HEBRON: A UNIQUE AND CONTROLLED VEGETABLE MARKET LINKED TO A COMPOST FACILITY
Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Category
FOOD WASTE

Context

Hebron is known as the city of the patriarchs, widely recognized for its historical and cultural patrimony. Situated in the heartland of Palestine, Hebron has a moderate climate throughout the year. The city has a deep heritage that can be traced back to the Canaanites, who settled here over 6,000 years ago due to the fertility of the earth from whose bounty they prospered. Today, the Municipal Council is responsible for the local development and prosperity of the city of Hebron, through cooperation between citizens, the Municipal Council and the international community. After the first Milan Urban Food Policy Pact meeting in 2015, the Municipality of Hebron strengthened its commitment to creating an integrated sustainable food system at the local level. The City Council, together with other local stakeholders, organized and implemented several initiatives, aimed at improving the supply and distribution of local products as well as reducing food waste in the region. This inclusive approach reflects a systemic vision of the food system, whose sustainability relies on the correct management and integration of all its components.

Overview of the food practice

Among the several activities coordinated by the Municipality, the establishment of a vegetable market center stands out. This market gathers all vegetables produced from smallholders, enabling quality control and traceability. Indeed, the collection of small farmers’ products in one center allows the Municipality to know the source of the product while monitoring its safety. Moreover, the center supervises compliance with standards for packaging and final pricing. The market also promotes sustainable practices to smallholders through the dissemination of brochures. This initiative is complemented by a project of food waste collection and disposal/recycling. The aim of this project is to collect and dispose of solid organic waste in the region in an environmentally-friendly way. All organic waste collected is treated for composting and reused as a natural soil amendment to improve soil conditions. The activity has been developed with the support of Hebron University and presented to other cities in the West Bank. The Municipality of Hebron presented its experience in the field of food supply and aggregation in one market with the supplier to customer controlling system to an annual national meeting of municipalities. Some other cities in the West Bank appreciated the practice and expressed the desire to visit Hebron to see the central vegetable market and its administration.

Regarding food waste collection and disposal/recycling, the municipality of Hebron took initiative two years ago to establish a local vegetable market center. This project is considered the first in terms of sharing facilities and standards to address food waste and recycling stimulating other cities in the West Bank to make similar plans.

Results and lessons learned

The Municipality of Hebron is centrally involved in the organization and control of food supply and means of distribution with a focus on small farmers and local realities. Together with the Ministry of Health and Agriculture, capacity building has been supported for monitoring groups in the market to broaden knowledge on the current situation. Recent monthly reports from the observation team state clear progress in the development of the initiative.

The practices presented in the previous paragraph highlight systemic integration that combines regulation of food production with reduction of food waste, complemented by transversal awareness-raising activities. The results have included increased traceability of food products and better control over their safety, helping protect the health of consumers. Citizens benefit from the strict control of product packaging and prices, which helps ensure compliance with national standards. However, consumers are not the only beneficiaries of these initiatives. Farmers are also provided with access to the urban market as well as increased knowledge on sustainable agricultural practices that can be easily implemented. At the same time, farmers receive organic compost for their land, which enriches the soil and in turn improves production yields and quality.