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## PRESENTATION SNAPSHOT

# What makes food policies happen? Insights from Portuguese initiatives



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## Presentation Abstract

Two key questions addressed in the current study are why urban agriculture and food initiatives in Portugal take so long to materialize, and why existing initiatives don't scale up from projects to policies. We argue that existing initiatives are mainly carried out as linear processes and have quite limited long-term political commitment. We carried out in-depth interviews with key informants involved in formulating the four initiatives examined. Findings suggest that political commitment and funding are critical points explaining why urban agriculture and food initiatives take so long to materialize in Portugal. These findings align with the conclusions of the recent reports from IPES-Food (Hawkes & Halliday, 2017) and ICLEI-RUAF (Dubbeling, 2013) on what makes food policy happen. In-depth interviews with key informants highlight additional **constraints**, notably the lack of several important facilitating tools such as **monitoring and assessment of initiatives; strong vertical multilevel governance and horizontal city-based governance; and significant participatory processes for project implementation and policy formulation**. Based on the results obtained so far, we conclude that the constraints found in Portugal come mostly from governance-related issues. Therefore, changes can only happen under a supportive policy at the national level and a facilitating legal system based on vertical and horizontal multilevel governance, strong political commitment, and a national awareness campaign among all the food systems actors. A national platform able to gather relevant data and assess and monitor ongoing initiatives may be the key step to assembling different stakeholders who can advocate and then lead to higher political commitment in Portugal.

**Keywords:** Urban Agriculture; Drivers; Constraints; Food Policies; Portugal

## Key Points

- Portugal needs a food system approach, even if the reasons are different from Canada: For example, more people in Portugal rely on food banks, and food waste is higher in Portugal than in Canada.
- Existing Portuguese urban agriculture initiatives are viewed as single events, mainly oriented toward food


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production for self-consumption rather than considering the whole spectrum of the food system.

- Raising awareness among Portuguese decision-makers is critical to advancing place-based urban agriculture initiatives as a component of the food system.
- Portugal isolation from the international urban agriculture and food debate can partially explain why urban agriculture is still fighting to find its place in Portuguese cities and their outskirts.
- At this time, there is a huge opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, notably between Portugal and the U.S. and Canada, which have long traditions of urban agriculture and food systems development. 

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