



# **D3.1 “CRFS Alliance”**

## **Community of practice and supporting instruments**



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### Document history

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## Introduction

In recent decades, we are experiencing a number of global threat trends caused by intensive human activity. Interaction developments between population overgrowth, vast migration and rapid urbanization are causing tremendous pressure on climate change, biodiversity and resource scarcity; challenging thus the Earth's life support systems. The magnitude of these trends seems to be more present in the upcoming years. Future projections show that by 2050 world population will reach 9 billion people, most of which will be living in cities, and within these, 3 billion people will be overweight, and 2 billion without enough food.

To address these challenges, City Region Food Systems (CRFS) demand immediate action. Without action for the transition towards sustainable CRFS, the environment will continue to be degraded and this will be reflected in a decreased world capacity to produce food for all, much less quality food for all. CRFS poses a planetary challenge that Cities2030 addresses at both local and regional levels, and develops it through small steps, systemic, pragmatic, actionable, transferable, and sustainable solutions. There is a need for the development and implementation of holistic ecosystems-based approaches for CRFS. Food is a critical and effective point to improve the city's resilience by tackling transportation, health, land and food waste. Cities2030 takes these steps of change by putting consumers at the core of solutions. We believe that more than 7.7 billion consumers hold the power to shift old consumption patterns to meet the requirements for an improved future.

Cities2030 innovative approach offers a great opportunity to lead the change by making use of an across disciplines expertise of best researchers, entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, cities and all actors of the CRFS as well. Our main goal is to create a future proof and effective CRFS via a connected structure centered on the people, built on trust, and with representative partners encompassing the entire CRFS. Therefore, the starting point of the project is a **community building process** (developed through the activities foreseen in WP3), to identify, engage and activate influential and expert institutions and people of the CRFS, incorporating all the project's audience, to create the best condition that generates collaborative partnership and co-creation within structured participatory processes.

This document provides a description of **the process** and **the tools** designed to gather people and organizations around the project to create the *Community of practices* which represents the real core of all project activities.

According to the Annex 1, ***D3.1- CRSF Alliance community of practice and supporting instruments*** is described as "A network of individuals and organizations representative of the food chain arena organized in groups, and a cloud-based system to support networking, data storage and exchange,

the “Connected CRFS Alliance”, the CRFS Synergies Action Plan (> see WP7) and the CRFS Educational Programme (see WP4/WP5)”

The document is structured as follows:

1. The **first chapter** explains the main aim of the CRFS Alliance
2. The **second chapter** explains the processes of establishment, the approach, and gives some examples of the engagement activities performed by the partners.
3. The **third chapter** describes the networking tools set to foster interaction among the members of the CRFS Alliance to create a community of practice

**Annexes** are then enclosed to provide evidence of:

- The organization of engagement activities by project partner (**Annex I**)
- The number of stakeholders organization actually involved in CRFS Labs activities and registered in the DIH Agri-food platform (**Annex II**)
- The number of interactions and followers on the official project LinkedIn profile (**Annex III**)
- The food experts within the partnership divided into the 10 thematic working groups and the first external experts already involved (**Annex IV**)
- The Community area in the Cities2030 project website, as a main networking tool to exchange good practices on the 10 thematic and foster interaction among partners and external experts supporting project activities (**Annex V**)
- The DIH Agri-food platform, another networking tool to foster interaction on thematic focused on cross-sectoral innovation and implementation of novel technologies and ICT in rural-based sectors (**Annex VI**)

For more information about the **CRFS Synergies Action Plan**, please refer to *D7.3 – Synergies Action Plan* available at <https://cities2030.eu/results/>

A **CRFS Educational Program** is under development and planned to support activities both at Alliance and at CRFS Labs Level, to raise capacities of CRFS alliance partners and members.

The learning materials will be integrated throughout project life and made available through the website. A toolkit to support the partners in using and exploiting the learning materials will be part of *D4.1-Policy co-creation capacity building programme* and *D5.1-Innovation action capacity building programme* that will be issued in the second project period.

# 1 The CRFS ALLIANCE and Alliance Partners in Cities2030

The main goal of Cities2030 is to create a future proof and effective urban food system via a connected structure centered in the citizens, built on trust, with partners encompassing the entire food chain and systems arena. The establishment of the CRFS Alliance has a central key role in the project to achieve this goal. Different approaches and tools have been set up building on existing synergies and expertise within the partnership and their connections worldwide (UN, FAO). In addition, key organizations that represent the local realities of the food system arena will be gathered in a single network and, will be encouraged to:

- exchange thoughts and detect barriers and obstacles to the sustainable development of CRFS
- share best practices and build a community of practice
- provide CRFS actors with opportunities to increase their knowledge and develop competences

Alliance Partners are legal entities or individuals motivated by the overall project framework, e.g., CRFS or food systems as a whole, and, or one or more of the 10 specific thematic embedded in the project structure, such as for example food security, food distribution, food-related inequalities and so forth. The members of the CRFS Alliance are motivated to engage and participate either continuously or in some more specific project activities. Yet, going beyond participation, partners' support to the consortium can be of a vast series of forms: they can act as event facilitators; engagement facilitators that help in recruiting a follower city, or as contributors to the project with their competences and knowledge on specific matters during specific events or activities.

Alliance Partners may have a vast series of roles across the project within the project's operational structures, spanning from the Advisory Boards to the Working Groups or facilitators. They are all part of the 500+ active participants anticipated to be gathered during the project scope and may as well be among the anticipated 50+ cities and regions anticipated to engage in the project by September 30th, 2024.

The alliance is open also to citizens, intended as *City Region food consumers*, whose choices impact the entire food ecosystem and CRFS.

## 2 The process to establish the Alliance

### 2.1 The overall approach

At the core of the project implementation, the **establishment of the CRFS Alliance**, is probably one of the most challenging activities that the partnership will have to face throughout the project life. On the one hand, the great complexity of the food system arena where actors might range from food producers, processors, retailers, food service industry, nutritionists, universities and research centers, SMEs, educators, behavioral and social scientists, innovative ICT companies to name but few. On the other hand, the great variety of different local contexts of the 20 EU countries that constitute the project consortium.

To tackle this challenge, Cities2030 has established a number of diversified instruments to activate different channels aiming at identifying and engaging the food arena actors that in each local territory can assist cities and regions in implementing sustainable CRFS.

Having a common and shared aim of engaging key actors of the food arena to design and implement project activities in the CRFS labs, project partners have been given widest flexibility to choose the best approach and tool to get the best possible results in their own country.

According to specific local realities and the most diversified contexts, different kinds of events and strategies have been put in place in this first project period.

In parallel, and on top of direct contacts and virtual or physical events, from the very project start-up phase, a LinkedIn profile has been activated to engage a wide audience of food experts at international level. Two Facebook pages (one in Italian language and one in English) and a Facebook Public Group have been created with the aim to communicate project aims and results to the wide public of CRFS consumers but also to engage them locally in the CRFS Labs participatory activities.

### 2.2 Engagement activities at local level

During this first project period, a various number of different kinds of engagement activities have been performed in all project countries to start connecting and involving the local actors of the food arena who will support with their knowledge and expertise the CRFS labs implementation throughout project life.

The engagement activities implemented by Cities2030 partners in this first project period have been mainly organized online, due to the restriction connected with the COVID pandemic in most target countries. At this stage of project implementation, the main aim has been to introduce the project rationale and explain the idea behind the policy and living labs development for each pilot area to explore potential participation for supporting lab development. The wide variety of engagement activities implemented have had different forms according to the different kind of target and/or the



thematic focus. In many cases, synergies with other running projects have been successfully established in this start-up phase.

The different kind of stakeholders' organizations involved at partnership level include:

- local farmers, entrepreneurs and municipalities;
- regional and national public bodies;
- national NGOs;
- international food sustainability and technology experts;
- representatives of big food corporations;
- scientists, academics and researchers;
- Ministers and representatives of national governments;
- Consortia and trade associations.

For some partners the focus of their activities shifted toward the contingency critical situation linked to the COVID pandemic. This is the case of the Belgium partners involved in the development of the Brugge Lab. Riddersstove (P3a) for instance, being the meal care organisation of the city of Bruges, during the COVID lockdown and the most critical emergency period, were fully taken to tackle this societal problem, struggling to keep providing 2.000 meals a day to residential homecare, institution for disabled adults and for elderly people at home. Their stakeholder engagement activities were limited during this period but the experience gained under this emergency was nevertheless useful in providing hints for reflections for the future activities.

In more structured and already developed living labs, like AGROTOPIA in Roeselare, there several onsite events were organised and many organizations were involved.

In Croatia, the focus of the first engagement activities has been on the collection of new insight on day-to-day problems faced by the local fruit growers and on switching to ecological food production. A similar theme has been the core of French activities characterized by many meetings with the local farming community with the aim of creating an urban farming network.

In Turkey, a four-helix approach has been applied from the very beginning of the stakeholder's engagement activities, involving universities, NGO and local authorities as a model to replicate in different Turkish areas that will be approached for MUFPP engagement as well as for the establishment of CRFS Labs, pilot experiments and Food Systems Dialogues.

In Denmark, there has been an extensive activity at different levels encompassing the local food system arena with institutional connection at national level too. Among the wide variety of stakeholders engaged the establishment of strong synergies with other H2020 projects funded under the same call (FoodTrails & FUSILLI) or other initiatives and campaign to engage citizen and enterprises in green choices ("*Vejle's Green choice*") or connection with hyper-local food producers to build an ecosystem with municipal business support.

Also in Finland, the engagement activities over the first project year, have been mostly dedicated to creating a strong synergy with finish partners of the FUSILLI project, involving the Ministry of

Agriculture and Forest Planner as well as many other cities willing to share ideas on CRFS innovation and sustainable transitions.

In Latvia, many Municipalities of the Vidzeme Region have been directly involved through the compilation of a survey and, at national level, the Ministry of Agriculture has been actively engaged in the discussions about the short food chains and local, organic production systems and confirmed the interest to collaborate on issues related to food public procurement within the Cities2030 project.

In Spain, Cities2030 partner organizations have been very active to establish Quart de Poblet and Arganda CRFS labs and create around them the stakeholder community to work on local innovations. In particular, the University of Madrid (P20 UPM) organized a physical workshop /focused mainly to experts in food processing, quality, and logistics (packing) where smart devices for food processing factory have been presented with a prototype demo and general discussions about CRFS were established in terms of food processing and consumption.

In Iceland, an EIT Food funded online workshop on aquaculture was held within the INSPIRE project on "Sustainable Aquaculture". Participants (learners) included students (Masters & PhD), entrepreneurs, owners and employees from within the food industry, while speakers included academics, policy makers and stakeholders from the food industry (start-ups, SMEs & larger companies).

In Slovenia, different kinds of on site and digital events have been organized involving stakeholders from national institutional level (the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Slovenia) to main Slovenian research institutes with a clear focus on digitalization applied to the agri-food sector.

In Cyprus the two partners spend a lot of the effort, through the pandemic and the total and partial closedowns, on building a closer connection among the communities involved in the project and the local producers small scale farmers and small-scale food producers who use local agricultural and meat and dairy products to create added value and well-respected local delicacies. Additionally, a big effort was made to build a relationship with the officers in the department of Agriculture and to get them involved in the project. Finally, the local team collected and developed a database with statistical data on the national and local economy, production, agriculture, social issues and demography.

In Italy, many physical and digital engagement events have been organized around the City of Vicenza living Lab "*Biblioteca internazionale La Vigna*" and the Paideia Campus at Pollica Living Lab by the seven partner organizations together. The Paideia Campus at Pollica Living Lab coordinated by Future Food Institute (P23 FFI), which operates at local level but in full alignment with the EU strategies of the Green Deal and Farm to Fork and with an eye to the future of Europe and the world, representing in fact a *topos* that, while insisting on a particular context, it is replicable and adaptable to the needs of any territory. In northern Italy, in a different context, the City of Vicenza has spent the first project period to develop its organisational framework which includes three main entities: the *Food Policy Group*, the *Technical working-group* and the *Local stakeholders working group*. The first two are fully operative and have already organised several meetings. The

third one will be activated shortly and will be able to properly address the priorities and needs as selected by the Food Policy Group.

Summing up, at project level, over 300 stakeholders' organizations have been already involved in more than 100 physical and 83 digital events engaging local farmers, entrepreneurs, municipalities, regional and national public bodies, NGOs, international food sustainability and technology experts, representatives of big food corporations, scientists, academics and researchers, Ministers and representatives of national Governments, to name but few, with more than 800 actors reached in all project countries. A table with the complete series of engagement activities implemented at partnership level is provided as **Annex I**.

The stakeholder organizations that already confirmed their active engagement in Labs' activities and/or other cross sectoral international initiatives organized within Cities2030, are approximately 98. The detailed list is reported as **Annex II**.

In addition to these, an uncountable series of individual and direct contacts have been activated by all partners creating interest around the project and the base to design future engagement activities for the next project periods.

### 2.3 Engagement activities through Social Media – The LinkedIn community

The rise of social media and its impact in information dissemination serve the project objectives of informing and engaging the communities of CRFS. Cities2030's social media strategy develops on two platforms: LinkedIn and Facebook. LinkedIn account addresses the professional and institutional audience target of our social media strategy. A project LinkedIn profile has been created from the very start and at present records more than 3.900 followers and 998 connections. According to the data analytics the level of interactivity and dissemination of Cities2030 posts is very high. This implies a strong engagement of the follower's audience, as some significative analytics referred to key posts, reported as **Annex III**, clearly show.

In parallel, to involve different target audiences and respond to local and regional realities and partner's specifics, two project Facebook pages and a Facebook public group have been created. Promotion and communication of supporting the engagement of the wide public of food consumers in all project countries. In the project start-up phase Facebook had the role of creating interest around the project. Throughout project implementation it will represent a virtual space for maintaining the engagement of the wide and not-structured public to the project activities and aims. Furthermore, institutional social media pages of partner organizations have been used to convey thematic and topics of local interest to non-professional users, reaching out key stakeholders of the local food arena that can be involved in the co-creation of the local CRFS Labs.

### 3 Alliance networking and cooperation instruments

The final task of the CRFS Alliance is also to create favorable conditions and tools that enable local stakeholders to have productive interaction enhancing collaboration and mutual learning. The main outcome of this cooperation will be the production of knowledge and innovative practices that will serve the needs of the food experts at local, national and international level and at the same time, they will provide a real benefit to the CRFS green transition, within and beyond the physical and temporal boundaries of the Cities2030 project.

Considering the wide variety of subjects and needs addressed and the multi-thematic and multi-stakeholders' approach, a number of complementary and synergic tools have been set to meet the diversified needs and characteristics of places and people involved in these networking activities. These are: the 10 thematic working groups, the Cities2030 Community platform and the DIH Agrifood platform, explained with more details in paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

#### 3.1 10 Thematic working groups

With the aim to foster interaction among the CRFS Alliance, 10 working groups based on the FAO-UN CRFS concept built around the Quadruple Helix approach has been established. While activating the Alliance, the 10 groups guarantee a balanced representation and discussion around each of the 10 FAO key thematic at project level and incorporating the four key actors of the CRFS arena (city/region, research body, a business and a civil society organization) will ensure the representativity for the entire societal panel of the food arena.



Figure 1. Cities2030 10 key thematic

Each working group has been assigned a CITIES2030 partner organization representative with the moderator role, having the task to facilitate the dialogue in and outside the partnership with experts around the 10 key thematic. The aim is to equip participants in the Lab activities with knowledge

and skills to develop innovation co-creation processes and/or for engaging external food experts as “ambassadors” of specific topics for international workshops or networking activities with other projects. Such engagement is critical as it allows the consortium members to be exposed to different perspectives and approaches. It also allows members to collect feedback and suggestions from a variety of individuals who have complementary competences and backgrounds, but who may have different expectations from the project’s results.

A list of the partners representatives selected per each thematic plus the first external experts identified by the consortium are available in **Annex IV**.

### 3.2 Community area in the SC2P Platform

To support the activation of the ten formed working groups, a dedicated space will be created in the project Community platform. This is thought to be a Blog space, developed within WP6 activities and part of the SC2P (D6.1) with the objective to foster their networking and discussion on sustainable food system key topics. Furthermore, the different components of the S2CP developed and available either for project partners and Lab’s stakeholders, are meant to create also a space to showcase Lab’s activities and innovations. Project partners and/or the external experts recruited by them, will be involved in the 10 working groups and will contribute to the blog with at least 2 articles per each theme per year. More information about the platform is provided in **Annex V**.

### 3.3 DIH Agri-food Platform

In addition to the above-mentioned cooperation instruments, to support networking and active interaction among partners and members of the Alliance, an invitation has been sent to partner organizations and most active stakeholders, to register in a Jotform hosted in the DIH Agri-food Platform made available by the Slovenian partner P30 ICT – *Innovation Technology Cluster*. The purpose of this nonprofit Business Support Organization is to foster cross-sectoral innovation and implementation of novel technologies and ICT in rural-based sectors bringing together key target groups (such as SMEs, food system actors, farmers and other rural actors). Therefore, the agri-food platform is a powerful tool to foster networking among partners, explore ideas and share knowledge, to gain visibility as a community of practice in the wide European context, with the aim to create a Europe-wide innovation-based ecosystem, which supports the shift towards more resilient, healthy and environmentally, socially, economically sustainable rural areas. Currently, nearly 980 organizations are part of the DIH Agri-food network (see **Annex VI** for more details), while about 98 project stakeholders’ organizations have registered in the Jotform (the complete database is reported in **Annex II**).

## 4 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Engagement activities organized by partners organizations

ANNEX 2: Data base of active stakeholders' organization registered in the Jotform

ANNEX 3: LinkedIn analytics

ANNEX 4: Data base of partners representative and external experts in the 10 thematic groups

ANNEX 5: Cities2030 Community area in the S2CP

ANNEX 6: DIH Agrifood Platform