The city of Surakarta, also known as Solo, is the beating heart of the surrounding regions’ economy, culture, and tourism. The City experiences a booming population size during business hours, creating an enormous food procurement and waste management challenge for the Solo City Government. Of the 230,000 tons of waste produced per year in Solo, 60% is organic waste. Urbanization also poses an additional challenge for the City Agriculture, Food Security, and Fisheries departments: the Office of Health and Social Service, Education, Youth and Sports, Residential and Housing Service, and the Department of Agriculture, Food Security, and Fisheries. To ensure community nutrition and a healthy environment, the Solo City Government has enacted a Food and Nutrition Regional Action Plan (RAD), with five pillars: improve community nutrition, increase access to diverse food, improve food quality and safety, ensure a sustainable and healthy environment, and improve the coordination of food and nutrition development. Action on Solo’s two keyston food policies, food waste reduction and the promotion of urban agriculture, has been achieved thanks to the collaboration with and empowerment of residents.

Solo residents are at the heart of the city’s sustainable food system transformation. Known for their culture of mutual cooperation, passionate residents, community leaders, and civil society organizations dedicate their time, energy, and resources for food system change. In the fight against food waste, food producers, including hotels, restaurants, and retailers, establish targets and guidelines to prevent waste at the source. For example, to meet environmental goals and cut operating costs, some hoteliers minimize their food stocks, cook enough food for only 80% of guests, and repurpose leftovers into other dishes. With excess food, civil society organizations take over. Through an interconnected network of local organizations and volunteers, excess food is processed into nutritious meals and distributed to those most in need.

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Solo City government is committed to integrated food policies and work is still ongoing to involve multiple City and Regional departments on Food and Nutrition RAD targets. For example, programs supporting the clean and healthy environment pillar are already being carried out by five regional departments: the Office of Health and Social Service, Education, Youth Service and Sports, Residential and Housing Service, and the Department of Public Works and Public Planning.

In 2018, Solo began collaborating with the international NGO Rikolto on the FOOD SMART CITIES project to improve the coordination of food policies among stakeholders. The project’s long-term objective is to increase greater inclusivity, transparency, and accountability on food governance at the city level for sustainable food consumption and production, while fostering local social and cultural development. To better align local urban policies, programs, and targets, the City is currently working on an official framework for collaboration on RAD food policies to improve communication and strategy building amongst stakeholders. Solo, the heart of the region’s economy and culture, is tackling the challenges of food waste and urban agriculture through integrated food policies. The City’s key to its success is a culture of mutual cooperation and empowerment among residents. Passionate residents are innovating and collaborating at the community level to reduce food waste, improve food security, and foster rural development in the region. To better align local urban policies, programs, and targets, the City is currently working on an official framework for collaboration on RAD food policies to improve communication and strategy building amongst stakeholders.

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