

## Priorities for inclusive urban food systems transformations in the global South

Tuesday July 6, 14:00-15:30 UTC

The side event “Priorities for inclusive urban food systems transformations in the global South” has gathered around 90 registered participants. It presented and conclusions of the brief written for the scientific group of the UNFSS ([link](#)). The session was moderated by **Dao The Anh**, vice President of VAAS. The panelists came from four continents. **Paule Moustier**, Cirad, Head of MoISA, as well as **Patrick Caron**, Cirad, University of Montpellier, suggested a new classification of the urban food systems in six types, that allows more specific and relevant recommendations for them to address challenges related to urban development. **Thomas Reardon**, Michigan State University outlined the synergies and competition between SME, supermarkets and e-commerce. He explained how e-commerce and supermarkets can support SMEs and provide them with new market opportunities. The latter have been crucial to e-commerce development and they might perform better than modern systems in countries where the lack of logistics prevents supermarkets and e-commerce to release their whole potential. Finally, **Charlotte Yaméogo**, CNRST, Ouagadougou and **Alexandra Rodriguez**, responsible for the PUAR, Quito municipality, and member of RUAF, presented examples from the field in their respective countries. We learned that in Burkina Faso, traditional caterers (mostly run by women) are often those from where innovations originate. The SMEs get inspiration from their successful dishes to propose food items with innovative packaging and labelling that make products more convenient. They also resort to licensing which improves technology and marketing. Finally, through the example of Quito in Ecuador, we saw how a participatory urban agriculture project implying a municipality and several food systems’ actors allows the development of urban agriculture with many positive outcomes: changes toward healthier and more sustainable lifestyles, subsistence, recreation, education, inclusion, integration and entrepreneurship.

This session has shown that we **need to go beyond the oppositions between the traditional**, informal food system **and the modern food system** driven by supermarkets. A “one way transformation” towards modernity as the only way to answer the new challenges of food safety and convenience is too simplistic. First we showed that the so-called traditional informal sector is indeed organized according to logics of geography and adaptation to risk, but it lacks basic support in terms of infrastructures, credit and training. Second we showed that a number of farmer organizations and SMEs are innovating to address consumer concerns for food safety and convenience, combining new production protocols with less use of chemicals, innovations in food processing techniques at a small scale, labelling and quality control. Third we showed that supermarkets and e-commerce are themselves frequently involving SMEs in their food supply or more generally as partners. Even though supermarkets and e-commerce are strong vehicles of food changes, they require high investments and do not generate as much employment of the low qualified population as food MSMEs involved in production, processing, marketing, storage and catering. Policies aiming at improving the food security and employment of the urban poor should focus on food MSMEs. We finally gave several recommendations for public officials to provide basic infrastructures and services to the farmer organisations and food MSMEs, and to support inter-disciplinary research on food systems. Better data on what and where food is eaten, where it comes from and how food value chains are organized and perform are needed to support multi-stakeholder platforms where a common vision and strategy for more inclusive urban food systems is developed.