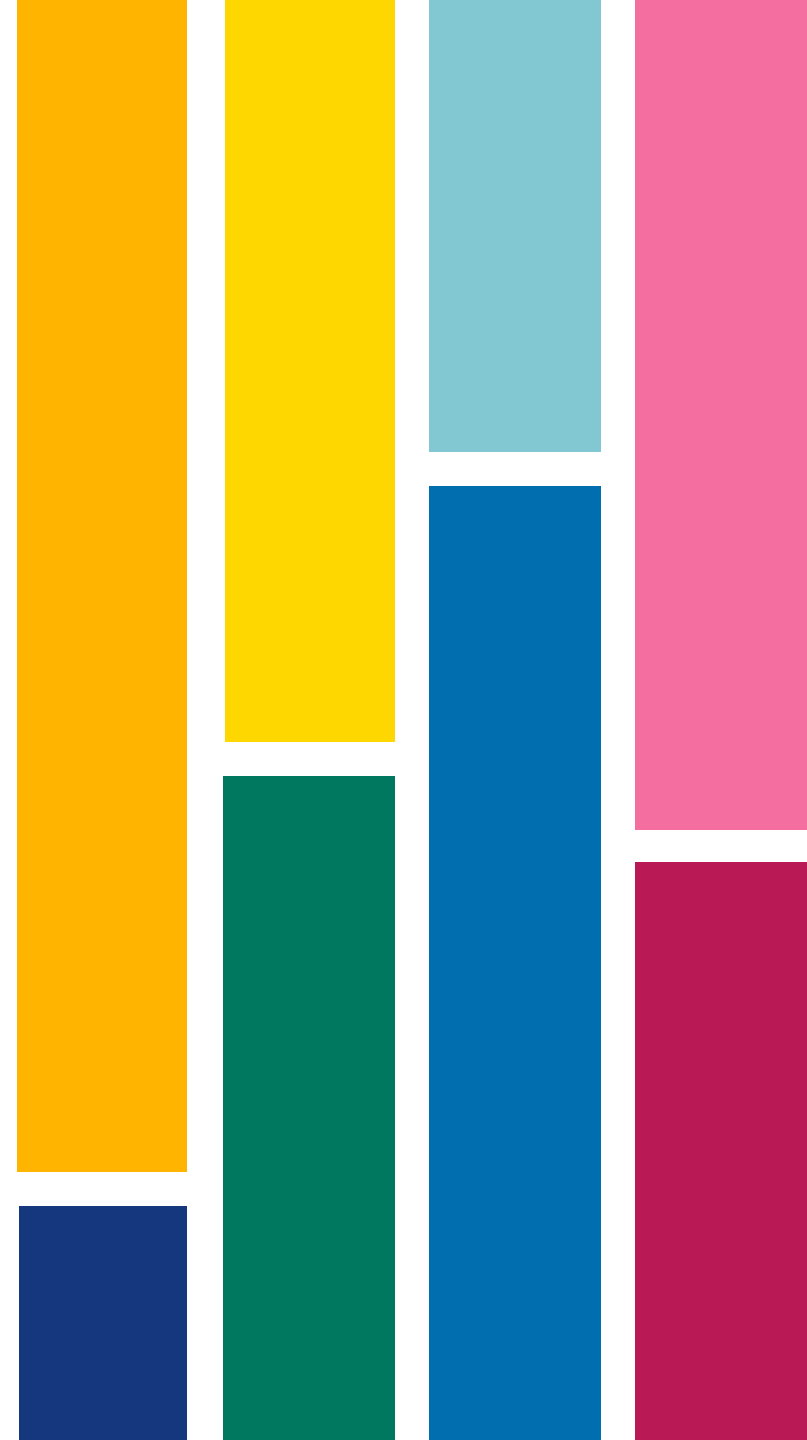


Understanding food systems: governance, local policy and strategic framing

Madeleine Coste
Head of Food,
Eurocities
13 November 2025



Agenda

Why do we need food policies?

How to frame food and farming?

How are Eurocities and the Milan Pact supporting cities?

The Cleverfood Project

Why do we need Food Policies?

8.5% of people in the EU are **unable to afford** proper meal 39.8% in Slovakia, 37.7% in Bulgaria, 37.3% in Hungary (Eurostats, 2024)

Overall, 25% of **children** aged 7–9 years were living with **overweight (including obesity)** and 11% with **obesity** in European region (WHO, 2025) with worrying trends in cancers, cardio vascular diseases, non-communicable diseases

Precarious **working conditions and brutal exploitation** – particularly for migrant farm labour

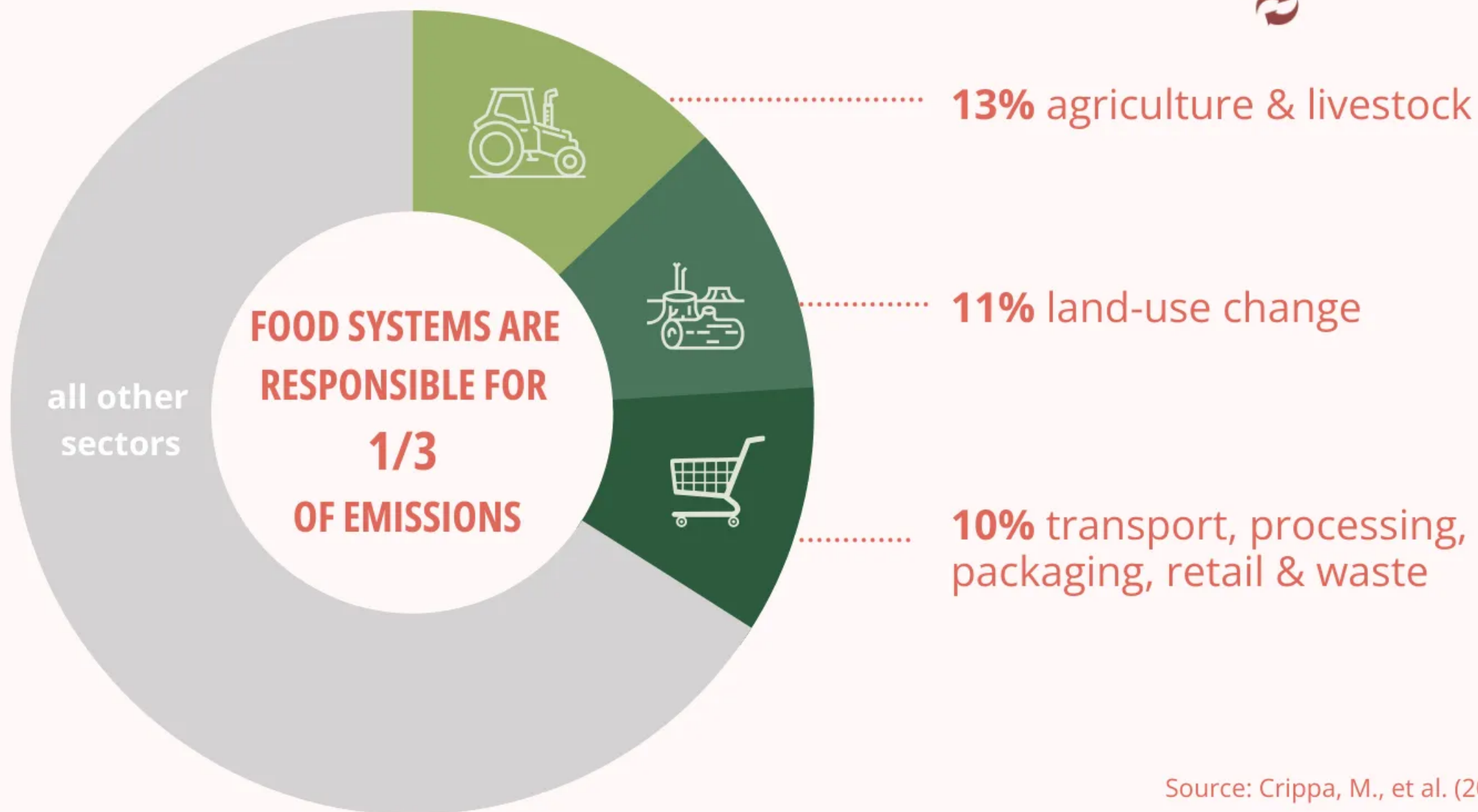
Industrial agricultural system reliant on synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and fossil fuels, and are responsible for 40% of global petrochemicals (IPES-Food, 2025)

Farmers are struggling to make a living. Across the EU, **small farms dropped by 44%** between 2007-2022 whilst the **number of mega-farms increased by 56%** (Greenpeace, 2024)

Food systems contribute to **1/3 of greenhouse gas emissions** (IPES-Food, 2021)



Total global greenhouse gas emissions



Source: Crippa, M., et al. (2021).

AMONG 7-9 YEAR OLD
CHILDREN OF THE WHO
EUROPEAN REGION,

ONLY
5%

EAT ENOUGH



FRUIT AND
VEGETABLES



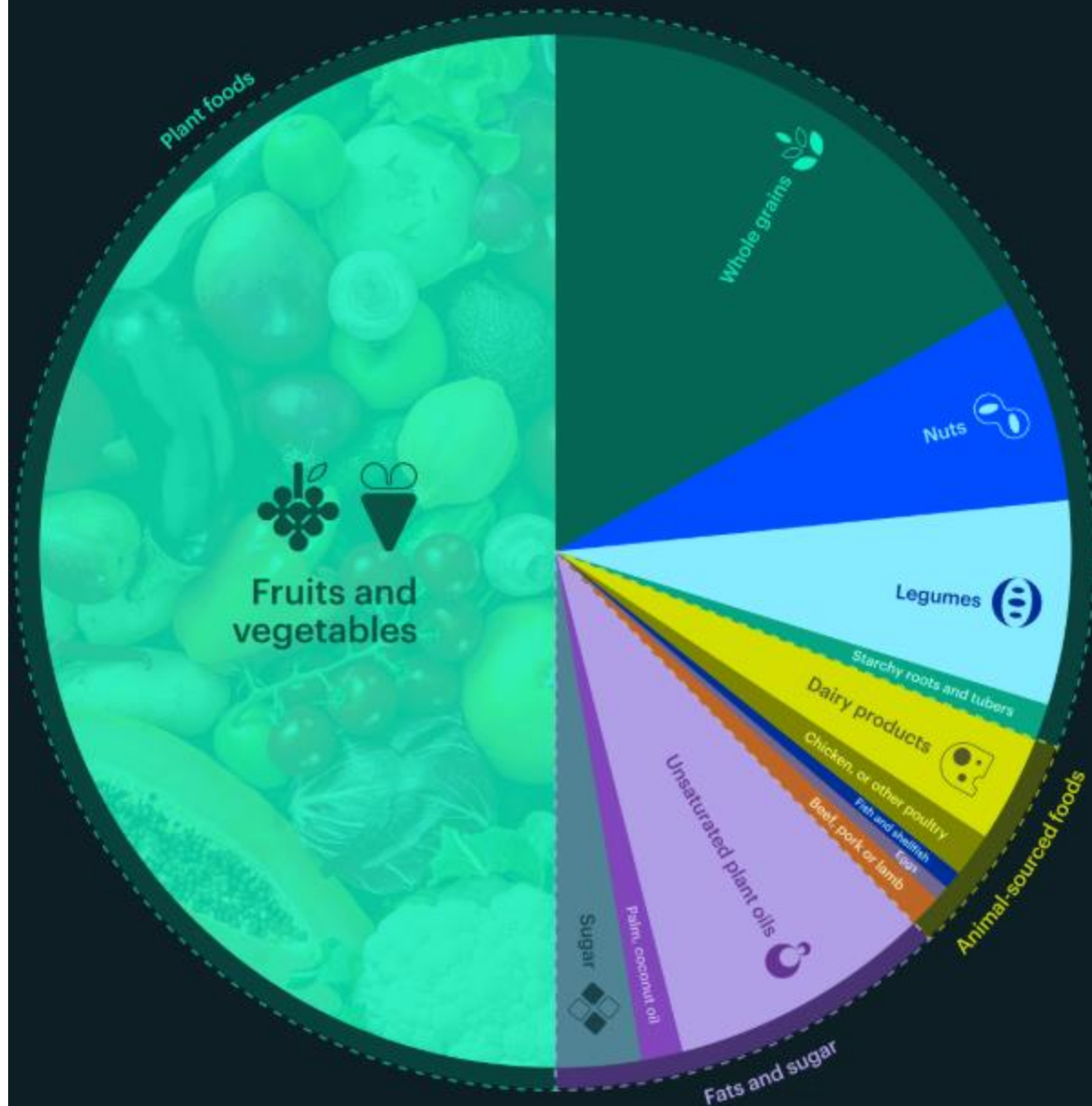
AMONG 7-9 YEAR OLD
CHILDREN OF THE WHO
EUROPEAN REGION,

41% EAT SWEETS
AND

29% CONSUME SUGARY
DRINKS

MORE THAN
3 TIMES
A WEEK





The EAT-Lancet Commission 2.0 finds that by simultaneously:

- Shifting to **healthy diet**
- Improving **agricultural productivity**
- Reducing **food loss and waste**

By 2050, we can reduce **agricultural emissions by 20%** compared to levels in 2020.

Food system actions could drive major reductions in GHG emissions



18% by shifting to well-managed production practices

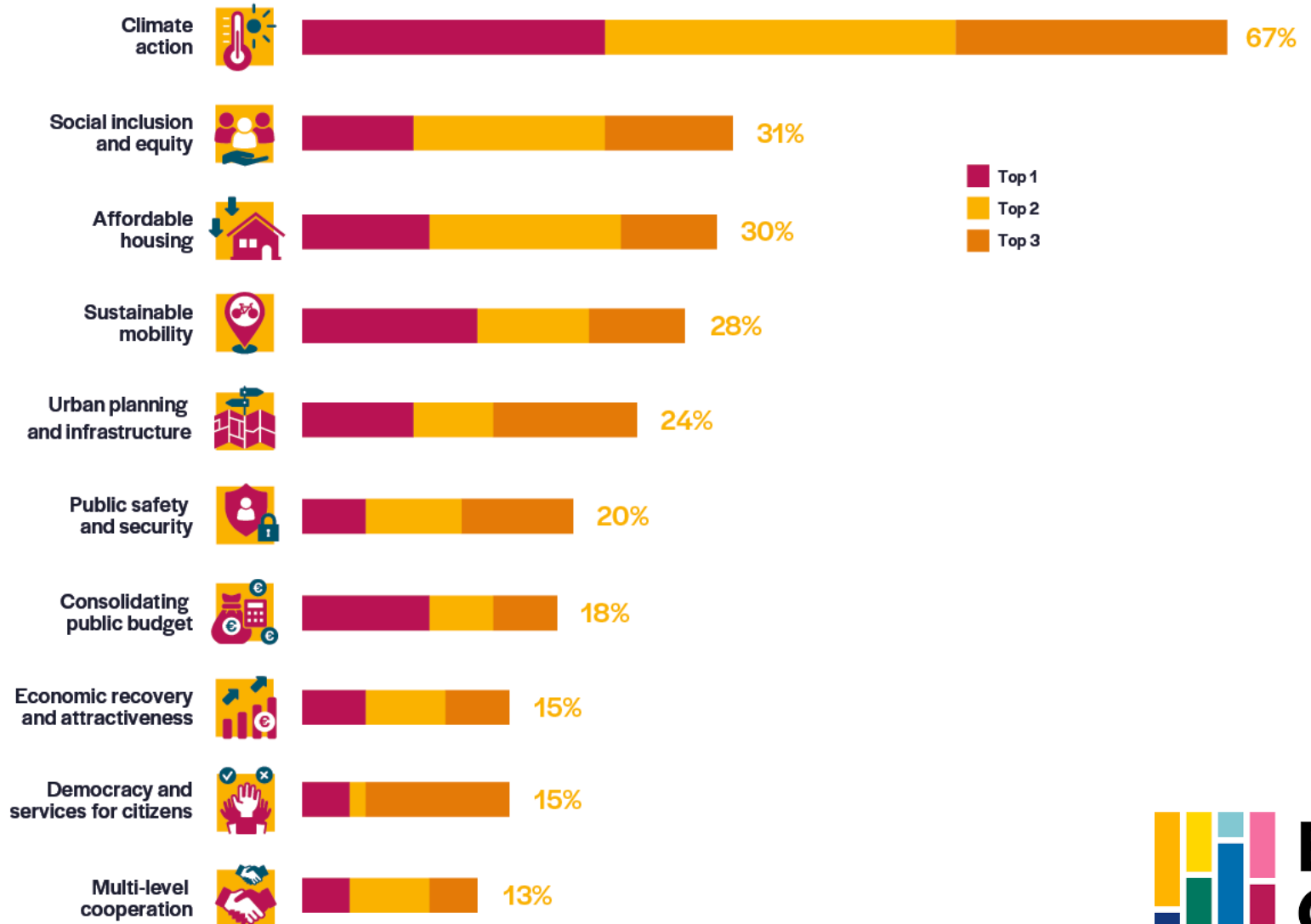
8% by transitioning to sustainable diets & halving meat production & consumption

8% by halving food loss & waste



Why should/do cities work on food?

- Eurocities Mayors' Pulse Survey
- Top 10 Priorities for 2024



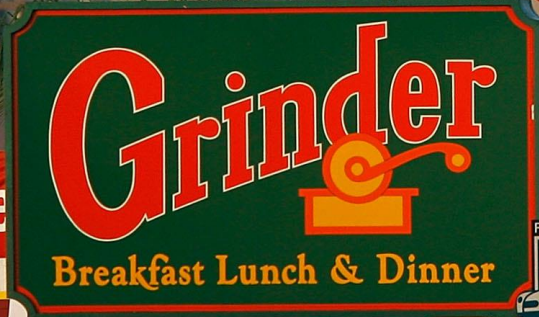
How to frame
food and
farming?

Promote healthy
& sustainable
**“Food
Environments”**

Beware of the
**“Food
Security”**
argument



Food environments shape what food we buy and eat.



Promote
healthy &
sustainable
“Food
Environments”

We need to urgently shift away from **blaming consumers for unhealthy & unsustainable habits** towards **making healthy & sustainable diets the « default » diet**; i.e the most:

- Affordable
- Widely available
- Accessible
- Attractive

Information and awareness raising campaigns are needed but are not sufficient.

Changing the **food environment** such as:

- Setting vegetarian menus as the default
- Reducing portion sizes
- Regulating advertising (banning junk food ads)
- Improving school meals
- Setting up fresh food markets

Beware of the “Food Security” argument

Myths:

Some actors claim that:

Food security is threatened
by:

- Environmental measures
- Reducing/banning pesticide use
- Stronger animal welfare

Their solution?

- Producing more food
- Intensifying food production
- Heavier use of chemicals

In reality:

Food security is threatened by:

- Environmental degradation
- Climate and biodiversity crises
 - Food waste and losses
 - Industrial animal rearing
- Unaffordability of healthy food

We need:

- Equitable and sustainable food systems
- Ambitious food and agricultural policies

European food policy – What you should know about the recent changes

EU Farm to Fork Strategy (2020)

Responsibility of DG SANTE (Health & Food Safety)^c

Food Systems approach

Food Environments, sustainability

A mix of policies on food production & food consumption

Targets (25% organic, 50% pesticide reduction)

Ambitious on environmental, animal welfare, health & social dimensions

Technological & social innovation

Sustainable Food Systems legislative Framework proposal

New Vision for Agriculture & Food (2025)

Responsibility of DG AGRI (Agriculture)

Focused on agriculture & “food security”

Technological innovation

Competitiveness, “future-proof”

No targets, no specific legislation

Food, health, consumption, diets, food environments are **absent**

The climate impact of food systems is largely ignored

SFS legislative framework off the table

Availability of EU Funds for cities on food seems limited

Eurocities at a glance

220+ 
European cities

150+ 
million people



Eurocities employees 

39 
countries

6000 
City politicians, officials
& experts actively
engaged

Thematic areas



MUFPP & EUROCITIES

The regionalization process of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact in Europe is based on a strong alliance with Eurocities, the main association of European mayors, that in 2016 established the Eurocities Working Group Food, a creative hub for knowledge sharing and codesign of innovative solutions related to urban food policies for European cities.

3 main goals

Meetings and Webinars
knowledge sharing

European joint projects
cooperation, exchanges, research,

European advocacy
towards EU bodies and stakeholders

**100+
CITIES**



● MUFPP cities

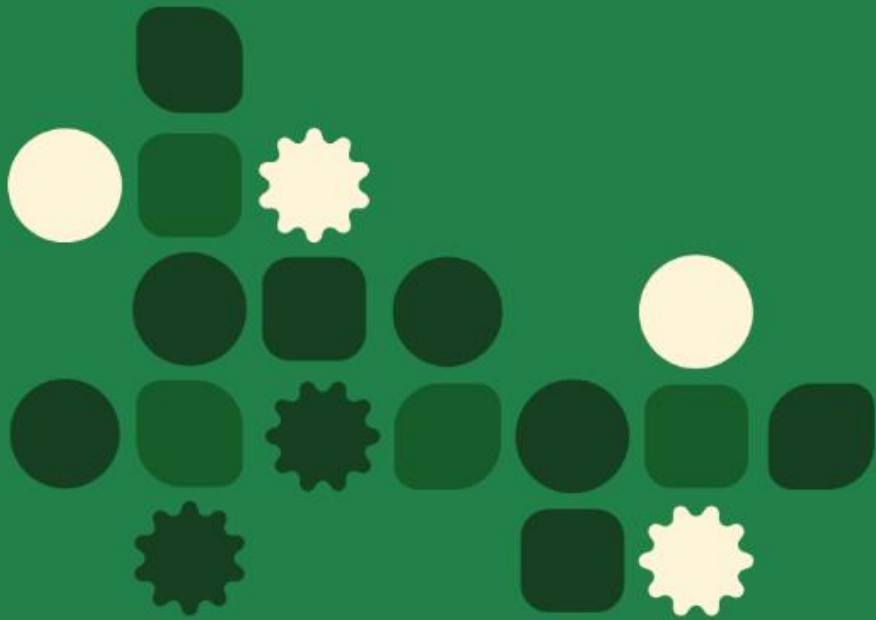
● Eurocities Working Group Food cities

European Policy – What will we advocate for in the next year(s)?

- Resilient and sustainable food systems capable of providing healthy food for all, resistant to geopolitical and climate shocks
- The EU's **first anti-poverty strategy** must address the impacts of food poverty and support cities
- Stronger **public procurement** rules for greener and healthier meals
- An ambitious revision of the **EU School Scheme**
- Maintenance and strengthening of the EU Child Guarantee to ensure **universal access to school meals**
- Cities' access to **EU funds for local food systems**, within the Multi-annual Financial Framework

Join us in these efforts!

CLEVERFOOD



Connected Labs and networks for
Empowering Versatile Engagement in
Radical Food system transformation
(**CLEVERFOOD**)

Coordination and Support Action (CSA)
project funded by Horizon Europe

What are key messages?

- Urgent need for transformation of the food system to make it more **fair, healthy and sustainable**
- This requires a shift to more **plant-based** food production and consumption, where **circularity** is embedded in all stages of the food value chain
- We need to ensure that such a transition is **fair** for both farmers and consumers



INTEGRATED FOOD POLICY

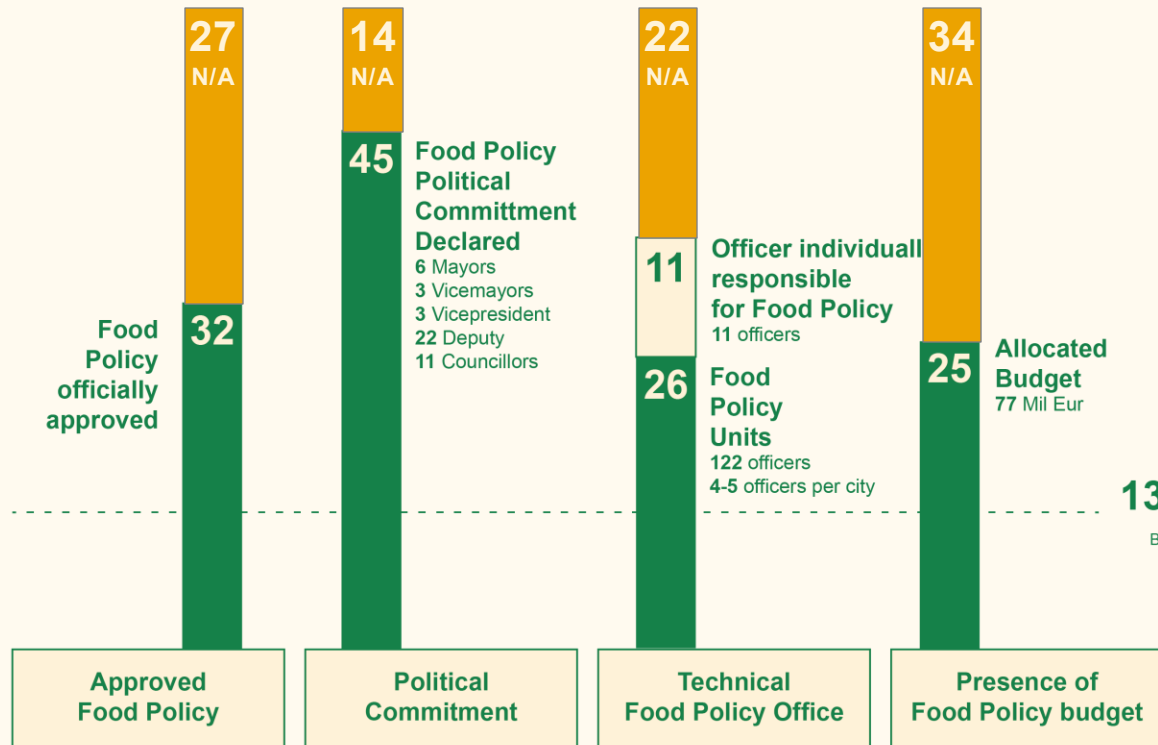


An integrated food policy is the **joining up of goals and policies** related to food systems **horizontally** across governments, **vertically** between governance levels, with **inside and outside government bodies** to better align these efforts, reduce incoherence between them, and tackle **food systems challenges** more effectively.

European Food Policy geography

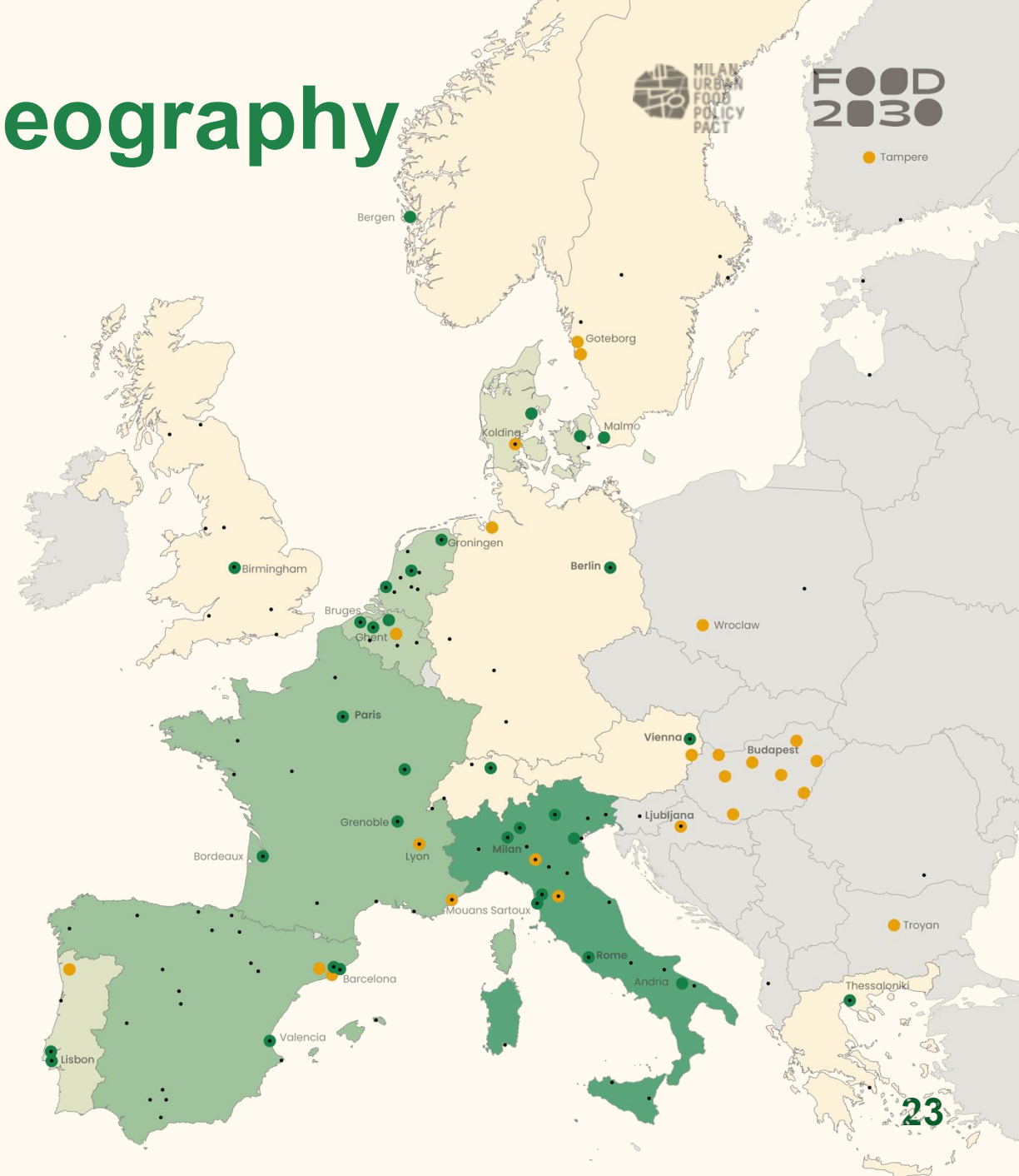
59 cities from
19 different countries

- Presence of an approved Urban Food Policy
- Absence of an approved Urban Food Policy
- Cities part of the MUFPP / Eurocities WG Food



13 Cities

Almere
Barberà del Vallès
Bergen
Berlin
Birmingham
Lyon Métropole
Milan
Paris
Roskilde
The Hague
València
Vienna
Zurich

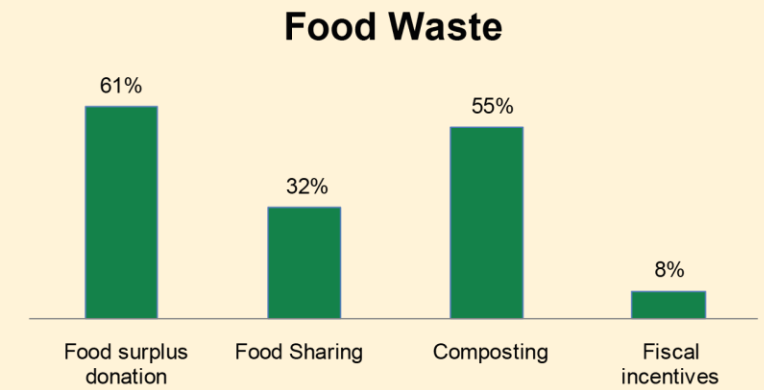
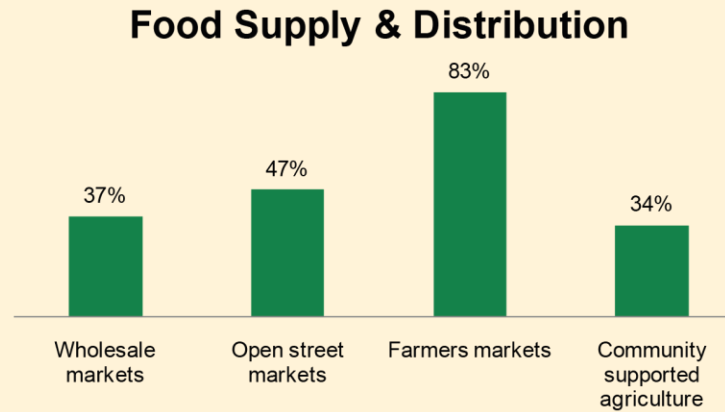
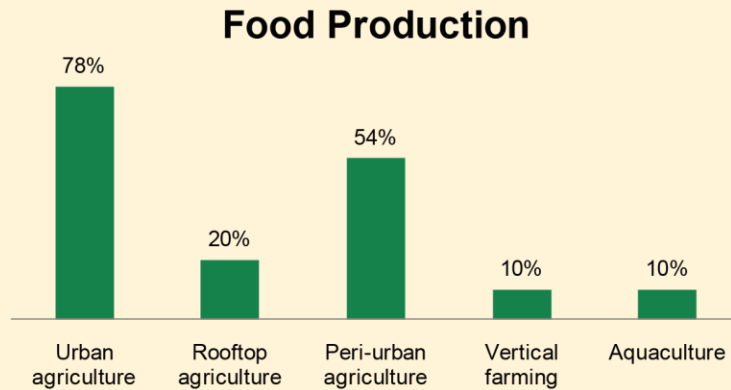
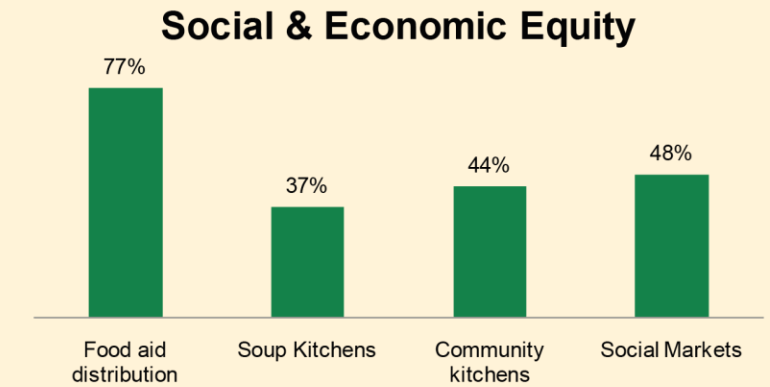
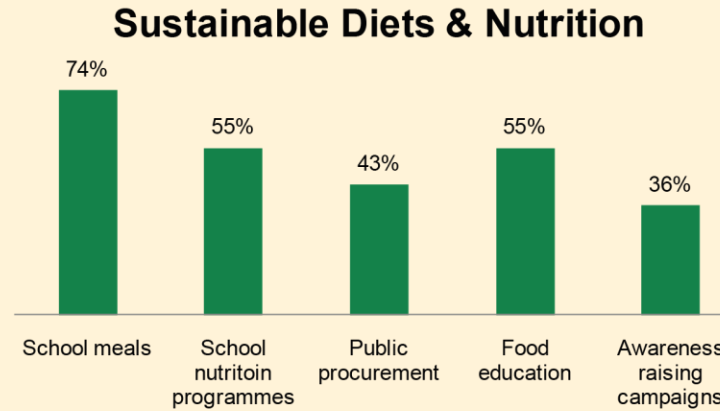
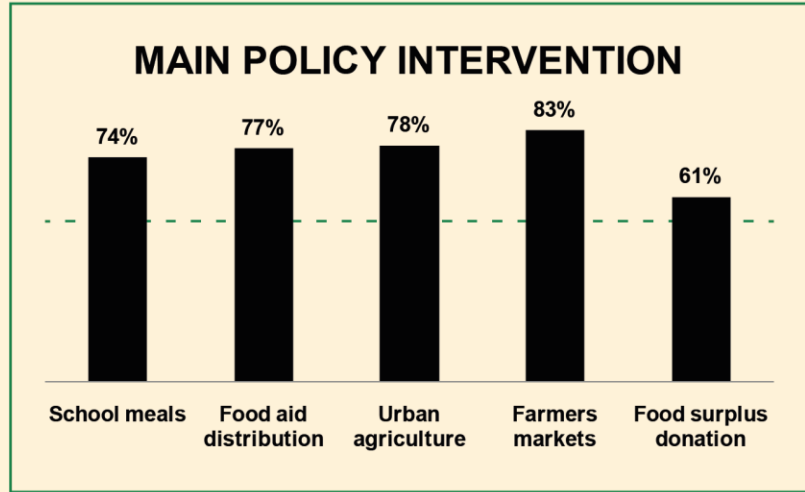


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Tampere

Policy interventions



Peer-learning programme coordinated by Eurocities



- Peer-learning programme for **40 food policy labs and food policy councils** implemented in cities and metropolitan areas
- Diversity of **stakeholders involved**: local authorities, universities, NGOs, and private companies
- **Topics addressed**: Stakeholder engagement, procurement, rural-urban linkages, inclusion of vulnerable groups, food council etc.
- Exchanges on how local initiatives can have a broader impact on **governance and policymaking of city-region food systems**
- **Action plans** to continue the activities, funding available to fund actions
- **Learn more** about the Peer-learning programme and the cities involved on the Food2030 website
<https://food2030.eu/projects/cleverfood/policy-labs/>





Discussion Q&A

Group Discussions

- Groups of 3-4
- As a group: Identify 3 things from the presentation that resonate with your local context?
- Share 2 challenges you expect to face in implementing your action plan
- Report back to the group

Resources

Food Trails Handbook on food policy (available in 9 languages)



Food Trails final publication (9 languages)



Food 2030 Toolkit for Public Engagement



D2.1 Comparative analysis of existing urban food policies

Eurocities is the largest network of European cities. We count over 200 large cities among our membership, representing more than 150 million people across 38 countries, from within and outside the European Union.

The Eurocities Working Group Food is a creative hub of food policy knowledge where information, ideas and good practices can be shared and investigating innovative solutions for urban food challenges.

The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact an international agreement on urban food policies signed by 250+ cities worldwide, committed to advancing on the common goal of sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban food systems.

Since 2015, Eurocities, and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, have been carrying the cities' voice and supporting those actively committed to transforming urban food systems, improving people's health and wellbeing and making cities more sustainable, inclusive, and future-proof.

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