This policy brief is informed by the findings of the ESRC/DFID-funded Consuming Urban Poverty Project (CUP) (formally called “Governing Food Systems to Alleviate Poverty in Secondary Cities in Africa”) on work carried out in low-income neighbourhoods of Kitwe, Zambia, in 2016 and 2017. The central focus of the study was to understand the connections between poverty, governance and urban space. This brief presents key findings related to market governance and makes policy recommendations that propose possible benefits that may emerge from the adoption of a food/poverty lens to certain governance approaches.

**Municipal markets and urban governance**

Historically, local governments in Zambia have played a critical role in the food system with efforts to ensure food security for urban residents through their management of municipal markets. However, under the current devolved governance processes in Zambia, the centrality of food governance as integral to the management of markets, and wider urban food access, has been lost. Market management is now largely viewed as being about regulating activities, provisioning of infrastructure, and the control of land.

Decisions that profoundly affect the food system are increasingly made without consideration of the food security impacts of these decisions.

Research from the Consuming Urban Poverty project confirmed that the informal food retail sector is essential to the food security of Kitwe’s urban poor, but its ability to meet these food security needs is dependent both on the location of these businesses and on the quality of infrastructure they have access to.

The Consuming Urban Poverty project investigated the food security status of residents of two poor neighbourhoods in Kitwe: Ipusukilo and Wusakile. Results from the survey found high levels of food insecurity, with only 6% of the sampled households considered food secure. Furthermore, when dietary diversity was examined, the mean household dietary diversity score for the sampled households was 3.25 out of a possible 12, where score of less than 6 is seen as a proxy indicator for malnutrition. Combined, the figures point to significant food poverty. When respondents were asked where food was accessed and how households navigated the food system, the informal sector was found to be the primary access point. Within this broad category, accessing food from local and central city markets dominated. In addition, central city markets played a vital role as the primary source of food for neighbourhood traders. Figure 1 on the next page shows the central role played by markets in the food access strategies of the respondents.

The focus of this policy brief is the municipal-run markets and their centrality in the urban food retail sector. Food retail is the main point of interaction between consumers and the food system – a key focus of the Consuming Urban Poverty project. The importance of these retailers as a source of food security has, however, not been recognised by the state. The current governance of food retail spaces is determined by an idealised “modern” city view. However, the limited capacity or resources to achieve this ideal, and the need to curate a complicated set of relationships with traders, market associations, large-scale private capital and the development sector has a fundamental impact on how the markets are governed and viewed.

**Market governance – a historical perspective**

The main legal basis for the original governance of the urban food system was the 1937 Market Ordinance, also known as the Lusaka Markets Act. This Act placed markets under the control and management of local authorities, regulating market buildings, what goods could be sold, when and at what maximum prices, as well as giving local authorities the right to inspect and grade goods. The 1937 Act was a powerful tool of spatial and economic control, in which control of the food...
system to meet urban food needs was seen as central. However, it was designed and promulgated in a predominantly rural country, with small urban centres characterised by almost full employment within the formal sector. The Markets Act was repealed in 2007 and replaced with the Markets and Bus Stations Bill, the draft form of which included clauses about price ceilings. Following an internal government review, these price control clauses were removed because they were “incompatible with the liberalised economy”. With the changes that followed and the liberalised economic approach applied, the primacy of market forces in delivering food security is made apparent as a principle of governance, and the role of urban markets as part of a food system designed to ensure urban food security was lost. Cities and the urban food system are now largely absent from Zambian food policy.

**Urban food governance in Kitwe**

The urban food system is being shaped by governance and planning interventions undertaken by local government that are not viewed as food system interventions but informed by economic development, foreign donor and land capture ideals. This is demonstrated through the local government’s governance of the city’s main market, Chisokone Market, in Kitwe’s Central Business District. The market has grown well beyond its original site. It occupies 15ha of land and is estimated to accommodate up to 10 000 traders. However, the officially gazetted area of the market is just 8 000m². The rest comprises the un-gazetted Chisokone B, C, Chisokone Kingston and Chisokone furniture market sites on land that is zoned for formal commercial activity, sites which have been occupied since at least the early 1990s. Marketeers on un-gazetted land have in practice gained legitimacy through paying daily tolls. In response to this situation, traders started calling the market Chisokone fertilised market.

![Figure 1: Main food sources for households in the past year (multiple-response question, 15 most cited responses listed) n=2 470.](image-url)

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market fees to the City Council. However this legitimacy is constantly challenged through municipal (and at times national government) initiatives aimed at market upgrading, market relocations, often to sites on the peri-urban fringe of the city, far removed from the foot traffic of customers and coupled with ongoing removal of street traders, who are then decanted into the already over-crowded Chisokone Market.

The central challenge associated with this disregard for both the main Chisokone market and neighbourhood markets is that it disregards the main food access points used by the poor urban consumer. The use of local markets and Chisokone is often linked to other access-related questions, such as links to transport interchanges, being accessible on foot, or being centrally located so that purchases can be combined with other visits to these centrally located areas.

The current over-arching policy and planning position of Kitwe City Council appears to favour modernisation and a desire to remove or control the informal sector. Evidence from the CUP research points to the fact that Kitwe residents make use of both the formal and informal food system in their endeavours to access food (Figure 1). Finding ways to proactively work with both food systems requires greater consideration.

Governance responses appear to swing from tacit support for market traders to repression, depending on the politics of the moment. Given the importance of the informal food retail sector to the food security of Kitwe's urban poor, understanding how these markets and their actors contribute to the economy, the food system and food security is an essential governance role; one that requires greater consideration before markets are relocated or targeted for closure.

More proactive food system governance within existing municipal mandates will improve food security and nutrition within Kitwe, which will have wider development benefits for the city and its residents.

Policy suggestions

• Local authorities should adopt a moratorium in all market relocations.
• A formal city-scale market strategy adopted through wide consultation needs to be formulated to map out the intersection between the city economy, the food system and food security.
• Local authorities need to review how they engage the 2007 Markets and Bus Stations Bill so as to enable proactive integration of the markets and other trader activities into strategic planning and management activities with a specific food security focus.
• The food security needs of all Kitwe residents must be considered in market governance and planning decisions.
• Marketeers and civil society groups working on food-security-related issues should be included in participatory processes regarding food markets.
• In the long term, the Kitwe City Council should work towards establishing appropriate governance structures to incorporate food security and food systems within their core mandates.