

## Transformation Story:

# Initiative ICLEI CityFood

A sustainable food future – one that ensures healthy people, healthy landscapes, and a healthy climate – can only succeed if we include our cities. Our initiative, *CityFood*, is ICLEI's flagship programme to **accelerate local government action** towards **sustainable food systems transformation** with a focus on **urban food systems**. By connecting urban food experts from all over the world, we support 40 cities worldwide in their **transition to healthier** and more **sustainable food systems**. In our current efforts, we synergistically combine a **global agenda** with **two local initiatives on fresh food markets** in Lilongwe, Malawi, and Lusaka, Zambia.

Looking into the future of urban food systems, we want to center our engagement **on food as a human right**. We want to see **fresh food markets to stay**, with adequate infrastructure as the **mainstream option to buy food** for everyone and as key platform for **learning, behaviour change, and civic life**. **Food markets** are recognised as relevant and attractive **investments** by **local governments** and the **private sector**. A basic condition for sustainable markets is the **efficient, fair, and economically viable management** of the markets. Under the leadership of local governments, the active participation of key stakeholders is necessary. We are progressing in this direction through **organised dialogues** in the cities and markets and the implementation of **governing structures** such as implementation taskforces and supervisory bodies.

Globally, we are building a **community of practice**, hosting multistakeholder dialogues in 16+ cities, and facilitating peer learning through **city-to-city exchanges**. As part of our initiatives global efforts, enriched by our city level experiences in many countries in all three continents, we have compiled a **global handbook on experiences to enhance fresh food markets**. This publication will be widely disseminated, to contribute to the **global discourse on urban food systems** by inspiring **practical implementation**. We further look into **advocacy, capacity-building and awareness raising** to enhance existing **governance structures for markets, policy buy-in** and recognition of the **need for the engagement of all relevant stakeholders to improve those**.

In our two city-level initiatives in Lusaka and Lilongwe, healthy food is still a **privilege for the few**, while many cannot afford it. Transforming food systems means ensuring **access for all** and shifting social norms to make **healthy food desirable**.







Local governments in both cities work in silos, missing that food is deeply entrenched in urban life. CityFood promotes a **cross-sectoral approach** where local government departments work together integrating food system goals in the urban space.

Moving forward, we are strengthening our engagement with **city-level decision-makers** and **market actors**. We will collaborate with existing **food governance platforms**, such as the Lusaka Food Policy Council, to improve coordination. Globally, we aim to disseminate our global handbook on fresh food markets, to foster a **shared understanding of the fresh food market ecosystems** centered around nutrition among local government partners. Looking further into the future, we envision our efforts to tackle **logistical and infra-structure challenges** to reduce the overall cost of food and make markets more **accessible** and **inclusive**. This also encompasses **economic incentives** as a lever for change.

Overall, urban foods systems are complex. We have identified **urban fresh food markets** as a promising **strategic entry point** for transforming food systems. However, the proof for the theory of change comes with a successful implementation of pilot measures, where the key stakeholders are in the driver's seat and develop their markets for healthy diets for urban consumers. Therefore, we are thrilled to see our story further develop.



**In the coming year, we aim to empower this initiative, its stakeholders and structures by implementing small investments, accompanied by capacity-development measures for the management, traders and consumers – all while centering nutrition at the heart of our efforts.**

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