

Editorial

Sustainable local food systems, guarantors of food and nutrition security

Los sistemas alimentarios locales sostenibles, garantes de la seguridad alimentaria y nutricional

Sistemas alimentares locais sustentáveis, garantidores da segurança alimentar e nutricional



María Eugenia Ramos Crespo¹  0000-0001-7354-5405  mariae@upr.edu.cu

¹ PhD in Economic Sciences. Full Professor at the University of Pinar del Río "Hermandades Saíz Montes de Oca". Faculty of Economic Sciences. Center of Studies for Management, Local Development, Tourism and Cooperativism. Pinar del Río, Cuba.

The current global agrifood model has encouraged specialization in the production of certain basic crops, with the use of fossil fuels and pesticides, as well as distribution systems based on the logic of the free market and complex supply chains monopolized at the global level by private corporations. This unleashes profound challenges, showing its vulnerabilities, as evidenced in the international economic and food crisis unleashed in 2007 and confirmed by the Covid-19 pandemic, widening the inequality gap and poverty, fostering malnutrition, chronic diseases and unsafe food, with the consequent impact on the environment.

This industrial monoculture and non-regenerative monoculture agriculture leads to the rapid loss of genetic diversity in traditional food and farming methods, degrading human and ecosystem health. Such is the effect that it is recognized that since 1900, 75% of crop diversity has disappeared from farmers' fields. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, it is known of 7,000 plants that can provide us with food, but only 150 are grown. Maize, wheat and rice supply almost 60% of our daily protein and calories (UN, 2023). The number of crops that support the global agricultural sector is decreasing and the genetic diversity of each of these species is being lost, undermining the resilience of agrifood systems.

On the other hand, it poses a very real threat to the lives and livelihoods of people globally, especially the most vulnerable and those living in fragile contexts, given that the rural population, mostly dependent on agricultural activity, is the most impoverished (UN, 2022). Family farmers around the world - nearly 800 million people - have long been the main food providers for their communities: they work 75% of the world's agricultural land and produce about 80% of the world's food. In its declaration on the rights of peasants, the United Nations warned that small-scale farmers and peasants account for 80% of the world's hungry and 70% of those living in extreme poverty.

People's health suffers because of unhealthy diets, often because they do not have access to adequate and acceptable food at all times, but it is also harmed by unhealthy working conditions, exposure to water, soil and air pollutants or the consumption of contaminated or harmful food. At the same time, it is estimated that one third of all food produced in the world is lost or wasted (Carrascosa García et al., 2020).

The definition of Food and Nutritional Security expressly refers to food availability and also to other conditions and attributes that must be addressed by Local Food Systems (LFS) such as access to food, which in an increasingly urban society are more directly linked to the income and economic capacity of consumers.

In Cuba, the Law of Food Sovereignty and Food and Nutritional Security defines the Sal as the actors, processes and resources linked to the production, transformation, marketing and consumption of food in the municipality and their interrelationships, in correspondence with the social, political, economic, technological and environmental dimensions to achieve food sovereignty, strengthen food and nutritional security and guarantee the right to food of the people (National Assembly of People's Power, 2022). Local food systems are considered sovereign when their actors participate in strategies, plans and other municipal decisions on the production, processing, marketing, distribution and consumption of food and use, as a priority, resources and inputs from the municipality, in order to reduce imports to ensure healthy and adequate food for the population.

This law regulates the organization of the sovereign and sustainable salt that articulates in an intersectoral and interinstitutional way the production, transformation, commercialization and consumption of food. It establishes the responsibility of the Organisms of the Central Administration of the State and the local organs of the People's Power for the adequate functioning of the food

systems in the territories, with a broad participation of science and innovation (National Assembly of the People's Power, 2022).

For the purposes of this Law, such systems are sustainable when their entire management is aimed at lasting over time and adapting, in a resilient manner, to economic, social, political, technological, cultural and environmental changes, without compromising the food and nutritional security of future generations.

From local governments in Cuba, structured in Popular Councils, explicit public policies should and can be defined to unite and organize local society, in such a way that they favor the processes of production, transformation, marketing and consumption of safe and nutritious food, strengthening the links between all the actors involved in this process, aligned with the priorities defined in the Municipal Development Strategies (EDM in Spanish), a planning and management tool that allows, among other mechanisms, the conscious and effective participation of citizens in the solution to one of the most pressing of their problems: food.

A properly designed EDM includes among its programs those that ensure, from knowledge management and innovation, solutions to the availability, access, stability, consumption and, consequently, the optimal biological use of food.

An effective design of the corresponding EDM makes it possible to define the guidelines for the different actors in a municipality involved in guaranteeing all the aforementioned components of Food and Nutritional Security, among which the following can be included:

- Promote the participation of farmers, cooperatives, small and medium-sized producers in the construction and implementation of agricultural policies, as well as of consumers and the population in general in the elaboration of food access and trade policies, with a sound environmental and gender focus.
- Stimulate the protection and development of the local market, guaranteeing a pricing policy in line with production costs in order to ensure decent prices for those who produce in the countryside, which will favor an adequate standard of living and fair access to healthy food for consumers.
- Ensure effective input market regulations to support farmers' capacity to produce food, but also to ensure a fair and well-planned transition to agroecological farming practices.

- Stimulate policies for greater investment in agricultural research and development with the objective of sustainably increasing agricultural productivity, restoring degraded lands, adapting to climate change, and recovering agricultural and natural ecosystems.
- Facilitate the training of all actors in the food system on the economic, social and environmental implications of our food choices and to promote a cultural shift towards more responsible and sustainable consumption.
- Ensure the training of food producers, handlers and processors to implement effective risk-based measures based on science and evidence to provide safe food while maintaining its nutrient content.
- Establish, maintain and protect the variety and diversity of food cultures, social norms, relationships and traditions that contribute to healthy diets through sustainable food systems.
- Stimulate policies aimed at encouraging the private sector to produce more nutritious foods and to assume the necessary mechanisms to ensure the placement of safe and nutritious foods, produced in a sustainable manner, that contribute to healthy diets.
- Promote policies aimed at the actors of local agrifood production systems that encourage the adoption of sustainable production models, as well as the prevention and reduction of food losses and waste in food chains.

From local food systems there is an opportunity to adopt innovative solutions to promote agriculture aligned with nature, which implies considering the use of synergies between sustainable innovation and agrobiodiversity, being sustainable to the extent that they do not compromise the economic and environmental bases for the future to ensure nutritious food and sustainable livelihoods for all. In addition, it should promote not only sustainable crop diversification, but also associativity as a basis for strengthening communities in their social fabric, with emphasis on gender issues and the development of financial skills, with a view to increasing the resilience of communities.

REFERENCES

National Assembly of People's Power. (2022). *Ley de Soberanía Alimentaria y Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional* (Ley 148). Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, Edición Ordinaria No. 77. <https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu/es/ley-148-de-2022-de-asamblea-nacional-del-poder-popular>

Carrascosa García, M., López García, D., & Molero Cortés, J. (2020). *Sistemas alimentarios locales frente a riesgos globales: De la crisis climática a la Covid-19*. Fundación Entretantos / Red de Ciudades por la Agroecología. <https://www.fao.org/urban-food-actions/resources/resources-detail/es/c/1312581/>

UN. (2022). *Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*. Organización de Naciones Unidas. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-02/>

UN. (2023). *Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible. Objetivo 2: Hambre Cero*. Organización de Naciones Unidas. <https://jointsdgfund.org/es/sustainable-development-goals/goal-2-zero-hunger>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License