Food Futures Strategy Uganda - insights from webinars 2020

Feeding Cities and migration

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This research was carried out by Wageningen University & Research within the context of the KB-motif *'Feeding cities and migration settlements'* as part of the programme *Food Security and Valuing Water (KB-35-002-001)* and was subsidized by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

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New ways to ensure sustainable food systems in the future are part of the strategic research program knowledge base (KB) programme 'Food Security and Valuing Water'. The project 'Feeding Cities and migration settlements' aims to gain a better understanding of, and therefore a better grip on, urban food systems while paying particular attention to the impact migration has on food security to create sustainable, resilient urban food systems. This report brings together the main outcomes of two webinars that were organized together with stakeholders in Uganda. The aim of these sessions was to share findings from the KB research -including the case-based learnings on Uganda, as well as that of others working on urban food systems. Together starting to unravel the challenges of the (urban) food systems in Uganda from different perspectives and entry points, and to set the scene for future strategies and (supportive) actions together with stakeholders.

Keywords: Uganda, food system approach, migration, city region food system, food security

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Photo cover: Outskirts of Kampala (Photo credits: Wageningen Environmental Research)

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1 Introduction

Cities all over the world are ever-expanding and becoming more complex in terms of logistics and administration. They need a robust and sustainable food system to provide everyone with enough healthy food. But how do you feed growing cities? How do you strengthen their connections with the surrounding farmland and how can sufficient nutritious food be produced? More knowledge is needed about the dynamics of urban food systems and their interaction with the surrounding areas.

Within the 2019-2022 KB programme *'Food Security and Valuing Water'*, the project '*Feeding Cities and migration settlements'* aims to gain a better understanding of, and therefore a better grip on, urban food systems while paying particular attention to the impact migration has on food security to create sustainable, resilient urban food systems. In 2019, the project *'Feeding Cities and Migration settlements'* explored valuable concepts and methodologies for a better understanding of the dynamics of urban food systems and migration settlements (Van Berkum, 2020), the spatial dimensions of urban food systems (De Rooij, 2020) and City Region food systems governance (Roosendaal, 2020). Close connections were already made with different potential case studies in Uganda, Kenya and Bangladesh.

Based on these understandings, activities in 2020 were dedicated to making a deep dive in the three cases from a food systems perspective. In the exploration of the Ugandan case study we aim at unraveling the challenges of the (urban) food systems in Uganda and work towards strategic interventions at different scales and across sectors and food system dimensions. While we had hoped to have an opportunity to locally strengthen our engagement with stakeholders this year, the COVID19 pandemic made this impossible. Instead, two webinars were designed with the aim of furthering our collaboration with key Ugandan stakeholders.

This report brings together the main outcomes of these dedicated webinars that were organized together with stakeholders in Uganda. The aim of these sessions was to share findings from our own research, as well as that of others working on urban food systems. Starting to unravel together the challenges of the (urban) food systems in Uganda from different perspectives and entry points, and to set the scene for future strategies and (supportive) actions together with stakeholders. A start towards strategizing Ugandan food systems has also been made with an analysis of different rural and urban projects in Uganda and their possible relationship in a food system perspective (De Rooij et al, 2020). The report of the these case-based learnings can also be found in the series of reports of this KB-program.

The main objectives for the webinars were:

- To identify the key topics and issues when it comes to changing and transforming the Ugandan food system
- To get to know perspectives on the challenges ahead, from different entry points
- To identify research questions for knowledge development and action perspectives on integrative approaches at different scales and entry points
- To identify key stakeholders and their potential role in changing and transforming the Ugandan food system

To enrich discussions, we invited a mixed group of stakeholders around the virtual table, with representatives from policy, private sector, implementation and knowledge partners, each working on different parts of the food system.

2 Key challenges in the food system

2.1 Introduction

The first webinar was dedicated to identifying key topics and issues when it comes to changing and transforming the Ugandan urban food system, and getting to know perspectives on the challenges ahead. Hence, in this session the aim was to explore the range of issues and challenges in the food system in Uganda from different levels and from different entry points. What are the connections, similarities and differences in the issues raised?

2.2 The research, policy and practice perspective

In the first workshop, we sought to bring together a diversity of perspectives from across the Dutch Diamond including government, knowledge institutions and NGOs. In the first presentation Bertram de Rooij shared experiences from a number of research projects that Wageningen University and Research is running in Uganda which look food systems at the urban and city region scale. From the policy side, we heard from Patrick Musoke, dept. director of Strategy at the Kampala Capital City Authority. Finally, Immaculate Yossa Daisy, Regional Advocacy member at Hivos, shared her experiences from the program 'Sustainable Diets for all' especially focusing on the importance of engaging citizens in food systems transformations.

2.2.1 Insights from WUR

The workshop started with a presentation by Bertram de Rooij, who shared insights from the WUR Knowledge Basis project *Feeding cities and migration*. In his presentation he shared the outcomes of an analysis of four case studies across the country that aimed to further understand overall challenges and focus areas for the Ugandan (urban) food system (De Rooij et al, 2020). These cases represent different projects at different scales, places and with different entry points in the food system approach (Figure 1). Together these case-based learning provide not only case specific insights, but also shed light on potential linking pins and knowledge gaps.

De Rooij indicated that the different case studies together highlight that especially the alignment and awareness should be raised that they all matter in the broader food system perspective and the urban-rural linkages alike. Some of the key findings from this analysis are that:

- Clear linkages are needed between demand and supply
- Both the formal and the informal parts of the food system should be captured
- Challenges are also beyond the food system (e.g. basic conditions as land tenure)
- Crossing borders is needed: **a comprehensive strategy** that links sectors, rural-urban and across the food system
- **Food system approach could help as a guidance**: it provides multiple entry points and one direction (vision).

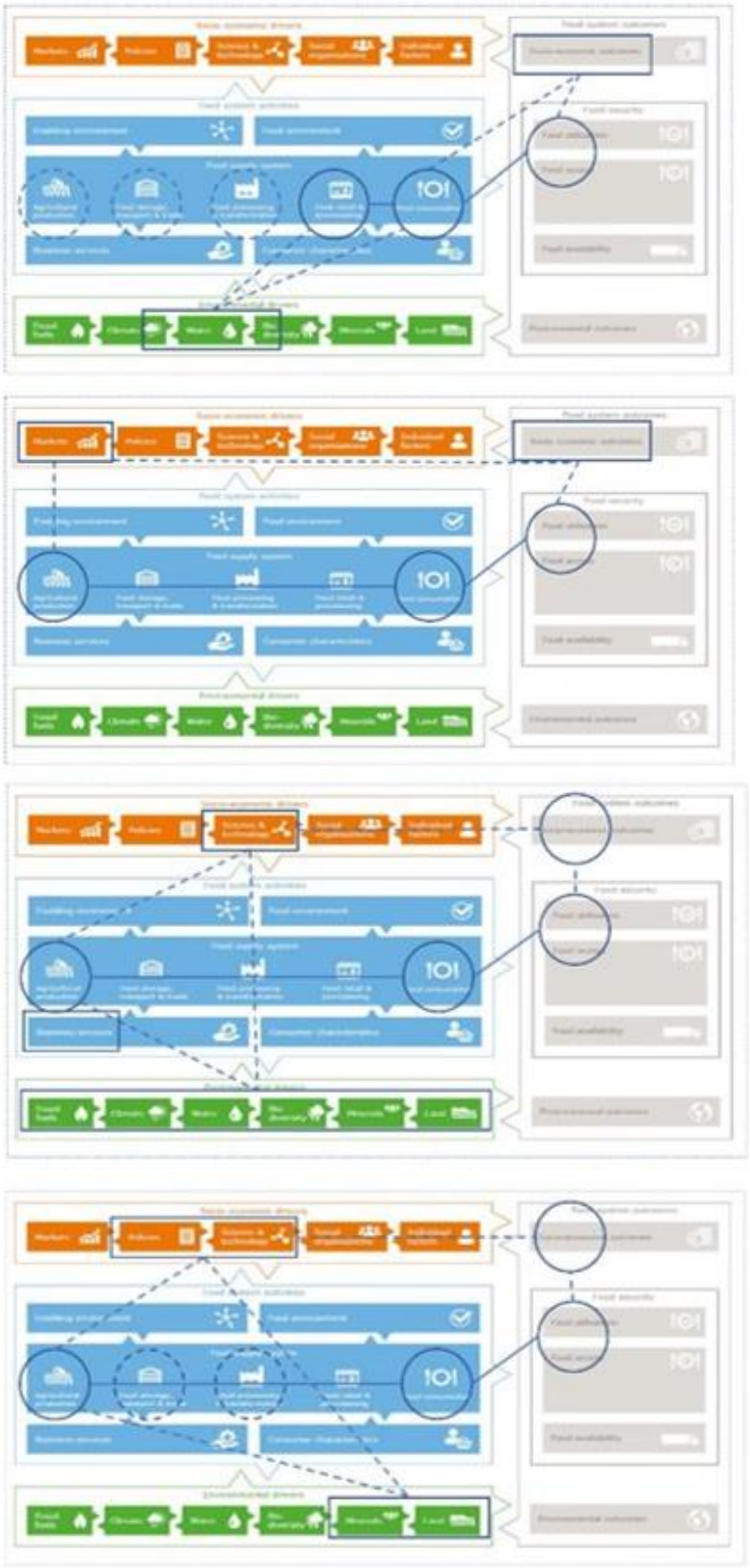

Figure 1: The different focal areas and entry points of the four projects analyzed

a. Project LEAP-agrii Nouricity -case Kampala

b. NIGI West Nile, Uganda

c. Improving food systems in less-favoured areas in East Africa

d. OKP Training4GreenJobs

2.2.2 Insights from Kampala

The second presentation came from Patrick Musoke of the Kampala Capital City Authority. In his presentation, Patrick Musoke explained that Kampala functions as a big magnet: many people are moving to the city for economic survival. The food system is challenged by this urban expansion, due to the loss of arable land and natural resources as the city boundaries expand outward. At the same time, this huge influx of people puts a strain on resources, and the supply of employment opportunities is not able to keep pace with demand. Many people in the city are struggling to find stable incomes, and because most people rely on purchased foods, this has consequences in terms of food security. How will the city be able to supply **enough jobs for everyone**? One opportunity for employment may be in urban agriculture; as many people migrating to the cities have agricultural experience. Related questions are whether we can identify better technologies and production methods that can be adopted in urban areas. New jobs may also be created by (improvements in) online food distribution systems.

Another challenge Mr Musoke discussed was the very **poor transport system**. This poor connectivity in the rural-urban nexus affects the volume and quality of food that reaches the market. At the moment over 30% of agricultural product gets lost in post-harvest handling and thus does not reach the market. Due to falling in prices during the COVID19 lockdown, this share of post-harvest loss has been even higher. Another important concern is climate change and environmental degradation linked to agriculture. How to utilize the energy from the sun for e.g. irrigation and ensure that we are not depleting the soils and provide nutritious food?

To realize change in the food system, enabling policies are needed. For example to support the urban community to increase urban farming capacity. Involvement and investment in the private sector is also important. How can we support this sector to be effective actors in urban food systems transformations? Finally, Mr Musoke emphasised the importance of making links between academics and practitioners and build a network to realize change.

2.2.3 Insights from 'Sustainable diets for all'

Sustainable Diets for All (SD4ALL) is an advocacy program that uses evidence, including evidence generated by citizens, to help low-income communities in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia improve their access to sustainable, diverse and nutritious food. The 5-year (2016-2020) programme is coordinated by Hivos, the International Institute for the Environment and Development (IIED), and partners in the focal countries.

In her presentation, Immaculate Daisy explained that the project works on three key areas in Uganda. Firstly, they focus on sustainable and diverse production for healthy and diverse consumption: using sustainable methods of production and encouraging increased diversity of on farm production. At the same time, they recognize that diversity on the farm does not necessarily result in diversity on the plate. Secondly, the project aims to support healthy and diverse consumption, supporting nutrition security, not just food security. Thirdly, the program is concerned with effective market linkages for small and medium enterprises and the informal sector.

The aims of the project are achieved through capacity building and with local organizations, including citizens. Also, they support research and generate evidence, with input from and by citizens themselves, as well as multi-stakeholder dialogues. An example of such a research project is the 'The Fort Portal Food Change Lab' in south western Uganda. The Lab was initiated with an aim to achieve both sustainable diets and a productive, sustainable local food system that ensures the future supply of sustainable food. The project looked at what needs to be changed to realize an enabling environment, including current local food policies. The project convened multi-actor dialogues, including local food vendors - actors who are often excluded from the dialogue. Evidence was also collected from citizens using a range of participatory methods including interviews and food diaries, which asked citizens to record what foods they were eating, and used this as a basis for discussions about healthy and sustainable diets.

Key lessons learned from the project include that there is power in evidence; citizens should be key actors and support both data collection and synthesis; and involving multiple actors of diverse backgrounds is instrumental in reaching different groups of people at different levels. Key challenges are that policies, legal and planning frameworks are misaligned and outdated. How do we update them and better align policies to realities? Moreover, there is weakness in implementation and enforcement of laws (e.g. hygiene-related). Finally, the food diaries illustrated a shift in food dietary preferences to processed foods instead of nutritious foods. How to preserve food traditions whilst also moving diets towards healthy and sustainable options?

2.3 The key topics and issues

At the end of the webinar all participants shared their inputs on what they felt were key topics and issues; based on the presentations (Figure 2). Key topics and issues have to do with different parts of the food system. In relation to socio-economic drivers, the effects and requirements across scales and integration of food into urban planning were mentioned as key topics. Climate change and soil fertility were mentioned as key topics related to environmental drivers. With regards to the food system activities, topics were raised in relation to the enabling environment, food environment and consumer characteristics and along the food supply system, including e.g. production technologies, food handling and distribution, perception of food and awareness on nutritional value of food. Finally, urban farming was discussed as an opportunity for improving urban food systems and empowering urban communities including slum dwellers and low income people. There is a need for capacity building programs that provide knowledge and skills on urban farming to the urban farmers, urban managers, slum dwellers, researchers, and NGOs. These issues were further discussed in the second webinar.

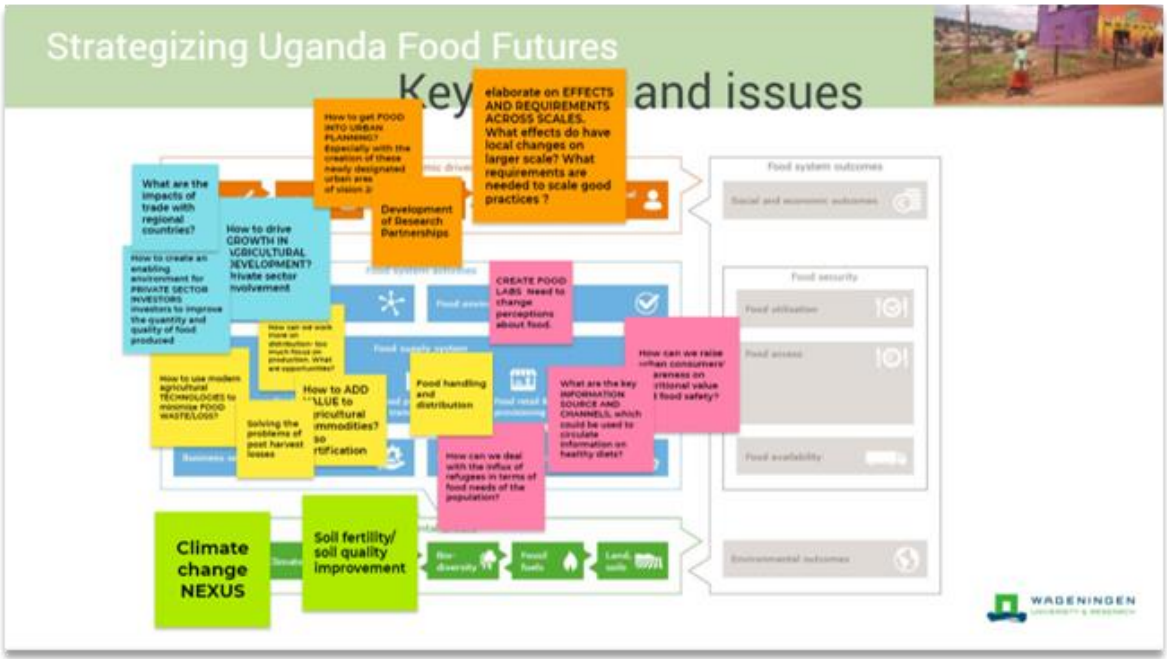

Figure 2: Key topics organised in the food system framework (framework by Van Berkum et al. 2018)

3 Deep dives into key issues

3.1 Introduction

Based on the input from the first webinar three topics were defined for further exploration in the second webinar. These topics for these 'deep dives' were:

- Urban strategies and actions from a systemic perspective;
- Spatial planning and policies;
- Citizens' voice and insights and strategies.

In this webinar we worked in three virtual break out rooms on each of these topics, thereby prioritizing issues and identifying agenda points for knowledge development and action perspectives on integrative approaches at different scales and from different entry points.

3.2 Further exploration of topics

3.2.1 Urban strategies and actions in a systemic perspective

The focus of this session was on implementing urban agriculture and on the related systemic changes needed. In this session it became clear that urban agriculture can help transform communities in cities. Although change is needed, there are still many challenges and constraints. Change could start from making spatial planners of Kampala aware of the importance and role of urban farming in urban development. Urban governance is needed to reform urban laws and make sure urban agriculture becomes more acceptable. It also requires further investigation what forms of urban agriculture, with what level of technology involvement, make sense.

Another important question is whether and how urban agriculture can play a role in income generation. How can urban agriculture not only be relevant for urban food security but also be an economic engine by creating jobs? Youth unemployment is a key issue - with over 70% of the population under the age of 30, and most are employed in small-scale agriculture or petty trade. Many of the young people move to urban areas looking for jobs, but in many cases there are no opportunities. We need to think of holistic ways to get these people into the work force.

Urban agriculture could help create more jobs and address food insecurity within cities. So, from an action perspective it is important to understand how communities can be engaged in urban agriculture and how they can be mobilized e.g. via organizations and trainings. Capacity building is essential. This includes providing necessary skills and training, and providing opportunities beyond (or expanding the role of) current educational providers. Looking at opportunities to find practical training that will give them the necessary skills to establish their own companies, or work as employees for others. Finally, it is important to also look into food processing and the streams of waste (recycling and other uses) and to investigate the potential to use these streams as input for other products. Therefore, actors in the food processing industry should also be included in the discussion.

3.2.2 Spatial planning and policies

A critical question in this session was how to plan for food? This entails planning for production, planning for reliable and safe centers of food, transportation systems, and planning for consumption (including divers needs/consumers groups). How should this be organized? From an action perspective a key issue is the promotion of spatial planning and the need for planning guidelines and inspiration as well as good practices as an example.

A key question related to spatial planning and policies is also how to deal with standards and the present situation? It is for example essential to realize legal reforms so that urban zoning laws and building codes enable backyard farming and more people participate in farming. It is furthermore important to question issues such as: Where can someone practice (urban) agriculture vs. where are these people staying vs. where is the market located? How can you make the link with (agro)logistics effectively? Hence, it is important to research how a city can be organized as a production system, i.e. planning for production, including efficient transportation and processing systems that reduce food waste. In view of land availability, it is also important that secondary cities will see urban agriculture as a serious activity, because there is still a lot of land that can be used in these emerging cities.

Another research topic raised was change agents: stakeholders in the food system that can catalyze change. Who are change agents and how to train them? Training and empowering citizens is a crucial issue to transform the food system, as is building a network of committed stakeholders. Research would benefit from an action perspective and joint factfinding with urban managers and stakeholders, as part of training/awareness programs. It is key to find out how to train urban managers and other stakeholders (e.g. not only focused on standards). Not only farmers should acquire the right knowledge on crops, soil fertility, etc., but farming and food issues should also be incorporated in training of various architects and policy officers. There is a need to train architects and urban planners that can design settlements that respond to new emerging issues including urban farming, climate change, waste management, food security, nutrition security and urban sustainability.

3.2.3 Citizens' voice and insights and strategies

The focal questions in this session were: how to bring the citizen's voice into research and scale insights to a strategic level; how to get citizens involved in research with citizen's science to the broader evidence base at different levels, and how to link local communities and initiatives to the business community? On a practical level, the devolved form of government in Uganda means that most people are able to access the lowest (village level, or Local council, LC1) chairman easily. For researchers, this can be a good way of getting an understanding of what issues people are facing at the grassroots level. To get citizen voices into research the many citizen groups and initiatives that are active in Uganda, women's groups, youth groups, farmer groups, can also be an effective way to engage communities easily – especially speaking to their representatives. The food diaries used by the 'Sustainable diets for all' project were mentioned as opportunity to getting citizens active in the research process. Other options could be monitoring of trucks entering or exiting the city or to monitor weighting time at borders.

A point of attention is that too many development projects fail to take a systems approach. Too many projects look at specific issues in isolation (soil depletion, waste) without considering how to solve the problems holistically, for example waste being turned into fertilizer to replenish the soil. One of the key take home message was that there is the need for circularity and initiatives that are linked to each other. There are a number of initiatives such as Scaling up Nutrition Network (SUN) and the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) that are seeking to link actors together. These could be a good place to start to engage with multiple actors, although may need other actors who are more active on the agricultural side. So, knowledge gaps are related to this lack of a systems approach in interventions and development of holistic solutions. A question from an action perspective is how to get actors, like the private sector, involved, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who are usually not at the table.

3.3 Conclusions

Overall, the second webinar made clear that it is a priority to create agents of change in Uganda, including citizens and future urban managers and spatial planners. Although Uganda has been an agriculture-oriented country, it has to transform to a 'food system oriented' country -a country which has the full system in view and acts along these interwoven elements- in order to be prepared for the future.

Urbanization is a key driver for the Ugandan economy- with the government projecting that 50% of the population will live in urban areas by 2040. Ensuring healthy and sustainable diets for these urban citizens will be critical. Fewer people will be working in agriculture in rural areas and thus the efficiency of food production needs to be increase. At the same time, there is enormous potential for the food system to support job creation, which is a critical challenge.

A critical emerging research question is how the food systems - from production, transport, processing, retail to consumption - might be between arranged to support job creation. Adjusting and modernizing policies will be key to seeing these changes. Thereby we need to be working creatively and effectively with a range of actors, from citizens who know the challenges of ineffective food systems first hand, to policy makers, to the private sector and other actors who can pilot new ways of doing things. Instrumental to generating change could be to link science and practice and create a platform together to generate systemic knowledge, create awareness, and realize action on the various parts of the food system.

The webinars clearly showed the needs, the opportunities and a solid basis for future cooperation and new alliances. A start has been made, a way forward to make, together with the participants and expanding the network -from policy level to grassroot initiatives and impact.

We would like to thank all who have actively participated in and contributed to these webinars. Working together on a Food Futures Strategy.

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