Results and lessons learned

Since its creation, the Food Security Unit has achieved several results. First, the Municipality validated and funded the food and nutrition education plan which consequently strengthens the food policy. This step is considered a determining factor in improving citizens’ quality of life. The Unit further developed different action plans: pedagogical encounters, home accompaniment visits, educational mobilizations and practical gastronomic workshops.

Second, the Food Security Unit has launched specific programs targeting vulnerable families, children and the elderly, including:

• comprehensive attention in food supplementation to the most vulnerable families of the city participating in the “Medellin Solidaria” program;
• implementation of the School Nutrition Program, with the aim of contributing to improve academic performance, regular attendance and promote the formation of healthy eating habits in the school population. The Program currently operates in 476 educational establishments, these institutions are attended daily by approximately 293,000 children, girls and adolescents with an annual investment of COP 90 billion;
• the communitarian restaurants “Comedores Comunitarios” strategy for the elderly, which currently serves 2,000 participants in 20 dining halls in different districts of the city, with food covered between 35 and 55 percent of the daily recommendations in calories and nutrients for this population. This work is accompanied by training and recreation processes, avoiding welfare attitudes, and by ensuring the commitment and management of the beneficiary community; and
• the establishment of 1,007 rural family gardens, urban productive terraces, associative gardens and institutional gardens.

The initiatives supported by the Municipality of Medellín fostered the creation of technical, nutritional and social knowledge that allows family and community integration of the actors involved, contributing to the creation of more inclusive and sustainable communities.

Context

Food and nutritional security is an issue that has been gaining significant value in local, national and international public policies in recent decades, due to a series of global, economic, political, social and ideological movements that have generated multiple shifts and issues worldwide. Within the humanitarian sector, poverty and hunger have mobilized the highest interests of countries in preventing and overcoming food scarcity for the global population. In this context, the City of Medellín has been taking action to improve local food security through, amongst others, the implementation of vegetable gardens for the production of vegetables and fruits at the local level. Additionally, the Municipality developed alternative food supply means to respond to the demands of the population of Medellín.

Overview of the food practice

The “Policy on Food and Food Security and Sovereignty” programme was created by the Council of Medellín in 2005, laying the groundwork for the creation of the “Food Sovereignty and Inclusive Medellín Management”, which subsequently gave way to the inclusive and participatory Food Security Unit. These programmes comprehensively address the concepts of food and nutrition through different tools (Food and Nutrition Profile, Food Management System, Food Supply Plan) and the strengthening of the urban and peri-urban agriculture processes. The actions developed in this framework can be divided into four specific blocks:

1. **Food and nutritional management:** The “Public Policy on Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty” develops the food supply component, focusing on the most vulnerable population, while through public procurement favoring local food producers — generating regional development.

2. **Structural processes:** Strengthening the food municipal policy and related projects based on a transversal approach.

3. **Productive projects and self-supply:** Promoting a culture for self-consumption in the families of the Municipality of Medellín both in rural and urban areas. Raise awareness of the possibility of generating and selling the surplus, especially in rural areas, and promoting other mechanisms of food access other than the purchase.

4. **Research and educational projects:** Focused on investigating food-related processes and models from food practices, ancestral knowledge in food, nutritional and food security status, biophysical conditions of the population, food habits, and environmental awareness, among others. These projects also generate timely analysis from various disciplines, recommendations and new research for work proposals.


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