



## Enhancing sustainable urban food systems in the Gaza Strip - Networking for positive policy change and resilience

### Background

Given the specific context of Gaza, where economic opportunities are very limited, any development programme should focus on promoting a 'resilient local development approach' and making the best use of what is locally available. Promoting and strengthening localised and sustainable urban food systems and markets play an important role in this, especially in light of Gaza's rapid population growth, growing urban unemployment and poverty, increasing household vulnerability to food insecurity and the imposed import and export restrictions that severely threaten and limit agricultural development.

### Urban food security in Gaza

According to an April World Bank report, in 2016, the unemployment rate in the Palestinian Territories remained very high at 42 % in Gaza, with youth unemployment at 58%. And, although nearly 80% of Gaza's residents receive some form of aid, poverty rates are very high. Past studies already made clear that a substantial reduction in food and cash aid would have important negative effects on the poorest segments of the Gaza population bringing them close to the minimum food security threshold. Consumer food insecurity is growing in parallel with declining agricultural self-sufficiency. Accelerated population growth (3.5%), urban sprawl and increasing conversion of agricultural land for housing, restricted access to (quality) land in the border area, sea and water, coupled to limited availability of good quality seeds and breeds, has resulted in a decline in the percentage of self-sufficiency for some agricultural products to about 50%. There is a need to focus on the strengthening of the local food system to ensure less dependency on international markets, lower ecological foot/food print, lower vulnerability to shocks due to climate change and military and other occupational measures that affect local agriculture production and food systems. Greater networking, coordination and exchange with relevant stakeholders is needed to shift the focus away from emergency aid towards the integration of long-term resilient development policies and initiatives, despite the difficult context.

### International agendas recognise the role to be played by urban and peri-urban agriculture

The [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#), signed currently by over 159 cities, including 2 Palestinian cities, recognise the role that urban, peri-urban and surrounding rural areas play a key role in feeding cities.

This recognition of the role agriculture can play in sustainable urbanisation is shared by [agriculture ministers of 65 nations, including Palestine](#), who call for urban food security to be made a priority on the global agenda'.

### **The Gaza Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Platform**

The Gaza Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Platform- GUPAP, launched in 2013, consists of a multi-stakeholder, interactive and participatory forum that brings together all key actors involved in the development of a resilient Palestinian agricultural sector in the Gaza Strip. GUPAP is currently made up of about 80 members, including **national and local government Institutions; Non-Governmental Civil Institutions; the Private Sector; Research and Educational Institutions; Agricultural Value Chain Platforms and Agricultural Micro-Finance Institutions.**

Over the past years, GUPAP, by building institutional capacity and collaboration among GUPAP members this resulted in the design and adaptation of 5 policies relating to local market-oriented urban and peri-urban agriculture development, including MoNE assessment of protection of national products, dates and dairy products & investigation on tariffs for imported foreign dairy products and quota placement on imported powder milk, the activation of the Dates Sector Development Committee (Red Palm Weevil Cluster), an advocacy campaign on women agricultural rights, and the reactivation of the Consumer Protection Association and launching of a Buy-local campaign. Furthermore, GUPAP has worked with both governmental (including municipalities) and non-governmental institutions to internalise the concepts of market oriented urban farming within the strategies and function of the national institutions. It was successful to integrate this concept within the 2016-2018 strategy of MoNE. Similarly these concepts as well as the project's participatory extension approaches have been integrated in the MoA strategy. GUPAP facilitated participation of value chain actors, including small scale producers and private sector, to provide input into these strategies.

From 2013-2017, GUPAP was hosted by Oxfam and PNGO; <http://pngoportal.org/en/776.html> . It was supported in its work by both Oxfam; <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/enhancing-market-oriented-urban-agriculture-in-the-gaza-strip-networking-for-po-620124>,, <http://wee.oxfam.org/mapping/Gaza-urban-peri-urban-agriculture>, as well as the RUAF Foundation-Global partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and City Region Food Systems; <http://www.ruaf.org/news/gupap-supports-national-policies-protect-national-products> .

### **GUPAP Work plan 2018-2020**

In 2017, GUPAP was established as an independent Palestinian NGO with its own legal status. GUPAP has defined the following goals and activities for the coming 3 years:

#### **Goal (1): Consolidate the functioning of GUPAP**

The goal is to consolidate the functioning of GUPAP as an independent NGO, maintaining sustained participation of its wide institutional member platform. Related strategic actions will include:

- 1.1 Continue to facilitate the efficient and effective functioning of the platform, information exchange and joint policy lobbying and advocacy activities.

- 1.2 Expand membership to new urban producer groups and value chains (e.g. vegetables, fodder producers).
- 1.3 Develop a new 3 year joint action plan with all GUPAP members, with institutional commitment for its implementation.
- 1.4 Regularly monitor GUPAP functioning, activities, results and impacts in order to improve performance.

**Goal (2): Influence local and national agriculture and other policies that bear on the development of sustainable and resilient urban agriculture in the Gaza Strip.**

Related strategic actions include:

- 2.1 To continue to review and influence policies of the MOA and MoNE in so far they bear on sustainable and resilient urban agriculture development.
- 2.2 Promote and support the development of a national Palestinian urban agriculture policy and programme.
- 2.3 Enhance awareness of decision makers and technical staff on the importance of urban agriculture and the need for building a favourable policy and regulatory framework.
- 2.4 Support local municipalities (in Gaza and the West Bank) to adopt the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and exchange experiences in its implementation.
- 2.5 Support local monitoring of the Milan Pact, using the framework currently being developed by Pact secretariat, FAO and RUAF.
- 2.6 Share experience and learning with other regional and international platforms working on similar activities.
- 2.7 Sharing GUPAP experiences on international platforms and events.

**Goal (3) Consolidate the establishment of an on-line information resources centre on urban agriculture to facilitate broad user access to information from the Gaza Strip and other (Arab speaking) countries.**

Currently, information on urban agriculture in Arabic language is fragmented, often out-of-date and dispersed among the many organisations working in this field. Under this goal, the following specific strategic actions are pursued:

- 3.1 Developing an interactive and participatory website and database on urban and peri-urban agriculture in the Gaza Strip.
- 3.2 Collect and update existing information and develop new information materials on urban agriculture innovation and good practices.

**Goal (4) Facilitate and strengthen institutional capacities and innovation in urban and peri-urban agriculture.**

Following its past working approaches, the GUPAP will continue training needs assessment and capacity building for all its members and other involved stakeholders. Adult learning and learning by doing approaches (PLAR) will be applied in order to optimally benefit from local experiences, knowledge and resources. Also to ensure demand based and responsive training fitted to the local context. Capacity building will be focussed on strengthening the skills of the GUPAP members in urban agriculture, policy review and revision as well as strengthening the

skills of agricultural institutions and organisations to adopt participatory development approaches and innovative practices of urban agriculture. The main strategic actions for this goal are to:

- 4.1 Increase capacities of the GUPAP members to enhance their effective and efficient engagement in GUPAP activities.
- 4.2 Provide training to urban and peri-urban agriculture farmers for improved production and marketing practices.
- 4.3 Facilitate links between GUPAP members and donor agencies for the implementation of urban agriculture projects (including for example school and home gardens, low space production systems, vegetable processing etcetera).

The aforementioned goals and strategic actions form the basis for further operational planning under which the GUPAP will develop and implement its various programmes, activities and initiatives. These will be implemented in close and strong cooperation between different GUPAP members and other involved stakeholders (see attached list of GUPAP members), a transparent call and selection process for the planned activities will be opened.

**For further contact:**

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