

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON. JOHN GAKUO THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR WATER, ENERGY, FORESTRY, ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENNING OF FOODMETERS WORKSHOP AT THE CHIROMO CONFERENCE CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, WENESDAY JULY 3 2013

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me begin by taking this opportunity to thank the organizers of this workshop for allowing me, on behalf of the Governor of Nairobi City County, to share some of my thoughts on the issues surrounding urban food security and sustainability in Nairobi.

Nairobi happens to be the only city in the world with a national park within her boundaries. We also happen to be the commercial and communication hub of the region. We are thus a great city on the continent.

This notwithstanding, Africa finds itself at a historic crossroads and Kenya is no exception. During the next 15 years, more than half of those living on the African continent will be living in cities. Kenya is expected to reach that urban tipping point even sooner. Whilst in 1980, only about 30 years ago, 8 percent of Kenyans lived in cities, by 2020, according to the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, that figure will have reached 50 percent.

Also in 2007, the larger Nairobi Metropolitan area had a population of 6.1 million. This number is expected to rise to 12 million by 2030. Quite rightly, food, and questions about how we will feed our rapidly growing cities, and what kind of food regimes we want to produce and provide the food we consume, is moving towards the centre of policy and development debates.

Clearly, in the context of rapid urbanization, food security is very much the crux of the matter. But the question of urban food security is no simple matter. It brings together questions of urbanization, smallholder production systems, economic growth, imports and exports, inclusivity and exclusivity, sustainability, inequality, governance and planning and finally, infrastructure.

Solutions to urban food security questions are therefore not simply a matter of increasing production, but also improving government policies towards local production and consumption of food, and the provision of infrastructure, such as better roads, storage, logistics and distribution. In other words, if we are to create food secure, sustainable cities, as is the intention, we must understand the entire food chain, and make improvements all along it, including the structures that govern food chains.

But the intersection of food and urbanization does not only pose a challenge, but certainly also provides economic potential. Whilst a growing number of people in Nairobi require more and more food to meet their nutritional requirements, African farmers, who produce much of that food, are seeing their markets grow. Nairobi is therefore also a catalyst for rural development.

If we are to both overcome the food security challenges which cities provide, whilst also tapping into the inclusive economic potential which cities generate, we must find ways to efficiently link

urban food demand and production. I have mentioned already that we must think about the type of food regime we want to employ to produce and provide the food we consume. African urban food systems are very complex because individuals, rather than large firms operationalised them. Smallholder farmers produce the food, thousands of traders then bring food to Nairobi, and sell it on to brokers, and wholesalers, who in turn sell it on retailers – many of them single entrepreneurs – and finally, to consumers, at markets, street corners, dukas, kiosks, and also supermarkets. As a result, Africa's urban food systems are amongst the most complex in the world. Some regard this as problematic. But, and this is an important point; growing, expanding and increasing the efficiency of Nairobi's food systems is not only a source of economic growth for Kenyans, but because it is so complex, it also has the potential to be decidedly inclusive. At the intersection between food and cities, climate change poses a formidable threat. Sustainability is therefore another characteristic of the food regime, which we should set out to create. We must innovate, to produce our food more sustainably.

But food sovereignty – our potential to produce the food we consume – is also an equally important source of sustainability. The resources to grow our own food are there, we know that. Yet, each year, the volume of imported food rises. This is partly because government has not yet succeeded in providing the right mix of incentives for farmers and partly because urban consumers tend to buy imports as they start to profit from Kenya's economic growth. Not only should we thus work to make our production methods more sustainable, but we should also work to shorten the food chains which provide the food we consume. We should work to be more food sovereign. The potential to do so is enormous. That brings me to urban agriculture, the shortest urban food chains of all. Even in Nairobi's built environment, people find space to grow food. Not only does this provide a potential sustainable component of our urban food security strategy, the urban poor often diversify their sources of incomes through engaging in urban agriculture. Urban planners and county governments should consider how to incorporate environmentally sound urban agriculture into their plans and byelaws.

With the creation of the county governments, Nairobi City County, will start thinking about how it will start feeding itself. Urban food planning, production, distribution will need to become an agenda for the New City County. Nairobi City County will need to find innovative and sustainable ways of feeding its increasing urban population. Shortening food chains, reducing the ecological footprint of the city while at the same time managing the environmental aspects, will have to be on the agenda of the Nairobi City County. Nothing manifests the seriousness with which the Governor regards the urban food security situation than the creation of a fully-fledged Department of Agriculture and Livestock in Nairobi County. This department will be responsible for all matters agricultural including food planning production and distribution.

A review of the by-laws is also timely, getting rid of inconsistencies in the by-laws and institutions. There is need to create an enabling environment for urban farming, by reviewing legislations some, which are full of contradictions. There will be need to review and harmonise such pieces of legislations at Nairobi County, Senate and Parliament. The need to create symbiotic and complementary relationships cannot be overlooked. In terms of urban food planning, Nairobi, Kiambu, Machakos and Kajiado Counties should be linked in line with metropolitan regional planning concept, as well as Vision 2030. The project under which today's workshop falls – FOODMETRES – Food planning and innovation for sustainable metropolitan

regions – is both highly relevant in terms of the challenges that Nairobi faces, as well as the potential it provides. I wish you a fruitful meeting today, not only for yourselves, but also, to generate knowledge required to combat the challenges we face as a result of a rapidly growing Nairobi.

Thank You