



**Landscapes for
People, Food and Nature**
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Issue Brief

CREATING CITY REGIONS THAT WORK AS LANDSCAPES FOR PEOPLE, FOOD & NATURE

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Creating resilient, sustainable city region food systems with durable and equitable urban rural linkages will require support at all levels of government.

- * Integrated challenges to both urban and rural landscapes from economic, ecosystem and health pressures call for integrated city-region planning beyond the current 'silos'.
- * Equity, poverty reduction and economic development can be integrated by linking secure access to resources and land tenure and including all stakeholders in a rights-based approach to development.
- * Agriculture and ecosystem management can be linked to achieve objectives for climate change resilience and mitigation, secure clean water supplies and biodiversity conservation.
- * Health, food and nutrition security can be enhanced by improved city-region ecosystem management that relates the health of ecosystems directly to sustainable diets for all.
- * Numerous tools and strategies for integrating objectives of sustainable city region development exist and need to be scaled up with support from national and international levels.

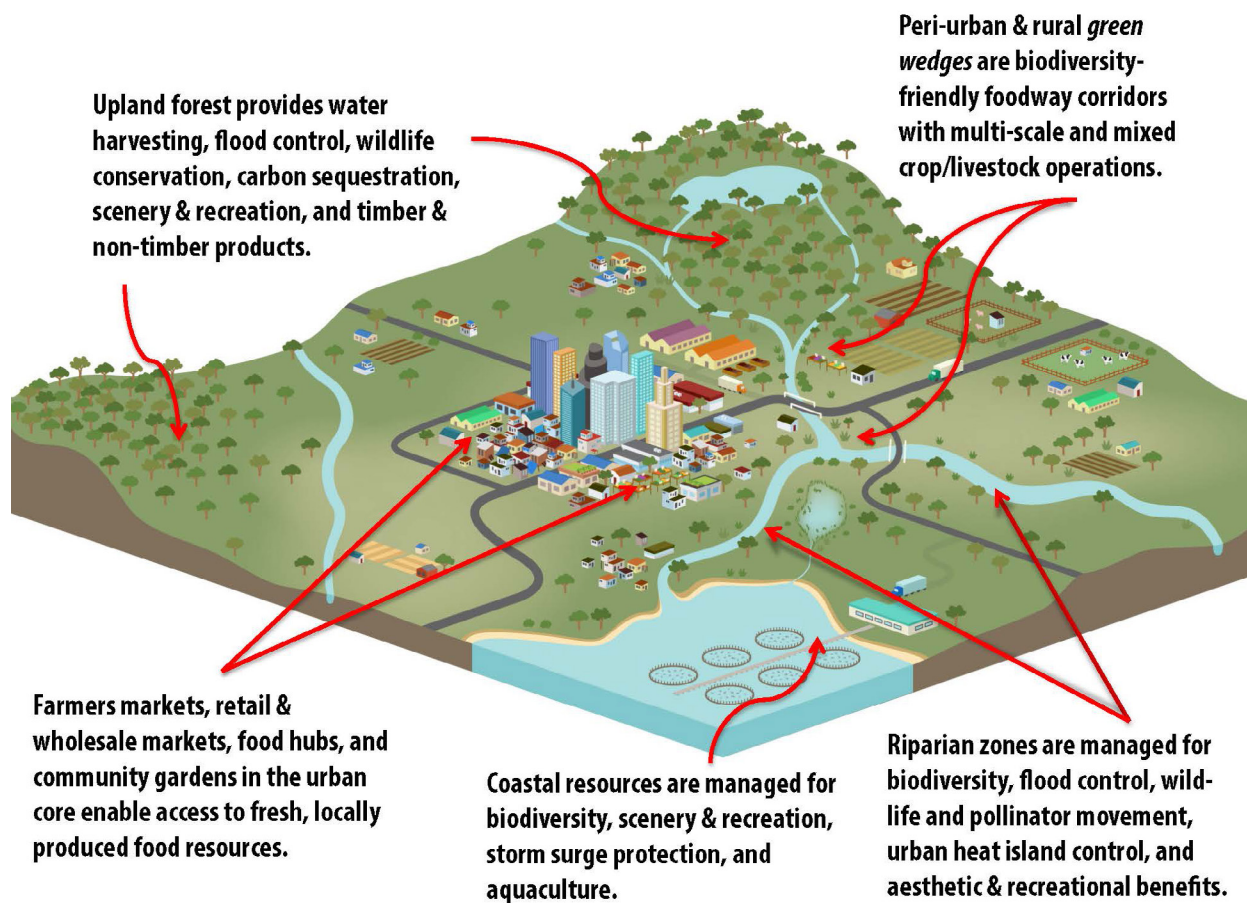
This brief is based on the report "City Regions as Landscapes for People, Food and Nature" by Thomas Forster and Arthur Getz Escudero, published in February 2014 by EcoAgriculture Partners, on behalf of the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature Initiative. Access the full report at landscapes.ecoagriculture.org/global_review/city_regions

INTEGRATED CHALLENGES CALL FOR INTEGRATED PLANNING

Managers of complex economic, social and environmental resource systems face challenges in the form of social unrest, economic volatility, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Confronted by these challenges, many decision makers and resource managers—from mayors to heads of international agencies, from small farmers to the urban poor, from businesses to health and social service providers—are seeking new ways to manage resilience of systems while working toward their long-term sustainability. A call for integrated planning and action underlies a new post-2015 development agenda at all levels, from cities and provinces and states, to countries and the international community. A landscape approach to food security, livelihoods, agriculture and the management of natural resources is a vital way to promote more equitable city regions with resilient and sustainable economies and ecosystems.

This brief provides an adaptable roadmap to help senior practitioners and policymakers design new integrated approaches to longstanding issues across sectors and all along the urban rural continuum. Reimagining, relinking and strengthening the relationship of the urban and rural are fundamental prerequisites to resilient and sustainable city regions. The report draws attention to three areas of dynamism linking urban and rural landscapes.

1. Notably, the most important challenges for cities and their surrounding peri-urban and rural areas are *shared spatially and are strongly connected*;
2. Urban and rural stakeholders have *different entry points* to advance sustainably and equitably managed ecosystem services and forms of governance;
3. There are new bridges of common understanding and experiences of sharing risks among these stakeholders to create *integrative solutions* that link both urban and rural interests and policies.



Some of the many elements of healthy and sustainable city regions. Illustration adapted from: Victoria (Australia) provincial government framework "Building healthy and resilient ecosystems across the landscape", Chapter 6: 72-73.

THE RURAL URBAN NEXUS IS VITAL FOR THE FUTURE

The integration of planning and development agendas by local authorities and other stakeholders in urban and rural communities can have many synergistic benefits (see figure on facing page). City region food systems and ecosystem services can provide a foundation for strategies to reduce inequality and reduce risks from severe weather events, economic volatility and civil conflict. Stronger ties between cities and their hinterlands can positively impact the lives of the most vulnerable, enhance biodiversity, foster more resilience in natural ecosystems and improve nutritional security from agricultural systems. All of these benefits will improve the national security of regions and countries.

However, to realize these benefits, much more understanding is needed of the scope of place-based professional, institutional and political challenges that exist across the rural urban continuum in all regions. Flows from rural to urban and urban to rural are constant and diverse, and include people, production, commodities, capital, income, information, and all kinds of natural resources, as well as waste and pollution. Many different agencies with distinct policies, mandates and jurisdictions impact these flows. Needed data is lacking in specificity or is simply absent. Key professional actors and institutions include, in the public sector, urban and regional planners, environmental and water planners, climate action and biodiversity planners, economic development actors and public health professionals. The private and nonprofit sectors include all types of food- and resource-related business entities, non-governmental and place-based civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs).

Significant barriers slow the creation of a common understanding among professionals of the importance of integrated planning. Institutions, agencies and businesses are often separate and have conflicting priorities or perspectives. Moreover, “silos” of professions and agencies are multiplied across the urban rural “divide” and from local to national and international levels. Movement from de facto and historically separate mandates and development agencies toward more integrated mandates and development frameworks can and does occur. This process transpires differently across city regions and national contexts; however, there are some common themes. Integration is often introduced as a method for addressing complex challenges with multiple causes, such as the widening gap between high and low income areas, and a lack of affordable access to essential services. A push for integration may arise organically in response to a crisis, or it may be steered by political leaders. In order for integra-

tion to succeed, it is critical that advocates frame win-win goals and anticipate obstacles in advance.

ECONOMIES, ECOSYSTEMS AND HEALTH: THEMATIC PATHWAYS TO RURAL URBAN INTEGRATION

Recent research, practical innovations and new policy instruments addressing city regions in both developed and developing countries reveal a number of thematic issue clusters that provide “entry pathways” to integrate city region landscapes and food systems.

EQUITY, POVERTY REDUCTION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Inequity has long been a core food and resource access issue, in both urban and rural areas of most countries. However, the pervasiveness and ubiquity of inequitable access to affordable and nutritious food has developed into a globally urgent discourse. Persistent and growing under-nourishment and poverty, along with the epidemic of over-nourishment and the rise of non-communicable dietary diseases, have kept food security, nutrition and agriculture at the forefront of development agendas. Equal access and the right of all urban and rural citizens to the resources necessary to lead dignified and sustainable lives is becoming an outstanding issue of the 21st century. Those city regions that have linked pro-poor economic development goals with planning for environmental protection, climate change preparedness and food system development are beginning to find scalable solutions to some of the world’s most difficult challenges.

PLANNING FOR AN URBAN RURAL CONTINUUM THAT LINKS BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURE

On a different plane, managers and planners charged with tasks like protecting clean and safe water supplies, reducing risk of flooding, safeguarding local biodiversity, guiding post-disaster recovery or mitigating their regions’ greenhouse gas emissions are becoming more engaged with food and fiber production and distribution systems, linking biodiversity and agriculture in the context of climate change. There is a growing understanding of both the multiple benefits of protected and managed rural areas, and the potential for applying a green mosaic approach to planning across urban and peri-urban areas. Recognition of and investment in water filtration services provided by upstream ecosystems and downstream users is increasing, strengthening urban rural linkages economically, socially and environmentally. As a subset of ecosystem services, agricultural ecosystem services can reduce risk for resilient city regions in ways that allow for socially inclusive and broad-based citizen engagement, as

well as leadership opportunities for local and subnational authorities. Recently there has been a call for investment in urban, peri-urban and territorial food system development that contributes to disaster risk reduction and management measures.

HEALTH, FOOD, AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AN ECOSYSTEM CONTEXT

Access to healthful and nutritious food has joined the hunger and poverty discourse as a crosscutting issue for economic and environmental actors in city regions. A systems approach to understanding human health in the context of urban and rural environments has yielded new perspectives on the interrelationships of employment, natural resource use, food access, physical activity, livable communities, infrastructure, investment and governance. The eco-health approach studies the nexus of ecology and health in order to understand and promote health and wellbeing in the context of social and ecological interactions, including those within agriculture and food systems. From the rural urban continuum perspective, a complex web of social and biological relationships must be assessed, especially as food production systems tend to intensify along the gradient toward urban areas. If such intensification is managed to prioritize the overall health of the food and natural resource ecology, and there is sufficient understanding of and investment in the maintenance of the “health return” as well as the economic returns and social values of a city region food system, then urban and rural communities may become better linked through promotion of “sustainable diets”.

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY PRIORITIES TO STRENGTHEN CITY REGIONS AT ALL LEVELS

Building from the evolution of local food system governance frameworks in recent years, including participatory and multistakeholder food councils, a portfolio of crosscutting tools and strategies have begun to develop. Inclusive stakeholder engagement is vital and must include government, private sector and civil society actors. Leveraging investment from stable local sources of capital, such as the harnessing of public or private urban food procurement to benefit rural communities, or the passage of policy enabling rural smallholders to provision urban slums or informal markets, is essential. Tools and strategies like these can help subnational and metropolitan governments and local rural authorities realign and reinforce urban-rural linkages, but most require and are tied to enabling policies or regulations.

Local and subnational authorities may develop many valuable policy initiatives to promote city region food systems, but national and even international policy is still key to scaling up. Policy frameworks that promote an ecosystem approach to city region food systems in the context of urban rural linkages (as called for in the 2013 Bonn Resilient Cities Mayors’ Declaration) will need to authorize multi-agency collaboration. Such integration will likely need supporting policy or resources from national governments. National support will in turn be helped by international recognition and substantially enabling normative policy support in the new Post-2015 Development Agenda. Thus, the mainstreaming of city region food systems and urban rural linkages will need support at all levels of government.

READ THE FULL REPORT

Forster, Thomas and Arthur Getz Escudero. City Regions as Landscapes for People, Food and Nature. Washington, DC: EcoAgriculture Partners, on behalf of the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature Initiative. 2014. <http://people-foodandnature.org/publication/city-regions-as-landscapes-for-people-food-and-nature/>