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“What data is needed for to improve city-regional food systems decision-making for health & sustainability outcomes”

It is vital to understand the dynamics of the food systems, governance, local authorities, and various stakeholders (e.g. producers, and consumers) participating in the region. This would aid in determining how the actors could be involved in the improvement and planning of sustainable food systems, that benefit all people, regardless of social status.

The required data could answer the following questions: Where is the distribution of food systems? Are they sustainable, effective, and adequate? Who are the actors? What are the current systems' limitations and challenges? How can they be improved? First, socioeconomic data is needed i.e. income, food production costs, views about health, consumer food preferences, production profits/losses, and population. With the data, it could be established if the current food systems are functional and meet the demographic and health demands of the communities. Additionally, we could assess the success or failure of previous interventions and plan for future innovations.

Second, geographic information such as the location of food systems, food markets, and distances to roads and markets are required. This data could be used to estimate the spatial coverage of food production and food markets in the region, and whether additional food system processes are required. Third, environmental data such as rainfall/temperature data and natural disasters affecting food growth and production are required. Such information is critical for recognizing losses caused by climatic disasters and planning for climate-resilient food systems. Finally, data on farmers, food processors, and market owners' knowledge, attitudes, and practices may be useful in identifying knowledge gaps as well as regulatory or technological issues confronting local food system players. Overall, the data could assist policymakers and decision-makers in establishing strategies for developing economically viable, socially equitable, and environmentally friendly food systems that promote the health and food production of the regions.