

In action



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

July 2022

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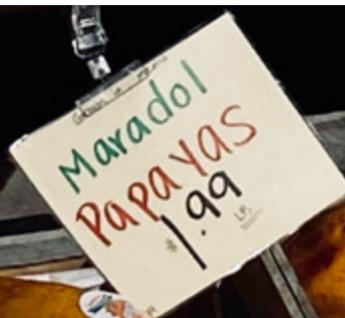
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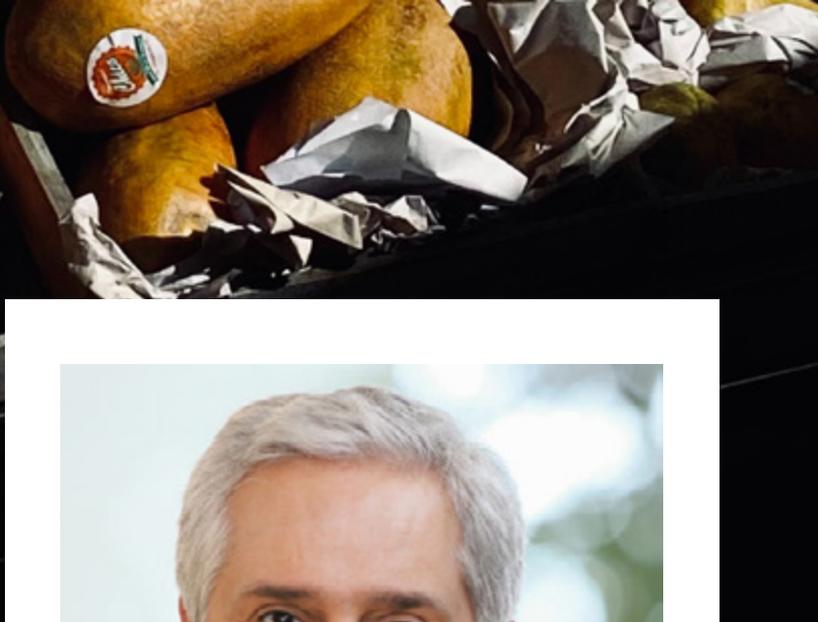
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In a foreword

Dear readers,

The world is currently facing serious threats that are heavily affecting global food systems. International organizations warn us that we might be at the beginning of a severe food crisis. It is therefore crucial for stakeholders and experts of the sector to take the lead and find bold solutions to prevent food crisis from happening. It is our responsibility to mitigate the effects of these current shocks as we build a sustainable pathway for the future, using all means available.

WUWM, as the world's largest network of wholesale markets and market actors and the biggest fresh food supplier of the world, is fully committed to harnessing the full potential of the market system and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration for innovative solutions to the current situation. The wholesale sector has already shown great resilience and robustness when confronted with the Covid-19 pandemic, demonstrating its strategic role in food security worldwide. We are confident that these joint efforts with all the relevant actors will mitigate food emergencies, and lead to a sustainable pathway that ensures global availability and affordability of healthy food .

In this edition of our newsletter, we wanted to further stress WUWM's commitment in fostering food security by sharing with our readers that our forthcoming Conference will be focused in this topic, under the theme of "Global food security in the XXIS: Risk,



challenges and solutions to ensure resilient and sustainable fresh food supply". This will be a unique opportunity to gather all key stakeholders of the sector. Together we will discuss and plan the tools and mechanisms needed to secure the global food supply. I want to broaden this invitation to all industry actors to complete this multi-stakeholder food systems approach.

We also share in our July edition of "In Action" major events, projects that we participated during the month of June, as well as interviews with experts that are bringing to the table insightful ideas to ensure better food systems.. I am also proud to announce that the World Union of Wholesale Markets was recently invited to join the UN Global Crisis Response Group Food Workstream Network and the European Commission Expert group on the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism as an observer.

I would like to thank all our members and all the actors and organizations collaborating with us for their strength and great support, as well as welcome all who will be joining us to reshape our food systems!

Yours sincerely,

Stephane Layani,
WUWM Chairman

Involved:

WUWM was invited to join the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food Workstream Network.

We are pleased to announce that WUWM has been invited to join the Food Workstream Network of the Global Crisis Response Group Mechanism. Created by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in March 2022, the United Nations (UN) Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) is made up of three workstreams on Food, Energy and Finance which collect data and generate analysis, policy recommendations and solutions to help decision-makers to address the interlinked crises of Food, Energy and Finance.

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Our organization participates in weekly in meetings with a panel of key global stakeholders to exchange field information on critical subjects identified by the Food working Group including country specific situations, food availability, risks, volatility of prices, and special policies taken by governments. The network gives participants the opportunity to share information on important topics including expectations and alerts. To explore options for interventions and partnerships, and connect with stakeholders in search of innovative solutions.

On the 15th of June 2022, the UN GCRG published a brief on the "Global Impact of war in Ukraine on food, energy and finance systems". The report analyses the causes and implications of the world's current crisis, highlighting the largest cost-of-living crisis of the twenty-first century to date. It also makes

policy recommendations, stressing that the food crisis is systemic in nature. The current energy and finance crisis is interconnected, and requires strong political will to solve it.

The report states that Worldwide, more people have been facing famine-like conditions, and more people have faced severe hunger emergencies. The lingering effects of the pandemic, coupled with the war in Ukraine and the impacts of climate change, are likely to further increase the ranks of the poor. Concluding that there is still hope to prevent most of the damage from this crisis, and the need to support countries who are hard-hit with it before it is too late to take action. The cost of doing this later will be much higher than it is now.

WUWM is committed to help tackling food insecurity and preventing food crises. Wholesale markets can play a big role in this. But ahead of any action, it is of utmost importance to understand and identify the precise risks and threats associated with the current situation and anticipate disruption in food supplies. All our members are called to share with us the latest evolution of the food situation in their countries and eventual risk factors that they can anticipate with their markets like price volatility, and supply problems. Sharing this information will be key to developing adequate solutions quickly.

The time for action is now if we want to mitigate the effects of the current crisis. All actors of the food value chain have a role to play. WUWM we will continue to be the hub of the fresh food sector, enabling and organizing this change together with our partners.

“The time for action is now if we want to mitigate the effect of the current crisis.”



In facts:

- Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.
- Food insecurity can occur if the diet is not nutritious, including when there is consumption of an excess of calories, or if food is not safe, meaning free from harmful substances.
- A prime impact of food insecurity is malnourishment leading to malnutrition, which refers to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.
- More than half the world's population are underweight or overweight: this will be more compromised under the impacts of climate change by changing the availability, access, utilisation, and stability of diets of sufficient nutritional quality.
- Food security is an outcome of the food system.
- Food systems have enormous potential to support healthy diets and nutrition, but this potential is often left largely unexploited.
- The food system encompasses all the activities and actors in the production, transport, manufacturing, retailing, consumption, and waste of food, and their impacts on nutrition, health and well-being, and the environment.
- Transforming food systems to make them more nutritious, sustainable, and equitable involves a wide array of policies and related actions. Some policies with effects on food systems are explicitly about food: Agricultural policies and food safety policies. Other policy areas—such as transportation, urban planning, energy, or poverty reduction—are not about food explicitly but nevertheless shape elements of the food system. Transportation policies, for instance, influence the ability to get food to market.

“Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

- A food systems approach to policymaking can be defined as the process of formulating policies to shift and align the whole food system toward a stated policy objective (or objectives) while leveraging the benefits and managing the risks for multiple food system objectives.
- Increasing the resilience of the food system through agroecology and diversification is an effective way to achieve climate change adaptation and reduce risks.
- Reducing food loss and waste reduces agricultural GHG emissions and the need for agricultural expansion for producing excess food.
- Integrated agricultural systems and practices can enhance food system resilience to climate change and reduce GHG emissions, while helping to achieve sustainability.



In Focus:

WUWM Abu Dhabi 2022: “Global food security in the XXIs: Risks, challenges and solutions to ensure resilient and sustainable fresh food supply chains”

We are glad to announce that WUWM 2022 Conference will be held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) this upcoming 19th of October 2022. Hosted by Abu Dhabi (AD) Ports Group, under the theme “Global food security in the XXIs: Risks, challenges and solutions to ensure resilient and sustainable fresh food supply chains” the Conference will bring together the major actors of the fresh food system to discuss innovative and effective ways to ensure more resilient and sustainable fresh food supply chains.

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On Monday 27th of June AD Ports Group and WUWM organized a press conference in order to sign the hosting agreement and to officially present the event to the press. The Conference was attended by H.E Saeed Al-Bahri Salem Al-Ameri, Director General of Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority, Captain Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi, CEO of AD Ports, Mr. Abdullah Humaid Al Hameli, Head of Industrial Cities & Free Zone (AD Ports), Mr. Mohamed Al Khadar Al Ahmed CEO of Khalifa Industrial Zone (KIZAD) and Ms. Eugenia Carrara Secretary-General of WUWM.

We wanted to share with our readers some of the questions and highlights of this fruitful press conference.



The WUWM Conference will be held for the first time in the Middle East: what is the relevance that this location entails?

This choice is significant for a number of reasons: the Middle East has been struggling with food insecurity and it relies heavily on imports. Today the region imports 80% of the food consumed. Therefore, WUWM Conference will offer an important opportunity to find pathways to strengthen regional resilience and network with key suppliers. The UAE is working hard to make a positive impact in the region, providing a safe and affordable fresh food supply to all. Saeed Al Bahri Salem Al Ameri, Director General of Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA), affirmed, the goal of UAE is to become one of the world's leading nations in the Global Food Security Index by 2051.

AD Ports Group is the region's premier facilitator of logistics, industry, and trade, as well as a bridge linking Abu Dhabi to the world. AD Ports Group's vertically integrated business approach has proven instrumental in driving the Emirate's economic development over the past decade. Captain Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi highlighted the double benefit that the WUWM Conference means for UAE: it is a chance to showcase the commitment of the UEA to ensure food security while at the same time learning about other practices of major stakeholders of the sector. WUWM Secretary General Eugenia Carrara underlined the importance of hosting an international conference in this globally strategic place for trade, in a country where multi-stakeholder action between the public and private sector to reshape the food systems at local the level is already effectively working. Showcasing this concrete example will be an inspiration for others.





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“WUWM 2022 Conference will bring together the major actors of the fresh food system to discuss innovative and effective ways to ensure more resilient and sustainable fresh food supply chains.”

How is UAE working to achieve the goal of food security in the country and in the overall region?

Saeed Al Bahri Salem Al Ameri underlined the top priority of food security in their national strategy: “It represents a working agenda for ensuring the efficiency in food production and achieving agile food supply chains and easing the food trade.” In parallel, Capt. Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi explained the AD Ports Group’s work to develop sustainable food supply systems and infrastructures that guarantee access to advanced quality control and safety measures, along with sustainable solutions not only for local but also for regional and international production and distribution.

This is one of the first times after covid-19 that such a major conference for the food industry will take place on site: how important is it to host a physical event after the pandemic?

Covid-19 has shown the fragility of our global food system, an issue that many countries thought was no longer a problem, affirmed Eugenia Carrara, now that the world seems to be almost lifted by the pandemic burden, other shocks, such as climate change effects in production, the current geopolitical situation and the oil prices are jeopardizing again food security : it is hence critical to have a global meeting where we can discuss with all the actors shaping the fresh food systems sectors tools to mitigate food crisis and find long term solutions to secure access to healthy diets worldwide. This conference will propose a new a systemic approach, putting together actors that used not to work together. In this sense I think that new ideas and solutions can primary occur when people meet in real time!

What are the some of the top practical ways in which stakeholders of the sector can collaborate to ease the problems experienced in the fresh food supply chain?

According to Ms Carrara, enhance communication, flexibility and fluidity among actors and develop joint networks and processes, is quite an effective way to ease new problems. “We have seen it during the Covid-19 crisis: the countries that counted with multistakeholder platforms, coordinated by national authorities, where able to give faster solutions to problems encountered along the supply chain. In case of future shocks or emergencies this kind of mechanism can help countries to react and adapt to new scenarios. In the long run the creation of effective national multistakeholder networks of cooperative action towards the transition of food systems will give the possibility to monitor in real time local situations, helping to prevent problems and track progressions” Ms Carrara stated.

In this regard, Abdullah Humaid Al Hameli raised the topic of food waste and losses. According to him, this major problem should be one of the top priorities to address through concrete collective action, such as extending shelf life of products. The goal is to reduce food waste at all stages, from the farm to the consumer. Mr. Al Hameli expressed his confidence in the WUWM Conference as an occasion to discuss and find solutions to this important topic.

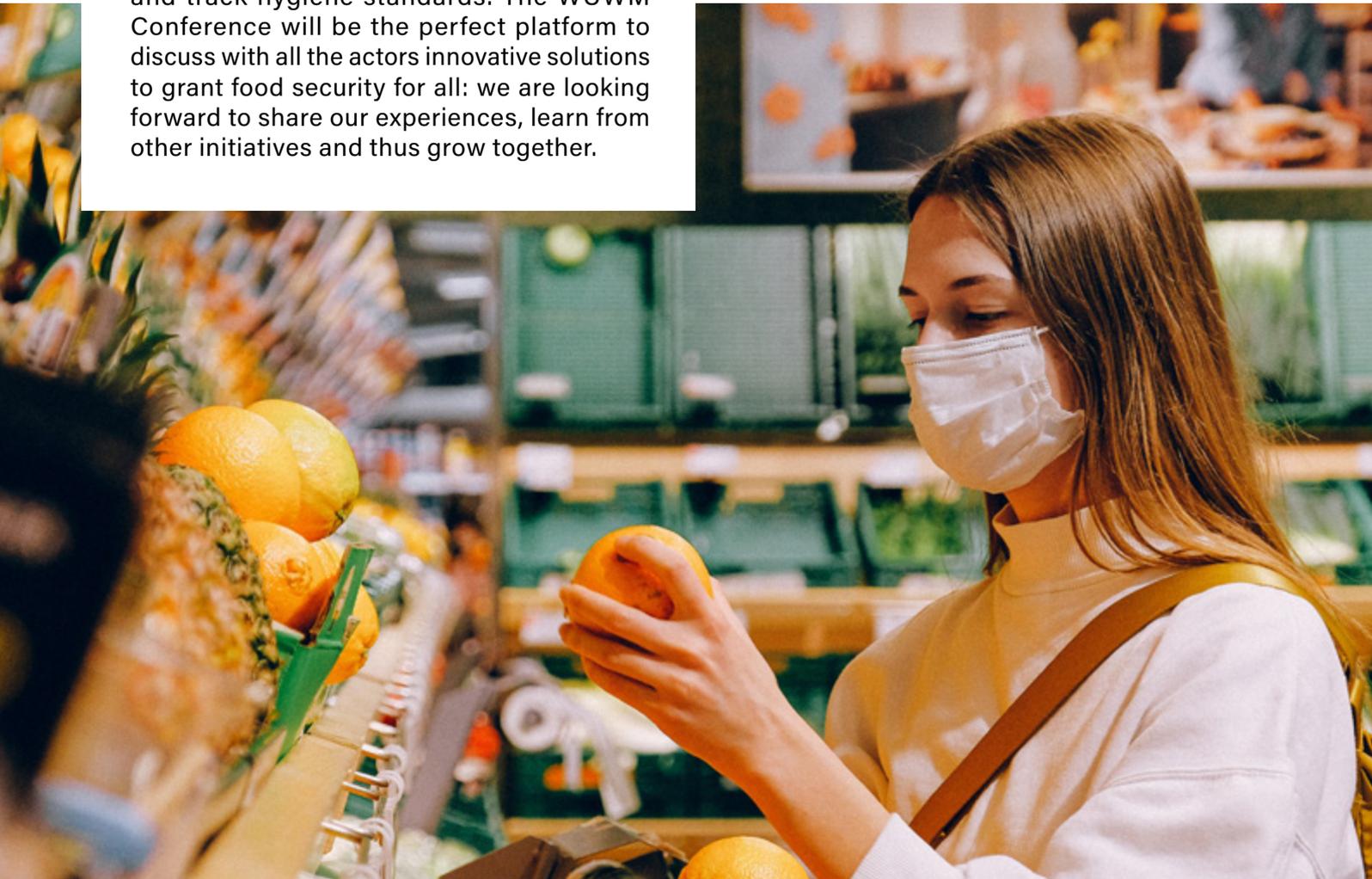
Do you see a bigger role of technology (artificial Intelligence, big data, machine learning and other forms of advanced technologies) in the fresh food supply chain? Will the theme of modernization be addressed during the WUWM Conference?

The pandemic was a great teacher in terms of technologies, commented Captain Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi, proceeding that before the outbreak of Covid-19, technologies were seen by many companies as distant and non-accessible features, but they are actually easily available and very useful in the food system's realm: for instance, technologies can be used to measure and trace food supplies, increase the lifespan of products while maintaining the same nutrients, or to ensure and track hygiene standards. The WUWM Conference will be the perfect platform to discuss with all the actors innovative solutions to grant food security for all: we are looking forward to share our experiences, learn from other initiatives and thus grow together.

Eugenia Carrara highlighted that the food industry is probably amid the industries that is less-penetrated by technology. In this regard, big data and similar tools can help to have a clear image of the whole chain, providing also opportunities to propose solutions to discrepancies or bottlenecks. But beyond technology, in a lot of cases around the world it is crucial to invest to modernize infrastructures to ensure simple - but crucial - functionalities such as a better cold chain or effective storage and packaging solutions. The WUWM Conference will be key to establish connections and build networks in order for all actors of the fresh food value chain to benefit from technologies and innovations.

“This conference comes at the right moment to get together - on site -. The best ideas and solutions occur when people meet in real time!”

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In the loop:

WUWM was invited as a key-speaker during the “Health Talks” organized by the World Health Organization in celebration of the World Food Safety Day

8 The World Health Organization (WHO) organized a series of “Health Talks on Food Safety” to celebrate the World Food Safety Day (June 7th). The online event, which took place from June 7th to June 9th, aimed to increase awareness of food safety by discussing major challenges to ensure food safety with the actors of the sector. During three days, international experts debated current and emerging issues with a focus on food safety, exploring different pathways to foster food safety.

Food safety refers to a set of practices, rules and regulations designed to ensure that food is always handled and consumed in a healthy, hygienic and risk-free manner. When food is unsafe, viruses, parasites, bacteria or pesticides residues can cause more than 200 different diseases, according to the World Health Organization, hence powering a vicious cycle of malnutrition and illnesses. In order to ensure food safety and healthy nutrition, joint action among producers, consumers and policy makers is needed. We have the tools needed to eradicate all negative consequences related to unsafe food.



In the frame of this online conference, WUWM was invited to participate as a key panelist during the webinar “Enabling safer food in traditional markets”, together with Delia Grace, Professor of Food Safety Systems and joint appointed scientist at ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute); Augustine Okoruwa, PhD FNIFST and Head of EatSafe Country Programmes; and Caroline Smith DeWaal, Deputy Director of EatSafe (Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food) at the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).

Traditional food markets are unique environments where billions of people across the globe have daily access to fresh produce including vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, and dairy. They account for the largest distribution share of fresh food supply in low- and middle- income countries (LMICs), areas in which food system’s vulnerabilities have the greatest impacts. Studies shows that in LMIC people primarily rely on traditional markets for access to food. A FAO study showed that over 90% of fruit and vegetable produced in low-income countries are sold by traditional markets and small retailers.

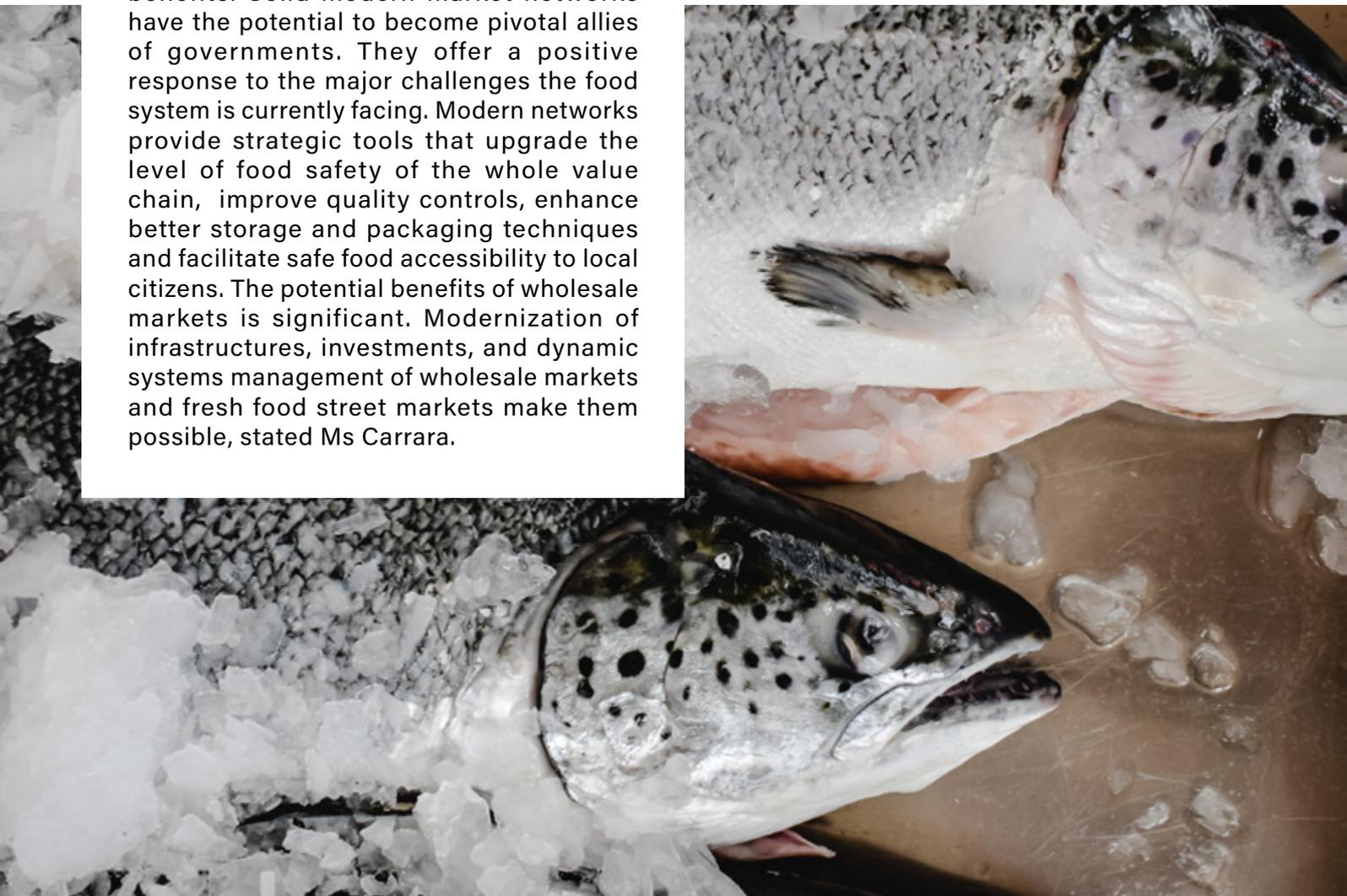
“Food safety refers to a set of practices, rules and regulations designed to ensure that food is always handled and consumed in a healthy, hygienic and risk-free manner.”

The Covid-19 pandemic provoked disruptions on the fresh food value chain, putting the nutrition of millions of people around the world at risk. Studies revealed that LMICs, in particular, have encountered many more obstacles compared to less impoverished areas with modernized and developed infrastructures. During Covid-19, the market system re-appeared as a key actor to ensure food security. The pandemic shed light on the central need to ensure food safety and develop better, safer infrastructures, such as adequate location, facilities and equipment and to foster a “food safety culture” awareness among market workers and customers. It showed the need to improve the ability of governments and market authorities to ensure food safety in markets. On average, one out of ten consumers becomes ill due to unsafe food, while Asia and Africa experience 33% of food-related illnesses and 75% of all deaths linked to unsafe produce. A deeper understanding of how traditional markets function is essential to ensuring food safety.

9 WUWM, represented by Secretary General Eugenia Carrara, highlighted the crucial role that an efficient market system can have in terms of economic, social and health benefits. Solid modern market networks have the potential to become pivotal allies of governments. They offer a positive response to the major challenges the food system is currently facing. Modern networks provide strategic tools that upgrade the level of food safety of the whole value chain, improve quality controls, enhance better storage and packaging techniques and facilitate safe food accessibility to local citizens. The potential benefits of wholesale markets is significant. Modernization of infrastructures, investments, and dynamic systems management of wholesale markets and fresh food street markets make them possible, stated Ms Carrara.

“The key to ensure food security and food safety resides in a resilient and functioning market system.”

All speakers at the conference agreed on the importance of resilient market systems as strategic infrastructures to ensure safe delivery of fresh food products, together with globally shared safety standards and regulations. Experts on food safety have been developing a set of standards to ensure safe and risk-free food. However, when it comes to traditional fresh food markets, there are no global minimum safety standards that ensure access to safe food. In this sense participants agreed on the need to develop multi-stakeholder action with proactive implementation of good practices. The first business is to educate stakeholders about the importance of food safety and the risks that come with unsafe food and foodborne diseases.





Interview with Caroline DeWaal

Unsafe food represents a major risk to human health, but as you stated it in your key speech during the WHO Health Talks, it is preventable: what are, according to you, the best long-term solutions to prevent unsafe food?

Safety isn't something that can be tested into food. It must be planned for during all steps of the production, processing, and distribution parts of the supply chain. Food safety experts have developed preventive control systems the supply businesses on what hazards to manage and how to manage them throughout the supply chain. Governments have adopted these approaches, which are also broadly featured in Codex food safety guidelines to governments.

In order to increase food safety, it is important to implement safety and hygiene standards: could you please tell us something more about the project to develop a "minimum standard" for food safety? Which actors would be included?

Traditional food markets exist all over the world and provide affordable fresh food for many millions of consumers globally. For consumers living in low- and middle-income countries, traditional markets are frequently their primary source of fresh foods, like meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. However, the structure and operation of traditional food markets can pose many food safety challenges. Traditional markets frequently have inadequate market infrastructure, limited access to potable water, weak hygienic

Interviews with Caroline DeWaal and Delia Grace

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As part of the WHO Health Talks in occasion of the World Food Safety Day 2022, WUWM participated as a key speaker in the roundtable-webinar «Enabling safer food in traditional markets». The aim of this webinar was to discuss ways to create an enable better and more safe food environments. During the panel, we spoke alongside two experts: Delia Grace, Professor in Food Safety Systems and joint appointed scientist at ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute) and Caroline Smith DeWaal, Deputy Director of EatSafe (Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food) at the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). We are pleased to share with our readers an in-depth interview with them, in which they share their insights about how to ensure better standards, regulations, but also how to develop a "food safety" culture in fresh food markets.



conditions, and insufficient storage practices, making them especially risky for the growth and spread of foodborne hazards.

GAIN is working on several platforms when it comes to minimum food safety standards for traditional food markets. Our EatSafe project, funded by USAID and Feed the Future is developing minimal acceptable food safety guidelines for traditional food markets in northwest Nigeria. This work is being led by our partner ILRI.

We have also researched existing Codex standards relevant to street-vended foods. Four different global regions have drafted such standards, and those contain many provisions applicable to food markets. Several countries are working with GAIN on a proposal for new work at the Codex Committee for Food Hygiene, which will be considered at its meeting in November.

Government programs can provide a foundation to manage food safety by setting and enforcing minimum food safety and quality standards and by establishing uniform standards for the conduct and performance for food businesses. Standards would be especially useful in the areas of vendor registration, design and infrastructure of markets, maintenance and sanitation in markets, and food handling.

The importance of providing national governments with guidance on managing the food sold through traditional markets is well recognized. Both WHO and FAO have published numerous handbooks on food safety in traditional food markets for national governments. The four regional guidance for street-vended foods, taken as a group, have significant information relevant to the regulation of traditional food markets. However there are gaps in the Codex documents that show that a global guidance would be appropriate.



Could you explain to our readers the difference in between CODEX and ISO standards? And why is it important to develop a CODEX for food safety?

Codex and ISO standards can be complementary. Codex provides food-related guidelines, standards, and codes of practice designed to assist governments in their statutory and regulatory work with the dual mission to protect consumers health and fair practices in trade. Specifically Codex standards are designed to protect citizens from health hazards caused by food consumption. ISO develops standards that are driven by industry needs and help define products, services, and test methods to help industry stakeholders fulfill regulatory requirements and meet private certification requirements.

“Food safety must be planned for during all steps of the production, processing, and distribution parts of the supply chain.”





“Wholesale markets have developed best practices to ensure the safety of the foods that they sell. Those practices could be highly relevant to share.”

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How can wholesale markets contribute to this goal, according to your experience and point of view?

Wholesale markets no doubt have developed best practices to ensure the safety of the foods that they sell. Those practices could be highly relevant to the type of traditional food markets that are servicing millions of consumers every day, as they seek out fresh foods like meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. It is important also to recognize that traditional food markets provide entry points for many workers in local communities. Teaching vendors how to source safer food products and ensure the safety of those products at the market is a challenge, and we welcome the inputs from all stakeholders.

In which way do you think that WUWM can collaborate with you to foster food safety measures and guidelines?

As we work to develop food safety guidelines for traditional food markets, we would welcome wholesale markets sharing their best practices and advice for improving conditions in local markets that are so vital to local economies and to providing consumers with fresh food.



Interview with Delia Grace

You are an accredited researcher, who has spent many years investigating food safety in the. Could you tell our readers a little bit more about your research projects?

Since 2006, my main research focus has been food safety in the domestic markets of developing countries. In the first decade, my research was mainly on description and diagnosis – what are the problems, are they big and important, what might be done about them. In the last decade, I have focused more on developing and testing solutions which could go to scale. About half of the work has been in Africa and the rest mainly in south and south east Asia. In these countries most fresh foods are sold in traditional markets, and my research focuses there although we look along the “farm to fork” or “boat to throat” pathway to see where risk is introduced and amplified and where it can be best mitigated.

“Food safety culture is about building the positive disposition and eagerness to ensure food is safe.”

Traditional markets entail both risks and benefits for global food safety: could you share your insights about risk assessment with our readers?

We were the first group to widely apply risk assessment to the sometimes challenging context of traditional markets. We found that not all markets are the same. In the most traditional, small, local markets risk is often quite low. But as food systems evolve and food chains lengthen and complexify the risk often increases. Then when public concern and governance start to catch up, we often see an improvement. We call this the food safety life cycle.

Can you share with us the best practices that you have seen to prevent unsafe food from entering food markets?

Food matters a lot to people and there is enormous interest and traditional market actors show enormous innovation in making food attractive to customers. We find that many practices carried out by farmers, transported and sellers are quite good at reducing food safety risk, although these practices are often done to approve appearance and shelf-life, because food safety is invisible. Food safety starts on the farm with hygiene, disease and pest management and good conditions for plant and animal growth. At the market, hygiene is again key and many simple technologies can also help keep food safe and attractive. For example, in Nigeria some meat sellers used mesh screens to keep flies from the food they sold. Many traditional food processing techniques such as fermenting can also decrease risk.

What do you think that would be the best long-term solution, in order to ensure food safety from farm to the fork ?

I don't think there is one silver bullet. Rather it is a combination of different actions by different stakeholders. Authorities should better understand the benefits and risks of traditional markets and ensure that regulation is enabling and positive rather than harmful and positive. Market actors need the skills and technologies to deliver safe food. Consumers are the ultimate drivers of food safety and

need to be able to convert their strong desire for safe food into incentives that motivate value chains to supply it.

How can wholesale markets contribute to this goal, according to your experience?

Wholesale markets have a crucial role as they are a bulking step, that is where products from lots of small farms come together. If not managed, this could foster cross-contamination and also loss of traceability. On the other hand, because wholesale markets are a bottleneck, or narrows, on the flow of food from farm to fork, they are also an excellent intervention point, where improvements can benefit huge numbers of farmers downstream and vast numbers of consumers upstream.

What are the current/upcoming projects on food safety in your agenda?

I am most excited about a portfolio of a dozen food safety interventions in traditional markets which are ongoing or recently completed. We are conducting an evaluation across the portfolio to draw strong and compelling evidence on what works to improve food safety in traditional markets and why.

During the WHO Health Talk webinar, you stressed the concept of establishing a "food safety culture": could you talk a little bit more about this and how do you think that this could be facilitated?

One of the best established facts in social science is that information alone will not change behaviour. Attitudes and values are determined how motivated people are to put knowledge into action, while a host of environmental factors may act as barriers or bridges to turning practice into habit. Food safety culture is about building the positive disposition and eagerness to ensure food is safe.





In Good Practices:

Italmercati, the Italian network of wholesale markets, organized an event to present the outcomes of a recent research aiming to address the major food systems challenges that Italy is facing.

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Italmercati and The European House Ambrosetti, a well-known think-tank specialized in the agri-food sector, organized an event titled, "Italy tackling the actual challenges of the food system: the wholesale markets' response". The event took place in Rome and hosted high level stakeholders of the wholesale market sector, agricultural and political sectors.

The event has two objectives: the first one was to introduce the results of a recent research conducted by the house of Ambrosetti about the role of wholesale markets in Italy. The second aim was to develop a multistakeholder platform to discuss about the effects of the multiple shocks impacting food and production chains.

ITALMERCATI
ITALIAN WHOLESALE MARKETS NETWORK

Fabio Massimo Pallottini, President of Italmercati, stressed that the research carried out by The European House Ambrosetti gives a precise picture about the role of wholesale markets, sharing new statistical data and information that was lacking before. The study examines both the role and value of wholesale food markets in the industry supply chain, taking into consideration the 19 markets connected to Italmercati, counting 2,500 companies involved with 22,000 workers.

The study states that in Italy markets have shown greater resilience during the COVID-19 in comparison to other suppliers. According to the House of Ambrossetti, wholesale agrifood markets will play a key role in addressing the major challenges of the Italian agrifood supply chain in the coming years. Nevertheless, the study shows that Wholesale agri-food markets are not yet adequately perceived by authorities as key players in the revitalization and sustainable transition of the Italian agrifood supply chain. There are first signs of recognition of their work, for instance the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP), which dedicates €800 million to wholesale agrifood markets over the period 2021-2026, but this efforts should be increased, according to the study.

The study also draw the attention to important economical function of markets: pointing out that the network of the 19 wholesale markets members of Italmercati generates a cumulative turnover of 80 million euros and activates supply and sub-supply chains of 107 million euros, with an overall contribution to national GDP of 85 million euros, supporting an ecosystem of 2,500 companies, that activates a direct turnover of 9 billion Euros, which reaches 22 billion Euros including indirect and induced, with a total Added Value of 12 billion Euros and 260,000 jobs.

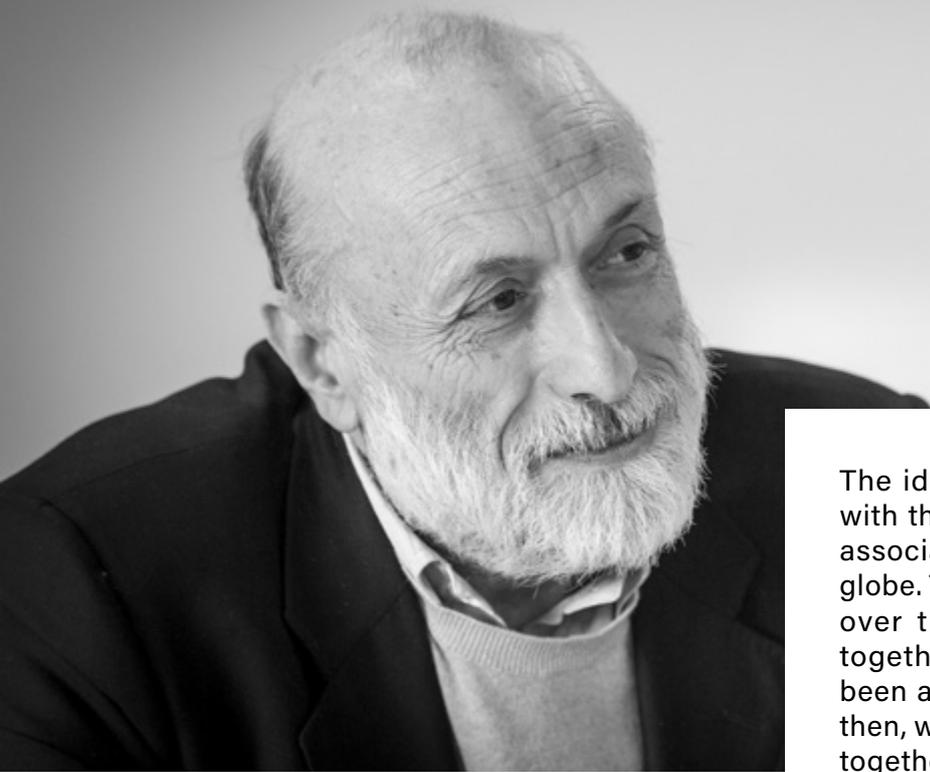
One of the main findings of the study is to point out that to successfully face the challenges of the coming years, the sector needs size consolidation: as of today, the number of Italian markets is 6 times higher than Spain and France, compared to a cumulative turnover 40% less than Spain and 30% less than France. In this sense, and to foster future growth, markets need a vision shared by all industry players that systemizes the digitization paths taken by individual markets to create an integrated national digital marketplace.

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The outcomes of this research are keys to give policy actors concrete data to propose a pathway to transition Italian food systems into sustainability and resilience. The Italian wholesale sector, in the words of Fabio Massimo Pallottini, is ready to face new challenges and to turn innovative ideas into concrete projects. Mr Pallottini pointed out that wholesale markets, are part of the essential infrastructures of this new food system architecture: “we need to be big and efficient machines in order to able to provide healthy food even in the suburbs and the most remote neighborhoods, in order to ensure food security” he stated.

“The outcomes of this research are keys to give policy actors concrete data to propose a pathway to transition Italian food systems into sustainability and resilience.”





Interview

with Carlo Petrini, Founder of Slow Food Movement, How to ensure food security, sustainability and food system resilience?

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We had the honour to interview Carlo Petrini, activist, writer and founder of the non-profit international association "Slow Food", to discuss about food security, sustainability and all the obstacles that are preventing the international community from achieving the zero hunger goal.

You are the President and founder of Slow Food, a non-profit renewed association committed to restoring value to food and respect for producers, in harmony with the environment. Could you talk about this reality and the idea behind this project?

Slow Food is an international association that shares the same values all across the globe. We share the values for a food system which is Good, Clean and Fair for everyone. By that we mean flavoursome, culturally appropriate and healthy food (good), that comes from a production that does not harm the environment (clean) and produced in fair conditions and pay for workers, while also ensuring the economic accessibility to the citizens (fair).

The idea in the first place was not started with the objective to create an international association present in 150 countries on the globe. This was a process that has developed over time. Though I must say that food, together with a political soul, have always been an inherent part of my life. It was 1986 then, when these two aspects of my life came together. In that year we started ARCI - Gola, and that was also the time when McDonald's opened its store on the historic Piazza di Spagna in Rome. We, as a newly founded association devoted to food, reacted to that event. We did so because we could not accept that the symbol of the homogenization of taste and food culture opened in a place of historic relevance.

From there the movement started growing. And I must admit that back in the days we were perceived as very weird with our ideas which were completely new at the time. There was no other association nor movement that focused on preserving traditional food culture, genuine foods and that put a lot of emphasis on the narration of the stories behind the products and producers.

Then in december 1989 Slow Food International came to life and from that moment on, slowly but steadily, we started to broaden our sphere of action by adopting an ecological and globalised mindset. It is a shift that happened naturally as food is one of the most intimate connections we as humans, universally have with the planet, and our food system has globally interconnected repercussions.



Slow Food®

You have been nominated ambassador of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) “Zero Hunger” project for Europe. What are the goals of this programme and how are you planning to contribute to their achievement?

The role was appointed to me in 2016 by FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva who recognised Slow Food and my contribution in increasing public awareness on the need to improve agriculture in Europe and to ensure sustainable food supply chains. Holding this responsibility to me means to continue my work in raising awareness and empowering realities that want to create a food system according to Slow Foods values.

It is important for example to continue the work on reintroducing local crops that smallholders and subsistence farmers can produce for their own consumption and sell on the markets as a means to achieve food security. The shame of hunger can and must be defeated within this generation. The commitment in this regard must take a political priority in all international forums, along with national and civil society.

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This is especially important now, in these unbelievably sad times of war and crises where we need to send a strong signal to the international community that we can create a world where no one is hungry and we live in peace.

In this regard, I'd like to point out how absurd the problem of hunger is in a global food system where 33% of all food produced goes to waste and 1.9 billion people are overweight, many of them suffering from conditions directly caused by their overeating. On the other hand we have almost 800 million humans that suffer from hunger. This cannot continue like this and we need to re-evaluate the production value chains that bring about the waste and redistribute wealth and food resources.

“Fresh food markets are incredibly important for the transition to more sustainable food systems.”

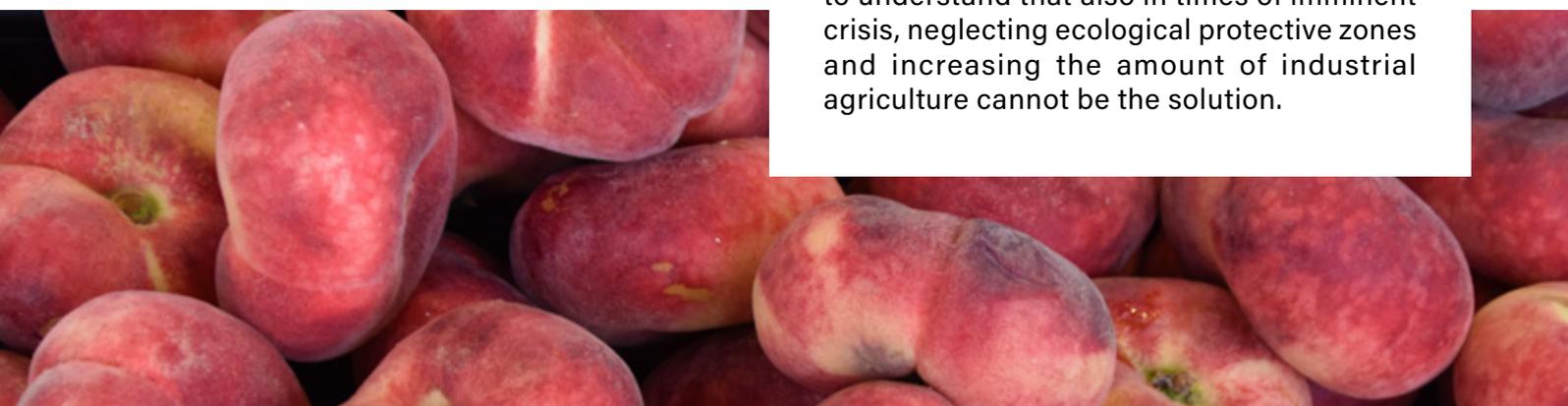
June is the month of the World Environment Day and World Nutrition day, international celebrations to remind us of our responsibility towards world communities and planet earth. As you stated in a recent article, this situation of double emergency (health and war) is «distracting» Europe from a path of ecological transition: could you elaborate on this thought?

Last April I had the opportunity to talk to some representatives of the European Commission in Brussels about this topic. It is not just that these issues are attracting our attention in the media, as the news is mainly filled with sensations about the war and the pandemic. No, unfortunately this “distraction” and the current crisis are being instrumentalised by different lobbies to push their agendas.

It seems unbelievable to me that due to the war the agricultural lobby is trying to push their usual agenda of industrial agriculture fueled by fossil fuels, pesticides and fertilisers to ensure food security. And some politicians are falling for it.

This way of thinking heavily threatens the objectives of the European Union for sustainable development as indicated by the New Green Deal and more specifically in the food sector by the Farm to Fork strategy. In these times we cannot continue to search for solutions for upcoming crises in short term strategies that fuel greenhouse gas emissions and support international capitalistic structures looking to gain profit.

The climate crisis remains present and it needs to be considered in every political action to come. The agricultural sector needs to understand that also in times of imminent crisis, neglecting ecological protective zones and increasing the amount of industrial agriculture cannot be the solution.





What are in your opinion the main challenges to succeed in the transition of our food systems? / What are, according to you, the solutions that should be implemented in order to restore planetary and human health? Both in a short-term perspective and long-run solutions.

The current challenges with regard to our food system need to deal with some absurdities such as the pandemic of obesity and malnutrition, the depletion of the environment related to the way we produce our food and with structural social inequalities that determine what we can eat, and has a result of that, how healthy we are.

In this process associations, activists and businesses need to recognize the position, power and opportunities they hold and express those in the most effective ways.

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What we need in order to restore balance in our society and our relationship with the natural world is a profound paradigm shift at the base level. We need to shift our values in business from the law of profit towards the core value of community service, from a culture of competition to one of cooperation and from the idealisation of consumption towards the cure of well being.

This paradigm shift is brought into life when we focus on relationships of trust, cooperation, and reciprocity with the aim of putting at the centre the common good. These are all values that have always been an inherent part of the philosophy of Slow Food, and if they are put into practice at a larger scale, can guarantee a future for the next generations. I would also like to point out that this shift must go hand in hand with the decisive actions of those who acknowledge that the world of tomorrow depends on taking care of the Earth, of all its living creatures, and of the relationships that us human beings are able to create with one another. Only this vision of human and ecological solidarity and respect, together with a strong motivation and passion will truly guarantee a restoration of planetary and human health.

Lastly the next pivotal step for our society is about transitioning effectively so the young generations can get to work with our full support. The future belongs to them, but they should not be left alone in creating it. Especially because many of the threats they are facing are our responsibility.

What are your thoughts on the food insecurity crisis caused by the Ukrainian war?

The Ukrainian war has and is going to have significant impacts on the food system globally. I'm saying that being aware of a sad fact: conflicts and hunger are intimately connected phenomena, in the occurrence of one, the other almost naturally follows.

This is confirmed by information from the World Food Program coming from Ukraine, where millions of people are currently receiving food aid. And this is also demonstrated by the worried declarations of numerous African countries, the Middle East, and Europe itself which, albeit for different reasons, fear the direct and indirect repercussions that the conflict will have on prices and the supply of food.

For example, Yemen imports 90% of its food, of which 50% of its grain from Russia and Ukraine. For a country where over half of the population (15 million individuals) already lives in conditions of food insecurity, the war represents the worsening of an already tragic situation. Egypt, once a large producer of wheat thanks to the fertility of the Nile, due to urbanization and desertification, purchases 80% of this product from Ukraine.

And in an area where bread has always been a politically controversial (as well as subsidised) commodity, there are fears that the rise in the prices of raw materials will create economic instability and insurrections by the population.

This is further confirmation of the need to transition to sustainable food systems that return power to the hands of farmers and produce using local and renewable inputs. Coming now to Europe, it must be recognized that even our food systems will not be exempt from the negative consequences deriving from the conflict. Ukraine is in fact the fourth largest supplier of food to the Union, while Russia supplies us with 40% of the gas used for heating the greenhouses where we grow more than half of the vegetables we consume. An increase in gas prices can lead not only to an increase in the price of food, but also to the failure of some farms, and therefore to a decrease in supply.

This is how, immediately after the pandemic, this conflict makes us again touch the vulnerability and injustice of a globalized food system, which responds only to the law of profit. In this scenario changing the current system by putting food sovereignty at the centre is a moral duty that we all have to confront. Because food can in no moment become a weapon that amplifies the damage of a conflict. Food must always and only be an instrument for spreading peace.

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What is the role in your opinion that wholesales, fresh food markets, could play in order to foster the transition of our food systems?

Fresh food markets, connected to farmers that sell directly, are incredibly important for the transition to more sustainable food systems. Fresh food markets are not only a great expression of what a short food supply chain is, but they also provide a fertile ground for the reinvigoration of culture, connection to natural processes and resources and the relationship between consumers and producers.

For these reasons Slow Food has always supported markets and created the Earth Markets, which are farmers markets where the protagonists are small producers and food artisans. On the stalls of an Earth Market you can find good, clean and fair food: the products are local, fresh and seasonal, respect the environment and the work of producers and they are traded at fair prices, for those who buy and for those who sell.

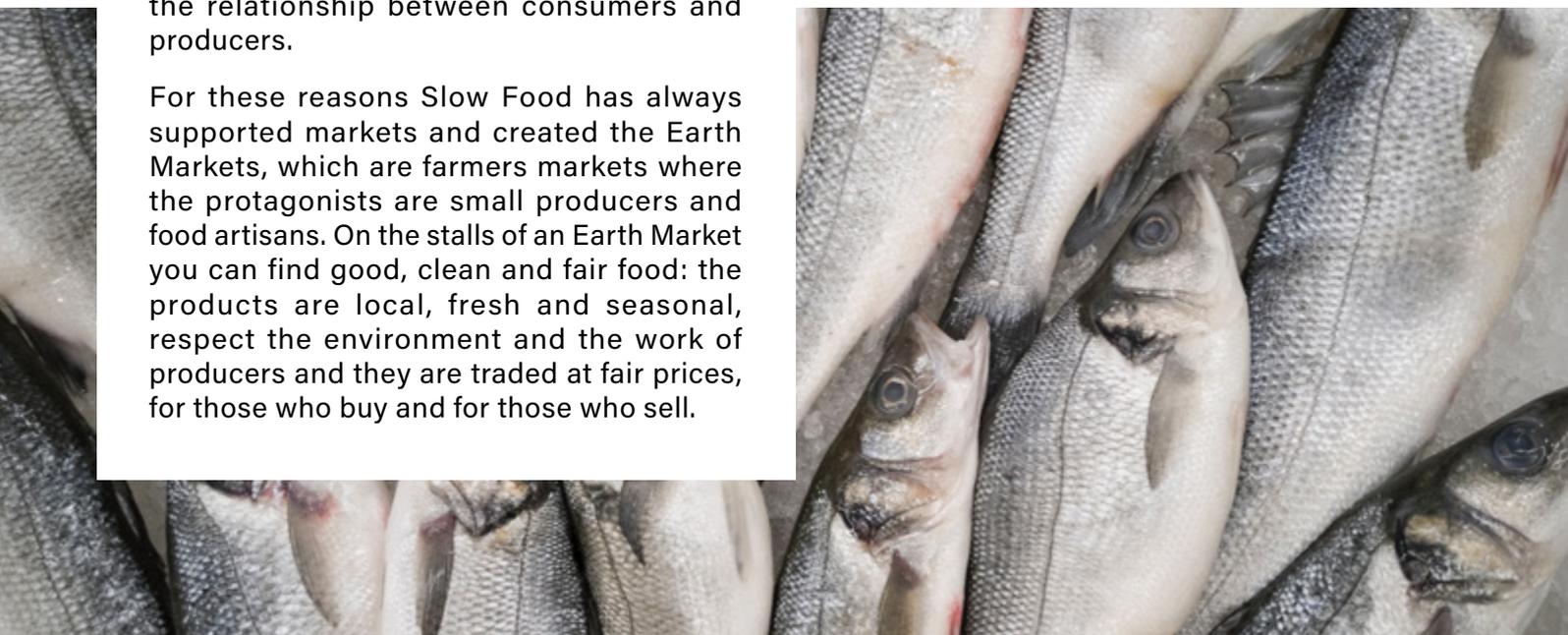
“Fresh food markets are a great expression of what a short food supply chain and provide a fertile ground for the reinvigoration of culture, connection to natural processes and resources and the relationship between consumers and producers.”

Earth Markets are places to buy high quality products, but also spaces to build communities, create exchange and educate.

And I think it is now the time for fresh food markets to incorporate these values into their schemes. We must prevent big retailers and international food corporations from making use of such spaces to push their agendas and see it as another way of making profit and “greenwashing” themselves.

Do you think that Slow food could join forces with WUWM/WUWM members to achieve this goal?

I believe that in this historic moment the spirit of collaboration is what we need to foster. Slow Food has always supported virtuous food initiatives and will continue to do so. In that sense we are open to explore possible synergies in the future.





Insightful:

An Oxford study busts myth: in high and middle income countries sustainable eating is cheaper and healthier!

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Sustainable diets could make a decisive impact on planetary and human health, contributing to safeguarding natural resources, minimising the environmental impact of food systems and reducing diet-related diseases. However, most people do not engage in sustainable and healthy eating practices because they are expensive and unaffordable. But is that really the case? The Oxford University investigated to check whether this widespread assumption is actually true.

The study, which was published in *The Lancet Planetary Health*, compared the costs of seven sustainable diets to the current typical diet in 150 countries, using food prices from the World Bank's International Comparison Program. The research revealed that, in high- and middle- income countries such as UK, USA, Australia and Western Europe, adopting more plant-based diet could reduce food expenditure by one third, while being healthy and environmentally friendly. The study also found that in lower income countries, like the Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan Africa, a healthy and sustainable diet would be up to a quarter cheaper than a typical Western one, however it would be at least one third more expensive than current diets. More specifically, if compared with the cost of current diets, the healthy and sustainable dietary patterns were (depending on the diet) up to 22–34% less expensive in upper-middle-income to high-income countries on average, whereas in lower-middle-income regions prices were at least 18–29% higher.

Oxford researchers further tried to analyze what kind of options could improve diet affordability and reduce their costs, by looking

at different policy options. According to their estimates and predictions, healthy and sustainable diets could become affordable everywhere in the world within the next 10 years, but only once economic development - particularly in lower income countries - is sided with food waste reduction and a climate and health-friendly food pricing. When these measures were connected, the healthy and sustainable diets were up to 25–29% cheaper in low-income to lower-middle-income countries, and up to 37% lower in cost on average, for the year 2050.

In high- and middle- income areas, changes in eating habits that encourage healthy and sustainable diets can help consumers reduce their food expenses while contributing to fight climate change effects and reduce obesity related health problems.

According to Dr. Marco Springmann, one of the contributors to the Oxford study, political will is the main driver to making healthy and sustainable diets available and affordable worldwide. Current diets in lower income countries are starchy and not very healthy, nor are "western-style" diets, which are additionally vastly unsustainable and unaffordable in poor regions of the world. The dietary patterns examined in the study are a better option for health, the environment, and financially, but development support and progressive food policies are needed to make them both affordable and desirable everywhere.

"Political will is the main driver to making healthy and sustainable diets available and affordable worldwide!"



Innovation:

How can wholesale markets help in the production of fertilizers? We share the case of a company operating in Maryland wholesale market.

“Bioenergy Devco” is name of this innovative company that shows again the important role that wholesale markets can play in reducing food waste and by doing so creating an important added value such as organic fertilizers! Using an anaerobic digester facility, this global leading company drives sustainable organic waste recycling and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by transforming organic material into energy and sustainable fertilizers.

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This innovative solution allows wholesale structures to decrease costs of organics disposal, create their own source of renewable energy, improve operating expenses and streamline organics management processes, addressing the food waste challenges of producers and wholesalers. We had the pleasure to talk with the Bioenergy Devco team and found out interesting insights about the values and commitment behind this technology.

Could you introduce to our readers your company and the work you are carrying out?

Bioenergy Devco, in partnership with our EU-based sister company BTS Biogas, is a global leader in the design, engineering, construction, financing, and operation of advanced anaerobic digester systems. Anaerobic digestion is the natural process of breaking down organic material inside enclosed tanks into renewable energy and healthy soil products. Our proven technology uses a naturally occurring biological process and provides a scalable option to help communities and businesses transform their organic waste and energy sectors.

In our over 24 years of experience, we have built more than 250 anaerobic digestion systems worldwide, operating over 140 of them. This summer, we will open our first facility in the United States, adjacent to the Maryland Wholesale market. Once fully operational, it will be the largest food waste digester in the United States, with an annual capacity of 110,000 tons of food residuals. At our new facility outside of Baltimore, we are sustainably processing food waste from numerous wholesalers in the region, offering customized solutions to their waste disposal issues and diverting their scraps and spoiled products from landfills and incinerators.

Your innovative and sustainable offer could make a significant impact both for the food systems transition and for the health of our planet: could you talk about the main benefits of using renewable natural gas?

The gas produced from anaerobic digestion is referred to as “biogas.” Instead of fossil fuels such as fracked gas, we create renewable power sourced from food waste that can function in our existing energy infrastructure. We are versatile and can create additional energy outputs beyond renewable natural gas (RNG). Many of our facilities in Europe upgrade the biogas to electricity, and we can also generate hydrogen from the anaerobic digestion process. At our new facility in Maryland, we will be upgrading the biogas to RNG and inputting directly into the local utilities’ gas infrastructure. The gas we create can help power the equivalent of over 7,700 US homes.

Most importantly, we can decrease the carbon impact of food waste by diverting it from landfills and incinerators. Our new facility will divert 64,000 tons of carbon dioxide from going into the atmosphere each year, with the same environmental impact as a forest area of 69,000 acres or roughly 82 times the size of Central Park.

In addition to renewable energy, your Anaerobic Digestion facilities generate another useful byproduct: “digestate”, a biofertilizer. Could you share more in detail about this interesting creation?

Often our agricultural sector uses chemical fertilizers, while anaerobic digestion creates natural soil products that help to increase yields and return valuable nutrients to the soil. We refer to this product as «digestate» -- the physical remnants that remain after the anaerobic digestors have digested the food waste. Digestate is very similar in chemical composition to compost, and we often mix digestate in compost piles. A significant difference between anaerobic digestion and large-scale composting operations is that we can create our soil products on a much smaller physical footprint than a composting operation.

The current crisis provoked by the Ukrainian war is heavily affecting the global food system, not only in terms of food shortages - but also agricultural inputs, such as fertilisers supply. How would you connect this to the work of Bioenergy Devco? What is your perspective on this emergency framework?

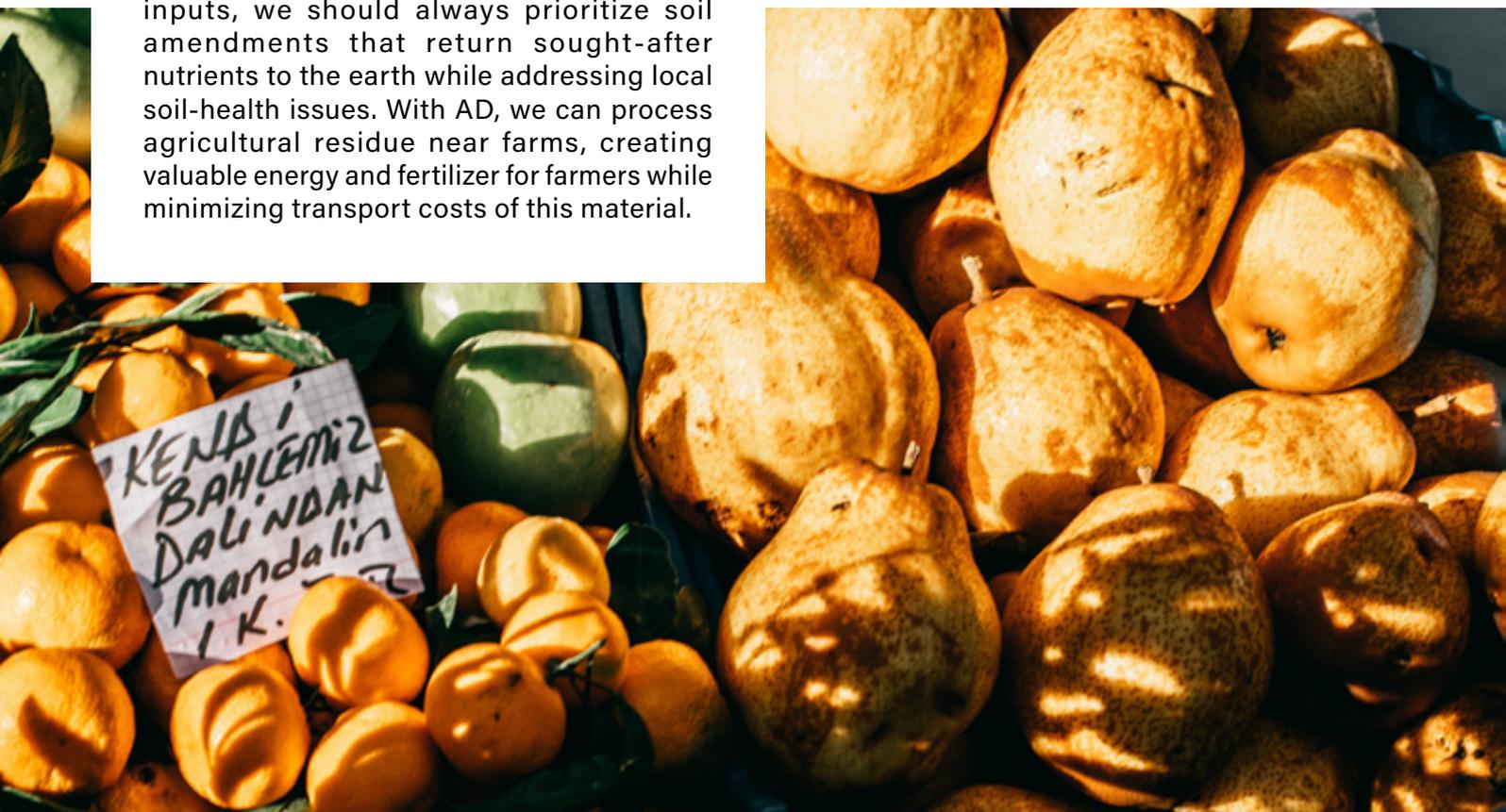
One thing we strongly believe in is energy and agricultural independence. Following the Biden Administration’s ban on Russian oil imports, we issued a statement applauding that decision. When it comes to agricultural inputs, we should always prioritize soil amendments that return sought-after nutrients to the earth while addressing local soil-health issues. With AD, we can process agricultural residue near farms, creating valuable energy and fertilizer for farmers while minimizing transport costs of this material.

Do you think that your work could be scaled up to another wholesale markets and become a valid alternative for other types of fertilizers?

Absolutely! Our small plant footprint enables us to locate our plant inside or near wholesale markets. We can also help reduce waste disposal and energy costs of wholesale markets by shortening truck trips and generating energy for heating or cooling of the market. The beauty of our anaerobic digestion technology is that we can take in several different waste forms at once. We are microbial scientists, figuring out the best mix possible of food wastes for anaerobic digestion tanks. Over our 24 years of experience, we have perfected countless digester tank recipes to address the food waste challenges of producers, distributors and wholesalers across the globe.

“Using an anaerobic digester facility, this company drives sustainable organic waste recycling and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.”

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In Events:

WUWM participated in the World Urban Forum 11 in Poland on 26-30 June.

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The World Union of Wholesale Markets participated for the first time in the World Urban Forum (WUF) which took place in Katowice (Poland) from June 26th to June 30th.

WUF is the premier global conference on urbanization convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). It brings together a wide range of participants from around the world to discuss major urban challenges facing the world today. The WUF was established in 2001 to examine one of the most pressing issues of our time: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies.

Since its first congress in Nairobi (Kenya) in 2002, the World Urban Forum has expanded both in size and scope, becoming a globally appreciated platform to share best practices and innovation. Held every two years in different cities around the world, this edition marked the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF11) under the theme “Transforming the cities for a better urban future”, focusing in exchanges about how to increase urban resilience and how to make urban scapes more liveable and sustainable. This question is particularly relevant when we acknowledge that three quarters of the world’s population are expected to be living in cities by mid-century and that the global population is expected to grow by 2 billion by 2050.

Food security is an integral part of city resilience: there cannot be full urban sustainability, equality and development if we don’t guarantee accessibility to healthy diets to citizens.

Achieving the transition of food systems should therefore be amid the priorities of sustainable cities. For instance, focusing efforts on this shift to a circular food system could cut urban food emissions by up to 65%. This effort, however, requires a major involvement from governments. Cities can leverage their institutional power to drive innovation in food systems by working with municipal bodies and urban actors being involved in all stages of the food system though public legislation, urban planning, and appropriate policies.

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated how fragile our food systems are, calling for fast action and coordination in the sector in order to reduce risk of food supply disruptions, food price volatility and food crises in the future. Today there is general recognition that actual food systems must be transformed.

WUWM has been contributing to rise and mainstream this discussing during the WUF 11 by taking part in two events: We participated as a key speaker in the Networking Event “Increasing urban resilience in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) using transdisciplinary approaches”, organized by UN-Habitat and GDAR (Global Diet and Activity Research) Network. By engaging in a rich discussion among experts from different sectors and parts of the world, the aim of this panel was to showcase and encourage context-sensitive, integrated, and inclusive approaches in order to help local stakeholders plan for resilient urban futures in LMICs.

WUWM was also co-organizer and panelist of another Networking Event: “Building Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems: Market Systems at the Center of Urban-Rural Linkages.” This session was the follow-up of the homonymous technical consultation held in April 2022 with the World Farmers Markets Coalition (WFMC), the Market Cities Initiative

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(MCI), with the support of UN-Habitat, FAO, and three associations of local and regional governments, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), and Regions4. This event was the second step to build a new platform and alliances capable of creating a holistic narrative and action plan to markets systems aiming to ensure that we can build sustainable food systems.

Markets systems have a key role to achieve the transition of food systems to sustainability and resilience. Food Markets, from small informal markets to big wholesale markets, are the actors of the food chain that can efficiently link urban consumers and food that is fresh, less processed, safe and sustainably sourced. Markets can influence the consumer's choices by offering healthier, fresher and more locally produced food, making it more available, varied and affordable, shortening supply chains, facilitating access to markets to smaller farmers, ensuring the traceability of products, promoting transparency of prices, managing food waste in a circular way, and, as such, creating a healthy food environment for cities.

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The World Urban Forum was an opportunity to exchange ideas, share knowledge, experiences and raise awareness of the importance of market systems to achieve the SDGs goals. With these networking events, we intended to strengthen partnerships and build communities of best practices to advance sustainable and inclusive urban development.

In WUWM's World

1st of June – WUWM participated in the European Commission sub-group about pip-fruits

June 8th – WUWM participated as a key panelist in the Health Talk on Enabling Safer Food in Traditional Markets at World Food Safety Day

June 13th – WUWM participated as a speaker in the first meeting of European Commission Food loss and waste monitoring Group

June 17th – WUWM hold its Bureau meeting

June 23th – WUWM participated in the Food Workstream Network of the Global Crisis Response Group Meeting.

June 26-30th – WUWM participated in the World Urban Forum 11 Conference in Katowice, Poland.

June 24th – WUWM participated in the OECD-FAO Multistakeholder advisory group on Responsible Agricultural supply chains

June 27th – WUWM & AD Ports Group Press Conference to officially announced the WUWM 2022 Conference in Abu Dhabi.

June 29th – WUWM was invited as a speaker in the Networking Event on GDAR Network: Increasing Urban Health and Resilience in LMICs using transdisciplinary approaches at the WUF 11 Conference

June 30th – WUWM hosted a Networking Event on Building Sustainable and Resilience Food System: Market Systems at the Centre of Urban-Rural Linkages at the WUF 11 Conference



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.

