

# In action



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

June 2022

## In a foreword 2

## Involved 3

WUWM Chairman Stéphane Layani was awarded the "Best Commitment" prize by the Better World Endowment Fund for WUWM's work to foster sustainability in the food sector!

## In Focus 4

Save the date and join us for WUWM 2022 Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates!

## In Facts 5

## Interview 6

with Graham Sanders, Chief Executive Officer of Ghassan Aboud Group, Regional Food Hub Abu Dhabi

## In Good Practices 8

Barcelona wholesale market, Mercabarna, joined forces with the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and created the first digital library on food waste in Spain!

## In the loop 9

Building together responsible supply chains. Interview with Marjoleine Hennis, Chair of the OECD-FAO Advisory Group on Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains

## Insightful 13

What are the biggest challenges for the food sector? Find out Emeline Fellus' opinion from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development

## In Action 16

How can we better prepare for future crisis in the fresh food sector? FAO researchers shared with us different cases and lessons of local governments behaviors during Covid-19 pandemic

## In Events 22

WUWM participated as a panelist in the SFS-MED Webinar "Food waste management and circular economy in Mediterranean cities"

## In WUWM's World 23



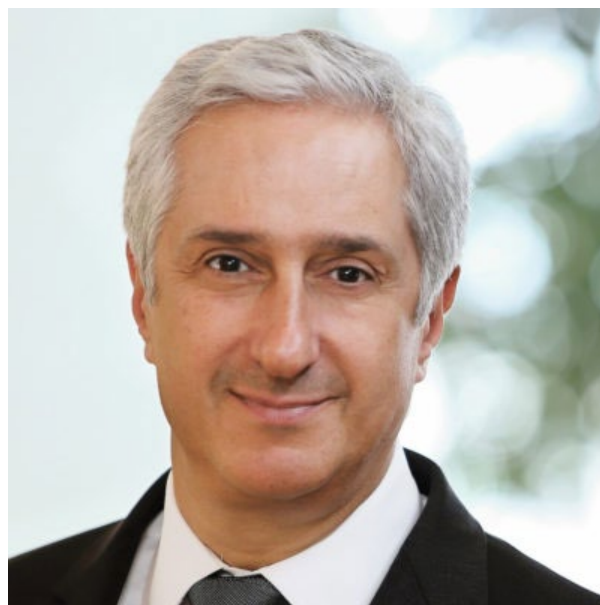


# In a foreword

Dear readers,

In a moment where governments around the world are concerned about disruptions in the food supply chain that could lead to food crisis, it is fundamental to work cooperatively to strengthen food systems, and make food supply chain logistics as robust and resilient as we can. As major actors of the fresh food supply sector we have the power to build up the necessary alliances, platforms and synergies and to develop all the tools and mechanisms needed to avoid food disruptions in the months ahead.

I am pleased to announce that the 2022 WUWM Conference will take place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from October 20th to 22nd. This conference will be an occasion to gain a multi-stakeholder perspective from major actors shaping the fresh food sector, and define steps that can be taken to build supply chain resilience, avoid food crisis and ensure food security. The risks now are global, that's the reason why, now more than ever, all actors shaping the food sector must stand tall on the front lines of this struggle to build innovative, adaptable and efficient response mechanisms in the face of food crisis. We must engage in a multi-stakeholder approach to overcome the difficulties that the food system faces in the forthcoming years in terms of distribution, logistics and coordination.



WUWM believes in the power of sharing and cooperating for successful and long-lasting results that benefit the food system.

In this edition of WUWM newsletter we are delighted to be able to announce the date and location of the WUWM 2022 Conference .

I would like to invite all interested actors to join us in Abu Dhabi for our WUWM 2022 Congress!

Thank you for your constant support.

Yours sincerely,

**Stephane Layani,**  
**WUWM Chairman**



# Involved:

**WUWM Chairman Stéphane Layani was awarded the “Best Commitment” prize by the Better World Endowment Fund for WUWM’s work to foster sustainability in the food sector!**

In occasion of the 75th Cannes Film Festival, the Better World Endowment Fund organized a special award ceremony to recognize the work of outstanding figures to ensure a “better world”.

This year the theme of the award was “Food, health and sustainability”, aiming to give visibility and recognize those people whose actions and commitment address the most pressing humanitarian and sustainability issues of our time. Due to the rising concerns about food insecurity, this year the Fund decided to dedicate the event to sustainability in the food sector. Stéphane Layani, as WUWM Chairman received the prize for the “Best commitment” in recognition of the work that he, his team and all the wholesale markets members of WUWM do in order to ensure food security and access to nutritious, healthy, affordable and sustainable fresh food supply to all.

The Better World Fund is an endowment fund based in Paris. It was created in 2016 in response to a humanitarian impulse coming from a society in need of more equality and truth. Beyond political, religious or cultural differences, the movement empowers women’s rights, education rights, environment and biodiversity protection. The Better World Fund has been organizing a series of high-level events in key locations in different parts of the world such as the Cannes Film Festival, the Venice Film festival, or the Dubai Expo 2020. The movement operates together with influential people from the Cinema, Music, Business, Sports and Fashion industries, working through art to raise awareness and funds to promote humanitarian action and sustainable development all over the world. “From images to action, the Better World Fund aspires to be more than a single event.



We stand as a movement shedding light upon concrete actions that impact people all over the world. We work to bring focus on the main humanitarian issues of our time” affirmed Manuel Collas De La Roche, President and Founder of The Better World Endowment Fund.

During the ceremony, 4 other awards were given for their commitment for humanitarian causes and the United Nation sustainable development goals: Dominique Ouattara, Sharon Stone, Aamruta Fadnavis and Skyler Griswold.

This award is a very important recognition, since it symbolizes the constant effort and commitment of our organization to build a better future for world communities and planet Earth, and it also represents a source of inspiration to abide by this acknowledgment pursue our work in the years to come!

**“Stéphane Layani, was awarded this prize in recognition of the work that wholesale markets do in order to ensure food security and access to nutritious, healthy, affordable and sustainable fresh food supply to all.”**



# In Focus:

## Save the date and join us for WUWM 2022 Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates!

We are glad to announce that the WUWM 2022 Conference will take place from October 20th to 22nd in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE)! This year, the WUWM Conference is particularly important – both concretely and symbolically – for a number of reasons. In a historic moment where governments around the world are concerned about an acute food crisis, it is important for experts of the food sector, wholesale markets, farmers, policy markets, logisticians, wholesalers, investors, international organizations, and governments to join forces and make solid steps towards a resilient food supply chain that can ensure reduce as much as possible the risk of food crises and disruptions of the supply chain.

4

The WUWM 2022 conference represents a chance to gather all the major actors of the sector, who will be able to interact, exchange about their initiatives during COVID-19 to tackle eventual disruptions, build new partnerships, get inspired by other experiences, and commit to take concrete action for the food systems that can benefit citizens around the world and the planet. The conference will take place for the first time in the MENA (Middle East/North Africa) region, a geographical area in which the UAE is taking the lead to exchange about these pressing issues.

MENA is a challenging territory, highly reliant on a dependable supply chain, as most of the food consumed locally is imported. With particularly aggressive weather for agriculture, enhancing supply chains and fostering local agriculture needs to be cutting edge in terms of innovation.

More information on the conference will be shared soon, meanwhile, we are excited to announce the date and location of the event and we kindly invite all of you to join us for this important event.

**“The WUWM 2022 conference represents a chance to gather all the major actors of the sector”**





# In facts:

---

- Creating sustainable food environments means ensuring that foods, beverages and meals that contribute to sustainable healthy diets are the most available, accessible, affordable, pleasurable and widely promoted.
- Price, lack of information and the challenge of identifying sustainable food options as well as their limited availability are the main perceived barriers to sustainable eating.
- Sustainable food environments drive demand for socially just supply chains and production models that work with nature, that are climate-proof and that take high levels of animal welfare as their starting point.
- Environmentally Sustainable Food Consumption is the use of food products that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle.
- The continued decline in crop diversity in agricultural production systems is making global food systems vulnerable: 75% of the world's food is generated from just 12 plants and 5 animal species, with only 3 plant species providing more than 50% of the world's food-energy needs.
- Wholesale markets are key actors to foster crop diversity as they trade the largest amount of diversified fruits and vegetables in comparison to other actors of the food supply chain
- FAO research indicates that markets have been successful in achieving positive changes in food environments, by: improving local and agricultural economies, highlighting land use for production and increasing access to healthy foods for residents.
- Implementing an efficient legal framework for healthy and sustainable food environments is one of the best ways to fulfil international commitments in the field of human rights, including children's right to health and the right to food.

**“Creating sustainable food environments means ensuring that foods, beverages and meals that contribute to sustainable healthy diets are the most available, accessible, affordable, pleasurable and widely promoted.”**



# Interview

## with Graham Sanders

**Chief Executive Officer of  
Ghassan Aboud Group, Regional  
Food Hub Abu Dhabi**



6

We had the pleasure to interview Graham Sanders, Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Regional Food Hub. We talked about the upcoming WUWM Conference and the importance it entails for the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region and for the United Arab Emirates in particular (UAE). This geographical area needs to overcome many obstacles in order to achieve food security and a resilient food system; but at the same time, there are many opportunities to grasp. Graham Sanders also highlighted the work his company, Ghassan Aboud Group is carrying out, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi government, the construction of a "Regional Food Hub" in Abu Dhabi, which could significantly improve food security in the region.

**This conference is going to be the first one taking place in the region. Can you briefly explain to our readers why you decided to organize this conference? And why it is so important to have a conference in the MENA region?**

The MENA region is home to between 450 and 600 million people. It is culturally and ethnically diverse, it is growing quickly, and it is becoming increasingly integrated in world trade, sport, art and politics. The UAE is taking a lead role and the 'Regional Food Hub Abu Dhabi' is an expression of this leadership in the food supply chain. The WUWM Conference is an opportunity to share the vision for this project and country and to discuss the changes occurring in the food sector in the MENA region.

**Could you describe the current situation of the food sector in your region? What are the most pressing challenges to overcome in order to achieve food security and sustainable food systems in the region?**

Food security, food supply and adequate nutrition for the population in the MENA region is a serious and ongoing challenge. The various conflicts in the region disrupt food production, climate change and 'water stress' is impacting agricultural production and rapid population growth is magnifying these issues. Half of the MENA region's food is imported and this rises to over 90% in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council). Covid exposed the risks of being so import dependent for food supply. The situation in Ukraine is once again raising prices and risks for vital food commodities in the MENA region. Addressing these challenges is very complex and often beyond the capability of a single country. Climate change and geo-political conflicts for example have material impacts on the food supply and affordability in MENA.

**Can you share some of the strategies adopted - or about to be implemented - to achieve the goal of food resilience?**

The Regional Food Hub Abu Dhabi is part of the UAE government strategy to improve food supply chains in the region. Building food supply chain efficiencies and adding storage and logistics capacity will help buffer the effects of supply chain problems, fluctuating food commodity prices and inefficient and fragmented logistics systems. The UAE government is also investing in and encouraging private sector investment in food production technology in desert climates.





**You are building a regional food hub in Abu Dhabi aiming to become the “region’s largest wholesale food trading hub”, could you tell our readers a bit more about it? Why have you decided to undertake this project? What do you think can be the benefits the food hub could bring to the region? What are the objectives of this project?**

The “Regional Food Hub Abu Dhabi” is an ambitious private public partnership between the Abu Dhabi Government (through AD Ports) and the Ghassan Aboud Group. Our technology and operations partner is Rungis. The MENA region is very large and food security and supply chain resilience in this region is fragile. There is no central hub for the large-scale trading of wholesale food products for the region. The UAE government and Ghassan Aboud Group recognized the logistics excellence of the UAE and have positioned the hub for direct access to major sea ports, major airports, excellent road networks and the new Gulf rail system currently under construction. The objective is to develop a very large scale “one stop shop” for the trading and logistics of all major food categories to service the MENA region. The site is nearly 4 square kilometres and will be built out over the next few years. The shareholders also recognize the critical importance of developing a market outlet for the fast-expanding agricultural sector in the UAE.

**The project has a really innovative/unique characteristic, this partnership with AD ports Group, can you share some words about it and why you chose to partner with them?**

This is one of the first large scale public/private partnerships in Abu Dhabi. The shareholders are a good fit with each other. Abu Dhabi Ports has extensive supply chain and logistics facilities and expertise and Ghassan Aboud Group has a substantial and growing foot print in the food sector in the region. Both parties care deeply about food security for the people of the region and are prepared to invest in long term solutions to some of the most complex food related issues.

**“Food security, food supply and adequate nutrition for the population is a serious and ongoing challenge”**

**Could you share with our readers why it is important to attend the forthcoming Abu Dhabi WUWM conference?**

There are many reasons why the WUWM members should attend the Abu Dhabi conference. The MENA region is full of opportunities in the food sector – challenges of course but also opportunities. This is not ‘business as usual’ – this region, but the UAE in particular, is investing, developing and creating new food industries. It is a technology/start up and innovation hub for the food industry. If you want to link Asia and Europe then you do it through the UAE. If you want to pursue opportunities in the MENA region, then you do it from the UAE. Abu Dhabi will put on a spectacular conference, it will be informative, fun and classy. The contacts and friends you will make at the Abu Dhabi conference will be unique and valuable and it is a great opportunity to see how the world comes together to do business at the crossroads of the world – the UAE.

# Regional Food Hub – Abu Dhabi

In collaboration with



مجموعة موانئ أبوظبي  
AD PORTS GROUP

A public private partnership



GHASSAN ABOUD GROUP  
Building a better future... together



# In Good Practices:

**Barcelona wholesale market, Mercabarna, joined forces with the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and created the first digital library on food waste in Spain!**

The Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) and Mercabarna created a Chair for the fight against food waste, one of the first concrete works that the Chair is launching is the first online bibliographic collection in Spain dedicated to food waste reduction. This online collection will bring key information about good practices to wholesale markets and fresh food actors and concrete tools to tackle food waste.

8

This first digital library on food waste in Spain is the result of a successful collaboration between the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC)-Mercabarna Chair and the Library of the Baix Llobregat Campus of the UPC.

It will give access to all food chain stakeholders, current regulations and applications and it will also provide updated information on waste in the agri-food chain, recovery, quantification of waste and reuse and circular economy.

The fight against food waste is not easy to win, it needs innovation and multiple actors working together. This tool represents a major innovation to bring the existing law and practices closer to food companies, supporting the agents of the food chain in complying with current regulations.

**“This online collection will bring to other wholesale markets and fresh food actors key information about good practices and concrete tools to tackle food waste.”**

As a matter of fact, food companies and social entities that distribute food in the Catalonia region are obliged - among other requirements - to have a plan for the prevention of food losses and waste and its implementation, and they must also report annually on the quantification of their losses and waste, under the terms set out in the “Law on Prevention of Food Losses and Waste”, which is in force since 2020. In the rest of Spain, the Government is working on a draft bill on the matter.

The portal allows automatic updating of information sources to keep the Library up to date, always under the supervision and intervention of the experts of the Chair and the Baix Llobregat Campus Library.

This food waste catalog already provides access to 6,000 articles, 236 research papers, more than 1,500 documents from the UPC repository, 100 bibliographic references to books, 6 European projects, among others. The food waste digital library has 8 different sections: home, articles, databases, books, academic papers, standards, projects and best practices/initiatives.

In addition to data and regulations, it is possible to consult articles, electronic books and academic publications available in the libraries of the UPC and in other libraries of the Catalan universities, as well as information on the subject from Spanish and European institutions.

Users can also consult the UPC's undergraduate and master's degree theses that deal with the subject of waste. Projects, practices and initiatives are also listed in the library, and it is possible for users to send information on actions they know of or wish to propose.



**mercabarna**







# In the loop:

9

## Building together responsible supply chains! Interview with Marjoleine Hennis, Chair of the OECD-FAO Advisory Group on Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains

WUWM was selected by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as a permanent member in the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group (AG) on Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains. The aim of the platform is to reunite major actors of the sector who, by means of joint collaboration and sharing of mutual expertise, can help develop successful sustainable and responsible food value chains. WUWM is proud to be part of this innovative Expert Group, and we would like to share more insights with our readers about the purpose, organization, and expected outcomes of the Expert Group. Dr. Marjoleine Hennis, who holds the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the OECD and serves as the Chair of the Advisory Group, answered our questions.

### Could you please introduce the main objectives/goals of this initiative to our readers?

Globalization has greatly impacted how food is produced, sourced and consumed around the world. Increasingly, many agri-food companies recognize their responsibility and role in integrating sustainability objectives into their operations and global supply chains. The question is, given the complexities of global supply chains, how can companies achieve these objectives? In 2016, FAO and the OECD launched the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains (OECD-FAO Guidance) to help agricultural and food companies operationalize internationally agreed standards of responsible business conduct (RBC) and implement risk-based due diligence while contributing to sustainable development. The OECD-FAO Guidance highlights some of the main risk areas that companies often face in the agricultural sector when sourcing from low- and middle-income countries. Among others, this can include salient impacts on human and labour rights, animal welfare, deforestation and natural resource depletion. In addition, the Guidance shows companies how to reduce those negative impacts.



**Could you share with us some concrete examples of responsible business conduct that can meet the objectives identified by the OECD-FAO Guidance?**

One of the key value-adds of the OECD-FAO Guidance is its five-step framework for risk-based due diligence. The framework provides a step-by-step approach on how companies can operationalize risk-based due diligence into their own operations, supply chains and business relationships.

Due diligence is a process through which businesses can proactively identify, prevent and account for how they address the actual and potential adverse environmental and social impacts of their activities as a core part of business decision-making and risk management strategy. The details of this due diligence framework are increasingly featured in government policies and regulations on corporate sustainability. When implemented effectively, due diligence can benefit businesses by lowering operational, reputational and financial risks by ensuring their operations are not causing harm to people and the planet. Through due diligence, businesses can improve productivity and make a greater contribution to the SDGs, going beyond their own operations to business relations across the whole value chain.

**In which ways you think that wholesale markets can help/work towards achievement of the objectives identified by the OECD-FAO Guidance?**

Wholesale and retail markets occupy a critical position in agricultural supply chains as aggregators and distributors of safe, fresh and nutritious food. Around 50 percent of fresh produce worldwide passes through wholesale markets. By applying the OECD-FAO Guidance to their own activities, wholesale and retail markets can lead by example. In addition, they can use their leverage to encourage business partners to mitigate and prevent adverse environmental and social harms in their operations, as the OECD-FAO Guidance recommends. As logistics hubs, wholesale markets act as an interlocutor between supply chain stakeholders, including producers, processors, transporters, retailers

**“This positioning means that wholesale markets have unique leverage to communicate and encourage responsible business practices to both upstream and downstream value chain actors.”**

and consumers. This positioning means that wholesale markets have unique leverage to communicate and encourage responsible business practices to both upstream and downstream value chain actors. Moreover, they can provide a forum for innovative approaches to supply chain sustainability, which can support risk mitigation on various fronts, such as low-carbon food distribution, traceability for food security, and improve cold chain logistics to reduce food loss and waste. As such, they can be powerful drivers of environmental and social risk management objectives and recommendations outlined in the OECD-FAO Guidance.

**Could you explain the objectives and tasks of the Advisory Group (AG)?**

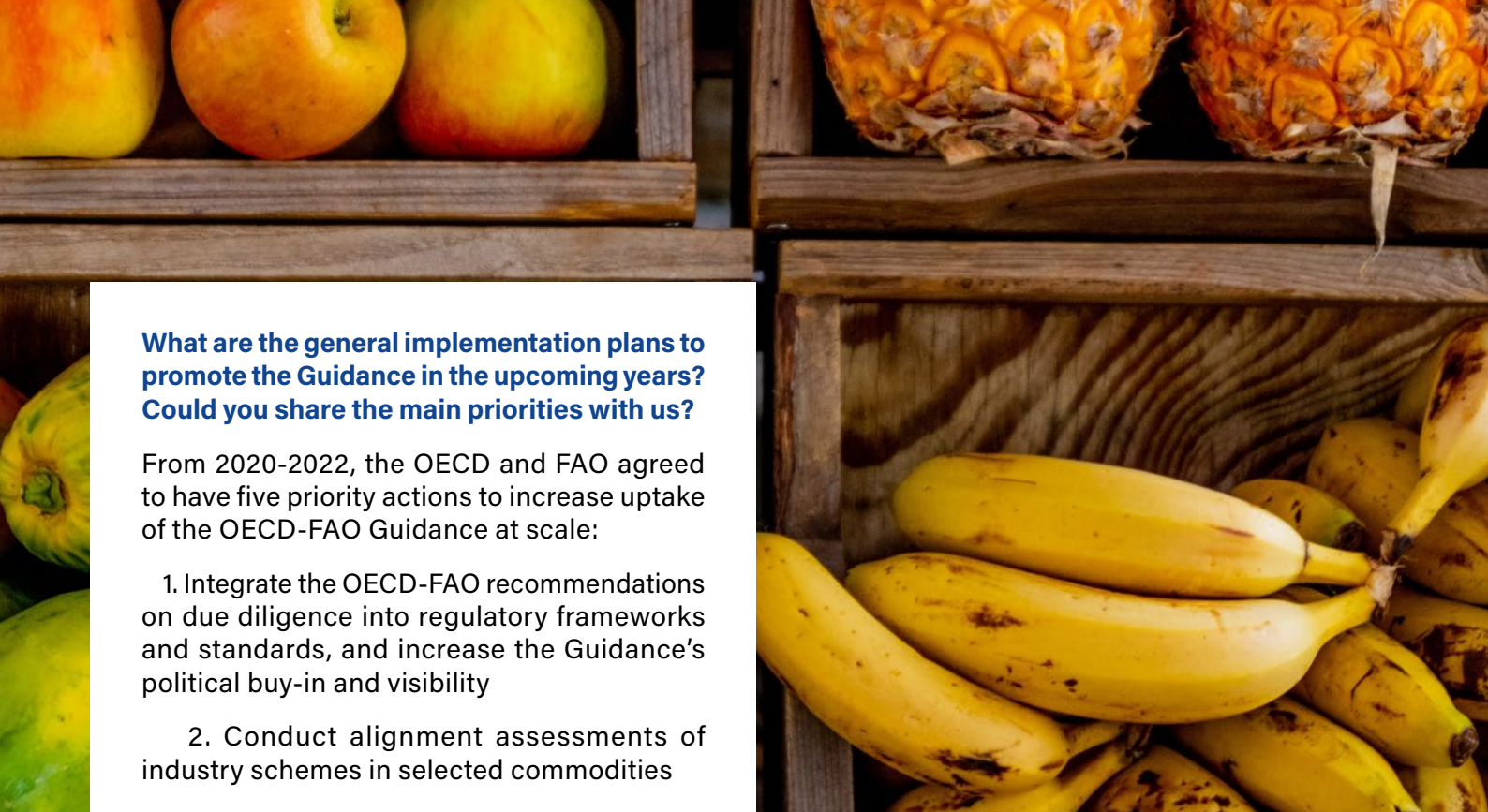
The OECD-FAO Advisory Group on Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains (AG) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together policy makers, businesses, investors, civil society organizations, academia and other stakeholders engaged in agricultural supply chains to collaborate, pool knowledge and build capacity in environmental and social risk management in the agricultural sector through the uptake of the OECD-FAO Guidance.

The AG provides a platform to support:

- the sharing of experiences and technical expertise on addressing social and environmental risks in agricultural supply chains
- the advancement of the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains through a shared OECD-FAO Guidance Implementation Plan







**What are the general implementation plans to promote the Guidance in the upcoming years? Could you share the main priorities with us?**

From 2020-2022, the OECD and FAO agreed to have five priority actions to increase uptake of the OECD-FAO Guidance at scale:

1. Integrate the OECD-FAO recommendations on due diligence into regulatory frameworks and standards, and increase the Guidance's political buy-in and visibility
2. Conduct alignment assessments of industry schemes in selected commodities
3. Develop effective communications materials and technical handbooks/tools to promote the OECD-FAO Guidance globally
4. Conduct training on risk-based due diligence
5. Measure uptake of the OECD-FAO Guidance by Adherents, and develop indicators of impact of due diligence

As the new Chair of the AG, along with new Co-chairs – the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the World Resources Institute/Food and Land Use Coalition (WRI/FOLU), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) – we plan to review and discuss updates to this implementation plan with AG members and the OECD-FAO Secretariat this year.

**“It will be great to learn how WUWM is approaching supply chain resiliency and technology in wholesale markets, particularly how technologies can be more inclusive of small-scale local producers.”**

**Could you briefly explain how the Advisory Group operates? (Meetings, discussion themes, proposals...)**

AG members meet virtually three times a year to discuss key levers to promote RBC and due diligence in the agricultural sector, per the recommendations of the OECD-FAO Guidance. Meetings provide an opportunity for members to share knowledge and experience on technical challenges, progress and insights on implementing due diligence, and to exchange ways to facilitate responsible agricultural supply chains with different stakeholders.

The first portion of each AG meeting is dedicated to a substantive discussion on issues related to business and environmental and social impacts in agricultural supply chains. Planned topics include global sustainability standards and certifications; government support and incentives for RBC; and developing key performance indicators (KPIs) for due diligence, among others. The AG aims to make those discussions as relevant as possible by seeking synergies with discussions in major global events of interest for its members, such as the upcoming COP27 in Egypt. Moreover, AG members may establish technical working groups (TWGs) to delve deeper on these specific issue areas outside of the three annual core AG meetings. TWGs will be member-led and provide an opportunity for further discussion amongst members.

### **From an institutional perspective, what does the Chair expect from the Advisory Group?**

As a multi-stakeholder platform, the AG provides the opportunity for agri-sector actors – from farm to fork – to build momentum, shape, and advance the global policy agenda on responsible agricultural supply chains. We focus on concrete outcomes, solutions and ideas for the promotion and implementation of the Guidance, which may contribute to the work of the FAO and the OECD and beyond. Furthermore, I hope that the AG will become the go-to group for exchanges on due diligence in agricultural supply chains and that it will serve as a forum for members to apply and build their institutional expertise and capacity to become leaders on responsible business conduct in their respective fields.

To achieve this, members are expected to be active participants – both during AG meetings and within their broader networks – to devise and implement effective environmental and social risk management measures across agricultural supply chains. AG members are also expected to adopt, promote and implement recommendations of the OECD-FAO Guidance into responsible sourcing and/or responsible business conduct (including business and human rights, ESG, CSR, sustainability, codes of conduct) strategies.

### **WUWM has recently joined the Advisory Group (AG): how do you think it could help to encourage the global uptake of the OECD-FAO Guidance? How is WUWM expected to cooperate? What are the main issues and aims you would like us to bring to the table?**

WUWM is a valuable addition to the AG. As a global network of fresh food and products organizations, WUWM is able to disseminate information, forge partnerships amongst its members, and adopt recommendations in its core business activities on the OECD-FAO Guidance.

Ensuring food security and providing healthy diets in a sustainable, inclusive, and consistent way are part of our common goals. We would value WUWM insights, learnings and good practices from your efforts to upgrade the industry, including the pursuit to a climate-neutral food supply chain. The AG provides a safe space to discuss challenges with the diverse group of stakeholders who have a role to play in building responsible agricultural supply chains, to identify gaps where more supports and collective actions are needed, and to learn from peers. As such, we look forward to WUWM's active engagement in the AG, bringing the perspectives of wholesalers and retailers.

### **How are you planning to strengthen supply chain resiliency and the role of technology in promoting responsibility and transparency in the sector, now that environmental and social risks have highlighted the vulnerability of the agricultural sector?**

The OECD-FAO Guidance recognizes how technology and innovation can play a key role in environmental and social risk mitigation efforts along agricultural supply chains. For example, traceability systems can improve supply chain logistics, make trading easier and ensure food safety of fresh produce. Enterprises operating along agricultural supply chains can make a significant contribution to sustainable development by supporting the diffusion of technology and innovation, particularly those that increase responsible production and sourcing and can generate direct and indirect employment. At the same time, enterprises must consider risks associated with technology, intellectual property rights, genetic resources, and traditional knowledge; the OECD-FAO Guidance provides a description of measures to mitigate such risks along agricultural supply chains. The AG plans to facilitate dialogue on best practices, challenges, and opportunities for technology to support responsible, resilient and just food systems. It will be great to learn how WUWM is approaching supply chain resiliency and technology in wholesale markets, particularly how technologies can be more inclusive of small-scale local producers.







13

# Insightful:

**What are the biggest challenges for the food sector? Find out Emeline Fellus' opinion from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development**

Our global food sector is currently experiencing a phase of acute crisis, exacerbated by the recent health, climate and geopolitical emergencies. We asked Emeline Fellus, Director of FreSH project and Member of the Extended Leadership Group at WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development) to share with us her point of view as an expert concerning our sector: what are the main challenges to overcome and how to successfully face them in order to achieve the transition to sustainable food systems?

**Could you talk about the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and your work with this organization?**

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is the premier global, CEO-led community of over 200 of the world's leading sustainable businesses working collectively to accelerate the system transformations needed for a net zero, nature positive, and more equitable future.

We do this by engaging executives and sustainability leaders from business and elsewhere to develop solutions at company, value chain and system level, which are necessary to create a world in which 9+ billion people are living well, within planetary boundaries, by mid-century.

I lead a key WBCSD project focusing on the food and agriculture sector, named FReSH – which stands for 'Food Reform for Sustainability and Health'. Within the FReSH project, more than 30 companies across the food value chain work together to drive food system transformation from fork to farm to provide healthy and sustainable diets to all.



**You recently published a document highlighting the biggest challenges for the food sector. Could you summarize them for our readers?**

WBCSD's Vision 2050 identifies four key challenges facing our food and agriculture systems:

- Producing food through sustainable production practices which restore and safeguard nature;
- Providing access to everyone to nutritious and affordable food;
- Ensuring that value chains are prosperous, equitable and free from human rights abuses;
- Consuming food is sustainable;

Specific targets, action areas and examples for businesses tackling each challenge are detailed in WBCSD's Food and Agriculture Roadmap.

**And what are the best strategies to adopt in order to successfully face these challenges?**

14

These challenges can seem daunting at times, but every food system actor has the means to contribute to achieving them. We can and must change our ways of doing at the individual level, at company level, at food value chain level and system level. The best way to proceed is first to map your business and activities against the action areas identified in the roadmap, to set targets, and then to create teams across your company to achieve these targets. It is critical to consider all environmental, social and health factors when going through this exercise, as often one action aiming at one target without consideration to others can lead to detrimental impacts on others: we must find new ways of doing business and behaving, that have positive impacts across all factors. A good example of this is diversifying staple crops produced, transformed, sold and consumed throughout the value chain. This is explained in WBCSD's Staple Crops Diversification Paper.



**What is the future you envision for our global food system?**

Our vision is for a food system that addresses the above-mentioned challenges and meets societal needs in 2050: "a regenerative and equitable food system producing healthy, safe and nutritious food for all."

As WBCSD's President and CEO, Peter Bakker, reflected at the end of the Food System Summit, "there is no system where the climate emergency, the loss of nature and mounting inequality come together as they do in the food system. Incremental change is no longer enough, a wholesale transformation of our food systems is now urgent and critical to deliver the SDGs and systemic change. Creating equitable, net-zero and nature-positive food systems that can nourish all people is everyone's business."

**"There is no system where the climate emergency, the loss of nature and mounting inequality come together as they do in the food system."**







### **What role can wholesale markets play to achieve the transition to sustainable and inclusive food systems?**

Wholesale markets, because of their strategic position in the value chain between producers, retailers and consumers, have the potential to tackle all key challenges and action areas listed above, really. And beyond that, they have the potential to re-connect all actors across the food value chain to ensure that everybody's wishes to improve the social and environmental impacts of food systems are reflected in better ways of producing, trading and consuming.

In particular, working along the food value chain from producers to consumer-facing companies and consumers to raise awareness about the need for, and ways to shift what we eat and how we eat it, is a critical action area which wholesales markets are uniquely placed to tackle. Specific changes that can be led by wholesales markets and their customers include:

- Adjusting product portfolio mixes and sizes to improve nutrition and sustainability and reduce food waste;
- Increasing the share, diversity and sustainability of plant-based foods;
- Increasing protein diversification and sustainability performance; and
- Supporting consumers to choose and access healthy and sustainable food.

In particular, developing new ways of doing business which reduce food loss and waste from farm to fork, represent a big action area for wholesale markets and their customers. In effect, it is hard to imagine how meaningful progress can be made to combat rising global hunger if 1.6 billion tons of food continue to be lost and wasted annually – which also represent 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. There are many solutions at hand of wholesale markets ranging from pretty 'simple' changes that can be made to the size, shape and color requirements imposed to suppliers or demanded by customers, to more technological changes implying the development of second market for fruit and vegetable that were not sold to primary customers. Inspiring examples are provided in the WBCSD 'recipe to reduce food loss and waste' report published a couple of years ago.

**“Developing new ways of doing business which reduce food loss and waste from farm to fork, represent a big action area for wholesale markets and their customers.”**



**The impact of COVID-19 (and other shocks and stresses such as climate change) on food systems has been significant: you have stated the effects in the “Building Resilience to COVID-19 in City Region Food Systems” article, which was based on a recent survey conducted by FAO. Could you please tell us a little bit more about the main results of this survey?**

FAO launched a survey shortly after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, to identify its impacts on urban food systems as well as to better understand municipal emergency measures. This study aimed to build an evidence base on how cities can respond to crises and strengthen the resilience of urban and city region food systems. The survey revealed that the pandemic affected all nodes and actors of the food system, from farm to fork. Food distribution and availability were disturbed by movement restrictions of people, goods and services and other containment measures such as closure of schools and marketplaces. Moreover, food shortages due to supply disruptions and panic buying led to increased prices, which greatly affected access to food in times of income losses as well as disruptions in distribution of food to vulnerable groups. Through the closure of schools, many children could not access school meal programmes. Movement and transport restrictions also led to shortages in agricultural labour and inputs, affecting food production and processing. Restricted mobility, access to and operation of markets and retail disrupted food supply and increased food loss and waste. Many urban dwellers also moved back to rural areas during the lockdown.



# In Action:

16

**How can we better prepare for future crisis in the fresh food sector? FAO researchers shared with us different cases and lessons of local governments behaviors during Covid-19 pandemic**

Isabella Trapani, Guido Santini and Roman Malek from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have worked on an interesting survey about the impacts of Covid-19 on regional urban food systems, analyzing the emergency responses adopted by three cities located in different regions of the world: Antananarivo (Madagascar), Melbourne (Australia), and Quito (Ecuador). The study highlighted the fundamental role played by municipalities in ensuring food security, as well as the importance of tailor-made territorial approaches. We had the pleasure to interview the very authors of the research project, who shared with us some insights of their work.



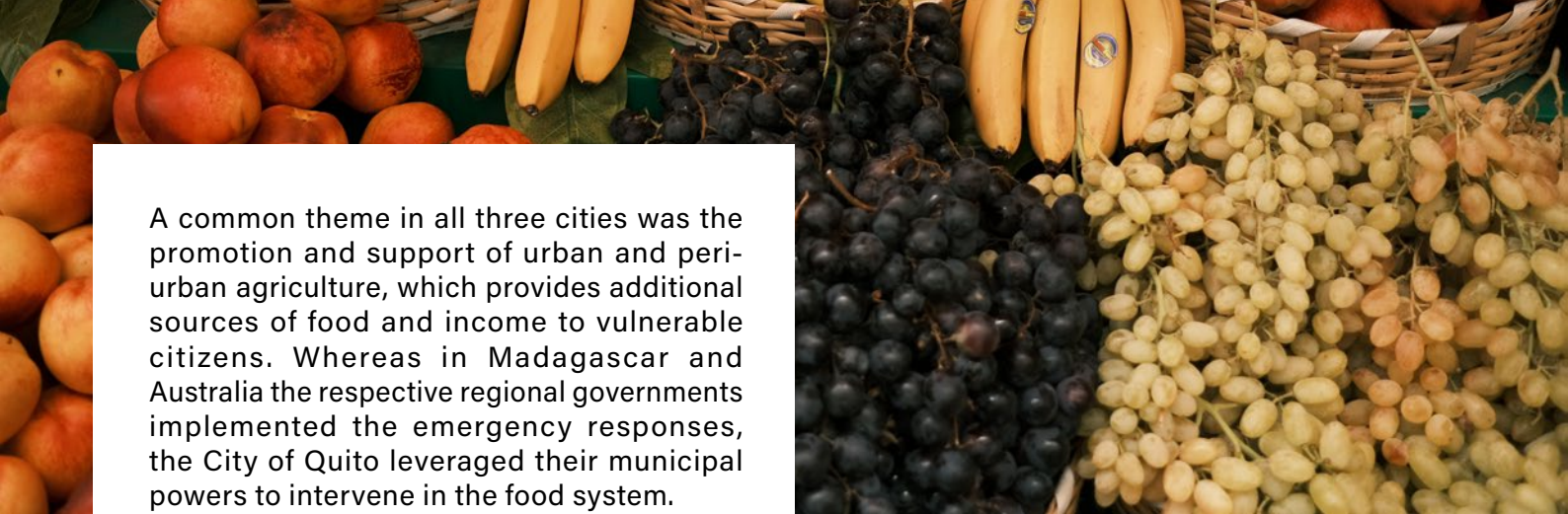
The survey also identified the main municipal responses to the pandemic. Many local governments implemented mechanisms to monitor food markets in view of food availability and prices, and directly purchased food from local producers and other distribution channels. Moreover, cities put in place measures to improve food access and distribution, particularly to vulnerable populations, through expansion of delivery services, temporary food hubs and direct distribution. In view of school closures, some cities set up alternative mechanisms to school canteens. A number of municipalities could also provide financial assistance to vulnerable people. To reduce spikes in food prices due to panic buying, many cities promoted responsible food purchase behaviour. In addition, another FAO assessment observed that restrictive measures on agricultural operations, including limited mobility, gatherings, and import restrictions of inputs and food to contain the spread of the virus, have generated a broad range of short-term and long-term impacts on food production and supply, mostly affecting subsistence and smallholder farmers in rural and urban areas.

Based on the analysis of the survey responses, food systems in small villages were more resilient compared to larger urban areas due to their proximity to production areas and shorter supply chains. This highlights the importance of urban-rural linkages and diversifying food sources, including promoting local food production and short supply chains. The results of the survey also underlined the importance of local governments as key enablers for reducing the impacts of different shocks and stresses on food systems and ensuring access to food for the most vulnerable population. During the pandemic, municipalities showed that they can play a crucial role in identifying and connecting the food system actors, facilitating collaboration and coordination and exploring innovative community-based solutions. However, cities need to be supported with adequate resources, a clear mandate, and enhanced links to national government programmes.

**In the article, you make reference to three cities located in different regions of the world, Antananarivo (Madagascar), Melbourne (Australia), and Quito (Ecuador), investigating the strategies they have adopted to mitigate the negative effects caused by the pandemic. Could you compare these strategies and explain to our readers the different approaches used?**

The three cities are very diverse, so they adopted different approaches to dealing with the pandemic. In Antananarivo, the regional government aimed to strengthen urban-rural linkages in the city region by better connecting producers with consumers through additional open-air markets and facilitated the processing of perishable foods. In Melbourne, the emergency response to the pandemic-related increased food insecurity was mainly led by civil society, who provided food boxes, emergency meals, and gardening kits to vulnerable citizens. The City of Melbourne has started adopting a territorial approach and is aiming to boost local production and consumption in the city region for enhanced resilience. In Quito, existing food governance mechanisms helped the city respond to the pandemic. With the support of FAO and RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems, the city implemented the City Region Food Systems (CRFS) programme between 2015 and 2018, which included an in-depth assessment of the food system, the development of a food strategy as well as the establishment of a multi-stakeholder governance platform. Therefore, the city could not only identify local markets but also vulnerable communities, both of which helped distribute food to households in need in times of the pandemic. The city also leveraged their multi-stakeholder governance platform to mobilize food system stakeholders which allowed for collaborative responses.





A common theme in all three cities was the promotion and support of urban and peri-urban agriculture, which provides additional sources of food and income to vulnerable citizens. Whereas in Madagascar and Australia the respective regional governments implemented the emergency responses, the City of Quito leveraged their municipal powers to intervene in the food system.

**According to you, which city region's approach was the most complete and efficient one? Which city obtained the best results?**

As the cities are set in very different contexts, are at different stages of engaging with their food system, and have different (limited) resources, capacities, and powers to intervene, it is not possible to adequately compare their responses. The different solutions that were implemented in the three city regions have great potential to build resilience towards multiple shocks and stresses beyond the pandemic. It is best to combine various measures such as boosting local and regional production and consumption of sustainable and healthy food, facilitating markets and food distribution, as well as collaborating with the key food system actors from the private sector, national and regional government, civil society and academia to enhance physical and economic access to food. It remains most important to adopt a holistic approach tailored to the local context, and to set up enabling mechanisms for urban food governance.

In general, the city region approach adopted in the City of Quito has been very inclusive and effective. The food system assessment and planning has fed into the formulation of the Resilience Strategy of the Metropolitan District of Quito (released in October 2017). The strategy placed the food economy as one of the main pillars for building urban resilience. As a result, a Multi-Actor Platform, called the Agri-Food Pact of Quito (PAQ), was created involving members from the private and public sectors, academia and civil society. During the COVID-19 pandemic the PAQ has facilitated increased access to healthy food and diversification of the local food supply chain through the Food Bank of Quito, especially for low-income communities.

**What do you think can be the right balance of cooperation between governments, municipalities, markets and organizations in terms of food systems?**

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is an essential element of urban food governance and food system transformation. The private sector, public sector, civil society and academia must work together to create sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems. This ensures leveraging existing knowledge, resources and capacities, fosters innovation, and enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of food system interventions. In times of crises, this is especially important in order to coordinate response measures and provide fast relief for vulnerable citizens. Collaboration between different sectors, entities, and population groups can be facilitated through a formal or informal multi-stakeholder governance platform.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is also at the core of the CRFS programme. Involving key food system actors ensures greater awareness and common understanding of characteristics, risks and vulnerabilities of a city region food system. It is crucial to build trust between different stakeholders, and to develop the knowledge and capacities needed to build resilient food systems. Through a participatory way of working, a shared vision based on different needs can be developed, and innovative solutions can be fostered. However, it is essential to identify a driving figure, a champion, who can facilitate the involvement of actors and concerted decision-making. Such a figure may be an institution or an official of an institution, with a preponderant role in the food system, decision-making power and influence in the city context.



**The strategies adopted were mainly emergency and targeted to have short-term relief. For what concerns the long-term perspective, what measures should be implemented?**

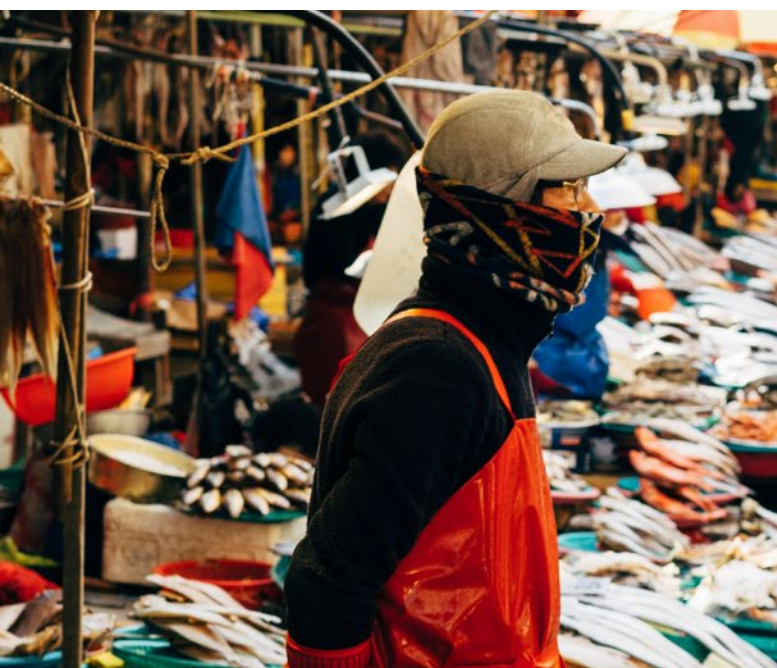
While measures such as emergency food relief and financial assistance are designed for the short-term, there are several measures that can be implemented for long-term food system transformation. One example of the latter is diversifying food sources, strengthening rural-urban linkages and promoting shorter food value chains by boosting local production and consumption, including urban, peri-urban and rural agriculture in a city region. Another example is to invest in shock-responsive social protection systems to protect the most vulnerable in the long-term, and risk insurance that enables food system actors to get reimbursed for losses and damages. Most importantly, it is necessary to integrate food and agriculture into existing policies and to develop urban food policies that strengthen the resilience and sustainability of food systems. Cities should adopt food- and risk-sensitive planning and urban design principles to create food environments for citizens that ensure adequate access to food and promote healthy and sustainable food choices.

The CRFS approach offers concrete policy and programme opportunities, within which developmental issues can be addressed and through which rural and urban areas and communities in a given city region can be directly linked. Improved city region food systems will help achieve better economic, social and environmental conditions in both urban and nearby rural areas.

**“The results of the survey underlined the importance of local governments as key enablers for reducing the impacts of different shocks and stresses on food systems and ensuring access to food for the most vulnerable population.”**

**What were - and still are - the main obstacles and vulnerabilities to overcome?**

The pandemic has caused economic crises in many parts of the world. Long food value chains as well as dependence on imports of food and agricultural inputs, in particular, make local food systems vulnerable to food shortages, supply chain disruptions and spikes in global and local food prices. This poses a great challenge to vulnerable populations in urban areas dependent on food purchases. Beyond the pandemic, urban food systems are facing several other shocks and stresses. This includes climate change, the impacts of which are already affecting food systems all over the world and will be increasing in both intensity and frequency in the future. The number of reported climate hazards such as droughts, floods and storms has almost doubled over the past two decades with a sharp increase in related disaster impacts. Over the past 10 years for example, agriculture production alone absorbed more than 23 percent of the overall impacts of medium- to large-scale natural disasters (and 82 percent for drought alone). The results are increased food prices and food shortages due to disruptions in agricultural







20

production and food distribution. While urban food systems are heavily affected by climate change, modern lifestyles and unsustainable consumption patterns in urban areas also significantly exacerbate climate change. At the same time, these challenges offer great opportunities for food systems transformation to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to build resilience. To overcome obstacles and vulnerabilities and enhance resilience, it is essential to better understand the impacts of multiple shocks and stresses and identify the vulnerable population in the context of a given city region.

**What do you think is the best approach to building resilient and sustainable food systems?**

In order to build resilient and sustainable food systems, it is crucial to identify existing risks, vulnerabilities and challenges in a given food system, and to create enabling environments and mechanisms for identifying, planning and implementing interventions and measures to build resilience in the food system. This includes building political will among key decision-makers, ensuring coherence between local, regional and national policies, enhancing collaboration between government departments, better coordinating food system interventions, as well as involving key food system stakeholders from all sectors. Moreover, leveraging and expanding existing powers, resources, knowledge and resilience capacities are the basis of effective food governance. Diversifying food sources and value chains, enhancing rural-urban linkages and promoting short value chains can

enhance both resilience and sustainability of local food systems. Further concrete resilience measures to multiple shocks and stresses include climate and disaster risk governance and information systems, early warning systems, risk transfer mechanisms such as social protection and insurance, risk-sensitive agricultural practices and technologies, emergency preparedness, early action and response, climate risk proofing of grey infrastructure along the food value chain, nature-based solutions, food loss and waste reduction, and climate friendly and sustainable diets.

**"A common theme in all three cities was the promotion and support of urban and peri-urban agriculture, which provides additional sources of food and income to vulnerable citizens."**



**In this context, what is the role that wholesale markets can play, according to you?**

To reduce the risk to multiple shocks it is important to diversify food sources and value chains, to minimize the risk of disruption. In this context, wholesale food markets can play a significant role in strengthening both the resilience and sustainability of urban food systems. They are essential entry points to food supply chains and offer benefits to all food system stakeholders, from producers to consumers. Wholesale markets act as a crucial link between local producers and suppliers and consumers as well as rural and urban areas. They facilitate short supply chains, especially in the case of locally produced commodities, which enhances food system resilience, boosts the local economy, and contributes to reducing food loss and waste. To respond to the impacts of the pandemic, some wholesale markets have also implemented new measures to market food such as through digital applications and platforms for producers, traders, and consumers. Moreover, many wholesale markets redirected surplus produce to local food banks which provided food relief and reduced food waste.

Nevertheless, it is key to avoid one-size-fits-all solutions, and in some contexts, it is more appropriate to decentralize food distribution by promoting and reinforcing food hubs, retail markets, etc. In addition, it is crucial to avoid creating bottlenecks in supply and distribution. For instance, a dramatic fire at the wholesale market of Medellin, Colombia, in 2017 created a dangerous disruption for several weeks, putting at risk the access to some basic food commodities, especially for the poor.

**What are your views and thoughts on the future of food systems, in terms of resilience, food security and sustainability?**

Cities are growing rapidly, and the urban population is expected to increase to 68% by 2050, with most of the growth predicted to take place in already densely populated and vulnerable urban settlements in Africa and Asia. This creates enormous challenges to urban food systems, agricultural production, the environment and food security. Therefore, cities urgently need to get involved in food system governance, leverage their powers and become active shapers of their urban food systems to ensure current and future food security for a growing population while protecting the environment.





# In Events:

## WUWM participated as a panelist in the SFS-MED Webinar “Food waste management and circular economy in Mediterranean cities”

On May 25th, WUWM was invited to speak as one of the principal panelists in the SFS-MED Webinar “Food waste management and circular economy in Mediterranean cities”.

The event was jointly organized by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area within the framework of the SFS-MED Platform (PRIMA), a multi-stakeholder initiative for Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean as an affiliated project of the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme.

This webinar was part of a series of technical encounters organized to give visibility to the expertise of a network of researchers, development practitioners and decision-makers. The aim of the meetings is to stimulate a debate around themes relevant to food systems transformation in the Mediterranean, and strengthen knowledge also by exchanging experiences about recent research and study findings, as well as presenting local and regional actions to promote the operationalization of food systems approaches. The webinars will revolve around a set of priorities and trends that are common to most countries in the region, considered points of departure concerning what to transform in the Mediterranean food systems. This particular webinar revolved around one main question: “How can Mediterranean cities ensure multi-stakeholder engagement in food waste management and applied circular economy practices?”

Food waste is a problem that heavily affects Mediterranean countries and tends to obstacle the efforts to produce and supply food through an efficient use of natural resources and investments. Shifting from a linear economy approach based on “take-make-waste” to a circular economy one allows to maintain the value and utility of food products, nutrients and resources for as long as possible, minimizing resource use and upcycling food waste and by-products. The transition towards circular food economies creates opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of food systems, fight food insecurity, diversify the job market through new skills and engage citizens in sustainable behaviors. In the Mediterranean region, over 70% of the population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to grow in the upcoming years. Urbanization in the Mediterranean area will lead to extended food chains, which will consequently increase food waste and pressure on land, water and energy resources. By implementing innovative strategies of circular economy, however, cities can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, increase supply of safe and nutritious food also through social protection programmes, and mitigate the burden on natural resources caused by food production.

The webinar reached an involvement of over 200 participants, not including those who assisted to the conference through the FAO live streaming platform. Experts of the sector from all across the Mediterranean area provided their personal point of view paired with examples of admirable and successful initiatives.

Mohamed Higazy, Director of North Africa Regional Office for United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Advisor to the Egyptian Minister of Local Development, introduced the panel discussion with keynote remarks on the Mediterranean area. According to him, there are two major issues to tackle in order to solve food insecurity in the region: increase food production and avoid food waste. But the main obstacle impeding the realization of these objectives is isolation; cities of the Mediterranean need to develop links that allow them to cooperate in the realm of food waste: policy makers and local stakeholders must plan and implement joint initiatives for a common goal.



A successful example of systemic action was presented by Elisa Porreca, representing the Food Policy Department of the Municipality of Milan (Italy). She carried out a program of waste collection from crucial infrastructures, such as offices, schools, canteens and wholesale markets of the city of Milan, for then recovering food waste for charities or recycling structures. Other panelists such as Ilirian Gjoni (Executive Director of Food Bank Albania) or Birol Ekici (Secretary General of the Turkish Union of Municipalities provided similar experiences of local governance, engagement and networking implemented to manage food waste and promote circular economy practices.

The World Union of Wholesale Markets, represented by Secretary General Eugenia Carrara, highlighted case studies of some of WUWM members, such as the French Marché de Rungis or the Spanish Mercabarna, who have found efficient ways of managing food waste, giving proof of a structured model of circular economy. Wholesale markets are indeed the key infrastructures able to significantly reduce food waste and promote good practices to make an innovative a sustainable use of it. However, the first action to undertake in a lot of Mediterranean countries is to have access to ways to finance investments to build modern infrastructures to improve storage and cold chain: that will have a radical impact in reducing food waste in the region.

All participants to the webinar agreed and underlined this above statement in their own interventions: food waste affects food security, the economy and the environment, and in order to break this vicious cycle it is important to come together and cooperate to put in motion a different chain of actions. It is hence fundamental to raise awareness at all levels of society, to consequently allow different sectors to join forces and contribute to a healthier, greener and more resilient food system.

## In WUWM's World

**May 11** — WUWM participated in the EAT Forum workshop "Food policies & their contribution to shaping food systems"

**May 11** — Italmercati and The European House Ambrosetti hosted the event "L'Italia alla prova del cambiamento": la risposta dei mercati agroalimentari all'ingrosso" in Rome, Italy

**May 13-14** — The international Love Your Local Market (LYLM) 2022 campaign was officially launched in Lisbon, Portugal

**May 22** — WUWM Chairman Stéphane Layani was awarded the Better World Fund "Best Commitment" prize in Cannes (France) for the engagement in ensuring food security and sustainable development

**May 25** — WUWM participated as a panelist in the SFS-MED Webinar «Food waste management and circular economy in Mediterranean cities"

**"Food waste is a problem that heavily affects Mediterranean countries and tends to obstacle the efforts to produce and supply food through an efficient use of natural resources and investments."**



### 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.

