

Establishing multisectoral food systems platforms in secondary cities in Rwanda as part of the NICE project

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The number of people living in urban areas is ever increasing and challenges urban food systems. Secondary cities characterized by rapid growth often lack adequate infrastructure. Multi-stakeholder platforms that can coordinate food systems actors, implement capacity building and provide clear regulatory and other guidance are key accelerators for food system transformation and increased resilience. The FAO promotes such multisectoral multi-stakeholder food systems platforms that combine a diverse range of expertise from the agricultural, food, education and health sectors, as well as from the private sector, civil society and academia. The Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project strengthens multi-stakeholder food systems platforms within existing structures as part of its approach to improve nutrition for city populations.

Approach

As in all six NICE cities, a needs and capacity assessment of possible platforms was carried out in Rubavu and Rusizi city districts in Rwanda in early 2022.



Exchanges about the multisectoral platform in Rusizi © NICE project

In Rwanda, the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) is acting as the main local government coordination platform for all development initiatives. Consultations were held with the JADF chairs, and members of the JADF commission and secretariat in each city about the composition and mandate of a food systems platform.

In both cities, it was then agreed to establish a food systems platform as a sub-committee under the umbrella of JADF. Inception meetings with 15-18 participants from government, civil society, including the national women's council and two youth representatives, were held in each

city to officially launch the platforms in April 2022, and the following platform objectives were agreed:

- To strengthen coordination and planning among nutrition, agriculture and health stakeholders, as well as local businesses and suppliers in the food system
- To promote that nutritious and agroecologically produced foods are available in the city, with attention to vulnerable population groups
- To support efficient and effective supply and demand side services and activities following national standards and guidelines.

During the inception meeting, the Director of Health was elected as chair of the platform in Rubavu, while the Director of Agriculture was elected into this role in Rusizi. The NICE project is supporting with the platform's secretariat in the short term, and what's-app is being used to facilitate communication and coordination. The subsequent meetings and activities have focused on strengthening the District Plans to Eliminate Malnutrition (DPEM), supporting Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers as well as communal kitchens.

Outlook

The newly established food system sub-committee of the JADF are convening, planning for a specific event to raise awareness about food systems, and involved in decision-making about the priority value chain interventions with local entrepreneurs and businesses. Formal documents for the platform covering its mission and scope of work are currently under development.