATx UNGA Bulletin

A Briefing Note of the High-Level Event on
"Urban Food Systems: The Nutrition Challenge"
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HIGH-LEVEL EVENT ON URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS: THE NUTRITION CHALLENGE: 20 SEPTEMBER 2016

The high-level event on "Urban Food Systems: The Nutrition Challenge" took place on Tuesday, 20 September at UN Headquarters in New York, US. Hosted by the EAT Foundation in collaboration with Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the event convened on the sidelines of the 71st UN General Assembly.

This third annual "EATx UNGA" featured speakers from government, academia, the private sector, the UN, and civil society who presented concrete solutions and commitments for urban food systems, while drawing connections with racial and economic justice, advertising, climate change, and rural communities. Johan Rockström, Executive Director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, who moderated the panel discussion during the event, said sustainable urban food systems are a *sine qua non* for the 2030 Agenda, and without them the world will not be able to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

EATx UNGA 2016 was co-sponsored by: Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation – International Sustainability Unit; C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group; Nordic Council of Ministers; New York Academy of Sciences; NCD Alliance; Save the Children; World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD); Permanent Mission of Palau to the UN; Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network; The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN); and the World Bank Group.

IMPORTANCE OF URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS IN CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

David Nabarro, UN Special Adviser on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, said cities are proving to be central to fulfilling the SDGs. Arguing that current food systems do

not fairly benefit people, smallholder farmers or consumers, and are "not very good for our planet," Nabarro called for a "food systems revolution" with vulnerable urban residents at the center, to develop strategies that simultaneously benefit farmers, consumers and the planet.

WELCOME

Gunhild Stordalen, EAT Foundation founder and president, described an "epidemic" of modern urban diets, noting that many people who move to cities end up obese and malnourished "by default." She said availability of nutritious food has worsened significantly in a single generation but that humans have not changed genetically, which has led to health problems. She expressed hope that cities can lead a dramatic change and noted that food links to almost all 17 SDGs and can help solve many challenges at once.

OPENING REMARKS – SETTING THE CONTEXT

Børge Brende, Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said the greatest challenge of our time – the fight against hunger and extreme poverty – is too great to be left to governments alone, and that success will bring tremendous progress in dealing with other crises. Among questions facing the international community, he asked how cities can feed millions of newcomers, especially given that climate change will reduce food production in many parts of the world. Brende advocated three concrete actions: increase food production; better distribute the food that is produced; and increase awareness about malnutrition's effects, both on health and on national economies.

URBAN SOLUTIONS – ADDRESSING FOOD & HEALTH IN AN INTEGRATED WAY

Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner of Health and Food Safety, said it is "ethically unacceptable and economically scandalous" that each year 88 million tonnes of

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food are wasted in the EU and a third of all food produced globally is wasted. He announced that in 2017, the EU will release a platform for action on food loss and waste prevention to make the EU a model for “making sure every edible crumb is used to feed people.” Andriukaitis also illuminated the fact that food with sugar and fat is cheap and widely available, including in schools, and is marketed as the right thing to eat.

NORDIC FOOD AND NUTRITION

Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, said chefs and other innovators had helped change the Nordic “food scene,” so that the Nordic diet is associated with sustainable, season-based products, instead of a heavy, meat-based diet. Høybråten added that: a common Nordic monitoring system enabling policymakers to see who is complying with the new dietary guidelines and adjust accordingly; Nordic governments require all school meals to be nutritious and all public meals to be organic; and the Nordic ministers are establishing a Nordic cities EAT initiative.

PANEL

Johan Rockström, Executive Director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, moderated a panel discussion on urban food systems. He said the Nordic guidelines are “the world’s best dietary guidelines, period,” and are the first to connect sustainability with health. He added that sustainable urban food systems are essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mark Watts, Executive Director of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, explained that in an urban context, the same steps to deliver on the Paris Agreement can help achieve the SDGs, specifically regarding food consumption and related methane emissions. This issue connects food sustainability, healthy citizens and tackling climate change, he said. Watts called on city governments to: use the power of procurement to require organic, sustainable food; use planning and transportation powers to make it easy for local, sustainable, organic food to get to market; and support urban agriculture.

Feike Sijbesma, CEO of Royal DSM, Netherlands, and Co-Chair of SUN Business Network Advisory Group, informed participants that earlier that morning, 5,000 mothers

around the world had seen their children dying in their arms, and this would take place again this afternoon, and again this evening. Banning hunger is “our next step as a civilization,” and is everyone’s responsibility, he stressed. For businesses that seek to make healthy food “aspirational, available, and affordable,” such as those that have joined the SUN Business Network, he said they may not make a profit in the short-term, but that “none of us can be successful in a world that fails.” He stressed that it is better for a business to “future-proof” itself by making positive changes before regulations require it.

Maria Helena Semedo, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), raised the dilemma that as urban areas expand to include more residents they may encroach on land that could help feed them. She suggested that urban planning involve not just infrastructure but also food production and linkages with rural areas. She said the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which enables municipalities around the world to work together on sustainable food policies, will have its first meeting on 14 October 2016.

Karen Washington, Rise and Root Farm, said people have been growing food in cities for many years, but face difficulty accessing land. “I’m angry that we have hunger and poverty,” said Washington, stressing that lack of access to healthy food does not make a neighborhood a “food desert,” but rather reflects “food apartheid.” She underscored the need to talk about race in the context of food. “We should not have cities or countries where some people have resources and others do not,” she said, and called on the private and public sectors to come together and share resources.

Høybråten stressed the need for cultural change, which he said requires leadership, good scientists, innovators and local leaders.

Q&A

In comments from the floor, a World Bank representative said transformation must not be restricted to where the policy environment is conducive, and highlighted the Decade of Action on Nutrition, which is expected to create coalitions for exchanging good practices and implementing “at scale.” A representative of Sierra Leone said agriculture remains an engine of growth in many developing countries, especially in Africa.

Rockstrom closed the meeting at 2:38 p.m.