

G h e n t , 2 0 1 6

CATERING FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY



Professor Roberta Sonnino

School of Geography and Planning

Cardiff University

The New Geography of Food Security

- Four main dimensions
 - Centrality of quality, rather than quantity
 - Food security encompasses “all diet-related ill health, not just hunger” (Lang, 2010)
 - Broader notion of “security”
 - Food riots that followed the price surge exploded not in areas where food was unavailable, “but where available food was too expensive for the poor” (Holt-Gimenez, 2008)

The New Geography of Food Security

- Four main dimensions
 - Extreme variation of food insecurity across different socio-economic groups
 - *When money is tight, the first things that drop out of the diet are usually the healthy foods, like fruits, vegetables, and lean sources of protein, which are nearly always more expensive (Director of the World Health Organization, 2009)*
 - Ecological pressures on the food system
 - Water availability
 - Soil degradation and loss
 - Very high levels of food losses and waste

The New Geography of Food Security

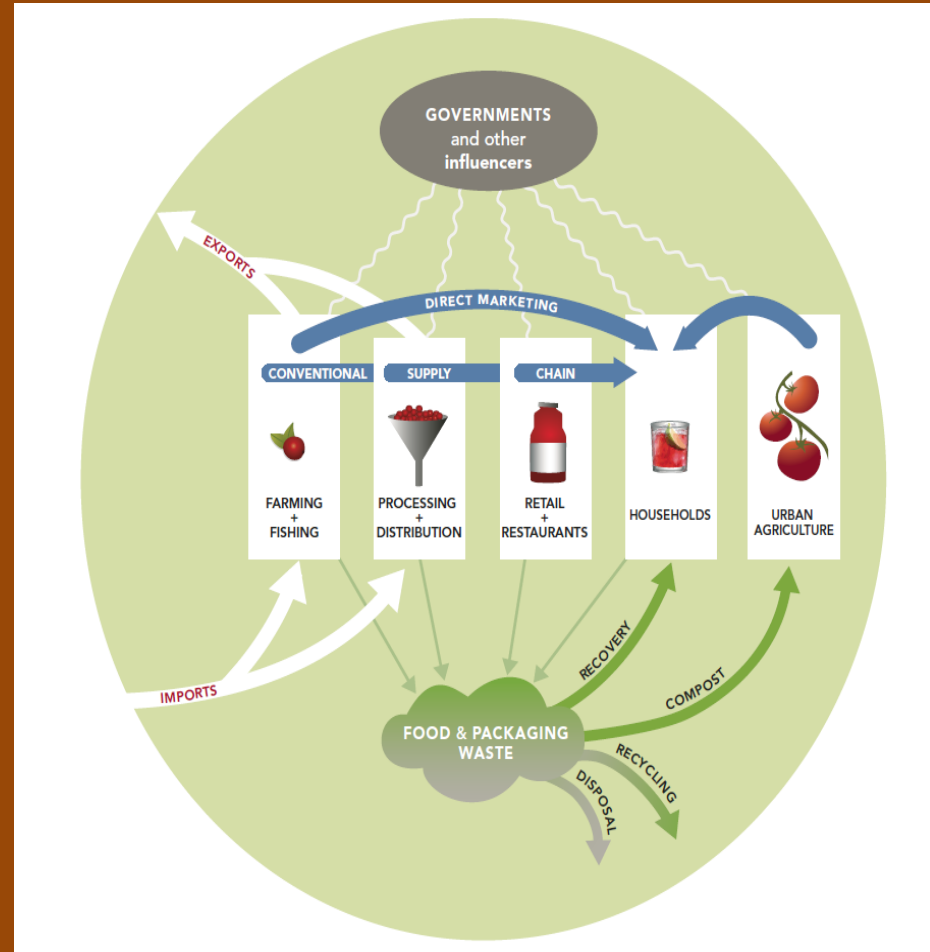
- Need to account for “the deeply inter-locking nature of economic, social and environmental systems to promote more cross-sectoral approaches to decision-making” (Misselhorn et al., 2012)
 - Adoption of a systemic perspective that takes into account the interrelatedness of the whole food chain – sustainable food security

Delivering Sustainable Food Security: The Power of Public Procurement

- *If we are what we eat, then public sector food purchasers help shape the lives of millions of people. In hospitals, schools, prisons, and canteens [...], good food helps maintain good health, promote healing rates and improve concentration and behaviour. But sustainable food procurement isn't just about better nutrition. It's about where the food comes from, how it's produced and transported, and where it ends up. It's about food quality, safety and choice. Most of all, it's about defining best value in its broadest sense (DEFRA, 2008).*

Embedding Best Value in Public Procurement Strategies

- Re-thinking public food services as health and well being (rather than commercial) services
 - Public meals as part of a wider strategy for sustainability that connects production, consumption, health and education
 - Emphasis on both global and local issues (e.g., fairness and poverty alleviation but also short supply chains and territoriality)



Embedding Best Value in Public Procurement Strategies: The Barriers

- Tensions within the European regulatory context have limited the potential of local sourcing as a sustainable food security tool
 - EU original procurement directives were underlined by emphasis on free trade and the single market, which created **perceived** barriers to the re-localization of public food chains
 - *Lots of sensible choices that could be made by procurement managers are ruled out by a spurious perception of efficiency* (B. Tuxworth, Forum for the Future, June 2006)

Embedding Best Value in Public Procurement Strategies: The Barriers

- *If it is set out in a non-discriminatory way, there's no doubt whatsoever that you can use as your technical specification that all foodstuff must be organic, full stop. [...] It is legitimate to say “we want foodstuff that is not older than”, it's a legitimate idea...If that means in practice that it will have to be locally-grown, so be it! It remains a legitimate criterion, but it is not a legitimate criterion if you say that it has to be produced within 10 kilometres from the school.*
Interview at **DG INTERNAL MARKET**

Embedding Best Value in Public Procurement Strategies: Some Examples

- Breaking the contract into smaller lots in order to enable more local producers (East Ayrshire, Scotland)
- “Guaranteed freshness” as an award criterion and incentives to source products from “bio-dedicated food chains” (Rome, Italy)
- Describing local varieties in the tendering documents (New York City, USA)



From Best Value to Sustainable Food Security

- Fragility of these innovations, which too often depend on the efforts of individuals and on very limited funding
- Need for strategies that prevent the isolation of food system innovators and embed local sustainability gains into the wider governance context

From Best Value to Sustainable Food Security

- Important opportunities offered by the 2014 reform of the EU legislation
 - Simplified rules and procedures could facilitate direct tendering by small sustainable food suppliers and reduce their transaction costs
 - Inclusion of environmental, social and labour requirements through life cycle costing
 - Commitments to sustainable public food procurement that the reform requires at the national level could provide crucial policy support for local innovations

Catering for Sustainable Food Security

- Catering for sustainable food security is not just about food – it's about new ways of thinking and feeling about food, bringing together a range of often neglected food system innovators
 - Public authorities, NGOs, food producers, cooks, caterers, consumers, legislators