



# FOOD SYSTEMS SOLUTIONS DIALOGUES 2026

*Leveraging cities, municipalities and urban stakeholders to advance food systems*

13 May 2026

Summary Report

## Introduction

The Food Systems Solutions Dialogues (FSSD) are purposeful, organized events that unite National Convenors and other food systems actors to share their experiences and insights on food systems hosted by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub). A new series launches annually. Morning and afternoon sessions are held for each Dialogue to accommodate different time zones. On 13 May 2026, the Dialogue “Leveraging cities, municipalities and urban stakeholders to advance food systems” was convened as part of the 2026 FSSD series. The Dialogue explored how cities, municipalities and urban stakeholders can support food systems transformation through stronger coordination, local action and alignment with national priorities. This Summary Report reflects the combined discussions from both the morning and afternoon sessions.

The Dialogue explored the critical role of cities, municipalities and urban stakeholders in driving food systems transformation, recognizing that urban areas are increasingly shaping food demand, consumption patterns, nutrition outcomes and market dynamics. Through country and city-level experiences, the Dialogue examined practical entry points to connect local action with national priorities, including governance and implementation mechanisms, territorial food planning processes, local public procurement and investment pipelines, while highlighting the importance of multi-level coordination and urban innovation in advancing sustainable food systems transformation.

## Setting the Scene

Mr Carlos Watson, Director a.i. of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, opened the Dialogue by welcoming participants and highlighting the increasing importance of urban areas in shaping food demand, market systems and public services. He stressed the critical role of cities, municipalities and urban stakeholders in driving food systems transformation. He encouraged participants to reflect on how national and local governments can strengthen coordination, align urban policies with national food systems priorities, and foster partnerships and implementation mechanisms to accelerate sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems transformation.

The morning and afternoon sessions featured a distinguished panel bringing together global and national perspectives on operationalizing a systems approach and strengthening policy coherence across food systems and nutrition. The panel included:

- Ms Jane Battersby, Report lead for the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition 2024 Report
- Ms Priscilla Muiruri, Coordinator, Food Systems Technical Working Group, Kenya
- Ms Chiara Mandelli, Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
- Ms Isis Nunez Ferrera, Coordinator, Urban Agrifood Systems, FAO on the Global Partnership for Transforming Urban Agrifood Systems
- Ms Gisele Bortolini, Coordinator of the Alimenta Cidades Strategy, Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger, Brazil

The morning session was moderated by Ms Mia Madsen, Policy Officer, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, while the afternoon session was moderated by Mr Guido Santini, Programme Coordinator, Plant Production and Protection Division, FAO.

### Key Insights from Panellists

Ms. Chiara Mandelli, EU & International Projects Coordinator at the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), highlighted the importance of bridging local decision-making with national governments through structured multi-level national dialogues. Drawing on the example of the National Dialogue on School Meals held in Semarang, Indonesia, she explained how the initiative brought together mayors, representatives from Indonesian cities, national ministries, national agencies and international experts to support the implementation of Indonesia's nationwide free nutrition meal programme. She emphasized that the dialogue was designed to close the gap between national ambition and the readiness of cities to deliver through evidence-based discussions and shared problem solving. Ms. Mandelli highlighted the role of champion mayors and city-level political leadership in convening multi-level coordination processes and stressed the importance of replicable governance models that can be adapted across different national contexts. She concluded by underscoring that cities should be viewed not only as implementers of national food policies, but also as governance partners in advancing food systems transformation.

Ms. Jane Battersby, Report lead for the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition 2024 Report, highlighted the increasing importance of addressing urban and peri-urban food systems in the context of rapid urbanization and rural transformation. She emphasized that urban food systems are shaped not only by food systems themselves, but also by interconnected systems such as infrastructure, health, planning, housing and employment. Drawing on the CFS Policy Recommendations on Strengthening Urban and Peri-Urban Food Systems, she underscored the need for stronger multi-level and multi-actor governance, greater recognition of the role and capacities of local governments, and improved



coordination across sectors and levels of government. She also highlighted the importance of strengthening data, research and knowledge systems across the rural-urban continuum and pointed to existing good practices, including the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and Brazil's Alimenta Cidades programme, as examples of how urban food governance can support more sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems transformation.

Ms. Priscilla Muiruri, Coordinator of the Food Systems Technical Working Group in Kenya, highlighted the growing complexity of integrating food systems into urban areas in the context of rapid urbanization and Kenya's devolved governance structure. She emphasized the importance of adopting a territorial food systems approach that recognizes the interdependence between urban and rural areas, while also strengthening coordination between national and county governments. Ms. Muiruri underscored the critical role of the informal sector, including street vendors, women traders and transporters, in supplying food to urban populations and stressed the need to build their capacities to ensure food quality and safety. She also highlighted initiatives such as home-grown school feeding programmes and market mapping in Kisumu County, which have supported evidence-based planning and informed national investments in urban food markets. At the same time, she noted persistent institutional, financing and capacity challenges, including weak coordination structures, limited investment in agriculture, outdated extension services and insufficient understanding of holistic food systems approaches among stakeholders.

Ms. Isis Nunez Ferrera, FAO Global Coordinator for Urban Agrifood Systems, highlighted the need to move from fragmented support toward more coordinated delivery to accelerate urban and peri-urban food systems transformation. Speaking on behalf of the *Global Partnership for Transforming Urban Agrifood Systems* and its network of more than 50 partner organizations, she emphasized that while many local activities and interventions already exist, stronger coordination, evidence-sharing, peer learning and alignment with national priorities are needed to translate local action into broader national food systems transformation. She noted that a key challenge remains the disconnect between local action and national ambitions, particularly in linking city-level initiatives with national food systems pathways and financing mechanisms. She introduced the Global Partnership as a practical platform to connect governments, city networks, technical organizations and funders around coordinated local delivery. Ms. Nunez Ferrera underscored the importance of strengthening "national anchoring" by linking local transformation pathways with national policies, financing mechanisms and implementation frameworks, while also promoting city-to-city exchange, stronger rural-urban linkages, coordinated investments, and improved learning and monitoring systems to support scaling up implementation.

Ms. Gisele Ane Bortolini of the Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight against Hunger in Brazil, highlighted the country's approach to advancing food systems transformation through strong national direction combined with local leadership. She presented the Alimenta Cidades Strategy as an intersectoral and multi-level initiative that brings together the federal government, states, municipalities, civil society and academia to



strengthen access to healthy and sustainable food systems, particularly for vulnerable urban populations. Through the Alimenta Cidades Strategy, Brazil is supporting municipalities in developing healthier, more sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban food systems through coordinated local action and multilevel cooperation. Ms. Bortolini emphasized the importance of recognizing municipalities as strategic partners, combining national coordination with local implementation, and transforming territorial diagnosis into concrete public action through evidence-based planning tools. She also underscored the role of urban food systems in addressing climate change through mitigation, adaptation and emergency response measures, while highlighting the importance of strengthening multilevel governance, cooperation and institutional coordination to translate national commitments into concrete changes in territories and people's lives.

## Dialogue with National Convenors

Following the panel, National Convenors engaged in a dialogue to exchange country experiences on linking local urban action with national food systems priorities. The discussion highlighted practical entry points for implementation, strengthened coordination between national and local governments, and the role of partnerships and multi-level governance in advancing sustainable food systems transformation.

To guide the conversation, participants were provided with a few guiding questions:

1. How can National Food Systems Convenors effectively engage cities and metropolitan authorities as partners in implementing national food systems pathways?
2. What concrete policy or implementation entry points have proven effective for linking city-level action with national food systems priorities (e.g. public procurement, territorial food planning, wholesale markets, food loss and waste)?
3. What partnerships, investment mechanisms or collaboration platforms can help countries scale local urban food systems solutions and connect them with national implementation priorities?

During the dialogue, National Convenors and country representatives shared experiences and reflections on strengthening coordination between national and local levels to advance urban and peri-urban food systems transformation. Jordan highlighted the establishment of the Higher Council for Food Security, chaired by the Prime Minister, and emphasized the role of municipalities in food loss and waste management, school feeding programmes and local market governance. Participants also highlighted the importance of decentralization, territorial planning and multi-level partnerships, including initiatives supported through the SDG Fund programme implemented by FAO and UNIDO. Haiti shared the recent establishment of an interministerial committee on food and nutrition security aimed at improving policy coordination and harmonization across sectors, while emphasizing the need for capacity strengthening and support to address food systems challenges in a context of multidimensional crises.



Participants also reflected on broader structural challenges affecting urban food systems, including the impacts of rapid urbanization and rising land prices on urban and peri-urban agriculture, as well as unequal market dynamics and the concentration of power across food systems value chains. The discussion underscored the importance of public policies, incentives and regulatory mechanisms to better support farmers, strengthen autonomy and promote more sustainable and equitable food systems transformation.

## **The Way Forward**

The Dialogue highlighted the importance of further strengthening multi-level governance and coordination mechanisms to better connect local urban action with national food systems priorities. Moving forward, greater emphasis could be placed on enhancing collaboration across sectors and levels of government, strengthening the capacities of local authorities, and promoting more integrated approaches to territorial planning, food markets, school feeding programmes, food loss and waste management, and other local implementation mechanisms. Participants also emphasized the importance of ensuring that local initiatives are more effectively linked with national pathways, policies and investment priorities to support coherent and inclusive food systems transformation.

The Dialogue also highlighted the need for more coordinated and aligned support across stakeholders, while strengthening peer learning, knowledge exchange and evidence systems to support implementation. Continued efforts to promote city-to-city exchange, strengthen rural-urban linkages, and support practical local action were identified as important opportunities to advance sustainable and inclusive urban and peri-urban food systems transformation.