



Giuseppe Sala,
Mayor of Milan.



Giuseppe Sala

A Holistic Approach to Urban Food Systems

Food is an issue that affects everyone. The city of Milan has been championing sound information and strong partnerships in ensuring food security, both at home and abroad. In this interview, Mayor of Milan **Giuseppe Sala** shares how his city has sought to bring together stakeholders from across societies, and even across borders, to ensure the sustainability of a vital resource—through an integrated food policy and other initiatives.

Food policy is usually developed at the national level. What is the city's role?

Food policy matters at all levels—globally, nationally and locally—because it affects everyone: our communities and livelihoods, our environment, ecosystems and the climate, our nutrition and health. Food policy shapes who eats what, why and at what cost.

Cities are assuming a central and growing role in achieving sustainable development. More than half of the world's population now live in urban areas. World hunger and malnutrition, coupled with (often) hidden poverty and rising inequalities, are increasingly taking on an urban dimension. Food-related issues have become pressing at the city level.

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For a long time, food production was considered beyond the competence of cities, because food is normally produced outside city limits. Now there is growing recognition of the role cities and local authorities can play in the development of sustainable food systems.

The city of Milan, in my opinion, is a good example of what cities can do with regard to food policy at the local level.

How is Milan pursuing its urban food policies?

The most significant challenge for implementing urban food policy is developing an integrated governance model, which is fundamental to achieving efficiency. Milan's strategy is to define a holistic framework for the City to work in synergy with different municipal departments and agencies, engage with local stakeholders (i.e. horizontal integration), and connect with Metropolitan and Regional authorities (i.e. vertical integration).

Implementing Milan's Food Policy involves three main approaches: creating projects that can generate institutional legacy, streamlining day-to-day activities, and establishing incentives to generate impact.

After two years, we have achieved many results, particularly in the fight against food waste—one of our most important priorities. One interesting initiative is a city-wide 20% tax reduction for food businesses that donate food to charities. This measure is likely to reach more than 10,000 potential beneficiaries, with an economic impact of 1.8 million euros (\$2.8 million). Another ongoing pilot project is a “Local Food Waste Hub” in three neighbourhoods, where a union brings together supermarkets and corporate canteens to collect their unsold food, which is redistributed as donations. A university lab conducts food flow monitoring, calculating the volume of food that comes through the hub, to understand how to replicate this model in all nine Milan neighbourhoods.

Milan's Food Policy was the outcome of a collaborative process. How did it come about, and what are its key drivers?

Food is at the confluence of many policies and is a crucial entry point for sustainable development. Since it affects the daily life of all citizens and actors, urban food topics are of common interest to cities in all European countries. Rarely is an issue more cross-cutting than this.

In 2014, the City launched a public consultation, engaging its different departments, universities, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), start-ups and the private sector: a process which resulted in the Milan Food Policy.

The Milan Food Policy strategises and organises the city's cross-cutting food-related issues, competencies and projects for a period of implementation (2015-2020). It is based on five priorities:

- 1) Ensure healthy food and water for all citizens;
- 2) Promote the sustainability of the food system;
- 3) Promote food education;
- 4) Fight against food waste;
- 5) Support scientific research in the agrifood sector.

The Milan Food Policy is based on rigorous research, with the support of a local foundation and a local research centre. Its implementation is guided by sound scientific data from regularly updated analysis of the local food system.

Political commitment is an important aspect of driving food policy. A Vice Mayor was appointed to coordinate Food Policy implementation, with the technical support of dedicated staff.

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A ratified document that addresses the city's food issues, a strategic approach and strong political commitment—all these are factors that can help the Municipality achieve synergies and accomplish its ambitious food goals.

What else has Milan done in engaging with the public to improve its urban food planning and systems?

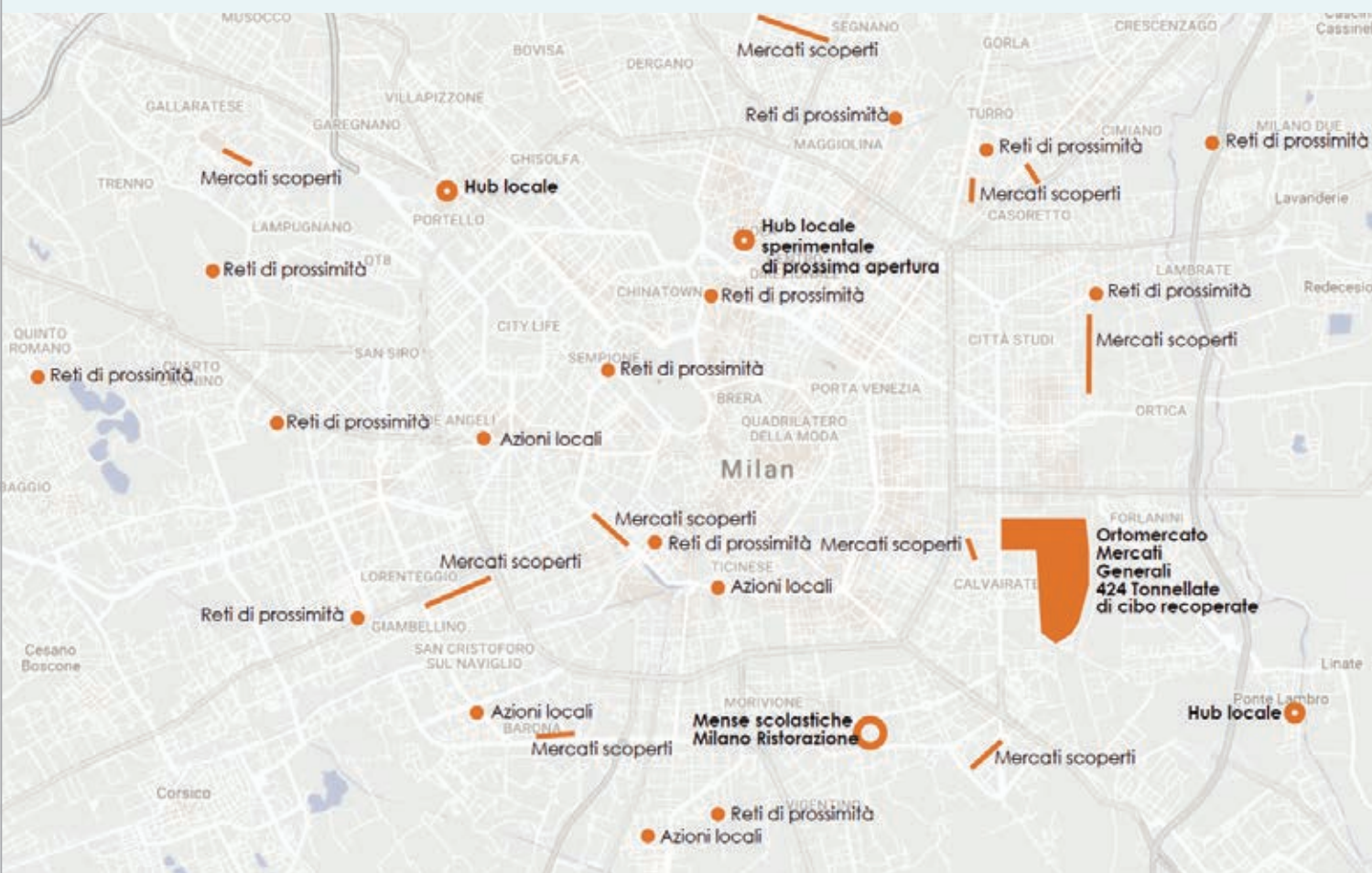
In civic engagement, we often convene local actors: we invite them to build maps of their neighbourhood initiatives, so we can understand how to steer our actions and build consensus.

Milan was chosen as the host city for Expo 2015, which Milan themed “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”. It was an occasion to prepare for and work on food issues, and spur political engagement. It led to an ongoing series of food-related discussions among the Municipality, research bodies, CSOs and grassroots groups. Milan has a rich tradition of community groups and associations: these have stepped up to meet this new social need.

To what extent are Milan's food priorities integrated with efforts to address other urban challenges such as climate change and building resilience?

Food security is the top priority of our Food Policy: this is consistent with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. It is addressed through a range of social, education and economic programmes. The challenge for the City is to achieve this goal by integrating the full range of the policy spectrum.

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01 Food hubs comprise partners such as street markets (*mercati scoperti*) and school canteens (*mense scolastiche*), which provide leftover food that can be redirected to beneficiaries like soup kitchens.

Several Milan Food Policy initiatives have shown that it is possible to tackle food security with climate mitigation and adaptation, particularly with urban-rural linkages. For example, we have focused efforts on components of the local food system that are under the City's direct supervision, such as school canteens and municipal agencies. We also engage with local actors such as farmer districts, research centres, and other institutions and non-profit organisations.

Through this multilevel approach, we have been able to align local public procurement with peri-urban agriculture patterns. For example, the Municipality of Milan connected school canteens' procurement with the local food supply chain of rice in the Milan Agricultural District (which produces an average of 180,000 kg of rice each year). We are working to achieve similar results with 19 other horticultural supply chains, by supporting the participation of Milan farmers in the Rural Development Programme. This is a financial mechanism to support Lombardy's agricultural and forestry entrepreneurs under the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

What other interesting initiatives has Milan introduced to enhance the urban food system?

According to our Food Policy, the Municipality should play an active role in providing healthy food, produced in a sustainable way, to certain segments of society: schoolchildren, the elderly, socially vulnerable groups and city employees.

We work with Milano Ristorazione (MiRi), a public company 100% owned by the Municipality, to provide some 85,000 meals to schools and social centre canteens daily.

MiRi prioritises healthy Italian products in its procurement process, preferring local, short chain, organic or integrated production foodstuffs, with some fair-trade products added to the menus.

One of the first initiatives undertaken in school canteens was to reduce children's consumption of salt. To promote healthy food during lesson breaks and also avoid food waste, MiRi designed a "Morning break with a fruit" programme. Fruit is distributed in the classroom as a morning snack, in lieu of other less healthy options, and instead of at the end of lunchtime. Students are then more inclined to eat fruit, and have better appetites to finish their lunches, minimising food waste. The trial programme last year involved 779 classes—this year it is scaling up to all school classes in the Milan area.

We are also building a consensus on food-related issues with other cities. In Europe, we chair the Eurocities Working Group Food—a network of 51 cities interested in food policy. Globally, we work with the C40 Food Systems Network. Through the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), or simply the Milan Pact, we collaborate with other cities, compare initiatives and work directly with their Mayors on common actions we can take.

Why is it necessary for cities to work together to tackle the world's food challenges?

While food-related actions are gaining priority in city agendas, they remain challenging because they require the integration of many segments of society, various levels of governance and collaboration between different policy areas.



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01 Each of the pavilions at the 2015 Milan Expo was dedicated to food: encompassing technology, innovation, culture, traditions, creativity and how they relate to food and diet.

02 Social enterprise Recup is one of many non-governmental organisations that work to reduce food waste in Milan.

“...cities are more likely to succeed in their efforts by cooperating with other cities with similar goals.”



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Cities implement their food system activities in different ways: some develop comprehensive documents and long-term plans, while others work on sectoral policies and projects. But the long-term ambition is to have a comprehensive and sustainable food strategy.

From our experience with the Milan Pact, we know that cities are more likely to succeed in their efforts by cooperating with other cities with similar goals. Collaboration can be in terms of sharing project outcomes, or a participative process in which a municipality acts as facilitator for a range of stakeholders, such as citizens' associations.

What is the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) and how does it equip cities to plan for food?

The Milan Pact is one of the main legacies of the 2015 Milan Expo. It brings together Mayors from 180 cities and towns from 62 countries around the world that consider food an entry point for sustainable

development. One of its aims is to foster the exchange of ideas and solutions for food issues among cities. It does so in a variety of ways, such as through the Milan Pact Awards, which promotes the sharing of urban food-related best practices. It also co-develops knowledge products, such as a recent report on food policies and city food practices produced by MUFPP, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and Italian research centre, EStà. The MUFPP collaborates with international organisations to keep cities better informed about the latest ideas on food systems, which local governments may not have access to.

At the MUFPP Annual Gathering in Tel Aviv in September 2018, we released a framework of 44 indicators to help cities assess their progress towards their food system goals. This was a tool many member cities had been asking for since the launch of the Pact in 2015.

01 Milan's 134 school vegetable gardens expose children to nature, create greater awareness of where food comes from, and encourage interaction across generations and cultures.

02 Serving fruit during snack time both encourages children to eat a healthier diet and minimises food waste.

