



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ROME GRADUATE SCHOOL

Conference

Sustainable Food Systems <> Sustainable Diets
Rome, Friday, 11 October 2019

Title proposal

A Food Policy for Rome: the path for the transition towards a sustainable Roman food system

Introduction

The research describes the path that a group of researchers, practitioners, experts and associations are carrying on in order to stimulate the debate on the need to provide for an urban food policy for the metropolis of Rome. Rome is the European city with the largest amount of agricultural areas within the urban area, yet they are scarcely integrated and highly fragmented, economically, socially and spatially. At the same time, the city is facing several challenges typical of western metropolis, directly or indirectly connected to food: waste management, “westernization” of diets with evident consequences in terms of obesity and malnutrition, growing poverty and lack of access to resources, abandonment of agricultural lands, disconnection of urban-rural linkages, and many other. Moreover, Rome has signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, nevertheless the city never committed in developing a food strategy. The growing debate about the importance of systemic approach to improve the sustainability of food systems, has stimulated some actors coming from universities and activism movements to gather a group of stakeholders in order to start talking and discussing about the need of a Food Policy for Rome. The objectives are threefold: to point out to the administration that Roman agro-food system has enormous potentialities and some threats that should be taken into account by policy-makers in order to face several challenges that the city is facing nowadays; to stimulate community participation to food system debate, improving the awareness about the potential impact of a food policy and increasing the social capital among the actors of the food system; to provide for and suggest some instruments and tools in order to implement a systemic food strategy for the city of Rome.

Methods

The research has been conducted through a mix of different methodologies: a questionnaire delivered to some key actors of the food system of Rome; the direct experience of the authors, being them among the first promoters of the bottom-up initiative; the theoretical framework, which is the base for the initiative, derives from the scientific literature exploring topics of food systems sustainability, urban-rural linkages, urban food policies. Furthermore, this work represents the result of a long-term research activity that prof. Marino and his staff have been performed in the last years on the agricultural landscape of Rome (Cavallo, Tufano, Marino, 2012; Cavallo, Di Donato, Marino, 2015), its food system (Marino, Cavallo, 2014) and foodscape (Cavallo, Guadagno, Marino, 2014).

Results

As already mentioned, this work intends to show the steps that a group of stakeholders have been carrying on in order to formulate a proposal for a Food Policy for Rome. Nevertheless, it worth specifying that the process is still going on and the final outcomes are still uncertain, depending on an endorsement or a direct involvement by the city administration.

The first section of the work (the interviews to some key actors) has been the basis on which the proposal for the Food Policy has been built. The priorities of the interviewees focus mainly on three objectives of the Food Policy: the creation of an active economic model around the agri-food chain, which guarantees an adequate income for all the players in the system (91.9%), the promotion of the specificities of the territory and the constitution of short supply chain forms and production diversification (88.7%). An element shared by the various interviewees is the development of a broad and adequate food policy/governance for the metropolitan city of Rome, at the level of those developed by other European capitals. It could establish a systemic and shared local food planning process, with objectives of social and ecological regeneration. Moreover, it should start with an inclusive and truly participatory Food Council, which also sees the presence of alternative food networks and is supported by adequate funding. This space for debate can provide institutions with indications and tools to encourage the reconversion of existing agri-food structures and the expansion of local, ecological, small-scale and solidarity food networks, but also school canteens and all collective catering. Finally, a Food Policy should be based on the importance of education and sharing, spreading information on healthy and sustainable food in a free and disinterested way.

The first result of this participative bottom-up approach is a shared document that shows why Rome would need a Food Policy, starting from the analysis of the food system and arriving to formulate a list of ten proposals. The participative process has continued through the involvement of other institutional partners and experts interested in the path, and through the implementation of working groups dedicated to the pillars that have been deemed to be extremely relevant for Rome: Access to resources (land, seeds, etc.); School catering and Green Public Procurement; Agriculture and labor rights; Food distribution and consumption; Solidarity economy, food rescue, food poverty.

Discussion and Conclusions

Many Italian cities have begun to develop urban food policies. Some of them started working in this direction before the Expo and the launch of the MUFPP, while other cities were inspired by the Expo and its legacy (e.g. Milan and Turin). The number of Italian cities signing up to the MUFPP is growing and 25 of the 193 signatory cities are now Italian. Beyond these 25 signatories, many other Italian cities are substantially engaged in this process but are not currently connected to each other through a network, although many of them belong to different international networks, including Healthy Cities or the Eurocities networks, which have specialized groups focused on this issue. In this context, Rome, among the signatories of the MUFPP, has not yet started a process to implement a food strategy, even though the analysis and the evidences emerged from the participative consultation with stakeholders have shown the potentialities for the city and the importance to give a priority to re-think the food system and address it towards sustainability and resilience. This multi-actor urban governance coalition is seeking to enroll pre-existing fragmented initiatives by scaling up food-related activities and advocacy to address broader policy concerns. The city, in other words, can become a strategic transition node that can exploit the policy vacuum created by the absence of comprehensive, coherent and integrated national and supra-national food policies to develop more sustainable food systems. Systemic perspective unveils emerging patterns, relationships and phenomena that would not be visible under a

siloed approach (Sonnino et al., 2019). Thinking of food systemically entails two main things: first, a consideration for the global environmental and socio-economic dynamics that affect (and are affected by) all activities involved with the production and consumption of food; second, and partly related to this, a focus on the relations and connections (or lack of) between all actors involved with those activities at different stages of the food system (not just production and consumption but also processing, packaging, retailing, distribution, transportation, storage and waste management).

References

Cavallo A., Tufano M., Marino D. (2012). Analysing the role of urban and periurban agriculture in changing landscape: the case of Rome. Agriculture in an urbanizing society, Wageningen, The Netherlands, 1-4 April 2012.

Cavallo A., Guadagno R., Marino D. (2014). The local agrifood systems in face of changes in urban rural relationship: the foodscape of Rome. Farming systems facing global challenges: Capacities and strategies Programme and Book of Abstracts 11 th European IFSA Symposium 1-4 April 2014 in Berlin, Germany

Cavallo A., Di Donato B., Marino D. (2015). Mapping and assessing urban agriculture in Rome. Agriculture and Agricultural Science Procedia 8 (2016) 774 – 783

Marino D., Cavallo A. (2014). Agricoltura, cibo e città, verso sistemi socioecologici resilienti (Agriculture, food and cities, towards resilient socio-ecological systems). CURSA, 1 (2). ISSN: 2284-4376.

Sonnino R., Tegoni C.L.S., De Cunto A. (2019). The challenge of systemic food change: Insights from cities. Cities 85, 110-116

Contact information

Dr. Giampiero Mazzocchi, University of Molise and University Sapienza, gia.mazzocchi@gmail.com
Prof. Davide Marino, University of Molise