

In action

Joining forces to shape
a resilient, sustainable,
safe & healthy food
system !



November 2021

In a foreword

Dear readers,

The month of October was marked by two important events for WUWM and for food systems transformation. First, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Forum (MUFPP) which took place in Barcelona. Mayors from around the world got together to share their best urban food policies, pointing out the key role that cities can play to ensure sustainable food systems in the forthcoming decades. Over 100 cities have joined in. During the Forum, WUWM was invited to co-organize an event highlighting the role of wholesale markets in the transition of food systems towards sustainability.

October was also the month of the 'Love Your Local Market' (LYLM) campaign. The campaign is an annual event celebrated in thousands of outdoor and indoor fresh food street markets around the world. It aims to bring more citizens to street markets by organizing concerts, demonstrate cooking with seasonal products as well as other attractive activities. We celebrated it with a special launch event in Barcelona which took place right after the MUFPP. WUWM was particularly honoured to launch the campaign in Barcelona, as the city was distinguished as the "World capital of sustainable eating" this year, recognizing the city's success in structuring their fresh food supply to ensure a better access to healthier diets to its citizens. This was a concrete way to show the impact of good urban food policies, as most of the street markets are owned and regulated by local governments and mostly supplied by wholesale markets. We were happy to see many MUFPP delegates, Barcelona's vice-mayor and other city representatives joining the launch of LYLM! It has been proven that street markets are key



actors to foster better diets as they provide access to a large variety of fresh foods — mostly seasonal, local fruits and vegetables — that are also economically accessible for lower income households. Therefore, we encourage cities to make use of this tool to improve their urban food policies!

In addition to these important events for our organization, WUWM was also present at the second International Forum for Urban-Rural Linkages organized by UN-HABITAT and is taking part in the discussions of COP26 advocating for the transformation of food systems in order to reduce CO2 emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. In this edition of "In Action" you will find a series of insightful interviews, practices, and pathways to ensure better food environments and retail markets at local levels as well as a special mention of COP26 and its implications for our sector.

As WUWM Chairman I engage myself to actively represent our members internationally and to continue our work towards healthier, more resilient and sustainable food systems which contribute to planetary health.

Yours sincerely,

Stephane Layani,
WUWM Acting Chairman

In the loop

WUWM joins forces with mayors from around the world at the 7th Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Forum (MUFPP) to foster sustainable urban food policies

During the 7th Global Forum of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), which took place in Barcelona from the 19th to the 21st of October, WUWM co-organized with the City of Barcelona a panel-session addressing the theme: 'The future of food in the post Covid-19 world: the role of wholesale markets in ensuring healthy food availability and transitioning food systems towards resilience and sustainability.'

2 The session highlighted the importance of wholesale markets in creating sustainable urban foodscapes as they are crucial infrastructures to ensure availability of fresh produce at a consumer level. Attendees of this session included city mayors, officials, and important food systems stakeholders from around the world.

The key take-aways from this session were that wholesale markets are major actors to ensure food security and to structure the fresh food supply in cities. They are the essential link of the food supply chain. They also play an important social role: as trade volumes enable to provide a cheaper supply of fresh produce in cities, giving lower class households access to healthier diets.

“WUWM co-organized with the City of Barcelona a panel-session addressing the theme: ‘The future of food in the post Covid-19 world’”

Stéphane Layani, Chairman of WUWM, participated in the panel discussion along with other WUWM member directors: Zengjun Ma, from the Chinese Agriculture Wholesale Market Association, Jordi Valls, Director of Barcelona’s wholesale market (Mercabarna), Cesare Ferrero, Milan’s Foody Wholesale Market Director, and Buenos Aires Central Wholesale Market Director Nahuel Levaggi.





In facts

Joining #COP26 objectives

- Today, the food sector accounts for over a quarter (26%) of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- FAO's estimates that world food production must rise 60% to keep pace with demographic change. Climate change puts this at risk.
- Half of the world's habitable (ice and desert-free) land is used for agriculture.
- 70% of global freshwater withdrawals are used for agriculture.
- Deforestation & forest degradation account for 10-11% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions from forest degradation (logging and fires) increased from 0.4 to 1.0 gt of CO₂ per year between 1990 & 2015.
- Livestock contributes nearly 2/3 of agriculture's greenhouse & 78% of its methane emissions.

Participants pointed out that Wholesale markets specifically sustain small and medium size producers, which are becoming frontrunners and great promoters of organic and local production. Often public-owned by city, regional or national authorities, wholesale markets are the operational arm of governments to ensure availability of fresh produce whilst ensuring quality, traceability and food safety.

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A central theme during the MUFPP forum was the need to foster 'green cities' all over the world. It was recognized that wholesale markets are key actors in this transition: First because they help to have better food environments – ensuring availability of fresh produce in cities. Second, because wholesale markets work as food hubs, aggregating in one site the right amount of volume that cities need to feed their citizens in a healthy way and support all the major agri-food actors. This concentration of actors allows: to optimize logistics, reducing the amount of CO₂, to scale up good-green practices (as the development of solar panels or electric vehicles for last mile distribution), and to develop circular economy strategies (the distribution of unsold products to communities in need or the up-cycling to produce compost of biogas) among others.

WUWM was happy to be part of this important Pact and we are looking forward to continuing discussing major issues to ensure the transition of city food systems with city mayors in order to be able to design successful food policies that are adapted to local realities and that can be followed by all the actors of the sector afterwards.

“Often public-owned by city, regional or national authorities, wholesale markets are the operational arm of governments to ensure availability of fresh produce whilst ensuring quality, traceability and food safety.”

In focus

WUWM launched the Love Your Local Market campaign in Barcelona to promote healthier eating habits and fresh food accessibility to all!

WUWM has launched the annual Love Your Local Market (LYLM) campaign during the 'Mercat the Mercats' in Barcelona on October 22nd. This launch event was also of particular importance as the city of Barcelona was selected in 2021 as the world capital of sustainable eating. The launch also took place one day after the 7th Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Forum organized in Barcelona.

In the morning, participants and Milan Pact delegates from all over the world visited Barcelona's wholesale market (Mercabarna). In the afternoon, the LYLM campaign was launched with the vice-mayor of Barcelona City Hall, the Director of Barcelona's street markets, the director of the WUWM retail market group, Jean Paul Auguste and Eugenia Carrara, WUWMs Secretary General at the Mercat the Mercats. After the launch, attendees were welcomed to visit the Mercat the Mercats, a market-gastronomic fair that reunites the best stands of Barcelona's fresh food street markets in one place for 3 days, giving the opportunity for citizens to enjoy fresh produce and gastronomy while attending talks, cooking demonstrations, tastings by chefs and producers, and concerts.

The global 'Love Your Local Market' (LYLM) campaign is an annual event celebrating retail -street or covered- fresh food markets. The event tries to raise awareness to the need of an articulated and structured agri-food supply sector in cities – as 90% of produce found in street markets comes from wholesale markets.

WUWM first global LYLM event was launched in 2014 with a core group of retail markets in various cities of Europe. By 2017 the international campaign had grown to over 3,000 markets participating from 17 countries – both inside and outside of Europe.

“The campaign serves to bring more citizens to fresh food markets by making them a more attractive place to shop.”

For one month, street markets around the world organize concerts, cooking shows and masterclasses. The campaign serves to bring more citizens to fresh food markets by making them a more attractive place to shop.

This year the campaign joined efforts with the United Nations to promote “International Year of Fruits and Vegetables” (#IYFV).

If the current eating trends continue, more than 4 billion people will be overweight by 2050 (45%) with 1.5 billion people obese, while 500 million people continue to be underweight (EAT-lancet institute). Oils and fats in daily diets are still increasing faster while the intake of sugar is not significantly decreasing.

Transitioning to healthier eating patterns and helping citizens improve their diets is a must and will be among the biggest challenges of the 21st century. Therefore, it is critical for cities around the world to ensure diversified food environments where citizens can access better and healthier food options with less fat and sugar. In this context, fresh food street markets are government allies in promoting better eating patterns. We hope to be able to celebrate LYLM campaign in 2022 with even more markets on board!





Interview with Ioannis Triantafyllis

WUWM Vice Chairman and General Manager of Greece's Markets and Fisheries Organisation on the Love Your Local Market campaign 2021

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Where and in what manner was the LYLM campaign launched in your country? What kind of events were organized around it?

Love Your Local Market (LYLM) campaign has been a major event for Greek Markets since 2015, when it was first introduced. We are organizing events in our premises and some more with adjacent municipalities. What is very important in our case is that Central Markets and Fisheries Organization is mainly operating wholesale markets. So, the main idea is how to introduce LYLM, which is primarily addressed to the final consumer, in wholesale premises. It was a difficult task, but if someone bears in mind that wholesale markets are an essential link of the food supply chain and not just something "exotic" and isolated, things are easier than they look. We have opened the doors to the end consumers and organized events to attract people who would normally not come to our markets, so that they see with their own eyes what the markets really look like. We brought schools and organized events aiming to familiarize kids to more healthy diets, like the



interactive "paths of food". An additional task was to reach out to municipalities adjacent to our markets and in this way we have managed to build strong relationships between us and our neighbours.

What does this campaign mean for your country? Can you share with us some of the main events that you will organize for LYLM 2021?

2021 was supposed to be a difficult year. People are returning to the markets after a long period of quarantine and we had to be cautious in order to be in compliance with COVID preventive measures. So, we are planning to run a social media campaign with celebrities (actors, singers, athletes) visiting our street markets and celebrating with us. We have also organized for small groups of elementary school children to come and play, while learning the advantages of eating healthy products from our vendors. We consider these events as a "general rehearsal" for the LYLM 2022, where we believe people will have more liberties from the measures of the pandemic.

"The importance of the LYLM campaign is that it brings more people to the markets where they can consume safely, in every aspect."

According to you, what effect can this campaign have on people's consumption of fresh and local food?

The target of LYLM campaign worldwide is to emphasize the importance of Markets and the way they supply citizens with fresh, healthy, nutritious food, while functioning as an incubator for local economies. Since time immemorial, people flock to the markets to buy goods that cater their needs. No matter if they want fresh food, cheap food, peculiar fresh food or out-of-season fresh food, markets offer everything in abundance. This is their advantage against every other single-stop sale point. This is not the only one though-personal contact is of high importance as well. Getting to know the seller creates a sense of trust which in turn enhances sales. These are the exact points that are stressed out by the campaign and which add some extra fun and flavour!

In the post-Covid19 era, when governments are focusing even more on enabling healthier diets for their citizens, what do you think could be the role of local markets? Do you think that the importance of the LYLM campaign is even stronger?

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A trend which became apparent in the COVID era is that consumers seem to focus more on the local, regional and seasonal supply. This can be a golden opportunity for local markets. Provided that protective measures are on, the consumers feel better going to the markets, interacting with others and seeing what they buy. The importance of the LYLM campaign is that it brings more people to the markets where they can consume safely, in every aspect.

“Local markets are of the utmost importance to societies. There are municipalities that have understood this and are boosting their markets.”

What are the main challenges that fresh food markets in Greece have to face from supermarkets and other retailers?

During the pandemic, e-commerce became very popular for obvious reasons and this gave an extra boost to the supermarkets. After the relaxation of the measures, there are indications that a great part of consumers are returning to the markets again. Digital sales are still ahead of course, but not so much as they were a year ago.

Regarding wholesale, it never ceased working. It may not always be obvious, but if wholesale markets would have shut down during the pandemic, fresh food shortages would have been catastrophic for every link of the supply chain, from farm to fork. Producers wouldn't have been able to distribute their produce, wholesalers wouldn't have been able to reach the appropriate channels and – above all – consumers would have experienced scarcity of products and excessive expensiveness.

I don't fool myself believing that fresh food is not more expensive than it used to be a year ago, but I imagine what would have happened if wholesale markets were not operating and it was difficult for food to find a way to the market! If someone believes that digital markets would save the game, they



must revise their thoughts, knowing that even digital applications use wholesale markets' premises for supply, storage and distribution. Most wholesale markets have initiated digital applications or platforms. In Greece we have started a b2b platform (e-lahanagora), in order to bring our merchant-tenants closer with their clients.

What role can local authorities play to sustain local markets? Why do you think that it is important for local authorities to develop this kind of infrastructure?

Local markets are of the utmost importance to societies. There are municipalities that have understood this and are boosting their markets, while others are not so warm to this approach. The truth is that most wholesale markets all around the world belong – in one way or another – to local authorities. Market infrastructure is rather expensive and it is seen as a public utility. Cities need to be fed in an efficient and sustainable way. Markets have a role in every discussion of the future of the agri-food supply sector. Last mile, urban logistics, digitalization, urban economics, green deal; markets can contribute to all these sectors, so authorities should aim to facilitate them.

These past few years, WUWM has aimed to enhance market extroversions, which appear to be fruitful. FAO, universities, governments, local authorities are invited to our conferences, use WUWM for their case studies, conduct researches in the field, and acknowledge the role of markets in the food supply chain.

“A trend which became apparent in the COVID era is that consumers seem to focus more on the local, regional and seasonal supply. This can be a golden opportunity for local markets.”

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Interview with Philippe Close

8 **The Mayor of Brussels, speaks with WUWM about the city's food policy and the importance of fresh food markets in ensuring accessibility to fresh produce to its citizens.**

As the Mayor of Brussels: How would you describe the ideal of a diversified food environment in a modern city?

As you know, Brussels is first and foremost around 180 nationalities grouped together in one territory. We are fortunate to be home to a large number of international institutions and many related jobs. Brussels lives through this cultural mix and this obviously has a positive and qualitative influence on the overall offer, which makes it possible to provide a diversified urban food supply. Many companies have been set up to facilitate

the import of products from all sources, and Mabru has become an important hub for this new supply. The fact that many Belgian products are produced close by can also be highlighted, since that also greatly facilitates local trade. A modern city must have a wide range of products, while at the same time preserving local trade and short supply chains. I believe that Brussels is totally fulfilling this mission.

“Logistics will increasingly take the centre stage, and players such as wholesale markets are obviously important in these future developments.”

Do you think that the Covid-19 pandemic changed the way that cities understand the importance of food security and fresh food availability?

Regarding the food availability, Brussels has weathered the crisis very well. It has not experienced a supply crisis. Thanks to the dynamics of the food actors, the population has had continuous access to fresh products. Covid may have stressed the need for efficient distribution tools, which Brussels has. More than ever, the food sectors have demonstrated their importance and their ability to react. Covid has not damaged this production and distribution chain, but as for the healthcare sector, the population has become aware of the importance of this structure.

“Raising awareness of healthy eating is a top priority, such as making schools aware of the consumption of seasonal fruit and vegetables every day to replace processed products.”

What is Brussels doing to foster diversified food environments? Do you have any «food systems» urban plans for the forthcoming years? Can you share its main priorities with us?

Brussels, like all European players, is focusing its efforts on short supply chains, local production and the closest possible supply. The valorization of small producers is also a major issue. Logistics will increasingly take the centre stage, and players such as wholesale markets are obviously important in these future developments. They are best placed to distribute this production.

What do you think cities can and should do in order to foster better eating patterns and healthier diets among their citizens?

Raising awareness of healthy eating is a top priority, such as making schools aware of the consumption of seasonal fruit and vegetables every day to replace processed products. Mentalities must be changed from an early age and action must be strong and permanent. Mind-sets are evolving and information is getting through better and better. Brussels' schools are doing a remarkable job in this aspect.

What is the role that wholesale markets can play in your view to foster the transition of our food systems? What is your relationship with Mabru?

Mabru —Brussels' wholesale market— is a company owned by the City of Brussels. The land is made available by the City to satisfy an economic and commercial need, but is at the service of the citizens to ensure a supply to all professionals in Belgium. Mabru obviously has a role to play in promoting quality distributors who meet certain standards and offer suitable products. Mabru plays its role as a logistics platform to the full, with 22,000 people passing through every month, demonstrating its efficiency. The partnership is excellent, this association has a Board of Directors, the majority of whom are appointed by the local authorities. Mabru has always acted in the best interest of the city and its inhabitants. Its role is essential and provides work for 700 people. We are proud to have such a great partner.

“Brussels, like all European players, is focusing its efforts on short supply chains, local production and the valorization of small producers. Wholesale markets are the best positioned to distribute this production!”



Insightful

WUWM supports #COP26 objectives and the importance of food system transformation in the fight against climate change

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The COP26 started this 31st of October in Glasgow, United Kingdom. This international conference co-hosted by the United Kingdom and Italy will last until the 12th of November and bring together multiple parties, from governments to NGOs, through international organizations, experts and researchers, in order to accelerate action towards the goals established of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This is major event, which is said to be the world's last good chance to get runaway climate change under control, is expected to promote the undertaking of concrete actions to tackle climate change and the structural problems that accelerate it.

Among the challenges that need to be addressed is the food system's transition towards sustainability, inclusivity and resilience. To put this into figures, food accounts for 26% of the global greenhouse emissions. WUWM truly supports the COP26's goals and efforts, because it holds the promise of change.

Our relationship with the environment that surrounds us must change, and evidence has been given that one of the main requirements of an effective climate transition is the transformation of our food systems.

Without a doubt, wholesale markets are a great tool to promote organic farming, guaranteeing nutritious and safe food for all, reducing food waste and incentivizing actors throughout the value chain to act in favor of our planet. Wholesale markets are therefore instruments of change, the "hidden center" of resilient and equitable food systems. After a fruitful UNFSS summit in September this year, where the importance and

role of wholesale markets was acknowledged by the entire world, WUWM continues to second international initiatives to share best practices and come up with multi-stakeholder solutions.

WUWM is glad to announce that we have signed the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration along many other major stakeholders (such as FAO, GAIN, ICLEI, C40) and cities – a commitment by subnational governments to tackle the climate emergency through integrated food policies and a call on national governments to act. WUWM supports the Declaration and its food systems approach on a subnational level that promises to accelerate climate action with more green food policies.

Wholesale markets can play a virtuous role in addressing the reduction of GHG emissions in a sustainable and resilient way. By making the distribution of food more local and supply chains shorter, they significantly reduce the amount of energy needed. Modern wholesale markets also contribute to the reduction of food waste while fostering better logistics that prevents food waste and can scale-up innovative circular economy solutions – like recycling or upcycling of fresh produce or material used.

WUWM was invited to attend relevant sessions of COP26 and will provide you with outcomes regarding the linkage of food systems and climate change mitigation on our social media channels.





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Interview with George Hongchoy

Hong Kong cutting-edge strategy to make fresh food retail markets more attractive and modern.

In this edition of "In Action" we had the pleasure to interview our member, Mr. George Hongchoy, Chief Executive Officer at Link, the company in charge of a large part of fresh food retail and fresh food markets in Hong Kong. Mr. Hongchoy gives us an insight into the fresh food retail and market infrastructure of Hong Kong and shares with us his strategy to make them more attractive.

Hong Kong has a dynamic fresh food and retail market infrastructure. As a major actor in this sector, what are your views on the evolution of the place of fresh food markets in Hong Kong?

Fresh markets in Hong Kong had originally been built to serve the residents of the large housing estates in which they were located, and many of them have been operating in exactly the same way for 50 years or more. Dirt, mess as well as off-putting smells have always had

to be tolerated. It is only recently that market operators have rediscovered what a market should be. We understand that fresh markets form a very important part of the community in Hong Kong. Not only does Link rejuvenate markets with modern designs and improve their overall shopping environment, we have also been upgrading their services and facilities, enhancing tenant mix and technology in response to rising customer expectations.

"We rejuvenate the markets with modern designs, upgrading the services and facilities while enhancing tenant mix and technology in response to rising customer expectations."

Lok Fu Place is a good example: located in central Kowloon and surrounded by many public housing estates, it is one of the first markets to be revitalized by Link. Its wide aisles and clear visibility make shopping a pleasure. We retain the strengths of traditional markets while enhancing the customers' shopping experience and the tenants' operating environment. The enhancement works have enabled long-established tenants to continue providing services in a much better environment, and have renewed the culture of fresh market shopping by redefining the city's fresh markets.

**What is the involvement of local authorities in the development of fresh food markets?
What is your relationship to them?**

There are several different operators of fresh markets in Hong Kong. Many markets situated in or near public housing estates are run by Link, which inherited them from the Hong Kong Housing Authority. So far, Link has redesigned almost 40 of them. Others are run by the Hong Kong Government's Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. They are often part of multi-story municipal complexes which also include facilities like libraries, theaters and local government offices. Traditional street markets can still be found in older districts like Wan Chai, Yau Ma Tei and Shau Kei Wan, and there are regular farmers' markets in a few areas, some of which specialize in organic produce.

What kinds of innovations are you implementing to make fresh food retail markets more appealing for citizens?

Introducing new tenant mix & gathering space

Link has always been introducing new market tenants to provide a wider variety of choice for shoppers. In the newer markets, Link takes one step forward to inject even more of a sense of community. We put cooked food stalls and places for people to sit right in the heart of the market. Hong Kong people like snacks and street food, so we have enriched some markets to meet this demand. It is also a space where people can meet and have a good time instead of only buying products. Successful markets are filled with people having tea, chatting, catching up on the news, as well as shopping.

Enhancing technology

In the past few years, Link has helped and encouraged its tenants to install several electronic and mobile payment options, including Octopus, AlipayHK and Wechat Pay, as they are more commonly used by the locals. At first, it was a challenge to get tenants to put this equipment in, but it is obviously more hygienic and convenient for our shoppers. Rather than the stallholder

cutting your fish, putting it in a bag and giving you some wet change, now we have options other than cash. To increase the acceptance of electronic payment in fresh markets, Link carried out marketing and educational efforts for behavioural changes and misconceptions about electronic payments.

Upgrading services and facilities

Link is constantly adding new customer-friendly services, such as trolleys inside markets, customer service counters and market DJs. Promotional initiatives – like a seafood expo and hotpot festival – are organized to coincide with special events or holidays.

The renovated markets are for everyone, and this is underlined by the barrier-free access to the new facilities. The improvement gives elderly and disabled people equal access to an enjoyable shopping experience. It recognizes that people come in all sizes, strengths and abilities, and the markets are a welcoming and accessible place for all of them.

To keep standards high, Link runs a series of "Tenant Academy" idea-sharing sessions to help traders keep their stalls in good shape, and keep their product displays looking fresh.

“We retain the strengths of traditional markets while enhancing the customers' shopping experience and the tenants' operating environment.”





Promoting sustainability

Fresh markets have a major role in promoting environmental sustainability; hence we work with green groups to reduce food waste with surplus food recycling programmes. One of these green groups is Food Angel, with which we joined forces to collect about 1.7 tonnes of surplus food from our fresh markets every day, and turn it into hot meals and food packs for people in need. In the past few years, more than 1,050 tons of surplus food have been collected, while 3.4 million hot meals and more than 200,000 food packs were produced for the underprivileged in Hong Kong.

In addition to Food Angel and other NGOs, about 2.5 tonnes of food waste are collected every day from 19 of our fresh markets and delivered to O-PARK1, the Hong Kong Government's Organic Resources Recovery Centre to generate renewable energy.

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How has the pandemic affected markets/ eating patterns in Hong Kong? Has the role of fresh food markets changed since Covid-19? Did you apply any innovation to support the role of the markets during the pandemic crisis?

During the pandemic crisis, Link's mass-market-oriented retail centers accounted for the non-discretionary segment of Hong Kong's retail market. Given our portfolio's resiliency, impact on our tenants was relatively lower than those operating at other locations in the territory during this crisis. We have acted swiftly to shore up retailers in need, particularly small businesses, by implementing the Tenant Support Scheme of HK\$600 million to support our tenants. We have also elevated hygiene measures to provide peace of mind to customers at our malls and fresh markets, in addition to stepping up promotional efforts to boost tenants' sales.

We understand digital payment minimizes contact with objects and enables a more convenient and hygienic mode of transaction. We have therefore joined hands with electronic wallet operators such as AlipayHK to drive digital payment transformation at fresh markets in Hong Kong.

“It is only recently that market operators have rediscovered what a market should be. Fresh markets form a very important part of the community in Hong Kong.”

Could you provide some major figures of your country (total number of street markets, number of markets that participated in the campaign, quantity/diversity of products found in your market, etc)?

In Hong Kong, fresh produce is sold at different outlets from street stalls to supermarkets and fresh markets. As for the markets managed by Link, the trade mix – the proportion of different goods sold in each market – has changed a lot. In the past, one-third of stalls which were not selling fresh food were occupied mostly by dry goods and other trades like ironmongers. Today, two-thirds of the market stalls still focus on fresh produce, depending on the location, but the remainder of the space is given to a more diverse trade mix. For instance, cooked food has been introduced.



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Innovation

Milan bets to transform its wholesale market into a modern sustainable hub to ensure food security and fresh food availability in the region

WUWM had the pleasure of interviewing Sogemi Spa's (Mercato Agroalimentare Milano) President, Cesare Ferrero about its sustainability project and Milan's transformation into an agri-food sector hub. In this interview, we discover more about the project, namely its timeline, challenges addressed, as well as the motivation behind it, with a closer look at the importance of its strengthened infrastructure and logistics.

“It is essential to deliver to the community a modern and efficient structure in order to create a distribution and market system able to compete with the great European market systems of Paris, Madrid and Barcelona.”

Milan is becoming a hub of the agri-food sector with the launch of its new sustainability project. Could you tell us more about it, in particular the different aspects and entities involved?

The Foody 2025 project began in 2017 following the definition of a relaunch plan for the Sogemi Company and the decision to build a new Fruit and Vegetable Market. In 2018 the City Council approvals were completed and in 2019 the corporate resolutions were too. Already in this brief summary the great criticality in the «time to market» emerges. Unfortunately, in a world increasingly converted to timeliness and short-termism, the longer periods of time that the Italian public sector uses to make decision are somewhat out of place.

“In short, Milan, the capital of Food in Italy, will finally have a Market that will offer innovative services for operators and consumers, conceived according to norms of quality and food safety, environmental sustainability, and innovation.”

This year sees the inauguration of the new food market in Milan, which will include a brand new pavilion for fruit and vegetables and a logistics platform of innovation to complement commercial activities. Why is it important to strengthen infrastructure and logistics in the Milan area in this way?

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The context we find ourselves in gives us an indication of the answer: Milan is the second largest agricultural municipality in Italy, with 3,700 hectares of cultivated land and over 130 farms in operation. It is an important agricultural and food heritage that must be enhanced and that finds its natural point of reference in Foody Mercato Agroalimentare Milano - today the first wholesale market in Italy for the quantity of products sold and among the most important markets in Europe. It is therefore essential to deliver to the community a modern and efficient

structure in order to create a distribution and market system able to compete with the great European market systems of Paris, Madrid and Barcelona. In fact, thanks to a total budget of about 100 million euros, the development project includes the creation of two new fruit and vegetable pavilions, logistics and production platforms, as well as a renovated Palazzo Affari and support services such as laboratories and food training centers. In short, Milan, the capital of Food in Italy, will finally have a Market that will offer innovative services for operators and consumers, conceived according to norms of quality and food safety, environmental sustainability, and innovation.

What have been the main challenges in the realization of this project and how have you overcome them?

One of the main challenges we are facing is related to the construction of a new Market in the same area of the existing Market while in full operation. This challenge is technical. The second challenge is business-oriented. Agri-Food Markets have been predominantly relocated outside of cities with large suburban areas. We have chosen to remain in the city in order to be the most important Italian agro-food city hub, a nerve center for market activity and urban distribution. The position of Foody has proved particularly successful over the years because it is inside the city, a step away from its center yet outside the most congested areas and easily accessible from the airport, railway line and highways. It is therefore a highly strategic and functional position for the development of business and trade.

“We have chosen to remain in the city in order to be the most important Italian agro-food city hub, a nerve center for market activity and urban distribution.”



Involved

WUWM participated in the 2nd Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages organized by UN-HABITAT

On October 19th and 20th, the Second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages took place in Lishui City, in the Chinese province of Zhejiang, and brought together 32 guest speakers and over 200 participants from more than 20 international organizations representing 17 different countries. The International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages is one of the key activities of the UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages programme, which aims to promote the Rural-Urban cooperation in order to reduce regional inequalities and increase resource efficiency.



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The Conference was entitled “Integrating Health and Territorial Development for Sustainable Livelihoods”. It aimed at promoting sustainable development and wellbeing for all across the urban-rural continuum. The Director of the WUWM Asia-Pacific Regional Group, Mr. Zengjun Ma, was invited, in representation of WUWM, as a guest speaker in a thematic session about “Public Health, Sustainable Healthy Diets and Food Systems”. Find his major takeaways from the Forum in this interview!

“As the main channel of fresh produce circulation, wholesale markets could increase the efficiency of their circulation, stabilize the prices, narrow the urban-rural price gap, minimize urban-rural disparity of supply and demand and promote the equitable distribution of fresh produce.”

What was the goal of the IFURL and what was your keynote about?

The second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages aimed to provide all participants with an opportunity and a platform to learn from each other, share case studies of different countries, share innovative methods and measures as well as some insights on rural development and health issues. Its purpose was to strengthen urban-rural linkages, promote sustainable development, improve the well-being of people in the process of urban-rural integration, and ensure better and more sustainable life environments in regards to the goals and requirements of the “New Urban Agenda” and other international agendas. My keynote was entitled “Ensure the Sustainable Supply of Fresh Agricultural Produce via Wholesale Markets”.

Why do you think that it is important for WUWM to participate in this kind of events?

WUWM actively participates in different activities organized by the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations. This can enhance the influence of WUWM and increase the voice of the wholesale market industry in the world. As a result, more countries and people from all over the world will focus on the wholesale market industry, recognize the vital function of wholesale markets in fresh agri-produce circulation worldwide, and simultaneously enlarge and deepen the cooperation between wholesale markets and other stakeholders globally.

Can you share with us the main take away from the conference?

We have learned about the views and perspectives on urban-rural linkage and urban-rural construction from China and other countries in the world, especially concerning rural construction and the case of Songyang’s best practice on sustainable development of urban-rural linkage. We communicated and exchanged with more than 300 officials, experts, scholars, media practitioners from 44 countries and 19 international organizations and learned new knowledge about healthy urban-rural development.

How do you think that wholesale markets can help strengthening rural-urban linkages?

As the main channel of fresh produce circulation, wholesale markets could increase the efficiency of their circulation, stabilize the prices, narrow the urban-rural price gap, minimize urban-rural disparity of supply and demand and promote the equitable distribution of fresh produce.

“This event has helped countries recognize the function of wholesale markets in guaranteeing sustainable supply of fresh agri-products, and increase the influence of the wholesale market industry worldwide.”

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What does this Forum mean for wholesale markets in general?

The forum has helped more countries recognize the function of wholesale market in guaranteeing sustainable supply of fresh agri-produce and increase the influence of the wholesale market industry worldwide.

Could you summarize the main innovation, tools, new technologies or ideas on sustainable urban and rural development that were shared during the conference?

E-commerce and scientific technologies can help reduce the conditions of uneven distribution of urban-rural medical care and educational resources. We also need to set up countryside construction, and economic development should adapt to local conditions, rely on local characteristics and resources advantages, and encourage rural areas around cities to develop their own economy.

In WUWM's World

October 1 — WUWM's LYLM markets had a meeting to discuss their activities this month

October 14 — WUWM met with the Global Food Banking Network to discuss possible future collaborations

October 19 — WUWM, Mercabarna and the city of Barcelona organized a session during the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact 7th Global Forum in Barcelona further highlighting the importance of sustainable fresh food systems in cities

October 19-21 — WUWM participated in the MUFPP 7th Global Forum in Barcelona and had meetings with many important food system stakeholders and city governments

October 20 — WUWM Asia-Pacific Chairman and Chinese Agriculture Wholesale Market Association (CAWA) Chairman Mr. Ma spoke at the International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages organized by UN-Habitat

October 22 — WUWM organized the launch of the Love Your Local Market campaign at the Mercat de Mercats in Barcelona with many important stakeholders in attendance

October 28 — WUWM's Bureau leadership met virtually to discuss the way forward, determine strategic pillars, and to look ahead at WUWM's activities in 2022



About WUWM:

We aim to facilitate access to healthy diets for everyone in the world by delivering more sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality fresh food supply systems. We exchange ideas, share best practices and cooperate with our partners in international organizations, governments, businesses, and the public.

