



# *Urban Food Strategies*

**The Rough Guide to Sustainable Food Systems**



*Photo on front page: Farmers' market in Malmö, Sweden  
Photo on this page: Community Garden Basel managed by  
Urban Agriculture Net Basel, Switzerland Alfoeldi Landhof,  
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## URBAN FOOD STRATEGIES – WHY, WHAT, HOW?

This guide is part of a collective effort to provide motivation and support for those actors interested in building more sustainable food systems in urban contexts. This document has been developed under the framework of Foodlinks<sup>1</sup>, a European project where civil society organizations, policy makers and academics have come together to share and co-produce knowledge around Urban Food Strategies (UFS) with the aim of furthering the political, practical and academic agendas. Far from proposing a recipe to develop UFS, we have compiled distinct motivations, measures, ideas, processes and examples that we hope are useful to inspire action towards more sustainable and just food systems for all. The document is structured in three sections:

### 1. Why do we need Urban Food Strategies in the first place?

This section gives a short overview of the consequences of our unsustainable food system for our wellbeing, including health issues, environmental impacts, economic performance, injustice and cultural erosion. We show how this global context is intrinsically connected to our local realities, and consequently we point out the potential of our cities and local governments to reverse these trends.

### 2. What is an Urban Food Strategy?

UFS can take many forms, and are conditioned by their local context. We celebrate this diversity and give a broad overview of what UFS look like around Europe. Therefore, this section collects visions and goals from UFS, and shows how they are translated into practices, instruments and actions. We have compiled measures and highlighted some good practices from cities that are already implementing their UFS in order to inspire other cities. Finally we describe how stakeholders organize in different places and the importance of assuring participation from key actors – but also of continually engaging with the city as a whole.

### 3. How do we develop an Urban Food Strategy?

So... where to start? The final section does not aim to provide a recipe, but rather to promote the sharing of experiences between cities. It proposes various stages to take into account when embarking on the process of developing an UFS. Managing participation is key to accomplishing a transformation of your urban food system. A preliminary evaluation on how your city is fed will give you the necessary data and information to start developing shared visions and goals, and an action plan towards achieving them. Thinking about how to monitor and evaluate your work is also essential, in order to improve your strategy and advance the process of constructing a sustainable food city.

**Summing up:** It is happening! Through this guide we aim to inspire action around building more sustainable cities. There are many things happening on the ground that are not included here, but please follow the conversation and expand this knowledge by sharing your experience at <http://pu-refoodlinks.eu/>.

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1 <http://www.foodlinkscommunity.net/>

# 1. WHY DO WE NEED URBAN FOOD STRATEGIES IN THE FIRST PLACE?

## 1.1 The global context: an unsustainable food system

In Europe, more than 70% of the population lives in urban areas, a number that is likely to increase in the forthcoming years (UN, 2008). Cities take for granted that everyday food will arrive at restaurants, cafés, shops, supermarkets, markets, schools, etc – enough to meet the health and diverse cultural needs of their inhabitants. However, events such as the 2007-8 food price hikes have shown the vulnerability of access to food, and its connection with riots and national security concerns around the world. Also these price hikes have demonstrated once more the dependence of our food system on fossil fuels, which constitute just one of the many environmental impacts of our diets. The number of households suffering from food poverty is increasing dramatically around Europe, and is accompanied by poor diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes. These problems have enormous impacts on people's well-being and, by extension, in the overall socio-economic situation and environmental resources.

### Box 1: Some facts illustrating our food system:

Some 43 million people are thought to be at risk of food poverty in Europe (FAO, 2009).

Globally, 44% of diabetes, 23% of ischemic heart disease and 7-41% of certain cancers are attributable to overweight and obesity (WHO, 2013). Economic costs of diet and exercise-related health problems in the US are \$561,8 billion (Kenkel and Manning, 1999).

Loss of farmland to cities is estimated at 1.6-3.3 million ha per year between 2000 and 2030 (UNEP, 2012).

Food system emissions—from production to consumption—contribute 19-29% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Vermeulen et al, 2012).

Per capita food waste by consumers is 95-115 kg a year in Europe and North America (FAO, 2013).

The US food system consumes ten times more energy than it produces in food energy (Giampietro and Pimentel, 1994; Pfeiffer, 2006).

In this context, food is rising up urban agendas and stakeholders at the local level – from the public, private, and civil society sectors – are reasserting responsibility for food policy. Food plays a unique role in sustaining human life, since we all need to eat! And food is connected with a wide range of municipal and regional policy areas: from land-use planning to infrastructure and transport, environmental conservation, housing and economic development. Food, then, can be a vehicle to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, as well as for addressing justice and health issues at different geographies and scales, including cities.

## 1.2 Considering the local context

Cities face many common challenges, but these are also mediated by their local context. Urban food systems and politics inevitably depend on the particular features and circumstances of a city, including: historical and cultural factors, strength and basis of the local economy, geographical setting and natural resources, infrastructure, and societal and political factors, such as governance structures and the strength of the state and of civil society. Consequently, UFS take different forms around the globe. Each one is dependent on its local context, which determines the aims, objectives and actions that are appropriate and achievable.

For instance, the city of Malmö in Sweden, an old industrial city undergoing an important regeneration process, developed a policy on Sustainable Development and Food<sup>1</sup> in 2010 that relies on the strength of the local state. In particular, the municipal responsibility and control of school meals procurement is a vehicle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40% by 2020, through decreasing the amount of meat served and increasing organic ingredients.

Another example is Bristol, the largest city in the South West of England, which has a strong regional food culture. This flourishing food culture is both a cause and a consequence of a very green urban civil society, which also helps explain why Bristol claims to be the first city in the UK to create a Food Policy Council (FPC).

These examples show the importance of reflecting on what you can actually do in your specific context, since food is a vehicle for addressing multiple issues that will manifest differently in every city.

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1 <http://malmo.se/English/Sustainable-City-Development/Sustainable-food-in-Malmo.html>

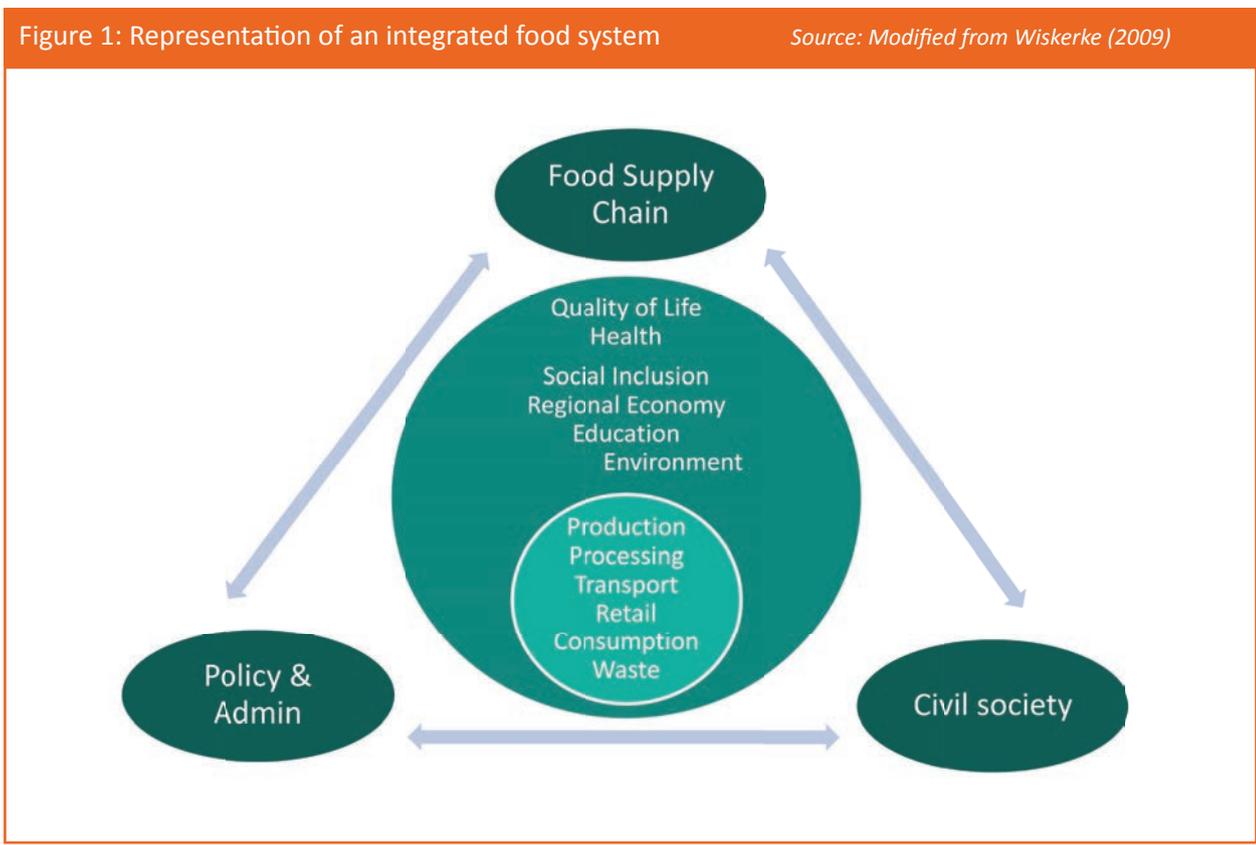
## 2. WHAT IS AN URBAN FOOD STRATEGY?

This chapter explains what we mean by the term ‘urban food strategy’. It shows which themes are addressed by UFS, what goals the cities have, and how they implement their strategies. Furthermore, this chapter gives an insight into stakeholder participation in UFS.

### 2.1 Definition: What do we mean by an urban food strategy?

We refer to the term ‘urban food strategy’ as a process consisting of how a city envisions change in its food system, and how it strives towards this change. UFS aim to place food on the urban agenda, capitalizing on efforts made by existing actors and creating synergistic effects by linking different stakeholder groups. Written milestones in this process can be charters, actions plans or full strategies; however an UFS does not directly imply a strategic document.

Ideally, UFS take a holistic approach to the food system of a city, considering horizontal and vertical dimensions. Horizontally, a holistic food system embraces different policy domains and fields of action, which mainly include health and wellbeing, environment, economy and community development, social and cultural aspects, and education. Also this holistic view implies a vertical food system approach, considering all different stages of the food system: food production, processing, storage, transport, retail, consumption and waste. Inevitably, developing comprehensive UFS is challenging, but increasingly cities understand that food is an important urban issue and consequently develop different food-related action fields (such as public procurement of food, urban production or educational projects) and gradually embrace more dimensions and activities.



Also, in order to develop an UFS different stakeholders need to come together from the public and private sector to take responsibility for the city's food system. Ideally these stakeholders include civil society, business, policy makers and politicians – the latter being particularly important to drive change in the public sector. It is vital to provide a space for the different actors and interests in the city to be heard, and to forge networks between distinct types of stakeholders, making a special effort in engaging with the wider community on a continual basis. However, in each city stakeholders come together differently. Some UFS start from a rather top-down approach mainly initiated by local authorities, for instance in Malmö or Tukums in Latvia; others have their origins in networks of civil society organizations, as in the cases of Bristol, and Todmorden in the North of England. Yet in the long run a comprehensive UFS needs effectively to integrate and promote participation of the local state, market actors and civil society.

## 2.2 Visions, goals, areas for action: What does an urban food strategy strive for?

UFS in Europe deal with a similar range of themes, although they might have different drivers and different priorities depending on their local context.<sup>123</sup> In this regard they try to integrate the vertical dimension of the food system (i.e. different stages of the food chain) with the horizontal dimension, (i.e. the different thematic fields where food can have an impact).

By and large UFS deal with the following thematic fields:

- **Health and wellbeing** (e.g. improve the health of the population as a whole, increase the welfare of society at large)
- **Environment** (reduce negative environmental impacts of the food system, e.g. reducing carbon emissions, being more energy efficient)
- **Economy and community development** (support a vibrant local economy, green economy, e.g. by supporting local growers, retailers, markets, and employment)
- **Social and cultural aspects** (support resilient, close-knit communities, food-friendly neighborhoods, e.g. by celebrating and promoting local food culture)

Some cities additionally have a focus on:

- **Food security/social justice** (e.g. fight food poverty, improved access for affordable, culturally diverse and healthy food, fairness in the food chain, a just food system)
- **Learning/empowerment** (e.g. life-long learning, empowered residents)
- **Urban-rural linkages** (i.e. connect city and the countryside through food)

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1 London's strategic objectives <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/promoting-healthy-sustainable-food/london-food-board/strategy-implementation-plans>

2 Plymouth food charter - [http://www.foodplymouth.org/?page\\_id=61](http://www.foodplymouth.org/?page_id=61)

3 The five themes of the sustainable food city network - <http://www.soilassociation.org/sustainablefoodcities>

Figure 2: Examples of visions and goals

In September and October 2012 the municipality of **Tukums** (Latvia) organized a public consultation on the aims of the Tukums Food Strategy.

Three priorities were identified:

- To promote public health
- To support the local economy
- To reduce the impact of the local food system on the environment.

The initiative “**Edible Edinburgh**” (Scotland) aims at:

- Moving towards a mixed economy of food
- Sustainable production and consumption becoming part of municipal discourse
- Bring together different disciplines and sectors in order to conceptualize the social, technical and financial changes needed.

One of the prime drivers in **Malmö’s** (Sweden) work is to reduce the environmental impact of food. Two approaches are taken. The first is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food procured by Malmö, by for example, reducing the amount of meat used, replacing meat with lentils and pulses. The second is to improve animal welfare and increase biodiversity in our countryside by procuring 100% organic food by 2020, which will reduce pesticide and artificial fertilizer use.

**Bristol** (UK), expresses its principles in a very short and concise format. Its Food Policy Council strives simply for ‘good food’:

- good food for people: everyone should have access to information, training and resources that enable them to grow, buy, cook, and enjoy good food
- good food for places: the public and policy-makers should support and value food enterprises who promote local jobs, prosperity and diversity, and treat workers well.
- good food for the planet: food should be produced, processed, distributed and disposed of in ways that benefit nature.



### 2.3 Practices, instruments, measures, actions: How are the goals implemented?

Generally speaking, the food system can be influenced by:

- Municipal legal and financial instruments (e.g. regulation, planning, taxes, subsidies, public spending)
- Communication strategies, awareness raising, training and advising (e.g. campaigning, workshops, festivals, awards)
- Developing concrete activities, initiatives and projects (e.g. promoting short food supply chains like farmers markets, community supported agriculture, urban agriculture or starting sustainable food businesses)

The different stakeholder groups involved in an UFS have different resources and powers, which apply to distinct fields of action. For instance, public bodies might tend to deal with legal and financial instruments, whereas civil society groups develop concrete activities. Therefore it is very important to create linkages between different actors to take advantage of the different resources and knowledge that they can bring to the table. Civil society organizations have largely shown their capacity to drive change, however now local authorities are also discovering and using their powers to change the food system. Some of the main instruments that city administrations possess to influence the food system are:

- Public procurement: Cities can **use their buying power** to influence the food system in a direction they want: e.g. more healthy food, more organic food, more vegetarian food, more local food, more culturally-appropriate food, etc. Those measures might be specified and implemented via legislation.
- Territorial/spatial planning/zoning: Cities can facilitate local food production by **designating land** for (peri)urban agriculture and gardening. Furthermore, spatial planning can support short food supply chains and diversity of food retail by planning for areas for independent food retailers or farmers' markets.
- Communal infrastructure: Local administration can keep or create facilities which support short food supply chains e.g. slaughterhouses, processing facilities, storage facilities etc.

Cities handle implementation of their UFS differently: Some develop comprehensive strategic documents and implementation plans e.g. London<sup>1</sup>; some write brief and very concrete action plans e.g. Plymouth<sup>2</sup>; and others might not produce any overview documents at all.

The table below shows examples of very concrete local measures aiming to change the urban food system for the better. The table focuses mainly on actions from city administration/politics, food partnerships and public institutions, rather than on civil society initiatives, as the latter are already better known.

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1 <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/promoting-healthy-sustainable-food/london-food-board/strategy-implementation-plans>

2 [http://www.foodplymouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/action-\\_plan\\_2012.pdf](http://www.foodplymouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/action-_plan_2012.pdf)

<b>Examples of implementation of urban food strategy goals (focusing on the public sector)</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>City/actors examples</b>
<b>Food production</b>		
Facilitate local agriculture	Zoning that provides and protects land for (peri)urban agriculture and gardening	Rennes (F), city planning
	Municipal institutions cooperate with local producers/farmers	London (UK), Brunswick Hospital Vienna (A), retirement homes
	New public procurement regulation for school catering that stimulates more local sourcing	Tukums (LV), municipality procurement department
Facilitate urban gardening (food growing)	Plan new neighborhoods/city developments to be 'food growing friendly'	Malmö (S), city planning office, city development 'Hyllie'
	Open up land around housing for gardening	Malmö (S), municipal housing company MKB
	Giving financial support to those working in disadvantaged areas with community gardening and social inclusion projects	Malmö (S), city administration, housing organizations, and city districts, e.g. in disadvantaged areas: Rosengård, Lindängen and Seved
	Record in municipal coalition agreement that community gardens and 'Selbsternte' plots shall be created in cooperation with private partners	Vienna (A), city government <a href="http://www.wien.gv.at/Regierungsuebereinkommen">www.wien.gv.at/Regierungsuebereinkommen</a>
	The Mayor promoted the goal of '2012 new food growing places by 2012'; the city offered advice to land owners, training and small financial support for growers	London (UK), mayor support, <a href="http://www.capitalgrowth.org/">www.capitalgrowth.org/</a>
	Establish urban food growing networks to support people involved	Bristol (UK) Bristol Food Network
	Promote urban growing through organized visits, events and training	Bristol (UK), Get Growing Garden Trail Harvest Brighton and Hove (UK), <a href="http://harvest-bh.org.uk/">http://harvest-bh.org.uk/</a>
	Promote food growing in schools	Copenhagen (DK), Copenhagen School Gardens where schools grow their own food on a 3 ha plot of land <a href="http://www.kbhskolehaver.dk/">http://www.kbhskolehaver.dk/</a>
	Enable the raising of small animals in backyards	Todmorden (UK), <a href="http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk">http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk</a>
Promote production systems that protect the environment	Offer citizens a garden parcel under the condition that they participate in training for organic gardening	Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)
	Supporting market oriented sustainable farming systems	Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)
	Public procurement regulation taking into consideration transportation distances	Tukums (LV), municipality procurement department

<b>Food processing &amp; distribution</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>City/actors examples</b>
Support local farmers' market	Assisting farmers with permit applications and providing electricity sources to be used during the market	Malmö (S), city administration
Promote skills to process and to cook sustainably	Teach cooks in public institutions to cook from scratch, to cook vegetarian, to cook seasonally etc.	Malmö (S), city administration
	Cook with pupils, grow food with pupils	Food for Life Partnership (UK) Svendborg Municipality (DK), LOMA-Local Food, Nymarkskolen.
Promote food hubs	Establish community food co-operative programs that enable people to access fresh fruit and vegetables on a weekly basis at wholesale prices, purchasing mainly from local farmers	Welsh government fruit and veg co-ops program <a href="http://www.foodcoops.wales.org.uk/">http://www.foodcoops.wales.org.uk/</a>
	Promote infrastructure in the city that allows safe storage and more efficient distribution of food	
	Promote the creation of buying groups and food co-ops by providing information on suppliers and creation process.	Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (UK) <a href="http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-buying-groups">http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-buying-groups</a>
Promote short food supply chains	Local authority supports local farmers' market by assisting in permit applications and providing electricity sources for the producers to use during the market.	Malmö (S), city administration
Maintain independent food wholesale sector	Protect and promote markets through an award scheme	<a href="#">BBC Food and Farming awards</a> (UK)
	Merge wholesale market with retailing, food festivals and cooking lessons and events	<a href="#">Bolton Market</a> (UK)
Promote diversity of food retail	Campaign to support independent retailers as a way to support the local economy, such as 'Independents' Day' on which everyone who buys from an independent shop is entered into a free prize draw	<a href="#">Bristol's Independents Campaign</a> (UK)
	Use planning to avoid the growth of out of town supermarkets that compete with and draw shoppers away from independent retail areas.	Green Party in Vienna (A) and some actors in Bristol (UK) are campaigning
<b>Food consumption</b>		
Promote local products	Mobile farm shop at university + farmers market in the city	Plymouth University, Food Plymouth Partnership, Plymouth City Centre Company (UK)
More informed consumers	Develop maps indicating where to buy or eat healthy, local food	Mapping Local Food Webs Toolkit <a href="http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/3076-mapping-local-food-webs-toolkit">http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/3076-mapping-local-food-webs-toolkit</a>
	Deliver advice on how to shop and cook healthy, nutritious food on a low budget.	Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (UK) <a href="http://www.bhfood.org.uk/budget-tips">http://www.bhfood.org.uk/budget-tips</a>
Buy more sustainable food for municipal institutions – revalue public procurement	Work towards 100 % organic for school kitchens without increasing the budget	Malmö (S), city administration
	Develop catering marks to award the delivery of good food	The Food for Life Catering Mark, Soil Association (UK) <a href="http://www.sacert.org/catering">http://www.sacert.org/catering</a>
	Create a 'public sector good local food procurement club'	Bristol (UK)

Action	Measures	City/actors examples
Promote cooking skills in communities	Establish a community cookery project to give people the knowledge and skills to help them create healthy, affordable meals. The project delivers a range of cookery courses for people of varying skills	Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (UK) <a href="http://www.bhfood.org.uk/cookery/">http://www.bhfood.org.uk/cookery/</a>
Enhance food literacy of school children	Make food an important topic throughout the whole curriculum	Svendborg Municipality (DK), LOMA Nmarks skolen project applies an integrated, whole school and health promotion approach  <a href="http://www.menu.aau.dk">www.menu.aau.dk</a> <a href="http://www.ifsa2012.dk/downloads/WS4_2/Ruge.pdf">http://www.ifsa2012.dk/downloads/WS4_2/Ruge.pdf</a>
Reduce access to unhealthy food	Use planning and regulatory measures to prevent the proliferation of take-away outlets around schools	Takeaways Toolkit (UK) Tools, interventions and case studies to help local authorities develop a response to the health impacts of fast food takeaways (supported by Mayor, published by Chartered Institute of Environmental Health) <a href="http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/TakeawaysToolkit_0.pdf">http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/TakeawaysToolkit_0.pdf</a>
<b>Food waste</b>		
Deal with food waste in public institutions	Offer more choices to patients in hospitals and cook meals to order	Campaign for Better Hospital Food (UK) <a href="http://www.sustainweb.org/hospitalfood/">http://www.sustainweb.org/hospitalfood/</a>
Avoid food waste at the food industry level	Connect the food industry with charities to redistribute surplus but safe and nutritious food to those in need	Fareshare (UK)
Promote and support community composting	Support a growing network of sites across the city where people can compost by providing advice, resources, training, support and encouragement to set up or maintain community compost projects.	Brighton and Hove Food Partnership <a href="http://www.bhfood.org.uk/community-composting">http://www.bhfood.org.uk/community-composting</a>
<b>Communication</b>		
Linking different urban food initiatives	Building a local network of grassroots food initiatives	Basel (CH), Urban AgriCulture Netz Basel <a href="http://www.urbanagriculturebasel.ch">http://www.urbanagriculturebasel.ch</a>
Motivate people for sustainable food projects	Food festivals and good food awards	Plymouth Food Awards (UK) Good food awards (UK) Healthy Choice Award, joint initiative from the Food Partnership, Brighton & Hove City Council and Brighton & Hove NHS (UK) <a href="http://www.bhfood.org.uk/healthy-choice-award/">http://www.bhfood.org.uk/healthy-choice-award/</a>
Race to the top	Maps that reflect a league table of local authorities' support for key good food initiatives, such as community food growing, high quality school food, helping local food outlets serve healthier food, and buying ethical food in schools and local authority canteens – including Fairtrade products, cage-free eggs and sustainable fish.	London borough maps of progress on healthy and sustainable food (UK) – produced by Sustain <a href="http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=249">http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=249</a>

## 2.4 Organizing stakeholder participation: Networks, partnerships, councils

UFS aim to involve and bring together different stakeholder groups in order to create networks and to facilitate synergistic relationships. Some UFS grow out of very engaged citizen movements and well-organized NGOs, such as in Bristol. Other strategies are formulated and implemented in a top-down manner like the strategy for sustainable public procurement in Malmö.

Consequently, actors involved in developing UFS generate different types of spaces that range in level of formality and organization, from formal memberships to loose and flexible affiliations, and from established functioning rules to tacit and self-organizing dynamics. In many cases these spaces have taken the name of **food policy councils**. Broadly speaking, a food policy council is a network of stakeholders who want to change the food system of the city. In general this includes stakeholders from public (city council, city administration), civil society and private sectors, who advocate different interests. Some food policy councils aid and advise policy formation; others focus more on linking efforts already being made or develop concrete initiatives and projects. Other formulae include **food partnerships** (see box 4), **steering groups** (see box 5), **food boards**, and different types of platforms and coordination bodies.

The resourcing of these organizations is a key issue, since in many cases they start by drawing resources together from the membership, such as funding for a specific project, physical meeting space, skills, etc. However, one of the main resources comes from securing paid time for workers to carry out administrative tasks, for an association to invest in the council or partnership, or for the development of the UFS. In some cases, food policy councils or partnerships take the form of non-profit organizations so they are able to apply for funds from public and private bodies.

### Box 3: Food policy council in Bristol, UK

The Bristol Food Policy Council was launched in March 2011 at the Bristol Food Conference, and claims to be the first city in the UK to have a food policy council. Its creation was a key recommendation of the Who Feeds Bristol<sup>1</sup> report. Currently it is a small group of committed and influential individuals, representing 11 distinct organizations, with expertise and local experience in the domains of food production, preparation, distribution and retail, as well as food policy (see Carey, 2013 for more information).

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/environment/environmental\\_health/Who%20Feeds%20Bristol%20report.pdf](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/environment/environmental_health/Who%20Feeds%20Bristol%20report.pdf) – Who feeds Bristol? - report

### Box 4: Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

This partnership<sup>1</sup> is constituted as a not-for-profit organization. The members are community organizations, statutory agencies, local businesses and individual residents from across the city. The partnership is steered and overseen by a board of directors, who are elected each year at the annual general meeting among the members of the Partnership. Additionally, there is an appointed place in the board of directors for representatives from the public health team at NHS Brighton & Hove, the City Council, Food Matters (as founders) and for a Councillor from the Sustainability Cabinet. It is funded by the National Health Service, the city council and different funds.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bhfood.org.uk/about-us/> - Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

### Box 5: Sustainable Edinburgh 2020

The initiative Sustainable Edinburgh 2020 organized a city seminar with various stakeholder groups in December 2012. Representatives of the public sector, the private sector and the third sector/community took part. Later, a steering group comprising a wide range of stakeholders was established, with a one year work plan. The members of the steering group are: Stirfresh vegetables, Cyrenians, Iglu restaurant, National Health Service Lothian, Parks and Green Space Manager, Waitrose, SRUC, Scotland Food & Drink, Climate Challenge Fund, Social Association Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council, University of Edinburgh, Transition Edinburgh South, Nourish Scotland, Bread Matters.



*Community Garden Basel managed by Urban Agriculture Net Basel, Switzerland  
Photo: Alfoeldi Landhof, Moschitz Kuenzli Friech*

### 3. HOW DO YOU DEVELOP AN URBAN FOOD STRATEGY?

UFS are processes that start as a spark in a context where there are sufficient social concerns around the food system to provoke actions from civil society organizations, business and/or the public sector. Therefore it is paramount to create and nurture an environment or momentum around food and sustainability to be able to start bringing in stakeholders and interests to the process. In places where municipal politicians and administration are initially reluctant to engage with civil society groups, the latter might first need to raise local awareness and build strong alliances and networks in order to gain attention and to show the relevance of their concerns. Taking into account these initial conditions, this section compiles some of the elements that might help to guide the process of developing UFS.

#### 3.1 Organizing participation processes and governance

Different stakeholders play a role everyday in shaping our current food system, as well as transforming it. In order to provoke the necessary changes in the food system, we need to engage with these policy and public actors, businesses and civil society organizations from the beginning of the process. Effective participation leads to:

- A general awareness of the UFS in all fields of society: policy & administration, the market, citizenship;
- A common vision about the need for change and a widely shared sense of ownership of the UFS;
- A stronger commitment to enabling and supporting the development and implementation of the UFS in the long term.

**How do you involve people in the process?** There are many ways to structure a participatory process for developing an UFS, depending on the local context. From experience in different cities, the following aspects are recognized as essential:

##### Stakeholder mapping

- Whoever initiates the process of developing an UFS needs to **identify the relevant actors**. Who should be part of this? Which policy, market and societal actors could be interested?
- Clarify and understand their **motivations**, since there are differences in visions, goals and interests between stakeholders. What is of interest for each stakeholder with regard to an UFS? What are the incentives and benefits for them to participate in an UFS? What are the potential barriers to their engagement?

#### Box 6: Tukums food strategy consultation process

In Tukums the stakeholder involvement in strategy development since 2011 has been a series of consultation and interaction activities. At the beginning public consultations were focused on establishing the aims of the strategy and involved the municipal council, school directors, teachers, kindergartens, school catering enterprises, and a local hospital. In the next round farmers and processing companies from the region became involved. Certain groups of stakeholders, like persons dependent on social aid, senior citizens, young parents, and retailers, were more difficult to engage. As the strategy became more developed and priority areas were identified, new public food procurement principles and guidelines were produced and discussed. This round of consultation focused on criteria of procurement and organization of supplies and involved mostly market actors like local farmers and agricultural cooperatives, as well as farm advisory services and procurement consultants.

#### Planning the process of participation

- Plan the UFS development process **step-by-step**
- Interchange between broad **participation of a wider audience** (awareness building) and **limited participation of strongly engaged stakeholders** (working on the action fields).
- **Clarify and communicate** clearly how the different inputs of the wider audience and the core group are used in the process.
- **Keep the public informed**, and think of ways to do this most effectively.

#### Effective facilitation

- Involve a **facilitator** to help reach your goals when many different viewpoints and interests are involved in the process.
- Choose **methods for participation** that best support the goals at each step.

Activities for stakeholder participation that have been successful in some cities include food conferences, city/region food markets, workshops, visits to other cities or successful initiatives, awards for innovative ideas for food activities, and informal events to share views and ideas.

#### Box 7: Vitoria Gasteiz Food Civic Meeting

In Vitoria-Gasteiz the Food Civic Meeting has been held annually since 2006. It is organized collaboratively by a set of civil society organizations (Zadorra Foundation, Slow Food and the local farmers' union). The objective is to raise awareness (within the citizenship and the municipality) about the necessity of moving towards a more sustainable food system based on more agroecological and conscious production and consumption patterns, and short supply chains.

An **integrative governance** structure for the UFS ensures that it is embedded in policy, market and civil society in the long term. It creates a balance between top-down and bottom-up elements to increase the resilience against short-term political changes and slowing-down of civil (voluntary) engagement.

In many cities (e.g. Bristol , Brighton & Hove ) **food policy councils** and **food partnerships** have been successfully established as effective governance structures, including city officials from different departments, producer and consumer organizations, processing companies, retail, and science partners. Depending on the local context, their focus is more on policy development or on particular projects to increase the sustainability of the local food system.

UFS should be **mainstreamed** into existing policies, instruments, budgets and practices of institutions and organizations. **Links to policies at regional or national level**, agricultural and food policies, etc. need to be considered. Particularly important is the connection of local or city strategies to their rural hinterlands, in terms of policy development but also in terms of reconnecting and integrating the food system.

### 3.2 Assessment of the current food system

Developing an UFS should start with an assessment aimed at understanding the current state of the local food system. An assessment will help in identifying issues and challenges faced by citizens, provide appropriate information to decision-makers to facilitate goal setting and policy development to improve food security, and establish baseline data and indicators for monitoring systems. Assessments have the potential to increase community involvement, develop broader awareness and understanding of food-related issues, improve collaboration across diverse stakeholder groups, and better integrate, scale up, or scale out existing programs and initiatives which directly or indirectly touch upon urban food systems.

It can be complicated, costly, and lengthy to perform a comprehensive analysis of the food system at city level, however a full assessment is not always necessary and a rapid assessment of only key aspects may be sufficient to inform an initial UFS. Methods may include an overview of previous research, document analysis, interviews, stakeholder consultations, evaluation panels, etc. Whether an assessment is comprehensive or rapid, it may consult a broad range of stakeholders, look at a diversity of food system issues, and be methodologically rigorous.

There are a number of excellent guides and toolkits which can provide some advice on the details of planning, designing and implementing an assessment (see the end of the section for more details). However, the analysis should have a holistic approach to the food system (see chapter 2), considering vertical (stages of the food system) and horizontal (action fields) dimensions of the food chain. Some elements that you may want to consider in your own assessment include:

**a) Assessing the vertical dimension of the food system: stages**

- **Food production** (what food is produced locally, by whom and under what working conditions, and using which production techniques)
- **Processing** (what processing companies operate in the city-region, how their input and output relate to the local economy and society)
- **Distribution and storage** (how food distribution is organized in the city-region; where and how people acquire food; the retail, state, and civic food distribution structures; the role and importance of short food supply chains within the existing food system)
- **Consumption** (who is consuming what kinds of food, in what context and in what amounts; affordability of food for all socioeconomic classes, which groups are already at risk of food insecurity, and the impact of food consumption habits on health related issues, such as obesity)
- **Waste** (source and volume of waste, lifecycle of food waste at all steps in the food system, GHG emissions of current food system)

**b) Assessing the horizontal dimension of the food system: areas of concern and themes**

- Assessment in this dimension is related to the **objectives and context of an UFS** and changes in human wellbeing that a strategy is expected to bring about. If the focus is on **public health** the assessment can look at food safety regulating bodies and laws, labeling practices, presence or lack of promotion and support of healthy lifestyles.
- Many cities put high priority on **environmental objectives** and their food assessment looks specifically at food miles, GHG emissions related to food production and transportation, short supply chains, distribution, and waste management practices.
- Economic assessment deals with the **impact on the regional economy** and local livelihoods implicated in all stages of the food system, and emergence of new business models in the area of local food economies.
- Food production and consumption are loaded with **social and cultural meanings**, therefore assessment can look at the diversity of foods and cuisines consumed in the city-region, needs of immigrants, valorisation of traditional foods and practices including local breeds, varieties and farming systems.
- Social justice – **fair and just practices** along the entire food system – is an important aspect to consider if cities see food as a key element for responsible businesses and inclusive communities.
- **Food security for all** – food poverty and assistance measures for people in need are critical in assessment.
- Assessment can also look at **knowledge, learning and empowerment** opportunities and practices that might be valorised and developed further (e.g. best practices, identification of good food ambassadors, pioneers and innovators, presence of education and awareness activities promoting sustainable and healthy food consumption).

#### Box 8: Who Feeds Bristol report: Towards a resilient food plan

This report was commissioned by the National Health Service Bristol, with support from the Bristol City Council, in 2010. The report analyzes the state of Bristol's food system taking a holistic approach. From this analysis the document highlights Bristol's strengths and vulnerabilities, and delivers suggestions for action.

Read more in <http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Who-Feeds-Bristol-report.pdf>

Furthermore, it is paramount to map, get to know and analyze the existing food policies, regulations and institutions in force in your respective city. Including:

- **Food policies:** Policies directly and indirectly related to food; processes of embedding food policy in the broader policy agenda; integration with other policies; implications of national, regional, or EU food-related frameworks.
- **Institutions:** Visions, norms and values driving food policies and institutions; laws and regulations; community and civic values related to food system functioning and management; relevant bodies implicated in food system policy and management.
- **Instruments and measurements:** Programs which support or undermine functioning of various aspects of the food system; tools and processes used to monitor and track efficiency and effectiveness of food-related policy or program interventions.
- **Participation structures:** Approaches and norms that encourage or limit stakeholder participation; existing and potential opportunities for civil society to participate in defining, planning, and implementing food policies and interventions; existing levels of participation by various stakeholders; measures taken to ensure involvement of various stakeholders.

#### Useful tools and guides for assessment:

##### **What's Cooking in Your Food System? A Guide to Community Food Assessment**

[www.downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/whats\\_cooking.pdf](http://www.downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/whats_cooking.pdf)

##### **Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit**

[www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan-electronic-publications-from-the-food-assistance-nutrition-research-program/efan02013.aspx](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan-electronic-publications-from-the-food-assistance-nutrition-research-program/efan02013.aspx)

##### **Good planning for good food. How the planning system in England can support healthy and sustainable food, January 2011**

<http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=192>

#### Read more:

<http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/bonn2013/urban-food-systems-forum/program/>

<http://www.feedingcities.com/>

### 3.3 Finding joint visions and goals

UFS have different origins and drivers but have the potential to bring people together from very different socio-economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In this sense, UFS are often based on a vision, for instance developing a sustainable food city or a green city, that is shared between the stakeholders involved in the process. This shared vision will guide the establishment of goals and specific actions.

In this regard it is important to engage as many stakeholders as possible in developing this future sustainable food city, so that different interests and points of view are represented and integrated in the joint venture. The more embedded the vision and goals are amongst different stakeholders, the stronger they stand, the more support they will gather, and the better they will be able to withstand changes in the political configurations of the municipality. Consequently, the development of the vision and associated goals constitutes a process where participation and negotiation are paramount. This process also allows the different actors to learn from each other's knowledge and experience, building a common cause.

For instance, in the case of Malmö the participatory process took an entire year with meetings and workshops before the final policy, with its vision of a Malmö providing its citizens with tasty nutritious and organic food, was in place. It is advisable to use different knowledge brokerage activities and facilitation techniques that help in advancing the process and taking decisions.

The definition of goals ranges from more general and far-reaching to specific and detailed. A useful mnemonic to identify relevant goals is the SMART system. This is often used when setting goals and objectives, and can even be called key performance indicators. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-sensitive.



Farmers Markets in Vitoria-Gasteiz

### 3.4 Defining an action plan and concrete actions

Based on the vision and goals, an action plan can be developed containing concrete actions. When constructing an action plan, it is also important to maintain an adequate level of participation, in order to prioritize activities according to the financial and human resources available and to make sure they can be delivered.

When you are constructing your action plan there are a number of questions you could be asking yourself:

- **What can we do to improve/change the current situation?** This is connected to the results of the assessment of the current food system, issues and challenges.
- How are we going to **prioritize the different actions?** Since it is difficult to carry out work on all actions simultaneously, it is important to work out an order of priority for implementation. All points are important but, when viewed over time, a schedule of different actions can allow focus on actions, which can result in more efficient work and better results.
- Who are the **main actors that can be involved in the implementation of the action plan?** The actors that have been involved in the construction of the vision and goals of the UFS are suitable candidates to be involved in the implementation of the action plan and play a role in the actions. In addition the UFS should not be closed to new and emerging actors in the local region who may want to join.
- What **tools** are available to you in the implementation of your action plan? What resources and skills are available/required for the implementation of the action plan?
- How can an action plan be implemented? A number of **simple steps** can be followed when implementing an action plan. Once the action plan is in place, a realistic timeline needs to be established so that it can be followed. Those responsible for each action step need to be identified so that you know the work will be accomplished.

Box 9: Bristol designed a food systems planning process to assist people in coordinating interrelated thematic fields and engage in developing them



### 3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

It is paramount to look back to the activities developed and at the process in order to assure you are walking in the right direction. In this regard, you should go back to the stage of assessment of the food system to make sure you are tackling all the relevant aspects that might have been changing in the city in relation to the food system dynamics. These changes might be the result of actions derived from the UFS process or from other forces, such as the increasing number of people in food poverty due to the economic crisis.

However, not only quantitative indicators on the food system are important. It is necessary to have an overarching process-oriented approach that gives value to the political spaces created and the conversations and networks generated. These elements might bring about change more slowly or in other forms but they are equally important. In this regard, a key aspect of food policy councils and similar coalitions is to influence policy; consequently this should be part of your monitoring. Finally, participation and raising awareness are also basic elements of the UFS process. Therefore, reflecting and learning on how you are promoting participation, widening the debates to the whole society, and integrating their views and needs, are crucial to the process.

*Roath Farmers' Market, Cardiff, UK*





## SUMMING UP: IT IS HAPPENING!

This document aims to motivate and provide people with ideas and basic tools to start a process of change of urban food systems. These processes are complex and challenging, and vary enormously from one place to another.

Through our work in the Foodlinks project we have experienced these differences and difficulties ourselves in our cities – Basel, Bristol, Cardiff, Malmö, Tukums, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Vienna. In some of these cities there exist interesting initiatives which are still detached from each other, while in others food related networks already exist; some cities are about to organiaie stakeholder participation, while others have already developed comprehensive strategies and policy institutions. We have been learning from each of these examples and celebrating the energy and capacity of cities to transform their *foodscapes*.

There are many cities that are walking this path, taking action to build more just and sustainable food for all. You can share your ideas and find support in different forums, such as the Foodlinks-Purefood blog<sup>1</sup>, Sustainable Food Cities Network<sup>2</sup> or the Food for Cities web<sup>3</sup>.

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1 <http://purefoodlinks.eu/>

2 <http://www.soilassociation.org/sustainablefoodcities>

3 <http://www.fao.org/fcit/en/>

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