

POLICY BRIEF IN SHORT

BALANCING THE PLATE AND THE PLANET: A POLICY BRIEF FOR ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE NEUTRALITY



Food systems are both a major contributor to climate change and a key part of the solution. Transforming food systems can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions while delivering social, health, economic, and environmental benefits.

These key recommendations for local and regional governments to address the interconnectedness between climate neutrality and food security are further elaborated in the full brief '[Balancing the Plate and the Planet: a Policy Brief for Achieving Food Security and Climate Neutrality](#)' and further contextualised through the examples from the European cities of Aarhus and Budapest.



1. INTEGRATE FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE GOALS INTO NATIONAL AND EU POLICY AGENDAS

EU POLICY SHOULD:

- **Strengthen the link between the European Climate Law and food security**, ensuring food system priorities are a central component of climate action plans.
- **Support cities in implementing food system transformation** by funding innovative actions and scaling up best practices across Europe.
- **Establish clearer guidelines for national governments** to integrate food system transformation into climate neutrality goals.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- **Mandate stronger compliance with dietary guidelines** that promote climate-friendly eating habits and align them with public procurement minimum standards.
- **Develop national strategies for food security** that balance climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and long-term food system resilience.
- **Foster public-private partnerships** that support innovation in sustainable food production, including land-use strategies that prioritize ecological sustainability.
- **Establish multi-level governance structures** that institutionalise targeted cooperation between national and local governments.

2. ENABLE FLEXIBLE AND SUPPORTIVE FOOD PROCUREMENT POLICIES

EU POLICY SHOULD:

- **Reform procurement rules to allow prioritization of climate-friendly, and sustainable food in public sector institutions** (e.g., schools, hospitals, municipal services).
- **Introduce EU-wide incentives** for cities that integrate sustainable food sourcing into their public procurement strategies.
- **Revise the EU Procurement Directives** enabling local procurers to prioritise local, seasonal products with high environmental and social standards.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- **Establish national frameworks** that empower municipalities to procure local, sustainable food without restrictive competition rules.
- **Provide financial and logistical support** for local Food Policy Councils (FPCs) to bridge gaps between producers, researchers, policymakers, and consumers.
- **Integrate national and local food system priorities** into national climate plans, considering climate-friendly procurement and short supply chains.

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3. DIRECT THE PUBLIC'S MONEY TOWARDS SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE AND ALTERNATIVE FOOD PRODUCTION

EU POLICY SHOULD:

- **Direct the public's money** (e.g., in the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)) to incentivize plant-based and regenerative agricultural practices rather than large-scale, intensive and industrial livestock farming.
- **Introduce financial mechanisms** to support farmers transitioning to food crops for human consumption and sustainable land use practices.
- **Ensure fair market conditions for sustainable producers** by integrating environmental and social impact criteria into subsidy allocation.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- **Implement national-level funding programs** that complement EU subsidies to encourage alternative food production models.
- **Provide technical and financial support to farmers**, especially small-scale farmers, when adopting regenerative agriculture, sustainable land management practices, and alternative protein crops.
- **Align national dietary guidelines with subsidy structures** to promote climate-friendly diets through incentives for plant-based food production.

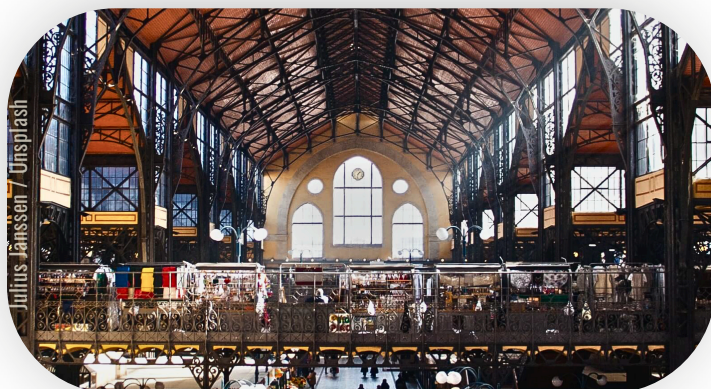
BOTH EU POLICY AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- **Provide dedicated funding streams** for urban food security and sustainability projects, particularly in cities that may not qualify for rural development funds. These funds should support urban farming, food rescue programs, food processing businesses, and community-based food initiatives that contribute to both food security and the achievement of climate goals. Local food strategies ultimately benefit national food security targets.
- **Reduce value added tax (VAT) on fruits and vegetables** and create clearer definitions and certifications for local and sustainable food products to support small farmers and promote healthier diets.



"Denmark's agriculture-intensive economy puts pressure on land-use and poses a significant threat to biodiversity and soil health. We need to move beyond a narrow focus on efficiency and yield, and begin to operate in a way that is conscious of biodiversity and food system resilience."

Dan Kristian Kristensen, Project Leader for Food Systems in Climate Plan
at Technical Dept., Aarhus Municipality



"The City of Budapest has a good basis for transforming the food system and a lot of the needed infrastructure. However, national and EU support in policy reform and funding is essential to better use what we have to transform food systems: city gardens and greening initiatives, market halls, public catering, social institutions addressing hunger, poverty, and housing."

Kinga Lőcsei-Tóth, Deputy Head of Department for Climate and Environmental Affairs
at Municipality of Budapest



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the European Union



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