

# Urban Food Market Development Post-Covid

Subjects: **Geography**

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Congestion of cities following rapid urbanization is a global concern that has necessitated global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11), which focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Decongestion efforts so far have focused on evicting street vendors from public spaces, and this had short-lived results because the traders spontaneously return to the streets as soon as the enforcement activities cease. Little attention has been paid to food market decongestion and development, whereby food markets are provided water facilities, wash bays, public toilets, upgraded stalls and other facilities that will ensure the safe use of the market place. This entry discusses the broader benefits of food market decongestion and development, including the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. The entry further discusses the considerations of public-private partnerships in food market decongestion and development.

Decongestion

Urban Food markets

Food market Development

Market Infrastructure

Public spaces

## 1. Introduction

Congestion of cities following rapid urbanization is a global concern that has necessitated global initiatives such as that of the sustainable cities in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Ghana, policies such as the National Urban Policy Framework (NUPF) and Action Plan, 2012; National Housing Policy (NHP), 2015; National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF), 2015–2035; and other related policies have been instituted to focus on urban renewal and the upgrading of slums <sup>[1]</sup>. Unfortunately, inadequate attention has been given to urban food market decongestion. As the world fights the novel COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to highlight the broader benefits of market decongestion.

Urban markets attract a large number of consumers and other economic activities and also serve as the image of the city <sup>[2]</sup>. Consequently, the appearance of urban markets provides an indication of the nature of cities. Unfortunately, many urban food markets in developing economies are unplanned and overcrowded, and usually face sanitation problems which eventually deteriorate the city landscape <sup>[3]</sup>. The sanitation problems arise mainly from poor disposal of crop and animal waste products, poor drainage systems and water disposal facilities, lack of public toilet facilities with handwashing facilities, and lack of proper storage facilities for foodstuff. Furthermore, the lack of sanitary conditions for slaughtering poultry and handling fish and meat products also serves as a source of infection. Besides offering a negative image of the markets, the health implications are consequential <sup>[3]</sup>. In order to

reduce these negative effects, local authorities and in some cases private entities need to undertake decongestion and market development activities.

Decongestion activities in Ghana have mainly focused on street vendors and slums. Decongestion is conceptualized in terms of reserving public space and infrastructure for certain classes of users [4]. Proper decongestion of urban food markets would involve the establishment of neighbourhood markets or satellite markets to reduce overcrowding at the main market centres and provide decentralized sites for wholesale deliveries [3][5]. Studies have shown that decongestion efforts focused on evicting street vendors from public spaces have short-lived results because they spontaneously return to the streets where they earn their livelihoods, as soon as enforcement activities cease [6][7]. This is due to the inappropriate location of satellite markets and the lack of consideration of other factors such as the differential needs of different enterprises and the value chain of various commodities [5]. Furthermore, city authorities lose sight of the social function of public spaces to traders and consumers alike [8].

Food market development efforts include upgrading market infrastructure, facilities, and services. This involves the provision of water facilities, wash bays, public toilets, upgraded stalls, and wider space to facilitate the movement of goods and mobility by other users of the market space. These facilities and services must be properly planned, maintained and managed to ensure good hygiene [9].

## 2. Benefits of Market Decongestion and Market Development

The benefits of market decongestion and market development are numerous. However, strict hygiene practices and discipline must be enforced to maintain the cleanliness of the markets in order to realize these benefits. In the wake of COVID-19, there is an emphasis on social distancing and handwashing as a means to reduce the spread of the virus. Decongestion by establishing satellite markets or neighbourhood markets would enhance social distancing and reduce the human traffic at the food markets. Food market development efforts that ensure the provision of handwashing facilities provide room for both social distancing and hygienic practices.

Beyond this, food market decongestion and development has immense public health benefits. The proper planning of food markets with handwashing facilities as well as sanitary conditions for handling fish and meat products would reduce the rate of contamination from all pathogens, not just COVID-19. Proper drainage systems and water facilities for washing fruits and vegetables also would reduce the risk of diseases such as cholera [9]. More so, decongestion through the establishment of satellite markets reduces stress and human traffic at the market, which has an implication on the well-being of market users [5].

One other benefit of market decongestion and development is the efficiency of market operations [9]. An improved layout of the market through decongestion and market development reduces the transaction time and increases the turnaround rate for traders at the market. This tends to increase sales of traders. An improved layout also would reduce transportation costs in carting goods and offer substantial savings for market users. The savings could be offset by higher rental fees and income taxes that could be used to maintain the cleanliness of the market.

Additionally, developed markets that are well managed can serve as a source of income generation for local authorities, which can be used to develop other markets.

Proper planning of markets with covered stalls and pavements improves the usability and functionality of the market at all times <sup>[9]</sup>. In rainy seasons, traders and consumers are safe to carry out their transactions. The provision of storage facilities also prevents loss of crops by pilferage and rodents.

Proper planning and decongestion of markets add to the aesthetics of cities and contribute to the achievement of SDG 11, which focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable <sup>[1][8]</sup>. This provides amenities and convenience for all users and also serves as tourist attraction sites <sup>[2]</sup>.

The establishment of satellite markets and the development of existing markets create opportunities for growth in agricultural production as the markets serve as outlets of distribution in the value chain <sup>[9]</sup> <sup>[10]</sup>. This 'induced' growth is particularly important for smallholder producers who rely on food markets for the sale of the produce. Such producers do not have the necessary technology to grade and standardize their products to sell to supermarkets <sup>[9]</sup>.

Given the wide range of benefits of market decongestion and development, it is important to consider who is responsible for market decongestion and development exercises. It is important to consider if it is worth investing public funds in such projects or relegating them to the private sector. Market infrastructure and facilities are considered public goods and must be provided by the State. However, studies reveal that local authorities pay little attention to the management of market infrastructure and waste problems of market spaces in Central Business Districts <sup>[11]</sup>. Consequently, the managerial and social problems associated with the use of market infrastructure can be handled by the private sector, which includes private investors, Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations, which have a role to play in public health education. Consequently, public-private partnership is required in successful market decongestion and development interventions.

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