



# Introduction

Aboabo market in Tamale.

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The world is urbanizing, and cities are becoming consumption hubs that drain their surroundings of food, water, energy and labor. Urban food systems are changing worldwide, driven not only by growing urban demand for food, but also by globalizing food markets and changing diets. Urban food system activities, ranging from production through distribution and processing to consumption, span across - and thereby link - urban, peri-urban, regional and international spaces.

For instance, urban food demand has an effect on food production areas within and beyond provincial and national boundaries through trade and vice versa; where crops cannot be stored, urban and peri-urban agriculture producing perishable crops benefit from the proximity to permanent and reliable markets; urban diets are influenced by international fast food.

In many low-income countries, food insecurity affects both urban and rural populations, as the

majority of urban dwellers relies on food markets and is therefore vulnerable to rising food prices.

There has been an increasing interest in urban food systems research given the pace and intensity of change these systems are undergoing and related emerging issues of urban food system resilience and sustainability. Aside from the academic interest, cities are considered key in solving many of today's challenges, for instance, urban agriculture is considered a means to minimize negative environmental effects from long-distance food transportation and a way to recycle urban organic waste as well as to generate income and contribute to food security in urban areas. At the same time, urban agriculture is affected by uncontrolled expansion of cities and air and water pollution. Beyond urban agriculture, improving city-hinterland interactions and relations has received increasing attention to enhance urban food system resilience and sustainability in urbanizing environments.

Given growing urban populations and the tremendous changes food systems are undergoing, there is a need to better understand urban food systems, the related production areas, opportunities and challenges, and how this is or should be linked to urban planning.

### About the publication

This publication tries to shed light on these issues in the context of cities in Ghana and Burkina Faso, West Africa. It was developed as part of the interdisciplinary UrbanFood<sup>Plus</sup> project (UFP), studying urban agriculture in four West African cities ([www.urbanfoodplus.org](http://www.urbanfoodplus.org)). This publication mainly presents findings of project activities in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Tamale, Ghana (Figure 0.1), carried out between

2013 and 2017. It provides a selection of the comprehensive results generated by the project on food system activities, including urban production, distribution, marketing and consumption, in these cities in the context of rapid urban growth and planning challenges. The publication comprises a background chapter on urban development and four main chapters describing urban food system activities that start with **urban farming** activities in Tamale and Ouagadougou. **Urban food supply** includes food flows and supply challenges. The chapters on **markets and consumption** give insights into retail markets and changing consumption patterns. The last chapter provides insights into **stakeholder dialogues**, a process which has accompanied the project from the very beginning.



Figure 0.1. Map of Ghana and Burkina Faso.