

POLICY BRIEF #4

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ABSTRACT / KEY MESSAGE

Scope of this document

Policy Brief #4 (D3.5) makes a lunge at bottom-up and citizen-guided initiatives.

The first objective of the document is to provide some indications on the importance of identifying, promoting and supporting these initiatives to accompany the transition of city-region food systems (CRFS), providing keys and useful examples for their possible scaling up.

The second objective is to raise awareness of emerging initiatives within the cities and Labs of the CITIES2030 partners. We will see that cities and CRFS Labs play a central role in recognising and supporting these initiatives, as they are often fragile and encounter numerous difficulties on their way. Therefore, being able to root them in situated food ecosystems and make them endure is crucial to bring about real change in the dominant food regime.

CITIES partners were therefore invited to contribute to this policy brief by indicating ongoing innovations that are particularly relevant in their city-region and are particularly representative. Partners were asked to identify exemplary experiments that can also serve as inspiration or models for other cities and CRFS Labs in Europe.

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CO-CREATING RESILIENT AND
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS
TOWARDS FOOD2030

The EU-funded Cities2030 project will bring together researchers, entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, cities and all agents of urban food systems and ecosystems (UFSE) to create a structure focused on the transformation of the way systems produce, transport, supply, recycle and reuse food.

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1. Introduction: Supporting bottom-up and citizen initiatives for the transition of food systems

The transition of city-region food systems (CRFS) requires addressing global challenges at the local level and bottom-up citizen-led initiatives play a central role in this (De Schutter, 2017). These initiatives are transitional niches that are fostering new ways of innovating, thinking and reorganising the food system by contributing to rebuilding equitable and sustainable food ecosystems.

Today, a growing number of bottom-up local coalitions are emerging in several European cities to experiment with innovative, multi-level solutions. These coalitions are often led by mixed groups of active citizens who share the common goal of achieving social and systemic change in their respective food ecosystems. Bottom-up initiatives are capable of strengthening resilience, and making food communities better equipped to tackle contemporary global challenges.

These initiatives can be significant in the long run, but they often emerge from fragile contexts and face several difficulties to endure. They can, however, help to drive real change in the dominant food regime, and for this to happen it is then necessary to support these transitional niches. In this sense, cities and CRFS Labs can play a crucial role in recognising, promoting and supporting these initiatives. Cities and CRFS Labs can create the conditions and co-design food policies that allow initiatives to develop, flourish and multiply to promote new ways of addressing global food system challenges at the local level, interacting with other actors in a multi-level dynamic.

Moreover, numerous studies show that the involvement of bottom-up initiatives in food policy co-design is crucial. Since the co-design process can be, if well used, a tool for empowering stakeholders, this same process can make them more aware of their role as catalysts in the transformation of the socio-territorial food system.

Recognize the importance of bottom-up and citizen initiatives

Several principles or concepts describe the importance of recognising and supporting bottom-up initiatives to transform food systems.

The first relates to food system innovation and the role of these initiatives in triggering innovation processes in current food systems. Indeed, citizen-led initiatives can be seen as a form of social innovation, which together with product, process and governance form the four cornerstones of food system innovation (Wascher et al., 2015).



The second relates to the relationship between these initiatives and the notion of Food Sovereignty. Food sovereignty is the idea that people have the right to define their own food and how, by whom and how that food should be produced. As defined in the international debate by la Via Campesina (1996) and subsequently introduced by numerous food policies and strategies in many European cities, the notion of Food Sovereignty then synthesises a large number of the objectives that these bottom-up initiatives bring.

Thirdly, these initiatives can rebuild a democratic model of food system in order to transform a dominant food system that produces high volumes of products at low costs, but has enormous social and environmental externalities that are borne by society and not reflected in food prices. Indeed, Food Democracy is about citizens regaining democratic control over the food system and its sustainable transformation (Baldy, 2019).

Finally, the notion of Food Citizenship shows that citizens recognise that their purchasing power can be used to develop a new terrain of social and political action that brings new responses to the crisis of the globalised food system (Affre et al., 2024).

Policies, strategies and projects promoting these initiatives

The transition to sustainable food systems requires parallel changes in policies, strategies and projects that promote these initiatives. For some time now, many political agendas of European cities have emphasised the need for local solutions directed by citizen-centred development and the idea of multi-level development and cooperation (De Cunto et al., 2017).

Since 2015, the Milan Urban Food Pact has emphasised that civil society and the private sector have major roles to play, and today the European Farm to Fork Strategy is supporting many projects such as the EU Food 2030 Project Family that identify, promote and support precisely these forms of initiatives¹.

It is now acknowledged that the role of citizens in collaboration with local institutions is central to the birth and development of forms of local food governance such as Food Councils, Food Districts, Food Communities, which have led to the adoption of true local food policies in numerous European and American cities.

What cities and CRFS Labs can do for these initiatives: the opportunity of upscaling

Although promising to accelerate the transition to future-proof systems, these initiatives are often small and hyper-localised and often struggle to take root due to inherent socio-cultural challenges. They are social initiatives that often face a lack of capacity and resources, which hinders their survival or growth potential. Up-scaling can help overcome such challenges to root

¹ The EU Food 2030 Project Family is a collaboration of five EU Horizon projects: FoodSHIFT 2030, FOODE, Food Trails, Cities 2030 and FUSILLI.



these initiatives in more stable ecosystems at the local level, and both cities and CRFS Labs can play an important role in this process.

On the one hand, cities have an important role to play in engaging civil society and bottom-up initiatives to identify emerging food system problems and response gaps early, and to build capacity across agencies, policy sectors and levels of governance. Cities have a strong interest in involving bottom-up initiatives enabling participatory processes to co-create their food strategies and support them by long-term urban food policies. Identifying, supporting and facilitating these initiatives can ensure an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach that truly addresses the contextual needs of urban food populations.

CRFS Labs also play an important role in this process and can prove to be a springboard by proposing some concrete measures. Many of the CRFS and Living Labs supported by European programmes have played an important role in accelerating initiatives through upscaling and broader policy measures at the city-region level². We will see that Cities2030 cities and CRFS Labs have also played a pivotal role in identifying, supporting and up-scaling these initiatives.

Up-scaling cannot present a one-size-fits-all solution and can have several purposes: implementation of the same initiative for long-term impact, sharing knowledge and results with other interested communities, or replication in similar contexts (Marradi, Mulder, 2022). A work carried out on the citizen-drive initiatives of the Edibles City Network programme emphasises that “there are rarely ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions” and that each up-scaling strategy must be studied according to the specific social, cultural and geographical conditions in which the initiative fits (Plassnig et al., 2022). Furthermore, a number of simple and easy-to-understand recommendations can guide up-scaling choices³.

² As FoodSHIFT, DESIGNSCAPES (Building Capacity for Design enabled Innovation in Urban Environments), Edibles City Network.

³ There are 11 key recommendations for up-scaling: There are rarely “one type fits all” solutions; Optimisation is a daily task; Stay flexible; Everything is driven by people; We are all experts! ; Networking and advocacy is key; Open your eyes to sustainable business models; Every mistake counts; Do good and talk about it! ; Most wanted resources are money and time; Reduce our ecological footprint and foodprint! (Plassnig et al., 2022:15).



2. The bottom-up and citizen initiatives in CITIES2030 Labs

Types of initiatives for innovation and transition of food systems

There are many examples of citizen-led innovations in urban food landscapes, and the rich diversity of these initiatives already indicates the powerful innovation role citizens can play in their local food systems, even when such initiatives are not yet recognised by policies.

This local bottom-up food activism is also referred to as ‘citizen-driven initiatives’, ‘grassroots initiatives’, or ‘community-base initiatives’.

Given the large number of types of initiatives and their complexity, there are many ways to describe their diversity. Indeed, one can start from different criteria, for example their forms of governance, or the type of challenges they face, or the geographical contexts in which they are set and the solutions that are implemented.

In this policy brief, we have decided to assemble some initiatives within the Cities2030 Labs that we have identified through two internal calls for contributions.

Selection Criteria

The case study selection methods are based on an initial overview of all the activities carried out by the Cities2030 partners. We launched a first call to all Cities2030 partners in cities to identify some citizen and bottom-up initiatives that could be meaningful and representative (Tab. 1).

City, Country	Partner	Code	Name of the initiative	Website
Bremerhaven, Germany	TTZ	P16	Local food council	https://www.moin-ernaehrung.de/;
			Food sharing	https://foodsharing.de;
			Regional market	https://www.regiomarkt-beverstedt.de/;
			Zero-Waste-Pop-Up-Cafe	https://dasbeet.info/idee/ ;
			Transparenz schaffen	https://cux-landfrauen.jimdo.com/transparenz/
Matís, Iceland	Matís	P22	Freedge	https://www.icelandreview.com/news/we-take-food-for-



				granted-new-community-fridge-opens-in-reykjavik/.
Pollica, Italy	Future Food Institute	P23	Circe	https://circecilento.wixsite.com/circecilento
Vidzeme, Latvia	Vidzeme Planning Region	P24	Straupe Farmers' Market	
			Bioregion establishment in the territory of Gauja National Park	
	Latvijas Lauku Forums	P25	Communication platform for stakeholders	
			Meetings with Local action groups	
Skopje, North Macedonia	GGP	P26	Food Bank Macedonia	https://www.bankazahrana.org/
Skopje, North Macedonia	AGFT	P27	Urban Garden Bostanie	https://www.facebook.com/zele.nataarka/?locale=mk_MK ; https://meta.mk/en/bostanie-cooperative-garden-in-capital-of-north-macedonia-teaches-young-people-gardening/ ; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-hDES6uqwo
Iasi, Romania	Iasi Municipality	P28	The Local Social Enterprise C.U.I.B.	
			ZERO WASTE Bistro from Romania	
Murska Sobota, Slovenia	ITC	P30	Green Point Short Food supply Chain	
	MOMS	P34	Centre for the Development of Sustainable Society	https://nasabauta.si/crtd-references/
Riga, Latvia	RTU	P39	REGION TASTE	https://novadagarsa.lv/
			Mūsu Bio tirgus	
Marseille, France	CITAG	P40	Sols Vivants	

Tab 1. List of bottom-up and citizen-driven initiatives provided by partners in the first call.



We then contacted the partners who responded positively to the call, whose answers we have grouped together in Tab. 1. We asked for their input for a more truthful and detailed description of their respective initiatives following a questionnaire that will be explained below. In addition to providing technical information about the initiative, partners answered to the following questions:

1. Which are the main goals of this initiative?
2. What relationships are developed between the food citizen/bottom-up initiative and the different types of actors and policies of the food system?
3. How does your initiative concretely relate to the space of your city?

We have subsequently reorganised the initiatives into four families based on the objectives that these initiatives promote: initiatives that promote soil protection; alliances between producers; valorisation of the role of women in the food system and their rights; recovery of food waste and food security. Of course, the examples given in the paper are only some of those currently underway within the CITIES2030 project. For a more extensive description of these and other ongoing practices, please refer to the project website, where all City Region Food System Labs are listed and described (<https://cities2030-community.gisai.eu/>).

2.1 Promoting Initiatives for Soil Protection and Regeneration

As emphasised by the European Commission and the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 (EU, 2020a) Soils are living ecosystems that underpin human life on Earth and are essential to the food system as they provide valuable services such as food supply and are crucial for ensuring food security.

However, today numerous anthropogenic activities related to the dominant food system have a direct or indirect impact on the proper functioning and health of soils. This is for example through intensive agriculture and the use of biocides, industrial food processing activities, but also numerous everyday citizen activities. Numerous practices related to dominant food system are today responsible for the degradation of a large part of soils (EU, 2020b).

As part of the Green Deal, numerous actions for soil protection have been taken in recent years in various European strategies that intersect with the goal of a transition to more resilient and sustainable food systems⁴. The focus on societal involvement is a recurring point of these actions: for example, the eighth objective of the EU mission A Soil Deal for Europe is to improve soil health by encouraging citizens to adopt more responsible soil health practices.

⁴ In 2020 the Biodiversity 2030, Farm to Fork and Chemicals Strategies, as well as the Circular Economy Action Plan and the European Climate Law. In 2021 the Fit for 55 package, the Zero Pollution Action Plan and the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 (Panagos et al., 2022).



In this sense, supporting and promoting citizens' initiatives that act for soil health is very important, and cities and CRFS Labs are expected to work towards this goal.

CRFS Lab of Marseille (P40 CITAG)

Name of the initiative: Sols Vivants

Location: Marseille, 14th arrondissement

Time references: 01/02/2023 – ongoing

The Sols Vivants collective is a ground based, multi stakeholders' initiative that unites citizens, non-profits, research groups and militant groups in Marseille around soil preservation and revitalization. The group has been meeting in many various places in Marseille to discover, exchange and cross-learn about soil preservation initiatives, policy, political and/or technical leverages in the very specific context of Marseille city and urbanism. Our group was born from a common concern: Protecting living soils and fertile lands. There were few of us at the first meeting, but very quickly many already well-established collectives joined, and often in action for several years. Indeed, Marseille is teeming with individual and collective initiatives for the reappropriation of living lands. For us, having this concern means preserving the earth but not freezing the situation (not putting it under cover), it is taking care, paying attention to this living and fertile compartment, to what it has as potential.

The Sols Vivants were born from the desire:

- to bring local initiatives together and get to know each other (Marseille focus/extended scope of the PACA Region) and strengthen our collective:
- to connect these initiatives together to increase their capacity to act, pool their resources, move forward together and/or respond as desired, deploy;
- to invest more collectively, or in a complementary/articulated manner, in the discussion/decisions spaces, becoming a force of proposal which, because aggregated or composite, carries more weight in the public and policy debate.

Access to land, fertile and living soil is the key denominator to food production in and around the cities. Thus living soils in Marseille are in direct link with the food policy -or should be. Sols Vivants collective aims at making visible this direct link and put pressure on the political sphere to maintain soil preservation on the agenda. This in order to raise the issue of living soils and fertile lands to the priority level that it deserves among citizens and decision-makers.

Sols Vivants collective manage:

- to learn to walk somewhere in order to feel anchored somewhere: the ground is not just a support, it is the support of our thinking and therefore of our action (bioregion);
- to build and carry a common vision that does not oppose agriculture and biodiversity, spontaneous dynamics of living things, soil regeneration (a certain agroecology allows this!);
- to consolidate the integrity of these living places, and their potential in the face of the precariousness of the legal and political means of protection implemented.

CITAG is a founding member of this collective and has been participating in this dynamic of cross-learning and advocacy creation towards a shared goal : a public event on the 5th of December 2023, to materialize the dynamic.

2.2 Supporting producer alliances

Producers are at the top of the food hourglass, they are the first level of the food chain and they ensure the production and care of the soils, waterways, air and biodiversity that guarantee food around the world. But producers are also the most affected by the dominant food system. They still suffer greatly in terms of income, as the Farm to Fork strategy points out in fact, the average



farmer in the EU currently earns about half of the average worker in the economy as a whole (Farm to Fork Report).

The transition towards a sustainable food system should bring a sustainable livelihood for primary producers. Moreover, we know the impact that harmful production practices can have on their health, the climate and the environment, and their commitment to healthier, ecologically sound production can contribute substantially to changing course.

This is why it is essential to support initiatives that come directly from producers practising healthy agriculture that respects natural resources. Initiatives such as direct sales, small farmers' markets and other forms of cooperation between producers are central to creating favorable contexts and political conditions for their engagement in the transition of food systems.

CRFS Lab Murska Sobota (P30 ITC)

Name of the initiative: Green Point Short Food Supply Chain

Location: Murska Sobota, Slovenia

GREEN POINT (Zelena točka) Short Food Supply Chain is including more than 70 local farmers, food producers and cooperatives, covering the process of production in greenhouse and open-air fields, with logistics from own distribution centre and different means of sales such as public institutions (schools, kindergartens, Retirement homes, ...), private institutions (Restaurants, health resorts, ...), own retail store and online shop - GREEN POINT. The Green point SFSC is continuously implementing innovative business models and technologies, trying to increase proportion of local and safe food found on end-customer plates. The SFSC is very active on increasing awareness about importance of local food producers and safe, healthy and local food.

The Green point SFSC is operated as a Living lab (ENoLL member), based on a Multi-Actor Approach, involving input industry and technology providers, primary producers, food businesses, consumers, citizens, local authorities and other actors, promoted with a view to co-create innovative systemic solutions in support of food systems sustainability goals. Thus, the Green point Living Lab is implementing innovative models and technologies relevant for the Smart villages & Rural development concepts, piloting and demonstrating technological (blockchain, big data, ...), economic (circular economy, Food loss and waste, ...) and social (consumer participation, public awareness, food sharing, food locality, ...) innovations.

City of Murska Sobota cooperates closely with Green Point Living Lab to continuously implement innovative business models and technologies. Both actors are cooperating together to increase the proportion of local and safe food for the citizens, whereby they decided to commonly restore the city market and offer food producers a way to sell their products. In addition they are organizing common promotional events and workshops, while monthly newspaper of the City administration has dedicated articles related to agri-food section with current challenges on the market and promotional activities related to local food.



CRFS Lab Vidzeme (P24 VPR, P25 LLF)

Name of the initiative: Straupe Farmers' Market

Location: Straupe, Cēsis Municipality, Vidzeme region, Latvia

Time references: Straupe Farmers' Market has been active since 2008

The market is the only regular market for small local producers in the Baltic States, which has been included in the prestigious Slow Food Earth Markets alliance. Slow Food is an international movement established to respond to fast food and food uniformity caused by globalisation, the disappearance of local food and the indifference of people to where food comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect our environment. Founders of Straupe Farmers' Market works hard to maintain the ancient skills and use traditional products. Straupe Farmers' Market has been active since 2008. From 2016 the market is in Old Post Station Straupe. The market is open on the first and third Sunday of every month.

The Straupe Farmers' Market plays a crucial role in supporting the local food system by making goods from farmers and producers more accessible to the public. This not only promotes the value of locally produced food but also emphasizes its freshness and responsibility towards sustainable agriculture. By providing a platform for Vidzeme inhabitants and others to directly engage with farmers and small producers, the Market fosters a sense of community and connection within the region. This direct interaction not only benefits consumers by offering transparency and quality assurance but also supports the livelihoods of local producers, contributing to the overall resilience and sustainability of the community food system. The Straupe Farmers' Market presents a successful model that other cities or regions could learn from. By offering a diverse range of fresh, locally sourced products, the Market not only benefits the local economy but also encourages healthy eating habits and food sustainability.

From 2016 the market is in Old Post Station Straupe. The market is open on the first and third Sunday of every month. Historically the Old Post Station Straupe was located on a strategically important road connecting Riga and Tartu in Estonia. Nowadays, the marketplace is keeping the tradition of organizing events dedicated to anniversary celebrations, various local events and traditions. Craftsmen, small producers, artisans, farmers, sometimes the whole family comes to trade. The Slow Food brand requires traders to have grown or produced their goods themselves, and can tell about them, and how to use them. They need to receive fair and appropriate pay for their work. In the Farmers' market everyone can purchase fresh, organically grown products such as various vegetables, fruit, berries, delicious cheeses, meat smoked according to ancient traditions, home-grown medicinal herb teas, home-made cakes and other delicacies.

2.2 Enhance the role and rights of women in food system transition

Women play an important role in food production worldwide (FAO, 2018). However, literature from many disciplines has explored how food can also be a key to their exploitation and oppression, and many challenges are related to the issue of gender differences at all stages of the food system. For example, women, even within their own households, are more vulnerable to food insecurity due to the unequal distribution of food resources between female and male members of a household.



Recent studies show that food policies in cities still tend not to take gender inequalities into account, especially in the so-called Global North, indeed some food policies risk reinforcing existing gender stereotypes (Bergonzini, 2024).

While little has yet been done in this regard, some initiatives are emerging in countries such as Spain and in particular in the food strategies promoted by the cities of Zaragoza⁵ and Barcelona⁶. In this sense, if more urban policy-makers and Living Labs supported and catalysed local food initiatives that are sensitive to women's rights and gender equity, they could guide and give rise to food policies that in this way can contribute not only to a more environmentally sustainable food system, but also to a more gender-equitable one.

GRFS Lab Paideia Campus (P23 FFI)

Name of the initiative: CiRCE - Cilento Resilienza Consapevolezza Energia

Location: Cilento, Campania, Italy

Time references: 2022

The actors/agents/stakeholders involved: Future Food Institute, local farmers, local fishermen

The main goals of the CiRCE initiative are to empower women in the Cilento Region by fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and supporting diverse projects. It provides a welcoming, inclusive space for sharing knowledge, resources, and opportunities, thus promoting economic growth and bridging the wage gap. By enhancing creativity and resourcefulness, CiRCE aims to build a community where women are central to economic development.

The CiRCE initiative, born from the EWA program by EIT Food and organized by Future Food Institute, fosters strong relationships between food citizens and various food system actors. By empowering women through entrepreneurial support, it creates a collaborative network involving local communities, policymakers, and businesses. This bottom-up approach influences food policies by integrating grassroots creativity and resourcefulness, promoting inclusive economic growth, and addressing local food system challenges through diverse, community-driven projects.

The CiRCE initiative concretely relates to space by revitalizing local green and blue networks through community-driven projects. It encourages the use of local resources and landscapes, fostering a connection between women entrepreneurs and their environment. CiRCE promotes slow mobility by integrating ecologic tourism. This approach enhances the region's natural beauty and sustainability while supporting economic and social development.

2.3 Food waste prevention, recycling and food safety

Western countries are faced with a disturbing paradox: on the one hand, an increasing number of people struggle to find healthy food every day, while on the other hand huge amounts of food waste are generated. Eurostat (2022) estimates that 30% of EU food waste arise in production,

⁵ <https://www.zaragoza.es/sede/portal/medioambiente/alimentacion/>

⁶ <https://www.alimentaciosostenible.barcelona/ca/estrategia-dalimentacio-saludable-i-sostenible-barcelona-2030>



manufacturing and retail, and that 70% of food waste arises in households, so the role of citizen in reduce food waste is central. European Commission proposes that by 2030 Member States should reduce food waste by 10 per cent at the processing and manufacturing stages and by 30 per cent (per head) at the combined retail and consumption stages (restaurants, catering and households).

Many solutions are emerging worldwide or find innovative answers to this contradiction in today's food system: from prevention by reducing surplus at the source, through the recovery of food and its reuse for human consumption and finally by recycling food waste for feeding animals, creating energy or compost (Mourad, 2016). Prevention means reducing the problem at source by optimising processes or adapting production to the needs of the food system. Prevention is a central element in the fight against food waste and the EU emphasises how we can all make a big effort to do this in our daily lives (EU, 2019).

However, others interesting initiatives are also arising for the recovery of food as recycling initiatives, composting and the most historical ones, the food banks that contribute in parallel to alleviate food hunger. Food banks, according to critics, are controversial cases because they only intervene on the effects of the food paradox and do not aim at addressing the structural root causes. But if placed in a context of prefiguration, autonomy, hybridisation and scalability, they can provide an exemplary model of social innovation that can be replicated in other contexts for the redistribution of food surpluses.

CRFS Lab Skopje (P26 GGP)

Name: Food Bank Macedonia

Location: Macedonia

Food Bank Macedonia aims to alleviate hunger and reduce food insecurity by collecting and distributing surplus food to individuals and families in need. Partnering with food producers, retailers, and distributors, they ensure that nutritious food reaches vulnerable populations. Food Bank Macedonia also promotes sustainability by reducing food waste and encouraging responsible consumption. They are also engaged in community outreach, education, and advocacy to address the root causes of hunger and promote long-term food security.

Food Bank Macedonia collaborates with food producers, retailers, non-profits, and government agencies to gather and distribute surplus food, ensuring that nutritious donations reach those in need. The organisation is also a part of a very significant working group along with the Food and Veterinary Agency, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Green Growth Platform (Cities2030 partner) and other relevant stakeholders which drafted a proposal for a law for the donation of food surpluses.

Food Bank Macedonia strategically situates itself within the urban region of the city of Skopje to efficiently distribute food to its beneficiaries with a fleet of distribution vehicles. This approach not only ensures timely delivery across the city region but also reduces environmental impact. By maximizing accessibility, the food bank promotes sustainable food access for individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. Food Bank Macedonia has close collaboration with the Centar Municipality in the City of Skopje in the process of identification of marginalized group of people that need help in food. Many citizen organizations representing different groups of socially disadvantaged people are supported by the Food Bank Macedonia.



3. Conclusions

This policy brief dealt with bottom-up and citizen initiatives showing how decisive these initiatives can be in catalysing the transition of the food system.

We have seen that today an increasing number of bottom-up local coalitions are emerging in several European cities. These are an important number of social innovations that contribute to citizens regaining democratic control of the food system and its sustainable transformation (food democracy), with the idea that it is the people who have the right to define their own food and how, by whom, and how this food should be produced (food sovereignty). These initiatives move to make citizens more aware of their power to develop a new terrain for social and political action that brings new answers to the crises of the globalised food system (food citizenship).

While many European policies and strategies recognise the importance of these initiatives, they often remain small and hyper-localised and often struggle to take root. Cities and CRFS Labs then can play a role in up-scaling them to help them overcome challenges and embed them in more stable long-term ecosystems.

The diversity of initiatives presented in this Policy Brief makes it clear that up-scaling solutions are not generalisable; rather, the formulation of possible up-scaling pathways must be co-constructed, and each initiative must be considered in a situated manner. This policy brief stimulates ideas around emerging initiatives in the European context and makes it possible to identify some elements to actively support innovations for further advancement. It emphasises how necessary and crucial cooperation is between cities, CRFS Labs and bottom-up initiatives, as well as with key partners also at the regional scale, in order to multiply efforts with citizen support and to multiply new interest groups also in other European regions and countries.



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