

## CITIES WITH WHO HEALTHY FOOD MARKET PROJECTS



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

The development of food markets is often sought by the governments because of economic reasons. However, food markets also offer the opportunity of creating a positive dynamic between development and health. If resources generated in the food market are used to improve consumer access to safe and nutritious food, the resulting health benefits for consumers will create a further demand for safe products. This will also help to attract tourists whose patronage promotes not only the market, but the local economy as a whole. Thus, business in the market will improve and, in turn, generate even more resources for further improvements. Opportunities for new health-promoting businesses using micro-credit schemes are also important considerations in Healthy Food Markets. This can lead to sustainable long-term improvement in the health status of the population as well as in the development of the market. This can also contribute to a business culture that is more in harmony with the health and well-being of the community. In the aftermath of natural or man-made disasters, the reconstruction of the marketplace is perhaps one of the most important steps in returning the community to a normal state. Therefore, the concept of Healthy Food Markets should be introduced early in the planning process.

## STARTING A HEALTHY FOOD MARKET PILOT PROJECT

For more details on how to implement a Healthy Food Market pilot project, the WHO publication "A Guide for Healthy Food Markets" can be downloaded from the WHO Website <http://www.who.int/foodsafety>. Copies of this publication can also be requested by writing the WHO Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Food-borne Diseases, Geneva, Switzerland or by emailing the WHO GEMS/Food Manager at [foodsafety@who.int](mailto:foodsafety@who.int).

Persons interested in starting a WHO Healthy Food Market pilot project should contact the appropriate WHO Food Safety Regional Adviser for their Region as follows:

- Africa – Dr Patience Mensah  
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- Western Pacific – Dr Tommaso Cavalli-Sforza  
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# Healthy *food* Markets



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# Healthy *food* Markets

## *Safe and nutritious food for all*

### IMPORTANCE OF FOOD MARKETS

After humans first domesticated plants and animals around 8000 BC, simple food markets probably arose naturally to provide the newly settled population with their food needs. Over the centuries, food markets have evolved with civilization, often serving as commercial and social centres for their communities and each with a unique history of traditions. Today, food markets are often the most important source of food for urban consumers, particularly in developing countries. From fruits and vegetables to grains and tubers, from meats, poultry and fish to dairy, and processed and semi-processed foods, these foods are often locally produced and sold at reasonable prices. In addition, food markets usually offer an array of ready-to-eat foods (street foods) that are affordable for even the lowest income members of the community. However, such markets have been implicated in the spread of serious epidemic diseases, including poisonings by toxic chemicals. Food markets are, therefore, critical settings not only for promoting health and nutritional status, but also for preventing disease and injury. For these reasons, the World Health Organization (WHO) is supporting a series of Healthy Food Market pilot projects to promote a safe and nutritious food supply for urban consumers.

### HEALTH AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE

Illness caused by contaminated food is perhaps the most widespread public health problem in the contemporary world and a major cause of reduced economic productivity. In developing countries, foodborne diarrhoeal diseases are major causes of illness and death, especially among children. The emergence of new diseases, such as SARS and avian influenza, have been associated with food animals sold in markets. The cholera pandemic in Latin America was in part caused by unhygienic practices in marketplaces. Foodborne diseases can also have major economic impacts on individuals, families, communities and even countries. Expenditures for medical care and lost income may result when individuals or their family members contract a foodborne disease. In food markets, unhygienic practices and conditions may result in loss of business from both local consumers as well as tourists. In some cases, large quantities of food may need to be recalled and destroyed. These losses are regrettable because they are preventable with basic investments in training and infrastructure, such as those advocated by Healthy Food Markets. Market improvements can also contribute to the economy by fostering new businesses and offering employment opportunities for the local population.

### WHO'S HEALTHY FOOD MARKET INITIATIVE

In many developing countries, rapid urban growth has overwhelmed the capacity of municipal authorities to provide basic food safety and environmental health services and other minimum prerequisites for a healthy population. As a result, many markets are often unplanned, uncontrolled, and under-financed. With this in mind, WHO developed the concept of Healthy Food Markets as an approach for ensuring food safety and environmental health in marketplaces. Interest in the concept of Healthy Food Markets has been substantial with pilot projects being implemented or planned in cities throughout the world (See Map). Undertaken within the framework of the existing WHO Healthy Cities Programme, these pilot projects seek to improve the health of urban dwellers, especially those with low-incomes. Through raising awareness of unsatisfactory health and environmental conditions and by mobilizing community participation through partnerships, local agencies and institutions identify and implement appropriate and sustainable solutions. The World Health Organization has prepared "A Guide to Healthy Food Markets", which is intended to assist interested parties in the planning, management and evaluation of pilot projects in their cities.

### PROVISION OF SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD

The most important principle underpinning the concept of Healthy Food Markets is the provision of safe and nutritious food. As affirmed in the World Declaration on Nutrition (Rome, 1992), access to safe and nutritious food is a basic individual right. For many urban populations, this access is provided by food markets. A Healthy Food Market is a health-promoting setting in the city in which all stakeholders collaborate to assure the provision of a safe and nutritious food supply for the community. These stakeholders include market vendors and their suppliers, market managers, various municipal and health authorities and consumers. Together they develop a vision of their marketplace that better serves the health and nutritional well-being of the community. By mobilizing market and other resources, a Healthy Food Market undertakes incremental changes in behaviour and practices as well as in infrastructure and services, which directly improve the safety and nutritional quality of the foods being sold in the market. In addition, certain occupational and environmental health issues, which may indirectly affect food safety, are included in the Healthy Food Market concept.