



Developing a Sustainable Food Security Program for an Urban Coastal City, Navotas City, Metro Manila. Part 2.

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Abstract: Despite the importance of urban coastal food systems to the achievement of food security; urban coastal cities continue to be most vulnerable to the impacts brought about by climate change. This paper is a follow up study to a previous report which looked into the development of a sustainable food security program for Navotas designed to mitigate the impacts brought about by climate change to food availability, access, utilization and stability and how these affects food security. This study aims to validate the use of the proposed food security program in Navotas and determine if there are improvements to the food security environment of Navotas a year after the initial study. Data from literature reviews and agency reports were validated by key informant interviews of local and national officials and focus group discussions with different stakeholder groups.

Key Words: sustainability; food security; urban centers

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding food security involves not only the technical considerations for food production, but also the economic situation of food producers, the climate and ecosystems within which they operate which also includes the available markets for crops, goods and livestock (Tamiru et al., 2011). Studies by Keatinge et al. (2010) and Michaelsen et al. (2009) have shown that the food security condition of both rich and poor communities whether they live in rural or urban settings improves when there is greater access to healthy and diversified diets Furthermore, gender roles is an important aspect of food security that until recently was largely under appreciated. In the Philippines as with many other countries, women are largely responsible for producing and marketing vegetables, they also play a significant part in processing fresh produce for value-addition after harvest (Keatinge et al., 2012).

Even though national agencies take lead in ensuring food safety and quality standards through enforced regulations, the food sector is largely a service and manufacturing industry, thus stakeholder involvement becomes a key parameter for monitoring, transparency and accountability (Fan et al. 2011;World Bank 2012).

An initial study on Navotas, found that the LGU perceived food security more as a component of the larger concern of human welfare and security, wherein local initiatives were focused on programmatic responses such as elementary school feeding programs and food drives. Given the geography and demographic characteristics of Navotas, flood control and social welfare programs would often take precedence in budget allocation and program implementation. The paper aims to present an updated study on Navotas City's a year after the researchers proposed the adoption and implementation of a food security program for the LGU.



2. METHODOLOGY

Literature survey and review of current legal and fiscal policies pertaining to urban coastal cities and current local policies in the City of Navotas were conducted to find out the current issues and challenges affecting food production capability and availability in this local government unit. Recent findings were compared to the data gathered from the previous study to determine if Navotas has adopted the proposed food security program and if the city has made any developments in creating a food secure environment for its citizens.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the new challenges identified that affect the ability of Navotas City local government in providing food security for their constituents?

A year after the initial study, the concept of Food Security has yet to be embraced by the LGU as a separate and distinct area of concern as evidence by the lack of an actual Food Security Policy in place. The City has been continuously allocating funding for food security in their Annual Development Plan since 2011, the absence of a unified plan of action for food related policies and concerns could very well hamper the LGUs ability to mitigate food related issues. Social welfare and climate change are significant challenges to Navotas' ability to ensure its citizens have direct access to affordable and nutritious food items. Recent procurement and after project reports have shown that the LGU has taken a very strong stand against the city's vulnerability to flooding, storm surges and severe weather as these directly impact not only local food production, but also local industry and human welfare and security.

2. What are the new food security best practices and developments in food security environment of Navotas City?

Despite still not having a concrete food security plan, Navotas' existing framework for addressing food related issues appear promising. A year after the walk-in interview at the City Planning Office, new ordinances and zoning regulations were put in place in order to mitigate the effects that

flooding and climate change has to the living and working conditions of the residents (e.g. allocation of new living space which includes possible backyard agri-fish production). A number of relocation programs have been undertaken as well as new anti-flooding projects are also now underway. The city council aims to develop the city into a flood resilient community.

The feeding programs continue to project successful results in alleviating malnutrition for underage and primary school children. Just this January 2015, the city held its first ever Food Festival highlighting not only the local residence love for food but also for the appreciation for homemade and local industry food production. This newfound appreciation for the local food production industry promotes not only commercial benefits to the producers, more importantly the festival creates a sense of awareness and pride for the residents of Navotas to realize the importance that food security and self-sufficiency plays in their daily lives.

3. What are the new developments in the food security environment of Navotas City a year after the initial study?

New infra-structures are being created in Navotas, which when completed can significantly improve the food security environment of the coastal city. These include the first public and locally-funded Navotas City Hospital, set to be fully operational by January 2015. The City is also set to build at least two or three more pumping stations early this year to add up to the existing 39 anti-flood facilities. The three-story hospital will cater mainly to the poor residents, especially thousands of PhilHealth cardholders (another LGU project). Over all, the local government is continuously implementing a long term plan designed to ensure the welfare and safety of its citizenry will be looked after.

Currently, the city of Navotas is primarily focused on poverty alleviation, human welfare and basic service provision. But what seems to be a growing trend for the city and its leaders is a growing appreciation and discussions on food related security issues as well as creating local awareness for the significance of food issues to the lives and welfare of its residents.

4. What are new policy recommendations for the national government and LGUs to adopt that are necessary to help achieve a sustainable food security environment for urban coastal cities?

LGUs must realize that local food security initiatives are important as they represent actual programmatic responses tailor-made to address sectoral or communal food security concerns be it on a policy, program or process level (Cabanilla, 2006). Lessons and insights from the local food security perspective are reflected back to the national level in order to help strengthen and/or develop needed food security related policies, mechanisms and institutions. Sustainable livelihoods and a healthy landscape likewise depend upon the integrated management of natural resources (Gutierrez-Montes et al., 2012; Valdivia, 2001); understanding existing social conditions of a community and how their use of natural resources and its impact to the environment should also be given consideration. Coastal cities should benefit from these insights as they are vulnerable to climatological and geographical considerations. Thus food security for Navotas and other urban coastal cities should be viewed not just through programmatic responses of the LGU representatives. What should instead be promoted by the city government is a holistic perspective, grounded in stakeholder consultation and participation as shown by the Conceptual Framework for Food Security in Urban Coastal Areas developed by Carandang, et.al. (2014).

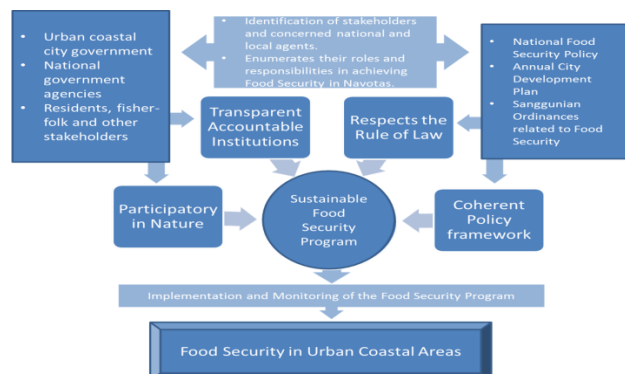


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Food Security in Urban Coastal Areas

4. CONCLUSIONS

A year after the initially study, Navotas has made significant efforts in creating a food secure environment for its citizenry. Granted, an overall food security program has yet to be adopted, the LGUs successes in implementing policies aimed at poverty alleviation, the provision of social welfare and basic health care has in fact helped promote the realization of creating a food secure environment in the city. It remains to be seen if this development is merely coincidental and whether or not the local government will continue its initiatives on creating awareness for local food production through its program of a Navotas Food Festival.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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