



**SECOND INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES**

Songyang County LISHUI CITY, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE,
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA | 19th - 20th October, 2021

SECOND INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

**Integrating Health and Territorial Development for
Sustainable Livelihoods**

IFURL2 summary report

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Introduction

While the world is rapidly urbanizing, the development gap between rural and urban areas is growing exponentially. Achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and leaving no one behind will require addressing the political, social and economic disparities between urban and rural areas. This is a key rationale for strengthening urban-rural linkages for integrated territorial development as agreed to by national governments in the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Urban-Rural Linkages touch on a wide array of thematic areas, ranging from urban and territorial planning and development, to strengthening small and intermediate towns, and to flows across urban and rural spaces of people, products, services, culture, and knowledge. These spatial flows of human mobility and migration are central to sustainable food systems, and maintaining public health. These and related issues were discussed during the second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL 2), held in Songyang County in southeast China on the 19th and 20th of October 2021. The theme of the Forum, “Integrating Health and Territorial Development for Sustainable Livelihoods”, was co-organised by UN-Habitat, the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Health Commission of Zhejiang Province, Lishui Municipal People’s Government and the Songyang County People’s Government. Over 200 participants attended the Forum in person and virtually from 19 countries to address topics related to health and territorial development.

Considering that the event was held in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum sought to integrate

the topic of health with urban-rural linkages across various themes linking global and local responses and policy processes. The Forum’s speakers and sessions were designed to address the growing volume of requests from both national and local governments to help plan for prevention, respond to, and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Forum concluded that, at the global level, governance measures and management approaches need to be tailored to learn from responses to the pandemic in cities, towns, and communities as well as in informal settlements so that the most vulnerable are protected.

Specific objectives of the Forum’s panels and roundtable discussions and outcomes centred around:

1. Articulation of urban-rural linkages in global resilience to crises,
2. Evaluating the role of intermediary cities and climate change,
3. Recognizing the value of collective peri-urban intelligence,
4. Incorporating food and nutrition sensitivity into spatial planning,
5. Sharing African perspectives on spatial planning,
6. Linking public spaces and health,
7. Underscoring urban-rural linkages in the context of food systems and sustainable healthy diets;
8. Examining the resilience of Melbourne’s city region food system as a case study,

9. Exploring traditional medicine and covid-19 in the context of urban-rural linkages,
10. Acknowledging health and nutrition as key dimensions of territorial food systems, planning and governance,
11. Prioritizing the fundamental role of rural areas to provision ecosystem services, and
12. Providing the songyang perspective on lessons learned from the covid-19 pandemic.

Through discussions centered around these twelve topics, IFURL 2 built upon IFURL 1 to make major contributions to the implementation of guiding principles on urban-rural linkages. The first Forum demonstrated the commitment of UN-Habitat and the Songyang County government's through developing and adopting the Songyang Consensus to promote restoration of rural economies and sustainable urban-rural development. The second Forum on urban-rural linkages brought together experts, practitioners and policymakers from different parts of the world to share

and promote innovative tools, methods and experiences on integrating health and urban-rural linkages at national and sub-national levels. The second Forum demonstrated the importance of urban-rural linkages in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in communities strengthening cooperation and working together to promote health and well-being across the urban-rural continuum. This report summarizes the key messages from presentations, in-depth discussions, shared experiences, session outcomes, expert contributions, and lessons learned.

Due to travel restrictions, the Forum was held in a hybrid format, with international speakers and audience connecting on-line, with domestic speakers and audience participating in the venue in Songyang County. For more background and details on the event, including information about each of the sessions please visit <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/ifurl2/>. This link provides video recordings, presentations and other materials from the Forum.



The second international forum on urban-rural linkages © Songyang County

Key Messages



Urban and rural systems are a unified territories that encompasses daily patterns of life, the complexity of which can best be seen through a “living systems” perspective as articulated in the first World Forum of Intermediary Cities ¹. Enhancing the territorial dimension of cities allows a two-way perspective from the city to its territory and from the rural hinterland to the urban core.



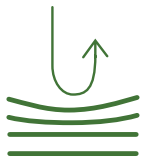
The COVID-19 global pandemic has generated an urgent demand for a better quality of life from the people around the world. Inclusive governance and democratic processes need to be reinforced to better includes rural communities and Indigenous Peoples. The COVID-19 pandemic has put on the table and made visible pre-existing inequities in every region. Lasting resilience will only be possible if disparities in access to services including social protection persist, especially for those living in rural areas including smaller cities and settlements. The COVID-19 pandemic has also generated a will for changing our models of development as a global community, requiring us to be more conscious of the fragility of life (including economic and socio-cultural systems) on our planet. We need new development models that strengthen these systems and take into account the services of ecosystems or nature, and lead to a greener way of life that better balances environment and development.



The concept of care must be at the heart of new development models, generating caring economies which take into account growing internal displacement, external migration with special attention to minorities and female empowerment. The concept of care also means taking responsibility for nature and our relationship with it, being more careful with life and its ecosystems. Beyond technology and investment, the human dimension of transformation needs to be at the heart of a renewed contract between governance at multiple levels and citizens.



Intermediary cities play an important role, linking rural and urban areas, as well as small and big agglomerations within urban systems. They host more than half of the world's population and are expected to contribute to more than 40% of urban population growth between 2010 and 2030 in less-developed regions. And they serve as key actors of the urban-rural continuum. The often unplanned growth patterns of intermediary cities expose them to compounded effects of climate change. All places including intermediary and large cities are connected through the flow of people, of goods, information, and services.



There will be no resilience without recognizing the role of intermediary cities and their function to mediate between rural and urban, providing once again a balance of yin and yang that can bring to planetary civilization a strengthening of smaller cities, towns and rural areas that include both cultivated and wild nature. Global resilience must be the key driver now for vision, policy, and actions to be pursued. The world demands resolution of inequities, focused on climate change, and territorial food and water access for all in settlements of all sizes. Such resolution will be the parameter by which a peaceful and resilient world post-COVID and urban-rural balance will be realized. The pressure to resolve inequity, injustices and disempowerment will be a critical driver for the transformations needed to achieve justice, peace and resilience.



The climate emergency requires territorial actions that encompass a balance between the urban and the rural as a balance of yin and yang, a resilient balance that embraces culture as well as economics as a driver to achieve that balance.



Climate change will change the urban-rural interface, and all flows including those that underpin food and water systems, biodiversity and other ecosystem services, placing intermediary cities on the front lines of climate change impacts. Internal (domestic) migration patterns will also be dramatically affected by climate change. Fast onsetting climate events will affect territories in different ways making a territorial approach essential to assess and identify areas of collaboration to limit the effects of climate change. Small and medium-sized cities have the potential to make strong contributions to achieving net zero transmission. Therefore, multi-level governance aligning small, intermediary, and larger cities, territories and national governments is key to promote the cooperation and collaboration between urban and rural areas.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The global “urban-rural interface” is too often a no-mans-land of change and disruption, sprawl and pollution, and extreme wealth and poverty. In this context, the health impacts of peri-urban development are likely to be exacerbated by climate stress. Peri-urban development often puts its population directly in the line of climate hazards, such as floods, fires, storms, coastal surges and invasive species. Peri-urban development also increases the health vulnerability of urban areas indirectly by disruption of food, water, ecosystems, transport pollution and congestion. Peri-urban development adds to social health vulnerability, by disruption of livelihoods and public services, growing social inequality and

exclusion, degradation of landscape and ecosystems.

There are many potential pathways and opportunities for peri-urban development to improve public health, including solutions for sustainable local livelihoods, ecosystem protection, ‘transformative adaptation’ for integrated food-energy-water systems. New models for networked and responsive public health systems are needed, including remote healthcare, community health mentors, and food quality chains. Capacity building for collaborative governance of public services, housing and general social cohesion, must be the foundation for effective public health in the peri-urban² environment.



One of the field visits for domestic participants © Songyang County

PUBLIC HEALTH, SUSTAINABLE HEALTHY DIETS AND FOOD SYSTEMS

The world faces enormous challenges in nourishing its growing population while assuring the health of the planet. An estimated one third of all food produced globally by current food systems is either lost or wasted. One third of greenhouse gas emissions is related to how we produce and what we consume. Highly processed foods, high in sugar, salt and fats are becoming more available everywhere, displacing healthier options. This alarming situation takes place in a context of urbanization and population growth. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown again the health and environmental vulnerability of the system. Current diets are the outcome of food production practices that are not sustainable and are major contributors to the decline of natural biodiversity, land degradation, water extraction and pollution. Globally current diets rely on a very limited range of crops (wheat, rice and maize) and livestock (cattle, chicken) leading to higher vulnerability in context of climate change.

Sustainable healthy diets are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals' health and well-being, have low environmental pressure and impact, are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable, and culturally acceptable. They can achieve optimal growth and development of all individuals and support functioning and physical, mental and social health and well-being at all life stages for present and future generations, and support the preservation of biodiversity and planetary health.

Urban and rural areas are not distinct territories with hard edges, but rather part of a continuum. The character of urban-rural linkages are key factors affecting nutrition. Nutrition outcomes need to be included in policy and actions for integrated territorial development. It is extremely important to utilize a territorial lens in nutrition

policy and programs and incorporate nutrition into urban and territorial planning and governance. Decision makers should consider how to effectively shape and increase inclusive urban-rural financing to address poverty, hunger and malnutrition, address human rights, environmental sensitivity and participation in policies and programs to improve nutrition. These steps will help include nutrition in the context of urban-rural linkages, in territorial governance and development in the research agenda.

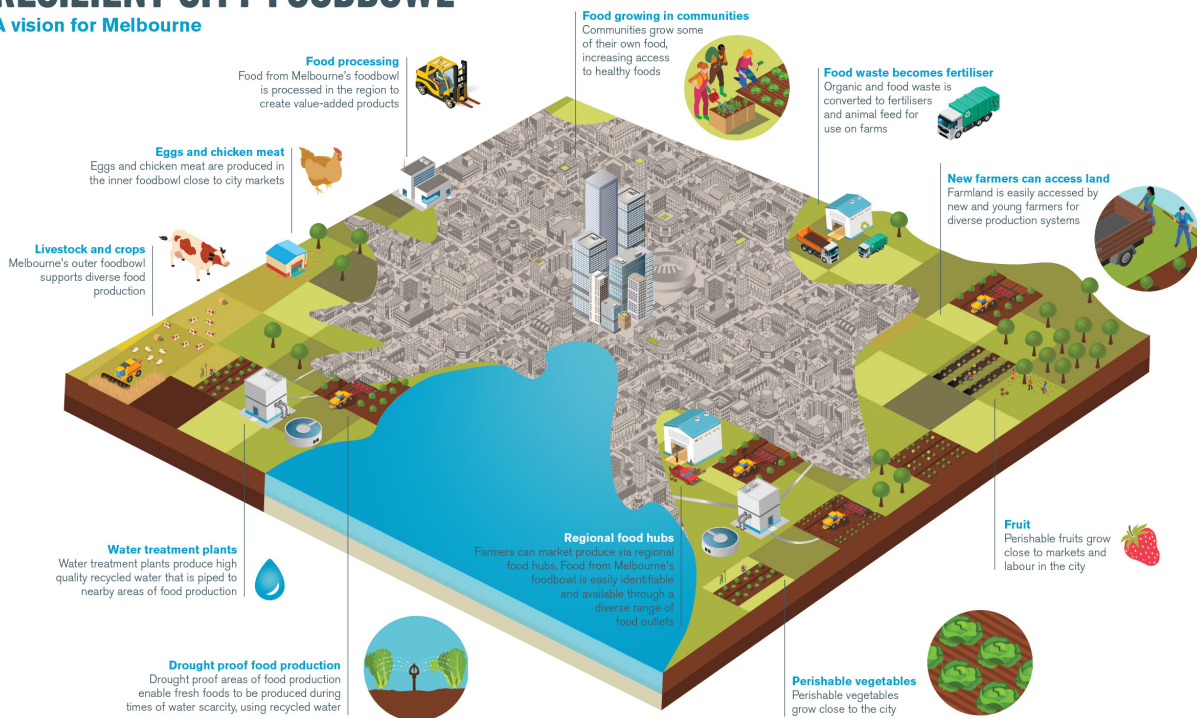
The food environments within which people make their food choices is shaped by a combination of external and personal domains that influence attitudes, choices, and habits. Food availability, prices, vendors, product properties, marketing and regulation shape the food environment externally. A healthy food environment also depends on household characteristics such as geographical accessibility, affordability, convenience, and desirability. The food environment reacts quickly to shocks in the wider food system, and the impacts vary depending on context. To protect the food environment against shocks, it is important to support more diverse and resilient distribution systems, including shorter supply chains and territorial markets.

The promotion of sustainable healthy diets helps strengthen territorial dimension of food systems, improve public health and good nutrition, and improve planetary health. Increasingly, food insecurity problems are prevalent across urban and rural areas and most pronounced in the least developed countries in the world. There is also a changing presentation of food insecurity. There is increasing double or triple burden of malnutrition, especially in Africa. The conversation about food and nutrition security and nutrition health needs to be situated in a much wider urban health framing and an urban infrastructure framing.

CASE STUDY 1. Building the resilience of Melbourne's city region food system

RESILIENT CITY FOODBOWL

A vision for Melbourne



A Vision for a resilient city foodbowl for Melbourne - source: <https://fvas.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/foodprint-melbourne>

Melbourne (Australia) is a rapidly growing city of around 5 million people, surrounded by a highly productive peri-urban region that is important to fresh food production, particularly for vegetables. However, food production in the region is at risk from rapid urbanization, loss of farmland and water scarcity. It also faces challenges from climate shocks, such as drought and fires. The 2020 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities across the region's food supply chains and improved the enabling environment for strengthening the resilience of Melbourne's city region food system. The pandemic also highlighted the risk of having just a few centralized supermarket distribution centres and food processing facilities. The Foodprint

Melbourne research project worked with stakeholders in a collaborative process to co-design strategies to strengthen the resilience of the city's food system. Foodprint includes strategies to strengthen local and regional food supply chains linking urban and peri-urban areas, foster collaborative governance across the region, promote sustainable livelihoods and address rapidly rising food insecurity. Some of the interviewees suggested the need to decentralize the food supply and have many more food markets and processing facilities to reduce the risk. Stronger links between city consumers and smaller scale local food producers and processors in the peri-urban areas for our cities can contribute to reducing this risk.

A holistic “whole-of-government” policy was adopted to strengthen the resilience of the city’s peri-urban region of food production. This was an outcome of a researched process to promote policy approaches that can strengthen the city region food system. This approach has five main pillars that focus on strengthening protection of peri-urban farmland, building strong regional food supply chains, increasing the use of recycled wastewater for food production, recycling nutrients from city waste back onto peri-urban farms and promoting sustainable approaches to farming. This framework cross multiple policy domains.

Takeaways from the case study:

1. Resilient food systems are likely to be diverse, diverse in the geographic locations that we source food from; diverse in the types and scales of food production and food enterprises.
2. Strengthening links between urban and peri-urban areas can build resilience of city region food systems. And we need to focus on building long-term resilience to any potential shock. Holistic “whole-of-government” policy approaches are needed.
3. Policy co-design processes can promote cross-sector policy approaches that promote resilient, sustainable, healthy and equitable food systems. And strong stakeholder and community networks build food system resilience.

HEALTH AS A KEY DIMENSION OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

Health and nutrition outcomes can improve the design of local and national policy programs to capitalize the synergies of improving diets, reducing health risks and empowering communities. Health interventions, territorial planning and governance are interdependent. Achieving health targets, especially those related to nutrition, eradicating food insecurity and malnutrition, will require multi-sector interventions and multi-level coordination between multiple stakeholders. And multi-sector interventions, multi-level coordination and multi-stakeholder participation as we see in the case study from Melbourne are at the core of territorial planning and governance.

The territorial approach can also be used to navigate both challenges as well as opportunities. Spatial planning profoundly impacts food and nutrition security. Spatial planning plays a key role in determining

the outcomes of food and nutrition security. A sensitivity to how planning decisions impact the food environment is new and needs to be incorporated in planning processes.

Building resilient food systems for the future requires the maintenance and restoration of food system diversity. Access to water, energy, infrastructure, waste management are all factors that shape the choices people make about food. Improvement of these systems need to build from lived experience, embedding food environment sensitivity into settlement upgrading and the planning of new areas. Incorporating food and agriculture considerations into spatial planning can enhance food and nutrition security, increase food system resilience, and embed principles of equity and sustainability into planning more broadly.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

CASE STUDY 2. Minna urban regeneration through acupuncture project at Kpakungu



Dr. Abdul Husaini's presentation during the IFURL 2 @ Songyang County

In many African cities, COVID-19 has exposed weak economies, weak infrastructure, lack of data, clash of culture and tradition, low testing rates, poor settlement planning system in place and a lack of trust in leadership.

The concept of urban acupuncture is an approach that systematically addresses contemporary cities' challenges through small scale "neuralgic" interventions in the city that can have direct impact on the urban morphology and life. In this approach, citizens' desires are taken into account in a situational and cultural context that focuses on the social cohesion of urban environment.

The Kpakungu area of Minna is within the city, lacks

basic amenities such as drainages, water and open space, and is densely populated and more prone to disease outbreak. The Minna Urban Regeneration through Acupuncture at Kpakungu Project is inspired by Songyang's successful integration of rural and urban areas through inclusive planning. The project was guided by the ongoing UN-Habitat-Niger State partnership through the UN-Habitat Urban Support Programme. It was designed to facilitate the systematic upgrading of a blighted area of Minna through:

1. Provision of a simple drainage system to collect domestic wastewater from each household
2. Improvement, where necessary, of storm water drainage within the neighborhood

3. Tarring of roads for improved travel
4. Provision of public sit-out and children play areas
5. Provision of community water points through boreholes and reticulation of tap water from existing public mains

The project is economically, politically, environmentally and socially beneficial. It can also help the area become more resilient during the pandemic through improving its drainage system, toilet facility, road upgrading, inclusive partnership and ownership and public spaces.

A more resilient city with better public health emergency response capacity requires better spatial planning which is inclusive and proactive. Unfortunately, in many developing countries, resilience is challenged by poor planning system, poor health sector intervention and fragile economies. It is therefore important that we acknowledge and emphasize the need for effective planning

CASE STUDY 3. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic from a local perspective



Ellen van Selm - Mayor of the municipality of Opsterland - presenting the Opsterland case at IFURL 2 @ Songyang County

The rural municipality Opsterland is in the province of Friesland in the north of the Netherlands. The consequences of the COVID-19 crisis might be visible for a long time. The pandemic has both economic and social effects. The Netherlands has provided national economic support grants to help with economic recovery. Research has also suggested a decline in mental health with a quarter of young adults psychologically unhealthy in the first half of 2021. The mayor of Opsterland realized the importance of face-to-face interactions in rural communities. The municipality has focused on assessing the necessity of social

interventions, making use of a Dutch interpretation of the SDGs, called comprehensive wellbeing, which concerns not only economic development, but also the living environment, including public spaces, which have a huge impact on the wellbeing of the residents.

A well-established coordination mechanism and governance arrangements are also important. In the Netherlands, both urban and rural municipalities work together. Throughout the pandemic, this cooperation has been of great importance in sharing information and monitoring COVID cases, developing measures and organizing the vaccination programme.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised the profile of health within the context of urban-rural linkages by generating new analysis, tools, policies, and governance mechanisms needed to address health in relation to strengthening urban-rural linkages. Topics covered during the event included the built environment and health, public health, sustainable healthy diets and food systems, traditional medicine, local knowledge and culture, health as a key dimension of territorial planning and governance, and lastly, crisis management and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

IFURL 2 underscored the proposition that good health and the well-being of people living within the urban-rural continuum are important factors for territories to be functional. The unprecedented reach of the pandemic has demonstrated that health is impacted and influenced by many other sectors and factors beyond what some may strictly consider as the health sector. The discourse in IFURL 2 has expanded the 'health sector' to include both the built environment and the natural environment whose intersection can directly and indirectly affect human health and livelihoods. In the face of the protracted global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, re-examining health through the lens of urban-rural linkages can provide a practical, actionable approach to intertwined challenges of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. The presentations of IFURL 2 demonstrate that policymakers, public health practitioners, urban planners and all other stakeholders can benefit from a collaborative approach to improve the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into their

decision-making and policy making, across sectors, territories and the policy arena.

Additionally, by placing an emphasis on rural cultures, value systems and rural revitalization, IFURL 2 also highlighted the importance of urban-rural linkages on the journey to sustainable urbanization (SDG 11); which aims to build inclusive safe resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. The event has shown that an important aspect of the journey is support for urban-rural linkages that are inclusive, mutually reinforcing, and interacting in ways that can benefit both rural and urban areas to promote more economic integration, territorial balance, and mutual promotion that will reshape the way territories are understood and experienced in the future. Cities, towns and villages comprise an organic whole with surrounding rural landscapes that can collaborate to optimize regional and territorial development and rural transformation. Therefore, a territorial approach is critical to appreciate efficient two-way flows of both tangible and intangible resources including wisdom, talent, capital, science and technology.

Finally, IFURL 2 was fruitful as a tangible demonstration of the strategic collaboration between co-organisers UN-Habitat and Songyang County, who work hand in hand to advance urban-rural linkages and elevate the importance of rural transformation. New partnerships that were formed after the forum will strengthen existing collaborations, expand the network and collaboration to bring territories and health into the same policy and normative discourse.

FORUM AGENDA

OPENING CEREMONY

Maimunah Mohd Sharid, Executive Director, UN-Habitat Opening Remarks

Remy Sietchiping, Director, Policy Legislation and Governance Section, UN-Habitat Introduction

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Firdaous Oussidhoum, Special Adviser to the Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) "The role for the Rural-Urban Linkage in the Global resilience: towards a new definition"

Vicente Ruiz, Economist, OECD "Intermediary Cities and Climate Change"

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Joe Ravetz, Manchester Urban Institute, Director of the Global Project Peri-cene "Spaces between or new places emerging? Towards a 'collective peri-urban intelligence'"

Jane Battersby, Urban Geographer, University of Cape Town "Incorporating Food and Nutrition Sensitivity into Spatial Planning: An African Perspective"

Li Sun, assistant professor, University of Leeds "Public Spaces and Health"

PUBLIC HEALTH, SUSTAINABLE HEALTHY DIETS AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Stineke Oenema, Executive Secretary, UN Nutrition "Sustainable healthy diets, food systems and urban-rural linkages"

Rachel Carey, Senior lecturer, Food Systems in the School of Agriculture and Food, University of Melbourne "Building the resilience of Melbourne's city region food system"

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

Maria-Teresa Nogales, founder and executive director, Fundación Alternativas, Bolivia "Tradition medicine, COVID-19 and Urban-Rural Linkages"

HEALTH AS A KEY DIMENSION OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

Adriano Campolina, senior policy officer, FAO "Health and nutrition as key dimensions of territorial food systems planning and governance"

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Abdul Husaini, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands and Housing, Niger State, Nigeria

“Minna urban regeneration through acupuncture project at Kpakungu”

Ellen van Selm, Mayor of the Municipality of Opsterland, Netherlands

“Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic from a local perspective”

Felipe Fonseca, Director of the Rural Agricultural Planning Unit, Colombia

“Fundamental role in countryside to guarantee supply”

References

1 https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/kutahya_declaration_intermediary_cities.pdf

2 <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/synergistics/> and <https://urban3.net/>

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