

Food strategies for green cities

2018

FOOD 2030 workshop outcomes

Food systems are built of multiple components, actors and cultures, and food systems are inextricably connected to nutrition, climate and environment, the circular economy and community empowerment. The transition to a more sustainable, health-centric and inclusive food system is difficult precisely because of the many interdependencies between these components.

This newsletter is based on the knowledge and information shared at the [‘Food Strategies for Green Cities’ workshop](#) (23 May 2018, official session at EU Green Week 2018), and presents some key recommendations and opportunities for Research and Innovation (R&I) policy and programming, especially with regard to Food Strategies for Green Cities. This workshop was built on a previous, full-day workshop held in 2017, and is part of the [FOOD 2030](#) process of creating a forward-looking R&I policy framework to future-proof European food systems, with the wider aim of engaging and mobilising cities to foster improved cooperation and openness amongst multiple food-system actors.



The event was attended by 94 participants and co-hosted by the European Commission FOOD 2030 team of DG RTD and by DG AGRI. It provided an opportunity for participants to feed in their priorities for cities’ food strategies on a range of topics (see Box 1 for the full list of these sessions). Three speakers presented their key messages for achieving more integrated food systems in cities, Froukje Idema, Programme Manager Food, Municipality of Ede, The

Netherlands; Frank Lohrberg, Head of the Institute for Landscape Architecture, RWTH Aachen University, Germany; and Olivier De Schutter, Co-Chair of IPES-Food (picture, right).



Box 1: List of World Café-style discussion group sessions:

- Integrated food governance (IFG)
- Urban agriculture & urban-rural linkages (U-R)
- Role of the EU (REU)
- Food waste (FW)
- Working with society (WwS)
- Role of research /universities (RoR)
- Microfinancing (MF)
- Public food procurement (PFP)
- Education and awareness (EA)
- Urban food logistics (UFL)
- Restaurants as catalysts (R)

Froukje Idema presented the case of Ede (The Netherlands), the city-home of many experimental farms, knowledge institutes, agri-food companies and start-ups. Ede is taking its responsibility for the food system seriously.

Ede is a municipality with both urban and rural areas, and is familiar with the challenges both areas face. To tackle these challenges, Ede has made a conscious effort to initiate an integrated local food policy, taking into account the whole food system. The Ede municipality has focused on five themes: healthy people, healthy environment, sustainable consumption, short food chains and the development of a robust agri-food sector.

With the first 'food alderman' role in The Netherlands, Ede can be seen as a food governance pioneer. Idema referenced just a few of the initiatives currently taking place: one third of Ede's primary schools currently have food gardens and/or lessons, and the [World Food Centre](#) (a hub where connections with entrepreneurs are planned to lead to new business models for a sustainable food system, and all aspects of the food chain can be experienced) is in development in the city.

During its work, Ede municipality identified an important gap in understanding how best to measure and monitor results of food policies. In response, Ede has developed its own set of tailor-made monitoring indicators (which also incorporate existing indicators, and which are made accessible for citizens via a dashboard). Idema made clear that cities will have to be able to show citizens the impact of their food policies, in order to achieve wide behavioural change.

They are monitoring the effects of their food policy closely, and so far they have found positive effects on school gardens, healthcare institutions, urban agricultural initiatives, and in connecting entrepreneurs.

Good-practice monitoring is anticipated to bring us closer to healthy and sustainable food in cities, and

Idema made the case that it is time for food policy monitoring to be professionalised and used more widely; R&I and government partners should be able to help with this.

Innovation in local governance will also be needed to shape the future role for local and city municipalities, and to share knowledge and scale up best practices. Idema finished with an encouragement to work together not only horizontally, between cities – but also vertically, between cities, regions, provinces, ministries and the EU.

"Ede's integrated food policy takes into account the entire food system – from farm to fork."

Froukje Idema, Ede Municipality



Frank Lohrberg positioned urban agriculture as a tool for city planning, rather than as an end in itself. Drawing from his experiences researching [urban agriculture throughout Europe](#), he stressed the importance of rural-urban partnerships, and cautioned that the focus on self-sufficiency for (and densifying of vertical agriculture within) cities may distract and detract from the traditional relationship between rural and urban areas. This



could be detrimental for rural areas, which already face severe challenges in the EU and throughout the world.

While cities are the best place for innovating food production, especially the urban fringe, they are not the best place for scaling it, as competition for land is highest near the city centre (the bid-rent theory), making significant expansion of urban agriculture unrealistic.

Urban areas, however, do serve as a vital testing ground, results of which could lay the basis for more radical change of European food policies. According to Lohrberg, any common food or agricultural policy should do better at supporting innovative, small-scale, labour-intensive and sustainable food businesses – which would help to make our landscapes more sustainable, lively and soulful.

Food systems are also a useful frame to engage stakeholders from across the first, second and third sectors in the same conversations, suggested Lohrberg. Additionally, there is a need to leverage the capabilities and potential of the younger EU generation, e.g. students with many ideas, but no land or opportunities. They will and should evolve the new urban landscapes in Europe.



“There is a need for laboratories for the new generation of newcomers in agriculture to be able to innovate.”

Frank Lohrberg, RWTH Aachen University

Olivier De Schutter noted that the [International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems \(IPES-Food\)](#) has launched, over the past three years, a large project on the need for a common food policy for the EU. Such an ‘umbrella strategy’ will need to link agricultural policy with environment, health, nutrition, investment and trade, among other elements. At present, policies at the highest level are not aligned with the innovation possible at the local level.

Relocalising and reterritorialising food systems will mean a shift in focus: from productivity and standardisation, to resilience and diversity.

An enabling environment is key, which could be attained via, for example, formal recognition of food and nutrition segments in local government, or in citizen sectors (such as food policy councils); enabling citizens to agree and implement uses for rural development funding; and using local knowledge and traditional practices at the appropriate level of subsidiarity.

De Schutter made the case for a larger framework into which this all these advances can be integrated – to set the direction for synergies and food-systems structural change into the future.

World Café

Knowledge shared by the World Café participants also identified a gap between governance at policy level and the actions possible at local level. The principle of subsidiarity was referenced several times, supported by suggestions for: establishing clear targets at national/regional scales; the value of bottom-up approaches; relocalisation; better financing for short supply chains; research into favourable environments for local, social-innovation or civil-society interventions; and reducing food miles (RoR, MF, FL, WwS, IFG, REU, U-R).

Lack of awareness or education was another gap that could be addressed by R&I, with regard to:



what is the best information to share on the responsible, sustainable use of food, including optimal portion size and gut-friendly food (EA, R).

Much of the discussion focused on the increasing dissemination and uptake of the knowledge that has already been researched and understood: better education and training responding to the information needs of farming communities (including new communication channels); better food-sciences education in schools and universities; better training and development of competency for professional producers, teachers, food retailers and restaurant workers. Gardens and plantations were seen as helpful sites to combat the lack of education/awareness in democratic ways (IFG, EA, U-R, FW, PFP, R).

Other themes included better cooperation between urban and rural populations (U-R, REU, FW, MF), making better use of the knowledge of local communities (U-R), and ensuring we know what the appropriate level/amount of regulation is in order to meet the needs of society (WWS).

Effective monitoring of food policies and food waste sources was seen as a gap, as was knowledge about the effects of implementation of initiatives. Life cycle assessment research, and research on sustainability

criteria indicators were suggested to plug this gap (REU, FW, PFP), as was the development of demonstrator districts, live examples or city testing sites – with the aim that lessons learnt from test case cities could then be scaled up for wider application (U-R, RoR).

REU and PFP mentioned that a common platform for knowledge exchange and networking could help to establish better control of food chains but would also need to involve both cities and rural areas. Labelling and traceability (in terms of the food supply chain, the recovery of uncontaminated 'waste' food, or the labelling of green restaurants) were also mentioned (FW, R).

More profound, fundamental data on impacts on both health and the environment was identified as a need. Suggested research areas included: fundamental research on what are the healthiest diets for humans, including research on gut-friendly (e.g. fermented) foods; data on extent of urban food security issues; ecological impacts of current and unsustainable food systems; alternatives to currently available foods (REU, FW, RoR, MF, R).

Market and behaviour research was another area deemed important to transition, regarding: the impact of market controls, or lack thereof, on food systems; the impacts of the 'real' costs of cheap and unhealthy food or of the high costs of organic/bio food; or the impacts of aggressive marketing strategies on consumer behavior (RoR, EA).

The development and testing of new business models (e.g. to support scale up of social innovators working on food) was seen as a key innovation need, and with it, a better understanding of the alternative economy, including how to ensure ownership and long-termism in sustainable food projects. (FW, WWS).