



**EAT x UNGA 2016**  
**URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS: THE NUTRITION CHALLENGE**  
**20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (1.15-2.30pm). Conference room 3, UN Headquarters, New York**

**CONCEPT NOTE – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

At the 71st United Nations General Assembly, the EAT Foundation (EAT) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs are co-organising a high-level EATx event.

This year's theme is "Urban Food Systems: The Nutrition Challenge" because feeding the world's growing population healthy food on a stable planet requires collaboration from all sectors of society and the role of cities is becoming increasingly important. With the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Habitat III, the launch of the Decade of Action on Nutrition and the Committee on World Food Security's focus on food systems and urbanisation, 2016 represents an unparalleled opportunity to prioritise and integrate the global urban, food system, climate/environment and nutrition agendas. To address the combined challenges of rapid urbanisation, climate change and environmental degradation, as well as obesity, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and undernutrition, co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder efforts across sectors and disciplines are needed. In particular, best practices from the private sector are crucial to addressing these challenges in an integrated way. EAT is exploring these synergies with an expanding body of collaborative urban food projects, including a regional Nordic Cities EAT Initiative and a joint Food Systems Network in collaboration with C40, a global network of cities committed to addressing climate change.

**BACKGROUND:**

Cities are facing unprecedented demographic, environmental, health, economic and social challenges. Currently over half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and this is projected to increase to 70% by 2050<sup>1</sup>. Over 90% of this demographic shift will take place in Africa and Asia<sup>2</sup> – while Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are also home to most of the world's undernourished people<sup>3</sup>.

Growing urban populations pose enormous challenges regarding food availability, transport, storage, and preparation, and the health implications of these are profound. Sedentary lifestyles and overconsumption of calories and ultraprocessed foods contribute to overweight and obesity as well as NCDs such as type-2 diabetes. On the other hand, insufficient access to fresh, nutritious, affordable foods<sup>4</sup> causes health problems such as stunted growth and impaired psychomotor development, widens social inequalities and entrenches poverty across generations. Furthermore, increasing demands for energy-intensive products such as meat, dairy and ultra-processed foods exacerbate the food value chain's negative environmental

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<sup>1</sup> UN-Habitat (2009). Global Report on Human Settlements: Planning Sustainable Cities. UK and USA: Earthscan; SKL International (2012). *The SymbioCity Approach: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Urban Development*. Available at: [http://www.symbiocity.org/PublicDownloads/The%20SymbioCity%20Approach/SCA%20full%20version%20\(6,1%20Mb\).pdf](http://www.symbiocity.org/PublicDownloads/The%20SymbioCity%20Approach/SCA%20full%20version%20(6,1%20Mb).pdf).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2014). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision. Available at: <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. 2015. Nutrition Strategy Overview. Available at: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do/Global-Development/Nutrition>.

<sup>4</sup> Food deserts describe geographic areas marked by a scarcity of accessible, affordable, nutritious food.

impacts, and agriculture alone currently accounts for roughly one-third of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions<sup>5</sup>.

Without effective planning, consequences of this rapid urbanisation could be detrimental to the health of city dwellers and the planet. At the same time, the concentration of resources and decision-making capacity in cities enables them to catalyse impactful change.

Conscientious urban planning and policy implementation can alleviate health and sustainability challenges through a variety of actions, like:

- fostering urban agriculture
- requiring supermarkets to reduce food waste
- promoting healthy and local foods in schools, hospitals and other municipal institutions via education and procurement policies

Moreover, the private sector plays a key role in shaping the food system at both global and local levels. Much can be learned from best practice examples of food procurement, labelling and regulation.

## **OBJECTIVES & CONCEPT**

The event will convene around 500 global leaders and experts across sectors and disciplines involved in the food-system challenges (depending on room capacity in the UN). The core objective of this high-level side event is to highlight the need to take a holistic approach to urban food system challenges, and to facilitate integrated strategies and new collaborations that leverage multiple benefits. The event will include a series of keynotes and an interactive panel discussion involving prominent experts from government, academia, the private sector, the UN and civil society.

In addition, the event aims to:

- Underline how a holistic approach to urban food systems is crucial to tackling global health and environmental challenges and to the achievement of the SDGs.
- Demonstrate research, policy and industry perspectives on urban food systems and the synergies between them.
- Showcase examples of best practice and key projects already underway which address urban food systems in a holistic way.
- Facilitate integrated strategies and new collaborations towards urban food system planning that leverage multiple 'win-win' benefits.
- Identify how a holistic urban food systems approach can catalyse action and link significant multilateral activities in 2016.

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<sup>5</sup> CGIAR. Food Emissions. Available at: <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/bigfacts/#theme=food-emissions>.

## **PARTNERS**

Addressing the crosscutting challenge of urban food systems requires input and collaboration from diverse actors at all levels.

### **Panellists:**

- Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General
- Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers
- Feike Sijbesma, CEO Royal DSM, Netherlands & Co-Chair SBN Advisory Group
- Karen Washington, Rise and Root Farm
- Mark Watts, Executive Director, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group

### **Speakers:**

- Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
- Erik Solheim, Executive Director, UNEP (tentatively confirmed)
- David Nabarro, UN Special Adviser on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Margot Wallström, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden
- Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

### **Co-sponsors (non-financial):**

- Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation - International Sustainability Unit
- C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group
- Nordic Council of Ministers
- New York Academy of Sciences
- NCD Alliance
- Save the Children
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development
- Palau UN Permanent Mission
- Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network
- The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- World Bank Group