



HAMBRE CERO

BARCELONA, 2-4 OCTUBRE 2024

V CUMBRE MUNDIAL DE LAS REGIONES
SOBRE SEGURIDAD Y SOBERANÍA ALIMENTARIA



CATALUÑA, DONDE LA COMIDA ES CULTURA

Concept note 5

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS A GUARANTEE OF A PROSPEROUS TERRITORY

GOAL

At the Food Systems Summit, held in September 2021, Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, stated: “Future food security depends on rural prosperity.” That statement has led to few consequences. Economic dynamics not only continue to concentrate activities in large cities, but the rural world is being kept out on the social and economic periphery. Some regions, however, are dedicating great efforts to reverse the situation, working to achieve greater prosperity in their rural areas.

CONCEPTUALISATION

In recent years, ORU Fogar has highlighted the need for the global debate to focus its attention on the exodus from rural areas. The territory has been emptied of young people and energy, at the same time that cities have been overwhelmed, incapable of generating infrastructure or providing services to the massive influx of people from the most remote areas. In a world concerned about the environment, sustainability and the well-being of citizens, we cannot remain indifferent to this phenomenon. However, too little attention has been paid to rural development in recent decades.

Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, was especially interested in having the rural world present at the Food Systems Summit. In this way, for the first time in many years, the Global Agenda focused on the rural area. In a context of greater instability of global food chains, and with the effects of climate change threatening food production, attention was again turned towards the rural world. The United Nations invited society to pay attention to a forgotten territory. Now, faced with the threat that Paul Roberts has called “the end of food”, the rural world, often underestimated, became a space on which all hopes were centred.

When we focus our gaze on the rural area, with very few exceptions and with differences between the north and the south, what we see is a territory with fewer services and infrastructure than the urban world. It is a world that is less connected, more isolated from economic flows and usually less prosperous than the urban world. In many countries there is talk of “empty” territories. Frequently, we are referring to territories with a predominantly ageing population. The surveys predict that the trend towards exodus will continue and that millions of people will continue to emigrate from the countryside to the cities. By 2050, seven out of ten people are expected to live in cities.

Traditionally, the rural world has been the provider of food. The industrialisation of the food sector has also led to the alteration of this assumption. According to the FAO 2023 Report, food insecurity disproportionately affects people in rural areas all over the world. In 2022, food insecurity affected 33% of adults living in rural areas, compared to 26% of those



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residing in urban areas. The report challenges the traditional idea that food purchases represent a small part of food consumption in rural households. Food purchases are high among urban households, but they are also surprisingly high among rural households far from an urban centre. This, as the report documents, happens in Africa itself. In many Andean rural areas we see that, due to this same phenomenon, there is severe child malnutrition in food production areas.

In recent months, across Europe we have seen a deeply dissatisfied agricultural sector. Mobilisations in various countries reflect concern about the economic viability of agricultural farms. Furthermore, farmers express their frustration at the excessive bureaucratisation of administrative procedures and competition from products coming from outside the European Union, which are not subject to the same requirements as those in Europe. Farmers affirm that their work is crucial for the management of the territory and are a fundamental part of rural development.

The development of rural areas is essential to achieve the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda, especially those that refer to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Thus, to have resilient food systems and agriculture, it will be necessary not only to support agriculture, livestock and fishing, but also to promote opportunities in the industrial and service sectors in the rural world. To achieve this, it will be essential to commit to creating infrastructure and services throughout the territory, as well as guaranteeing good communications and telecommunications coverage.

The role of public policies is fundamental in reversing the abandonment of the rural world. In view of the forecast that the concentration of economic activity in cities and large economic centres will continue to grow, it is urgent that institutions commit to changing trends, distributing investments and contributing to territorial balance. With this desire, it is crucial to strengthen the network of small and medium-sized businesses, farms and food industries throughout the territory, guaranteeing a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable food system. This new impetus that would mean ensuring decent wages for small producers, who grow approximately a third of the food consumed globally.

Many regions are working in this direction. By supporting the rural economy, not only is the food supply guaranteed, but employment is generated and economic growth is encouraged in the territory. By opting for locally made products, they support the livelihood of small businesses and avoid depending exclusively on large urban centres. This approach contributes to the construction of more stable and sustainable societies, since economic growth in the agricultural sector is particularly effective in reducing social and territorial inequalities. To achieve growth, it is essential, in any case, to improve connectivity between urban, peri-urban and rural areas. This space should make it possible to disseminate good regional practices for revitalising the rural world.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- How do we combat the rural exodus? What are the biggest challenges and opportunities?



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- What are the basic infrastructure elements needed to establish the population in the territory?
- How can value be added to the rural area compared to the appeal of the big city?
- What skills should regions have to address the challenges of the rural world?
- What policies determine economic activity in the territory?