



ACCELERATING
THE END OF HUNGER
AND MALNUTRITION
— A GLOBAL EVENT —

How to Build Urban Food Systems for Better Diets, Nutrition, and Health in Low and Middle-Income Countries

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Side event agenda

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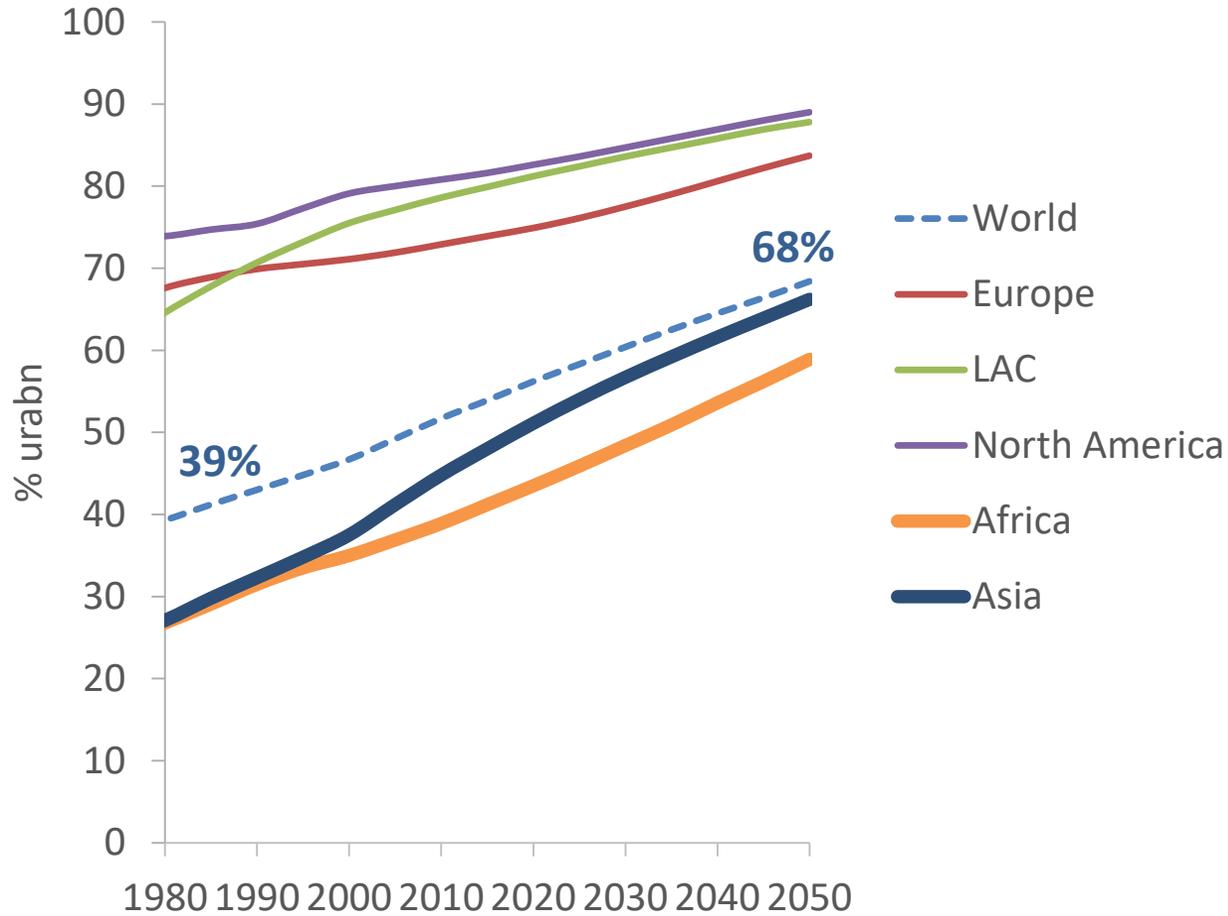
MATTHEW KOVAC

Executive Director
Food Industry Asia

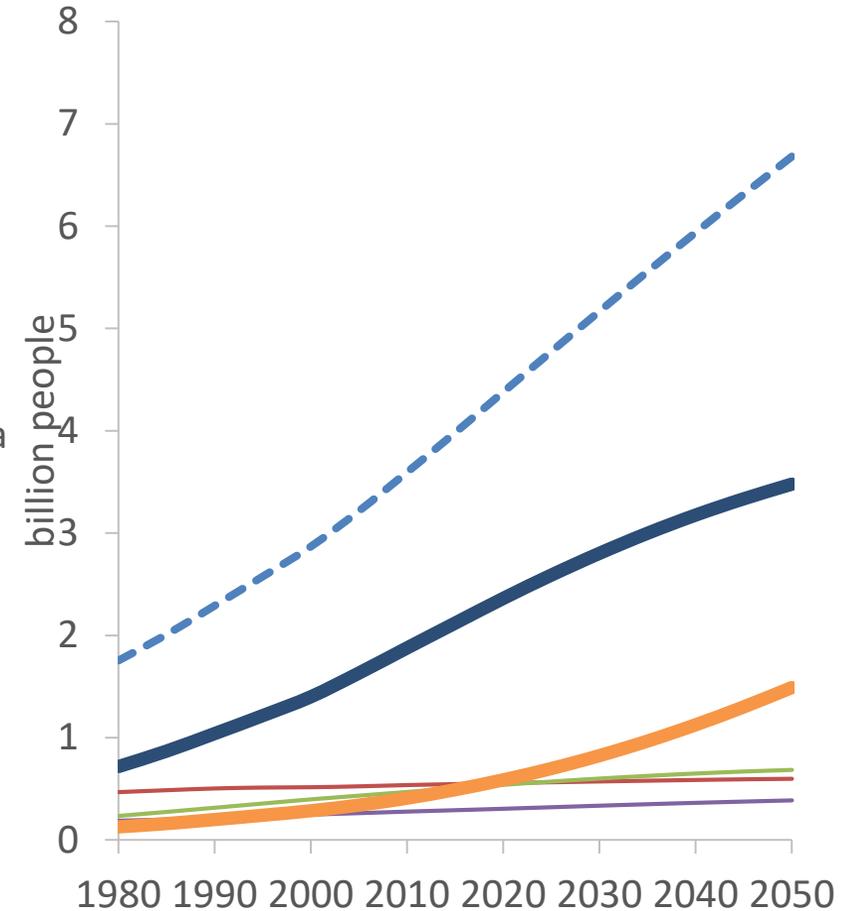


Why focus on the urban poor?

Most people are in cities...



... especially in Africa and Asia



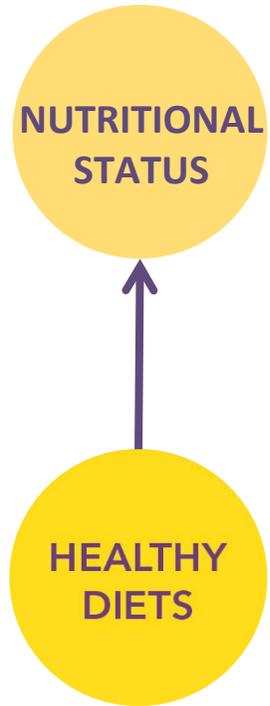
Urban poor suffer from **all forms of malnutrition**



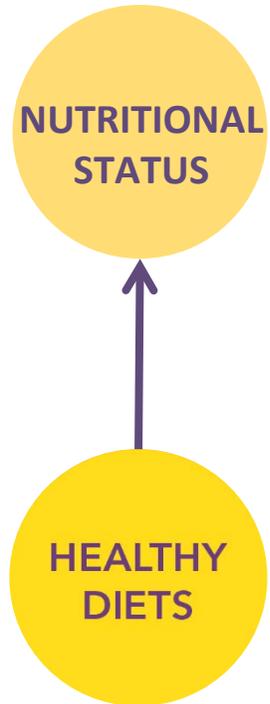
The urban poor suffer from **all forms of malnutrition**

- **Stunting:**
 - 1 in 3 stunted children lives in a city
 - Rapid decline in rural areas but stable in urban areas
- **Overweight and obesity:** prevalence higher in urban areas
- **Micronutrient deficiencies** (very limited data)

Changes in urban diets drive nutritional status

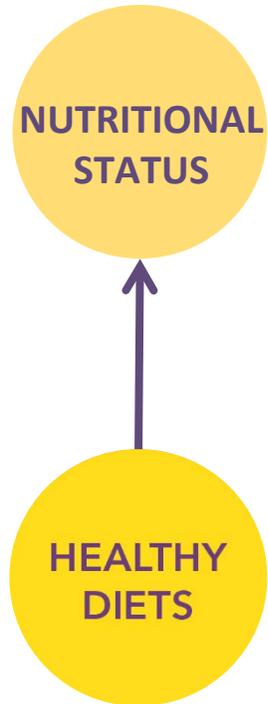


Changes in urban diets drive nutritional status

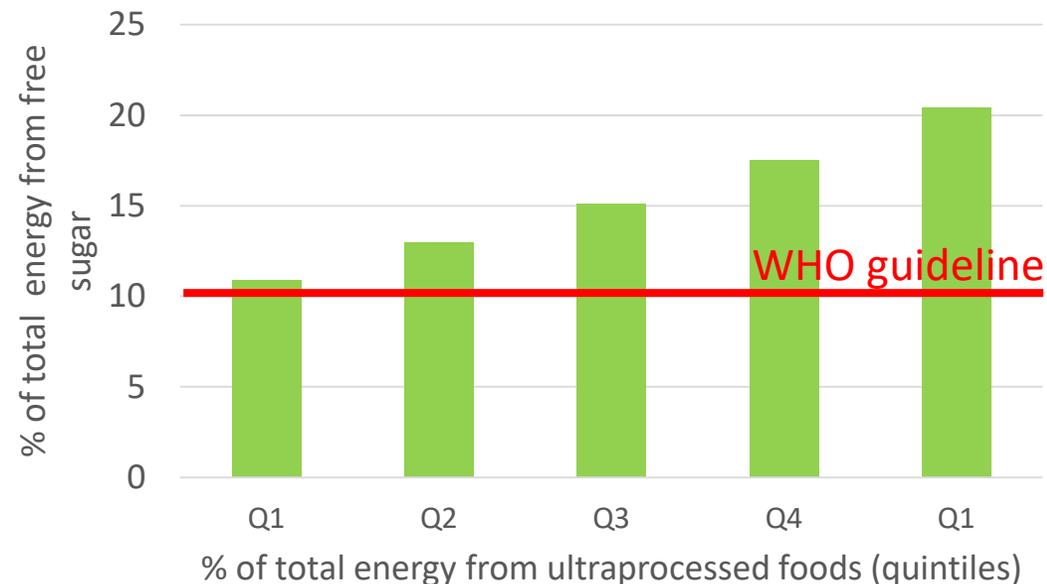


- Poor-quality diets drive all forms of malnutrition
- “Nutrition transition” faster in urban than rural areas
 - Traditional diets consisting of coarse grains, staple cereals, and pulses
→ diets high in sugar, salt, saturated fat
 - Increasing consumption of ultra-processed foods

Changes in urban diets drive nutritional status

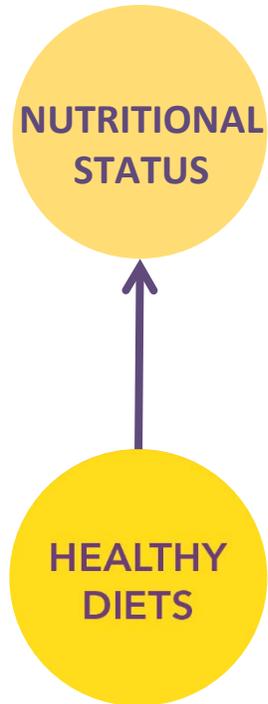


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The share of ultra-processed foods determines the overall nutritional quality of diets in Brazil (Costa Louzada et al, PHN, 2017)

Changes in urban diets drive nutritional status



- Poor-quality diets drive all forms of malnutrition
- “Nutrition transition” faster in urban than rural areas
 - Traditional diets consisting of coarse grains, staple cereals, and pulses → diets high in sugar, salt, saturated fat
 - Increased consumption of ultra-processed foods
- Nutrition transition contributes to the double-burden of malnutrition
 - Coexistence of undernutrition with overweight, obesity, and diet-related noncommunicable diseases.
 - NCDs are the leading cause of death globally (71% of all deaths in 2016)

Individual and household factors shape diets of the urban poor



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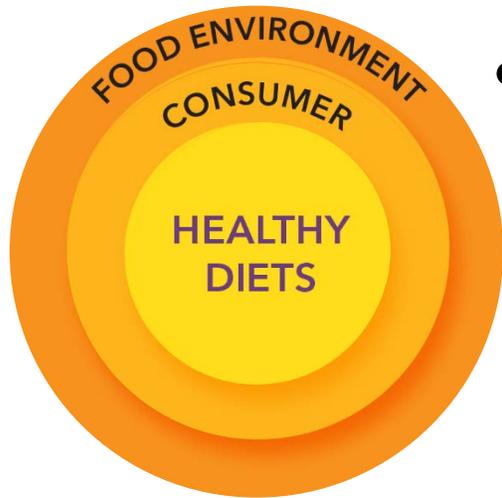
- Urban dwellers purchase most of their food:
 - Recent 18-country study: 40% of urban dwellers in low-income countries could not afford the recommended fruit and vegetable consumption
 - Livelihoods often depend on unstable informal-sector employment
 - Less access to social safety nets (compared to rural counterparts), leaving the urban poor more vulnerable to income and food-price shocks.
 - Women engaged in the workforce in urban areas with limited childcare options
- Time constraints, housing conditions and limited access to cooking facilities:
 - Drive urban dwellers toward the convenience of processed and ultra-processed ready-to-eat snacks and foods, street foods, and quick meals
 - Increase the risk of overconsumption of energy, added sugar, salt, and saturated fat

Urban diets are inextricably linked to the **food environment**

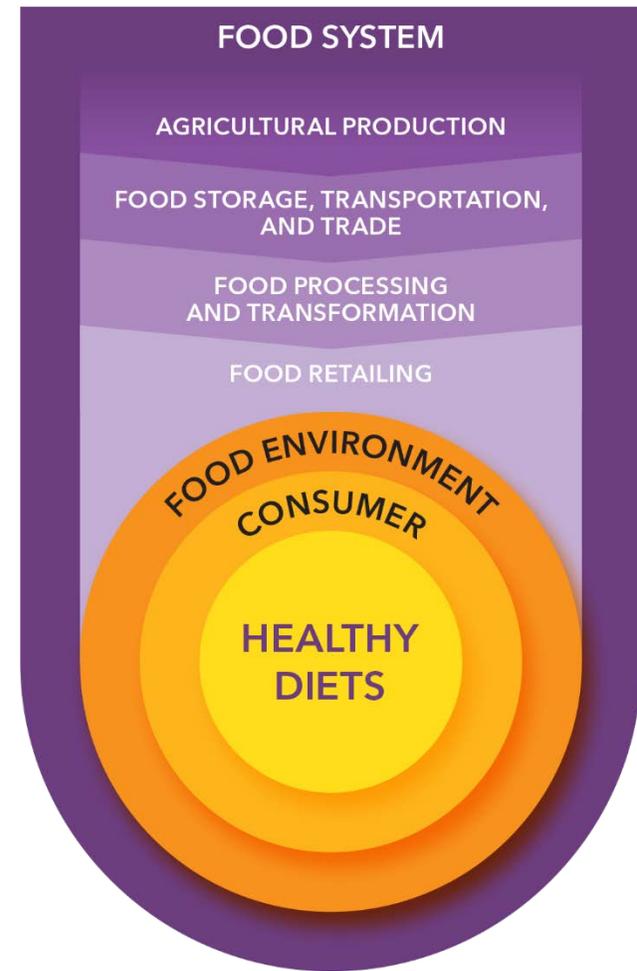


Urban diets are inextricably linked to the **food environment**

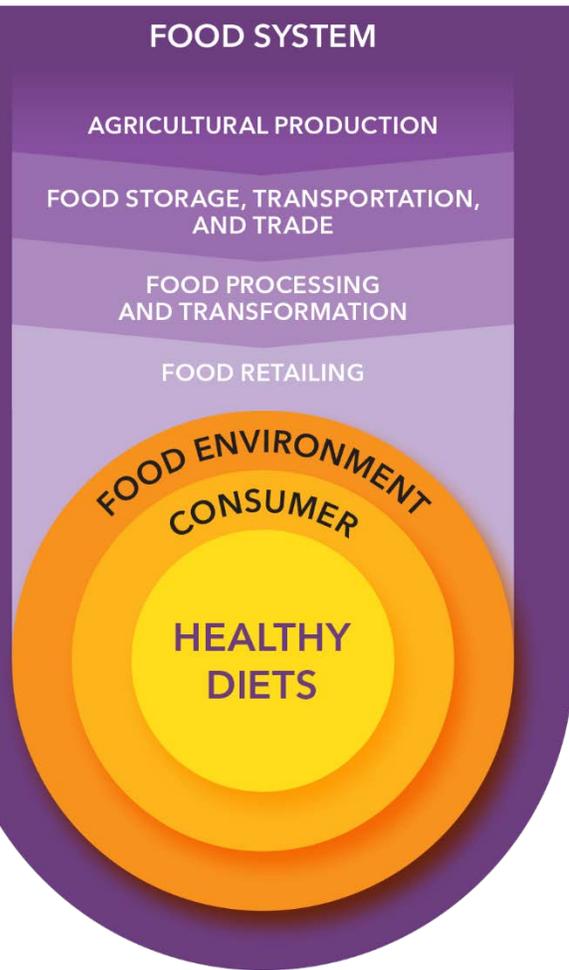
- The food environment in urban areas is rapidly changing
- Urban dwellers generally have access to a more diverse food supply than individuals in rural areas, but...
- ...are exposed to
 - aggressive marketing of ultra-processed foods
 - modernizing food retail sector, accelerated spread of supermarkets
 - supermarkets which increase access to energy-dense and nutrient-poor ultra-processed foods.



The urban food environment is part of the **food system**



The urban food environment is part of the **food system**



- Globalization and trade liberalization have changed urban food system
- Urban demand can drive rural transformation in peri-urban areas where foods are produced
- Informal food vendors and processors:
 - Important source of food for the urban poor
 - Poor governance threatens livelihoods of vendors, often women

Addressing the urban poor's nutrition problems requires **better evidence**



- **Diets**
 - What do poor urban dwellers eat (especially the poor)?
 - Where do they procure their food/meals?
 - What are the drivers of healthy and unhealthy food choices?
- **Food environment**
 - How does it affect food choice?
 - How can we map and characterize the quality of food environment?
- **Food system**
 - What are the opportunities for leveraging food systems and food environments to improve urban diets?
 - How can urban/rural linkages be strengthened to improve diets in urban areas and stimulate rural transformation?

Urban food systems for better diets, nutrition, and health – a new IFPRI research program



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URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS FOR BETTER DIETS, NUTRITION, AND HEALTH

Major shifts in our global food system, driven in part by rapid urbanization, threaten the urban poor's access to healthy diets and exacerbate malnutrition in all its forms.

The world is rapidly urbanizing. For the first time in history, more than half the global population lives in cities. This figure will rise to two-thirds by 2050, with up to 90 percent of the growth occurring in Africa and Asia. While rapid urbanization creates opportunities for economic growth, especially in low- and middle-income countries, it also comes with unique challenges. As cities expand, they struggle to ensure access to affordable and healthy diets, especially for the urban poor. Unhealthy diets are at the root of all forms of malnutrition and drive such problems as the persistently high rates of maternal and child undernutrition and currently booming rates of overweight, obesity, and diet-related noncommunicable diseases found in urban centers.

To address these issues, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is launching a new research program on urban food systems, diets, and nutrition. IFPRI's strategic focus on food systems—from production, marketing, and consumption to governance—and its vibrant cross-cutting work on gender bring together the knowledge and expertise needed to examine, characterize, and holistically analyze the unique challenges facing urban food systems.

THE NUTRITION TRANSITION

As countries develop and incomes rise, traditional diets rich in coarse grains, staple cereals, and pulses rapidly give way to diets high in sugar, salt, fat, animal-sourced foods, refined grains, and processed foods. While this nutrition transition is happening everywhere, it is unfolding at a much faster pace in urban areas of low- and middle-income countries due to rapid rises in income and greater food availability, the brisk expansion of modern food retail systems, and the abundance of convenient and cheap processed, energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods.

The negative health effects of this nutrition transition are compounded by the often low physical activity of urban dwellers, which exacerbates their risk of overweight, obesity, and associated noncommunicable diseases. Lifestyle changes, time constraints (especially among working women), and the lack of cooking facilities also lead to heavy reliance on street foods and meals consumed outside the home, raising concerns about food safety and other health risks, especially in poor urban neighborhoods where clean water, sanitation, and waste removal are limited.

