

SÃO PAULO BRAZIL

CONNECTING THE DOTS FOR INTEGRATED FOOD POLICIES

This food policy snapshot is based on an interview with ALINE CARDOSO, Secretary for Economic Development at the City of São Paulo.

GLASGOW
FOOD AND
CLIMATE
DECLARATION

In Brazil, the COVID-19 crisis has served to exacerbate the ongoing economic, environmental, and health crises across the country. Of particular concern, high unemployment and austerity measures preceding and during the pandemic have resulted in a SHARP RISE IN FOOD INSECURITY. In the mega-city of São Paulo, however, policymakers have recognized that integrated food policies can deliver multiple benefits. The UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS drive this municipal policy integration, where City departments are tasked with delivering as many SDGs as possible through their programs. Of the many integrated food policies in São Paulo, two stand out: the Sustainable Markets and Parks initiative to combat food loss and waste and the Connect the Dots farmland protection program. These initiatives have been globally recognized for their economic, food security, and environmental benefits.

“ Our work in the Department for Economic Development is very cross-cutting. In our department we are acting on 10 to 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Our policies fight poverty, fight hunger, fight inequality, and foster a green economy. ”

ENABLERS

COLLABORATION WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

The municipal departments in the city of São Paulo whose work is relevant to food systems proactively seek to collaborate on food policymaking and problem-solving. For example, the City's Urban Development, Economic, and Environmental Departments were all initially involved in the development of the Connect the Dots initiative. The International Relations Department joined this effort in 2016, once international funding was secured for the initiative. Municipal departments have also developed close ties with social assistance NGOs working on the ground, particularly in the poorest areas of the city. During the pandemic, when supply chains were hit and unemployment rose, the municipality was able to quickly draw on their community partnership networks to distribute food and aid to those most in need. This collaboration within and outside of the municipal government ensures greater policy integration and effective implementation.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING AND RECOGNITION

São Paulo's food policies have garnered international recognition, opening up new funding streams to accelerate action. This is in part due to the support and visibility that the late mayor, Bruno Covas, gave to the city's successful food policies. The Connect the Dots initiative was the grand prize winner of the 2016 BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES MAYORS CHALLENGE, a program to recognize and replicate innovative urban policies that tackle multiple challenges. While Bloomberg Philanthropies provided funding for the project, international recognition also increased awareness of and buy-in to the project among local stakeholders. São Paulo's work to reduce food loss and waste and compost municipal green waste also attracted the ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION to choose the city as a strategic partner to accelerate the transition to a circular food economy. This international recognition has helped foster an enabling environment for the development of integrated food policies at the local level.

“ Cities are the implementers of food and climate agendas, but people leading cities make the difference. The same city in the same situation, with the same resources, but with different people leading it can get very different results. We need political leaders who are really committed to innovating and finding solutions to transform people's lives. ”

BARRIERS

FUNDING AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Despite international funding support for Connect the Dots, the greatest challenges São Paulo faces in implementing integrated food policies are a lack of sufficient resources and funding. In this mega-city, the number of people in need of social assistance is great, but the municipal government often lacks the funding or the public servants required to support them. This creates a policy environment where difficult decisions have to be made about how and where funding is allocated. However, out of a necessity to use scarce funding as efficiently as possible, public servants are creative in finding integrated policy solutions to deliver multiple benefits. Nevertheless, São Paulo's successful food policies could be accelerated and expanded by increasing funding allocations from the state and federal levels.

THE GENDER GAP

The gender gap in Brazil, reflected by inequalities in educational, economic, and political opportunities between men and women, is a major inhibitor to progress. In times of crisis, women experience more severe socio-economic effects and are the last to be reintegrated into a recovering economy. Only 10-15% of political positions are occupied by women, but it was the few women acting as departmental heads in the municipal government that led the fight against hunger and unemployment during the pandemic. For example, they launched a meal program to support women in job creation and food provisioning. In all areas of government and society, closing the gender gap has the potential to address the socio-economic challenges of the most vulnerable and guarantee progress and prosperity for all.

The Sustainable Markets and Parks and the Connect the Dots initiatives have both received international recognition and funding for their multiple environmental, climate, and socio-economic benefits. The success of these integrated food policies is due to the city's political leadership and willingness to sustain robust cross-departmental and community partnerships. Brazil entered this DECADE OF ACTION to deliver on the SDGs in the midst of an economic recession and a health crisis. The challenges for the country are many, but cities like São Paulo are finding creative ways to use limited resources to generate multiple benefits for its citizens and the planet.

SUSTAINABLE MARKETS AND PARKS

- Targets the city's 800+ weekly food markets where unsold food was historically thrown into landfills.
- Employees were hired to collect food suitable for consumption, food banks were contacted for distribution, and composting facilities were built to process food waste unsuitable for consumption and green waste generated from parks.
- This three-pronged food policy reduces greenhouse gas emissions, boosts food security, and generates employment.

CONNECT THE DOTS

- Aims to protect the forests, reservoirs, and farms in rural districts on the outskirts of the city from urban development.
- Farmers are offered technical assistance to boost yields, increase income, transition to sustainable farming practices, and find urban buyers for their fresh, organic produce.
- This food policy aims to improve farming livelihoods, supply local food, and protect the environment.

