



**Report on the launch of the Food
Systems Desk**

**Under the AfriFOODlinks Project
implemented by Lusaka City Council**

Nakatindi Hall, Lusaka City Council

29th August, 2025

1. Introduction

AfriFOODlinks is an EU-funded project coordinated by ICLEI Africa worth thirty-five thousand euros and aims to address the systemic underpinnings of food insecurity and environmental impact, to lead to real transformation. The project sets out to do so by supporting knowledge generation and research uptake on a city-level, funding real-world interventions and strengthening linkages and collaborative networks between cities and other stakeholders committed to food systems transformation across the globe. Lusaka City Council (through the mayor's office) has been part of this project since 2023 as a sharing city.

Where are we now

- An embedded researcher from UNZA (Dr. Gilbert Siame) had been engaged by ICLEI Africa to carryout research on food systems in Lusaka
- A youth ambassador (Chef Womba Mufuzi) was also engaged by ICLEI Africa to act as a food enthusiast who will bring ideas and engage youths on reshaping the future of our food systems
- Lusaka hosted an exchange visit of 12 municipal officials from Lisbon (Portugal), Arusha (Tanzania) and Cape Town (South Africa) in April, 2024. In August 2024, Arusha City Council hosted the 2nd exchange visit while Lisbon City Council hosted in April 2025 and Lusaka City Council participated in all learning processes.
- Three workshops for Councillors and Heads of Departments have been held to build their capacity in food systems and the importance of having a dedicated **food desk** that will spearhead the implementation of the project.

Functions of the food desk

- Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration: Foster inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagements for effective communication, coordination, resource pooling and collective action.

- Develop mechanisms for resource Mobilization and Funding: The mechanism needs to be developed to support the well-functioning of the Lusaka Food Policy Council (LFPC) and the office. These could enhance the financial sustainability of the LFPC through diversified funding streams, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing models.
- Policy Analysis and Development Capacity: Strengthen evidence-based policymaking through enhanced research, data analysis, data and information sharing, and build technical expertise in the food systems sector in Lusaka region.
- Inclusivity and Interest Management: Address competing interests and equity gaps by promoting participatory decision-making, social inclusion, and gender mainstreaming in food systems governance in Lusaka.
- Data-Driven and Evidence-based decision-Making: The proposed structures need to prioritize synthesis of Develop robust data management systems for informed decision-making, performance monitoring, and impact evaluation.
- Participatory Governance and Accountability: Amplify stakeholder engagement, transparency, and accountability through regular feedback mechanisms, civic participation, and collaborative problem-solving. Establish and strengthen food system labs and create a food systems office at Lusaka City Council for visibility and engagement.
- Promotion of value addition to reduce food wastage e.g. making tomato sauce and paste from tomatoes
- Introducing other sources of markets by connecting framers to other companies to reduce the current food wastage, creating an online market with proper segmentation of food products and prices

Reporting Structure

- Housed under the Department of Housing and Social Services given that it has presence in all local communities.

- Supervised by the Director of Housing and Social Services who will make reports to the committee meetings that feed into the Full Council meetings for by-law generation.
- Provide reports to the District Development Coordinating Committee that will feed into the Provincial Development Coordinating Committee and the National Development Coordinating Committee.

2. Launch of the Food Desk

On 29th August, 2025, Lusaka City Council with partners that include HIVOS, CUTS International, and CURP launched the Food Desk at Nakatindi Hall. The launch was also an opportunity for partners to highlight the roles they have played in setting up the food desk and the support they intend to give to the Council.

The event was graced by the Town Clerk, Eng. Liftery Ndaba, who was represented by Acting Director of Housing and Social Services. The Town clerk emphasized that the launch of the food systems desk aims to directly address some of these pressing challenges facing the city. He pointed out that sustainable food systems are at the core of human well-being as they play a critical role in determining not only what we consume, but also influence what we grow, how we grow it, how our food is processed, stored, distributed, and ultimately consumed-all of which have a profound impact on the health of our city's population, our livelihoods, and the environment as a whole. He concluded by challenging all in attendance to view this food systems desk through a futuristic lens, one that will transcend the launch.

Dr Siame, the embedded researcher of the project from the University of Zambia, explained the rationale behind establishing the desk, noting Lusaka's strategic role in piloting food system interventions and addressing key challenges such as:

- Coordination and governance gaps
- Very limited storage capacity of horticultural products
- Poor performance of public food markets

- Very high levels of food loss
- Food safety – quality and traceability challenges
- Poor market information systems
- Poor service delivery at public food markets
- Low farmer control or role in food pricing and selling – mostly by largely uncountable brokers/ agents
- High levels of malnutrition – in low income communities

Dr Siame further stated that in order for the food desk to be a success, support from various actors should be enhanced which includes strengthening the capacity of the food desk and the council in general.

HIVOS made a presentation through Mr. Vuyo Mupango, who is a program manager and has supported the project from its inception. One of the key interventions he highlighted that the Food Desk will accomplish is to pilot an intervention in Chilenje market that will be used to build coordination efforts with other stakeholders in the food system. HIVOS has been collaborating with GIZ in various projects and would like to collaborate with other organisations. Mr. Mupango further highlighted that HIVOS aspires that by the end of the project, the government will have recognized the need to have officers at local government level that can coordinate stakeholders and communities to plan for food systems at ward level.

The event was concluded by the guest of Honor, The City Mayor, Ms. Chilando Chitangala. The mayor noted that such systems as the Food Desk are vital as they directly influence food security, access to healthy nutrition, and the sustainability of our urban areas. By coordinating diverse stakeholders and implementing relevant policies, they lay the groundwork for a more resilient and equitable food systems. She further added that the food systems desk will support evidence-based policy-making through improved research, data analysis, and information sharing. This will enhance technical expertise in food systems, not only in Lusaka but throughout the country. Being an advocate of youth empowerment and involvement in development, the mayor highlighted that the food system desk will also give youth, the opportunity to

influence priorities at community level through dialogue, advocacy and ultimately, and that young people now have the platform to foster the formulation of youth engagements in decision making related to food systems.

The launch concluded with the concluding remarks from Councillor Luka Phiri, who is the Chairperson of the Culture, Community Development, sports and Social Services Committee. He appreciated the various stakeholders that have been part of the establishment of the Food Desk and pledged continued support to its operations.

It is also worth noting that on Tuesday 2nd September, 2025, the Coordinators of the Food Desk had arranged for the building of capacity in food systems for the Chilenje Market rehabilitation to 35 Community Development Officers from the Department of Housing and Social Services in Food Systems so that they are equipped to provide similar trainings in other markets in the city.



Figure 1 showing the Her Worship the Mayor with Ward Councillors, the acting Director of the Department of Housing and Social Services, the Country Director for CUTS International and HIVOS program manager



Figure 2. The Desk Coordinator Ms Bwalya Funga, The Assistant Desk Coordinator, Ms. Evelyn Musonda and Ms. Mwiche Nalupumbwe the support staff from CUTs International



Figure 3. The Community Development Officers from the Department of Housing and Social Services who were built capacity in Food Systems



Figure 4. Urban Futures Youth Champion Committee Member Emmanuel Chapa, together with Policy Lead Prisca, delivered a comprehensive presentation highlighting the initiatives led by young people in Chongwe, reshaping the narrative around local food systems.