

THE ITALIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND URBAN FOOD SECURITY

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Food and nutrition security is a longstanding priority of the Italian Development Cooperation. As stated in the Rome Declaration on Nutrition (2014), we are committed to eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide – particularly under nutrition in children, anaemia in women and children, among other micronutrient deficiencies – as well as reverse the trend in obesity.

Hosting FAO, IFAD and WFP, Rome is a global Headquarters of this challenge. Italy is a staunch supporter of the Rome-based UN organizations and of the other multilateral institutions that collaborate with them in this field: from IDLO to Bioversity International, to the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of CIHEAM in Bari. We encourage these institutions to intensify their coordination, while respecting the different mandate of each agency.

The Zero Hunger challenge, as the UN rightly labelled it, is to be faced in cities as well as in rural areas. Today, 3.8 billion people live already in cities, more than 50% of the world's population; in 2050, they could be more than 70%. Urban growth is often associated with raising inequalities, between cities and rural areas and within cities. There are issues of economic and social suffering, space use, of sustainability and waste. One should not forget, however, that cities are also laboratories of political and social innovation of enormous potential.

Rural vs. urban development is a false trade off: these two are not parallel paths, but deeply intertwined instead. Rural-urban linkages are essential for the prosperity of both cities and rural areas. Food security can only be guaranteed if the growing demand from cities can be met by increased food supply from rural areas. Cities, in turn, may provide an enhanced access to markets for rural products, therefore contributing to foster an inclusive rural transformation.

The Italian Development cooperation is committed to promote sustainable food systems – *'from the seed to the fork'* – that maintain and reinforce rural-urban linkages. A special attention is devoted to smallholders and small and medium food and agriculture enterprises.

After the recent reform, the Italian Development cooperation has fully evolved into a multi-stakeholder system including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the newly established Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, *Cassa Depositi e Prestiti* in its new role of Italian national investment bank for international development. In this renovated system, the contribution of civil society, academia, the private sector and local administrations is extremely important.

We strongly encourage, indeed, the experiences of partnership for development among cities: the project *Microjardins-Dakar*, for example, is the result of the collaboration of the Italian Cooperation, FAO, the City of Milan, the University of Milan, and the civil societies of both Senegal and Italy. Owing to the virtuous interaction among all these actors, it has been possible to enable a large number of urban residents – especially women – to contribute in first person to their

families' food security and nutrition: they have learned how to create micro-gardens on their balconies or nearby their homes, producing healthy and sustainable food. The project, started in Dakar (Senegal), has been replicated also in Banjul (Gambia), Niamey (Niger) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).

With the support of the Italian Cooperation, cities in the partner countries have been working side-by-side with the city of Milan for the common objective of sustainable urban development. The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact promoted by the City of Milan, an agreement signed by 130 cities all over the world, is another important milestone in this direction.

Sustainable and inclusive urban development and food security are, indeed, a shared objective for all of us. One of the most innovative aspects of the 2030 Agenda and of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) adopted last October in Quito is their universal character. The NUA and the SDGs are to be achieved not only by developing countries – they are a challenge for the whole world: the Italian Cooperation is committed to do its part.