

Urban Food Strategies: The Rough Guide to Sustainable Food Systems

Summary and recommendations for local governments

Food integrates sustainability dimensions

Food plays an important role in a **wide range of policy areas at national but also regional and local level**: from land-use planning to infrastructure and transport, from environmental protection to housing and socio-economic development. Food can function as a **vehicle to integrate** the economic, social and environmental **dimensions of sustainability**, and to **address justice and health** issues in cities.

Placing food on a city's agenda

Developing an Urban Food Strategy enables cities to **envision a turn towards more sustainability and to plan for concrete action**. Urban food strategies **place food on the urban agenda**, link different stakeholder groups in their efforts to push for more sustainable food production and consumption.

Urban food strategy: a holistic approach

Ideally, urban food strategies take a **holistic approach to the food system of a city**. They embrace **various policy domains**, including health and wellbeing, environment, economy and community development, social and cultural development, and education. They also consider different **stages** of the food system: production, processing, storage, transport, retail, consumption and waste.

Changing the food system requires the collaboration of different actors, from public and private agencies among which policymakers, citizens, entrepreneurs and civil society organizations.

Steps to develop an urban food strategy

1. Organizing participation processes and governance

It is important to identify all relevant stakeholders, to understand their motivations, and communicate with the wider audience.

2. Assessment of the current food system

Assessing the current food system helps to identify issues and challenges faced by consumers and producers, and provides citizens and decision makers with the information needed to set policy goals and establish baseline data and indicators for monitoring.

3. Formulating joint visions and goals

A shared vision and common goals give guidance to specific actions. Discussing objectives offers an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience, and develop a common sense of understanding and direction

4. Defining an Action Plan and concrete Actions

Based on a common plan, specific actions can be designed and prioritized in order to address the main challenges identified in step 2. It is paramount to decide which actors will take the leadership to deliver the actions as well as define resources and what tools to apply.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is important to reconsider participation, goals and action plans; opening new windows of opportunity and building on earlier actions and achievements.

The Rough Guide to Urban Food Strategies is available in full length on foodlinkscommunity.net

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Potential actions of local governments in an Urban Food Strategy

- Promote urban food strategies through various **targeted communication strategies**, such as food festivals, local good food award competition, workshops and other educational activities.
- Provide **financial support for food related projects and activities**, such as farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, urban agriculture, and the start of sustainable food businesses.
- Make sure that the **different municipal departments dealing with local food coordinate their activities**.
- **Allocate time** of key civil servants to engage in the development of urban food strategies.
- Make sure that you **re-orientate your public procurement** of food towards more sustainable food, choosing for more healthy food, more organic food, more vegetarian food, more local food, or more culturally-appropriate food.
- **Designate land for (peri) urban agriculture and gardening** in current and also future development plans.
- Designate **areas for farmers' markets and sustainable food shops**, assuring easy access and excluding competing chains.
- **Revise legislation** where necessary to support the proliferation of small producers and independent enterprises.
- Designate **exclusion zones for unhealthy food hubs** near sensitive areas such as schools.
- **Create facilities that support short food supply chains**, such as local slaughterhouses, processing facilities, storage facilities, and wholesale markets.

