

SURAKARTA (SOLO) INDONESIA

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR CHANGE

This food policy snapshot is based on an interview with Ahyani Sidik, Regional Secretary of the Surakarta City Government.

GLASGOW
FOOD AND
CLIMATE
DECLARATION

The city of Surakarta in Central Java, better known as Solo, is the beating heart of the surrounding region’s economy, culture, and tourism. The City experiences a tripling in population size during business hours, creating an enormous food procurement and waste management challenge for the Solo City Government. Of the 300 tons of waste produced on average per day, 65% is organic waste. Urbanization also poses an additional challenge for the City. Agricultural land has significantly decreased in the area, forcing Solo to supply 90% of its food from other regions. To ensure community nutrition and a healthy environment, the Solo City Government has enacted a Food and Nutrition Regional Action Plan (RAD), with five pillars: improve community nutrition, increase access to diverse food, improve food quality and safety, ensure a clean and healthy environment, and improve the coordination of food and nutrition development. Action on Solo’s two keystone food policies, food waste reduction and the promotion of urban agriculture, has been achieved thanks to the collaboration with and empowerment of residents.

“ Surakarta, a small city with limited open spaces and very dense population, is coping with climate change through integrated food policies for sustainable urban farming, waste, and water management.”

ENABLERS

EMPOWER RESIDENTS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Solo’s residents are at the heart of the city’s sustainable food system transformation. Known for their culture of mutual cooperation, passionate residents, business leaders, and civil society organizations dedicate their time, energy, and resources for food system change. In the fight against food waste, food producers, including hotels, restaurants, and retail establishments, receive targets and guidance to prevent waste at the source. For example, to meet environmental goals and cut operating costs, some hoteliers minimize their food stocks, cook enough food for only 80% of guests, and repurpose leftovers into other dishes. With excess food, civil society organizations take over. Through an interconnected network of local organizations and volunteers, excess food is processed into nutritious meals and distributed to those most in need.

Urban agriculture development is also spearheaded by the community, something the City government encourages by providing training and resources. For example, in Malabar in the district of Mojosongo, community residents volunteered to build and maintain a 100m2 hydroponic garden using recycled materials. The garden produces 100kg of produce per month for residential consumption.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, urban agriculture projects flourished in the city, through the cooperation of health volunteers, community health centers, and the Department of Agriculture, Food Security, and Fisheries.

SOLO CITY GOVERNMENT URBAN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD WASTE POLICIES

- In 2018, Solo banned temporary waste dumpsites (TPS) and implemented policies to collect and process food waste for compost on urban farms.
- The City encourages the conversion of underutilized green spaces to urban farms, on private and public land, and provides agricultural inputs and training.
- The City works with residents, civil society organizations, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, and catering firms to reduce food waste and redistribute excess food through food sharing activities.

BARRIERS

DECIDING ON AN EFFECTIVE COORDINATION MECHANISM

Solo City government is committed to integrated food policies and work is still ongoing to involve multiple City and regional departments on Food and Nutrition RAD targets. For example, programs supporting the clean and healthy environment pillar are already being carried out by five regional departments: the Office of Health and Social Service, Education, Youth Service and Sports, Residential and Housing Service, and the Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning.

In 2018, Solo began collaborating with the international NGO Rikolto on the FOOD SMART CITIES project to improve the coordination of food policies among stakeholders. The project’s long-term objective is to create greater inclusivity, transparency, and accountability on food governance at the city level for sustainable food consumption and production, while fostering rural development in the region. To better align local actors’ policies, programs, and targets, the City is currently working on an official framework for collaboration on RAD food policies to improve communication and strategy-building amongst stakeholders.

Solo, the heart of the region’s economy and culture, is tackling the challenges of food waste and urban agriculture through integrated food policies. The key to their success is a culture of mutual cooperation and empowerment among residents. Passionate residents are innovating and collaborating at the community level to increase food security through food sharing and urban agriculture. The City has prioritized improving food policy governance and coordination, and a new partnership with Rikolto aims to help create more formalized structures. With effective and efficient food policy coordination, Solo will be well on its way to meeting its food, health, and environmental goals.

