

Foreword

The profound transformation of sustainable food systems is a major challenge for agriculture and societies. We must not only solve the problems of malnutrition, but also address all the challenges of sustainable development in a comprehensive way. In addition to the recurrent food and nutrition crises that have marked previous decades, changing dietary patterns have created a situation where population supply challenges are compounded by nutritional and health challenges, such as obesity and its many related diseases. Although there is now near-universal abundance of food, malnutrition is the main public health problem.

Moreover, the environmental and climate crises and their impacts invite us to rethink food systems to reduce their footprint, support the renewal of resources and increase the resilience of societies and ecosystems. Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic both reflects the systemic dimension of the crises that follow one after the other and reinforces the need for profound structural transformations. This pandemic has generated an additional shock that urgently requires more rapid and systemic actions.

Society can respond to these challenges in various ways and at multiple levels. From international organizations to local civil society actors, social movements, and national and local governments, initiatives to promote food systems are emerging to promote sustainable food systems. However, although awareness is growing and consumers around the world are increasingly demanding healthy food that respects cultures and the environment, current solutions are limited given the scale of the challenge. Truly successful solutions will require actors from different sectors, at different scales and with different visions to all work together. This book highlights many initiatives and transformations, often developed and carried out in different places and within specific spaces. We know that such initiatives are rarely replicable, given the specificity of contexts, and that we cannot imagine remaking the world simply by reproducing them. We also know that local changes depend on actions undertaken in other spheres, which make new transformations possible and drive them forward. The aim is therefore to develop a new system of action, a framework that structures and enhances action to support sustainable development. In the face of this challenge, public policies play a central role. They educate populations and raise their awareness; adjust production and consumption standards; create new legal and regulatory frameworks; encourage new forms of production, marketing and consumption while prohibiting others; facilitate the creation of spaces for cooperation; promote and support local initiatives; address conflicts of interest, and more.

This book, proposed by the Public Policy and Rural Development in Latin America (PP-AL), contributes to this global reflection. The original chapters compiled here analyze food policies in Latin America, a heterogeneous continent where both food issues and innovative initiatives to address them abound.

With chapters covering the situation in ten Latin American countries, this book presents a broad overview of the region's food policy trajectories, illustrating the development of policies over the last two decades to provide access to food for the poorest and most vulnerable populations. These food and nutrition security policies and programs have integrated the health dimension in the last decade. However, they have only marginally integrated the environmental one necessary to establish sustainable food systems. Moreover, recent political changes in certain countries have affected the implementation of these programs, leaving vulnerable populations in a critical situation.

This book also takes an original look at emerging initiatives from urban and rural territories, through which the many different situations can be explored by substituting or complementing national public actions. Certain local initiatives and dynamics presented in this book reflect initial efforts to reconfigure local alliances between producers and consumers and the emergence of new actors working to promote alternative food culture and values. They also show the possible development of integrated policies that seek to address the various economic, social, health and environmental challenges in a coordinated manner, and to better ensure coherent sector-specific policies.

Additionally, this book explores the processes by which instruments and regulations are created and local initiatives emerge. The analysis reveals that the social movements of family farming and agroecology have played a key role in promoting inclusive regulations and environmentally friendly local food systems.

However, although promising, the initiatives presented in this book are recent and relevant to a specific moment or place. This book shows that innumerable constraints persist in fostering sustainable food systems in the region. The first constraint results from agrarian dynamics, competition between different models of agricultural development and centuries-old inequality in the way land and natural resources are distributed. As a result, the food situation continues to deteriorate very rapidly for certain rural population groups, particularly traditional communities. The second constraint highlighted in this book stems from the difficulties of coordinating different actors and levels of government to build integrated policies for sustainable food systems. In fact, although there has been a shift towards more integrative *référentiels* for a new generation of policies, there are still no integrated national food policies that include all the dimensions required to develop sustainable food systems and provide the necessary framework for action for the local production of public goods. To create such policies, policymakers would need to address intersectoral challenges, which inevitably emerge with multifaceted issues such as sustainable food systems. There would also need to be greater dialogue and integration between rural social movements and consumer movements and urban civil society organizations, on the one hand, and environmental movements, on the other, to advocate for sustainable and equitable food system models. This book does

not propose a normative vision of sustainable food systems, but instead presents historical and recent policy trajectories along with their current limitations, and provides an overview of innovative perspectives. Through these contributions, it offers food for thought for the scientific community, as well as for public decision-makers and social movements, to consider and promote policies for sustainable food systems. It also offers suggestions and perspectives from which to tackle an important challenge for the design of our future: coordinating local initiatives, regional and national public policies and international frameworks for action. In a context of increasing political volatility and re-politicization of food issues, this book offers an important contribution to defining the political strategies that must now be implemented to navigate towards a sustainable world and mobilizing the lessons learned, alliances and power relations across different scales of action.

Patrick Caron
CIRAD,
Vice-President, University of Montpellier