

CITY FOOD POLICIES



Mainstreaming diversity © Risteco

Some lessons learnt: an overview on various strategies.

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Twelve case studies have been selected among a wide range of relevant experiences and classified in five categories that highlight different typologies of projects. The examination of all case studies shows that progresses are faster and easier where cities already having a deep concern for environmental issues and already have developed agenda 21 or environmental planning.

The exam of these successful projects shows how pioneers have been able to detect the capacity of food-related projects to strengthen social cohesion and create a social bond, on top of such benefits. Indeed, not only food can become a thread that connect all the main competences of the cities related to urban environment, economic development, education, solidarity, culture and leisure, health, politics and governance, but it can also give consistency to a synergic osmosis between cities and adjacent territories.

1. Developing a systemic vision through a Food policy Council



Toronto's and Bristol's cases highlight how instrumental Food Policy Councils have been in working with communities, policymakers, and city councillors to identify opportunities. Their synergic effect can be explained because all food-related activities make more sense within a frame of action resulting from a systemic vision. Not only it allows a more rational use of funding, but it channels with greater efficiency all existing voluntary actions and dynamics that are an essential impetus.

Indeed, Food Policy Councils are multi actor-task force that have demonstrated for 30 years, a consistent capacity for bringing people together across sectors, disciplines, and even political stripes to work together on food issues. With the supervision of experts, they evolve as a resource to their members, fulfilling networking and professional development needs and facilitating the discussion of issues that are relevant to decision makers, practitioners and advocates working on food issues. They have also the responsibility to balance their deliberations on a broad and growing range of potential food system issues with the strategic identification of specific opportunities for action.

2. Food connects social and health concerns



New York City case is a brilliant example of a deep cultural change based on the concept of Food and Nutrition Security, which has framed sustainable food into an essential and transversal element in the life of all citizens within a holistic approach. The budgetary restraint imposes to find solutions to fund these expensive programs.

- Cities may develop a metrics system to measure externalities and impacts in order to justify new expenditures and shifts in the municipality budget. No immediate methodologies are available and tailor-made systems of evaluation need to be adapted to local contexts.

- Cities may support alternative food system to positively contribute to the local economy and to redistribute part of the expenses in their own territory.

3. The leverage of public food service



Public Food service is a direct way to test and exemplify any kind of action about sustainable food systems. Cities, such as Copenhagen may foresee the role of Public Food service to invest

more in human resources and know-how, by setting people at the centre of economy and also to educate and raise awareness on the importance of food among the population (from children to elderly people). In particular it is possible to empower municipal staff, starting from cooks, to become able to prepare healthy, inclusive, balanced, environmental-friendly, tasty meals without increasing the price.

Paris and Rome are good examples of cities aware of public procurement potential to enable them to reorganize the food supply chain, including production (inside and outside the city) and to optimize the last mile logistics in their own area of influence.

4. Urban planning against urban sprawling - using urban assets to preserve agriculture and water resources



The thirty-year old territorial project developed in Rennes is emblematic to show how much food issues can drive cities to develop a responsible and coherent urban planning policy that preserves functional agricultural territories connected together and also vital resources such as biodiversity and water. Not only cities should not grow by erasing rural food-lands, but they can use their specific assets (see two examples below) to stimulate rural development in harmony with urban needs.

The cases of Nuremberg and Saragossa illustrate that cities may develop a pragmatic action to support local food producers, mainly by stimulating the demand among urban population, using a commercial approach (Nuremberg) or an educative approach (Saragossa). In the meantime, by being logistics nodes for people mobility, they become international gateways for instance managing international fairs and cooperation programs and doing so the network also remote rural areas all together.

5. Being smart, developing a local economy based on local food productions



The question of food policy raises the necessity to frame the area of action in order to increase the efficiency. But some cities such as Brussels have experimented the impediments produced by too narrow and precise definitions that were initially used to map out the proposed field of action and finally chose a more pragmatic and experimental approach to foster innovation. For this reason, this city that has decided to implement sustainable food systems mainly to reinforce economy and create local employment, urban agriculture has been identified as the promising area of activity in the food system, still to be implemented.

Territorial food marketing can also be developed to enable the promotion of local agriculture with the objective to increase food self-sufficiency (Geneva) but also to earn recognition worldwide and an international reputation looking to become a capital of high quality food to attract tourism for instance (Turin).

9 propositions, based on lessons learnt, to implement efficient city food policies:

1. To integrate food strategy into the Agenda 21.
2. To create territorial Agencies using plural-disciplinary approach based on subsidiarity and participation.
3. To connect the different territorial levels of the Agencies for Food Policies.

4. To integrate the management of edible landscapes, in and out the city, into urban planning
5. To integrate food diversity and quality in all food distribution channels.
6. To make solidarity and food waste management an issue for more food value within the urban food strategy.

7. To implement tools for building capacity and monitoring the leverage effect for sustainable food supply chains
8. To introduce more flexible rules for public procurement that allows territories adopting agriculture planning tools to increase local food production, to use public food services as a leverage to structure and support local food supply chain systems.
9. To modernize Public Food Service with new production systems and skilled staff.