cities 2030

Co-creating resIlient and susTaInable food systEms towardS FOOD2030

Creating Policy Labs
Step-by- Step Guide

About CITIES2030

Leading the way toward sustainable food futures, Cities2030 is a pioneering initiative focused on transforming city-region food systems. As a collaborative effort under Horizon 2020 and the Food 2030 Policy Framework, the project aims to create a more sustainable and equitable food future. By fostering collaboration among consumers, businesses, and policymakers, Cities2030 seeks to develop practical solutions that address challenges like food insecurity, climate change, and resource scarcity. Through research, innovation, and citizen engagement, Cities2030 envisions a world where cities and regions have resilient and sustainable food systems that benefit both people and the planet.

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About the step-by-step guide

This document is adapted from the step-by-step guide in the project Deliverable D4.3 - Policy Action Plans

Disclaimer

Overview

To support CITIES2030's goal to create more sustainable, resilient, and equitable food environments, this guide offers a step-by-step approach to establishing policy living labs within the context of City Region Food Systems (CRFS).

CRFS recognizes the interconnectedness of food production, distribution, consumption, and waste within a specific geographic area. Optimizing CRFS can address challenges like food insecurity, environmental degradation, and economic disparities. The ultimate goal of CRFS labs is to identify methods for transforming food systems to be "more sustainable, resilient, diverse, inclusive, and competitive for the benefit of society" (European Commission, 2017).

Drawing heavily from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (FAO & RUAF, 2019), this guide provides practical tools and resources for practitioners working in the food systems domain to establish and operate successful policy living labs. These labs are essential for testing and refining policies that promote sustainable and equitable food systems. By fostering experimentation and collaboration, they accelerate the transition to a more resilient food future.

Figure 1   The Step by Step Model
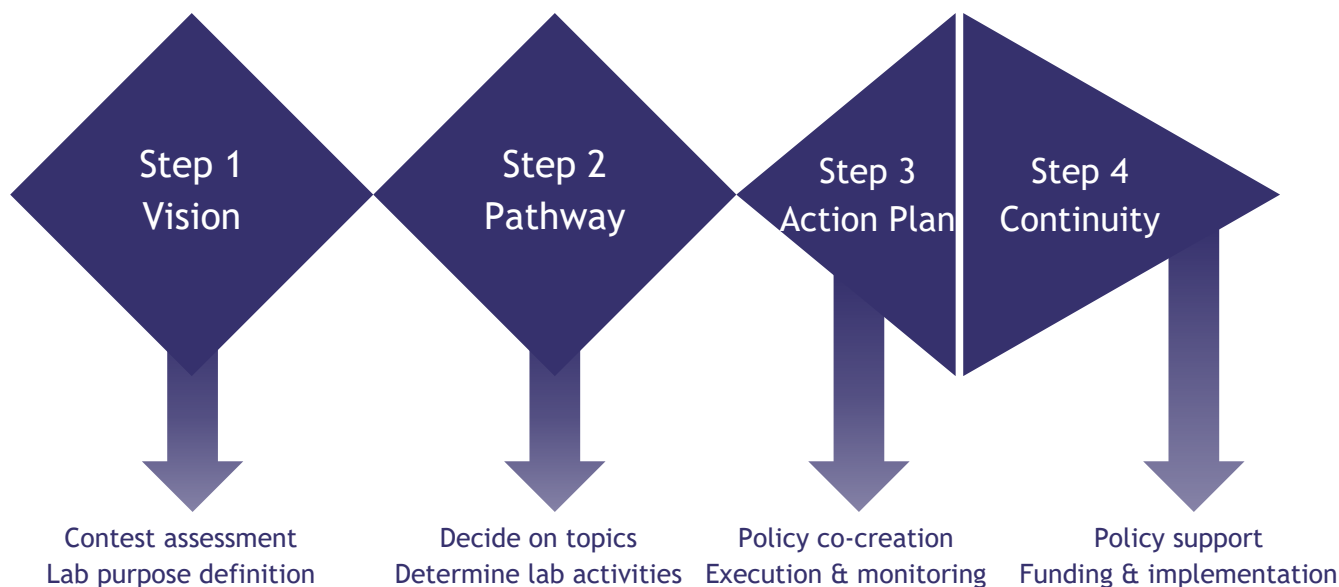
The process of CITIES2030 framing of CRFS labs is depicted in Figure 1. The overarching goal of this process is to assess policy actions to support the transformation of regional food systems towards more sustainable and resilient CRFS that provide equal access to a healthy diet for the public. Each step in this process represents a phase in lab development and addresses a specific goal:

Step 0: *Lab setup.* Activities in the lab setup phase aim at the initial organization of lab resources. This phase is not included in the step-by-step model as many partners will have a certain method of organization in place when they join Cities2030. However, this phase is described in the detailed guide to assist novel labs that may need to go through this process. Labs organize their setup by assessing available personnel, skills, financial resources, data and an assessment of their stakeholder network and building skills within the team where necessary.

Step 1: *Vision.* The process of defining a lab vision aims at gaining an understanding of the concept and application of CRFS labs. This includes forming holistic insights into what a CRFS lab entails; viewing it as a system by which stakeholder inclusion and piloting policy instruments inform the policy creation process. The policy context and urban-rural food system interdependencies that are specific for the CRFS lab are set out and assessed. This assessment functions as a base on which the lab narrative can be built and a work plan can be developed.

Step 2: *Pathway development.* The second step focuses on the identification of the challenges CRFS lab may face. The lab builds onto the lab vision through performing a situation analysis (SWOT) that provides more granular insight into which policy themes require action and which requirements and bottlenecks can be expected within those themes. The identified challenges will need to be analyzed in their current state to provide insights that support the selection and trialing of policy instruments. Linking lab activities directly to the assessed challenges supporting the creation of SMART goals.

Step 3: *Action Plan.* The process of defining a lab vision aims at gaining an understanding of the concept and application of CRFS labs. This includes forming holistic insights into what a CRFS lab entails; viewing it as a system by which stakeholder inclusion and piloting policy instruments inform the policy creation process. The policy context and urban-rural food system interdependencies that are specific for the CRFS lab are set out and assessed. This assessment functions as a base on which the lab narrative can be built and a work plan can be developed.

Step 4: *Scaling up & Continuity.* The final lab phase concentrates on assessing lab results and aims at realizing continuity of those activities that have proven successful in the CRFS. This includes the identification of best practices, based on policy analysis and integration of policy results into food networks and food governance structures existent within the CRFS. As a part of this process, the balance between the societal costs and impacts of each activity should be assessed to come to informed decisions regarding the long-term impact on the CRFS.

Step 0
Set up the lab

Table 1   Set up the lab

Lab phase		Lab actions
Assess available tools	Explore data	Create inventory of CRFS data sources
	Set up team	List team members Identify missing expertise or skills within the team
	Assign roles	Assign team members according to skillset
	Map stakeholders	Create inventory of stakeholders Indicate availability / expertise / skills
	Engage in training	Set up training and information events to maximise expertise and skills within team and stakeholder network

Assess tools & resources

It may be tempting to dive straight into defining goals at the startup phase of a policy lab, but labs are urged to start at the root by assessing the region context to assess the potential of a CRFS policy lab. The main goal of the initial startup phase is to assess available tools and facilitate optimal utilization of needed resources. This will increase the effectiveness of lab activities at a later stage.

Explore data

Creating an inventory of available data is vital for the relevance of policy lab activities. Data can support lab activities, validate efforts by demonstrating outcomes quantitatively and at a later stage it may assist in the extrapolation of lab results to applicability at higher governance levels. At project level the data-driven approach allows for identifying best practices and quantifying the effect of initiatives and policy input. Therefore, it is vital to assess on which topics data is available before lab kick-off.

Relevant data may already be collected by government institutions, with sources including national data archives. However, public data collection often takes place at the national level with little opportunities for the assessment at the local level. Therefore, it is worth assessing the availability of local level data. In cases where there is no data available on the exact element you are interested in, options may exist to gauge the topic through proxies.

Policy labs could also benefit from private-sector data to address challenges, through sourcing data through partners. For example, market partners may collect customer information which may be accessible (in anonymised form) through collaboration with market stakeholders.

Additionally, data may be retrieved from research institutions that collect their own research data or have developed proxies for research purposes.

Team

The team consists of all individuals responsible for executing tasks and producing deliverables outlined in the lab action plan, and as such team setup is central to the lab and has a profound impact on lab capacity and results. Team members should be confirmed as part of the lab and their capacities should be identified clearly. At the minimum it should be clear how many hours each member has to spend on the lab next to other responsibilities. Additionally, each team member brings a unique combination of experience, skills, and network. This should be noted early in the process so these qualities can be taken into consideration in the development of the action plan and members can be mapped to the components in which their skill sets can be maximized.

Stakeholders

We briefly return to the concept of CRFS, which is defined as "all the actors, processes and relationships that are involved in food production, processing, distribution and consumption in a given city region" (FAO, 2023). CRFS is characterized by a strong interconnectedness of the food system element and partners across several dimensions.

The first dimension is connection across sectors, such as food security, economic development, water and waste management, energy, transport, health, climate change, governance and spatial planning.

The second dimension is the connection of CRFS across territorial boundaries; sectoral systems such as those mentioned above often have boundaries that do not align perfectly with the CRFS territory. This can consist of neighbouring towns or cities as well as national, European or global networks.

Therefore, a multitude of systems with varying territorial scopes will impact the CRFS and these linkages should be acknowledged in the policy labs. The importance of this integration is stressed by the dependence of policy labs on political will to invest in the policy opportunities that the lab builds its activities on.
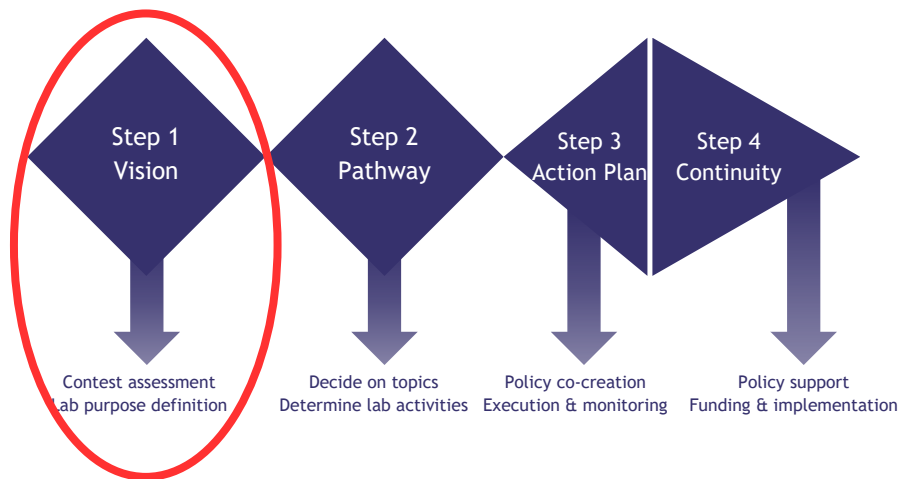
Additionally, research has demonstrated that inclusion of stakeholders leads to more effective food policies (Saviolidis, 2020). Therefore, any policy lab should involve actors from those sectors and territories that most strongly affect the opportunities assessed by the lab.

Step 1
Vision

The policy lab vision gives direction to activities by defining a broad project goal. It defines the priority areas that labs will be working on and assesses the role of the MUFPP framework within the lab approach. A well-developed vision directs lab activities and provides focus. A vision statement links lab activities to your (policy) context and thereby functions as a method to align stakeholders. As a result, a well-established vision statement can increase the impact of the policy lab.

The vision creation process will continuously run through the assessment and planning process and will advance as the lab progresses. However, a vision should be defined at the policy lab initiation to create directed purpose for all actors involved. The vision builds on the concepts of CRFS and MUFPP to align the policy lab with the Cities2030 context. The stage of vision-creation comprises assessing the context of the policy lab and, building on this assessment, defining the purpose of the policy lab with special consideration of the lab's unique circumstances.

Table 2   Vision

Lab phase		Lab actions
Assess context	Situation analysis	Create inventory of policies affecting CRFS Identify policy areas Optional: Identify policy (instrument) types Identify policy gap
	Assess CRFS potential	Context assessment Identify region-specific key issues and needs
Define purpose	Develop narrative	Develop targeted strategies Develop work plan

Assess context

A vital part of vision creation is context assessment of the policy lab. This consists of evaluation of two components; (1) an overview of the policies that are in place in the lab territory focusing on food system policies and (2) the place of the policy lab in the CRFS. The combination of these two elements will allow the policy lab to take into account the regions' unique characteristics in the development of a vision and the direction specified to the lab.

Situation analysis

A situation analysis aims to create an understanding of the environment in which a policy is being developed and assessed. It provides an overview of the risks and benefits of each policy option being assessed. At this early stage of the policy lab, a basic situation analysis should be conducted. There will be a more elaborate situation analysis at a later stage of the lab creation process.

Create inventory of policies affectivng CRFS

In the early vision creation stage the situation analysis involves an analysis of the current state of food policies in the lab region. This takes the form of an overview of policies that are in place and applicable to the field of food system governance in the region. An overview of the elements of the food governance situation analysis is given in table 3.

Table 3   Elements of Existing Food Policies supporting Vision Creation

Policies	
List Policies	Local level policies National level policies European level policies
Policy area	
Work field	Educational policies Agricultural policies Urban (planning) policies Health policies … other fields to be identified by the lab
Policy type	
Policy effect	Distributive policies Redistributive policies Regulatory policies Constituent policies

Identify Policy Areas

The starting point is a list of all food governance policies in the CRFS. Policies will exist on the local, national and European level. It is advisable to focus attention on the local and national levels, as they are the most impactful levels for the CRFS. European level reports, Directives and regulations can be accessed on the digital database of EC legislation and publications, <u>EUR-Lex</u>, whereas more general information on specific themes is accessible through the <u>EC website</u>. The aim of this inventory is to gain an understanding of the intent expressed by regulators on different levels of governance with regard to the functioning and reforming of the food system. The inventory of the main policies influencing the CRFS can be used to identify any policy gaps that may be present.

It is vital that the work field is noted for each of these policies, i.e. to which food system themes these policies relate. Some examples of work fields are public procurement, food waste reduction, influencing consumer behaviour, public health and food security for the public, to mention a few.

As food systems are generally under-governed, most labs will be able to identify a policy gap by assessing which themes are adequately governed and which themes remain unaddressed. The goal of identifying policies in their respective fields is to identify any aspects of the food system that remain unaddressed by policy. When identified, these policy gaps provide opportunity for the policy lab to support the transformation of the CRFS. If an opportunity is defined based on the inventory, the labs can stop their policy analysis at this point and continue to the next phase of assessing CRFS potential.

Identify policy types

Labs may need to continue their assessment if no CRFS policy gap can be identified using the methods described above. Labs can continue this process by identifying other policy dimensions, which are listed in table 3. There is no fixed rule for the amount of or order in which policy dimensions should be assessed. It is up to the labs' judgement to decide which policy dimension is most relevant within their context and for the policies active in their region.

One option to delve deeper into policies is by specifying the policy type. Policies are specified by the methods in which they have effect, including distributive, redistributive, regulatory, and constituent effects (Bouwma et al, 2015).

Identify policy gap

Once the policies in the CRFS are listed, labs can progress to assess the policy gaps within their territory. This gap can exist in each policy (instrument) type. It has been long recognised that the food system is under regulated, particularly in CRFS contexts (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000) so labs are likely to identify policy gaps without going in-depth (i.e. determining the policy type or policy instrument). Once the policy gap has been identified, it should be assessed for each gap whether this would be an effective avenue to explore in the living lab.

> **Table 4   Definition of policy types**
>
> A distributive policy benefits specific constituents, but its costs are borne collectively. This is in contrast to a redistributive policy, where the costs are borne by a relatively small number of actors and the benefits are enjoyed by a different societal group.
>
> Regulatory policy focuses on achieving the government's objectives through the use of regulations, laws, and other instruments to deliver better economic and social outcomes and thus enhance citizens and businesses.
>
> Constituent policies consist of the establishment of government structures or rules or procedures for the conduct of government. Such rules aim at distributing or dividing power.

Assess CRFS Potential

The situation analysis can be finalized by assessing the lab potential in the CRFS context. This is a first step of pathway development, which will be elaborated on in the next step. This surficial assessment aims to use the findings from the situation analysis to provide direction to move the lab forward and therefore the more detailed assessment can be left for the pathway development stage.

Context Assessment

Assess the context: i.e. create a snapshot of the CRFS, define its boundaries and list important characteristics, such as boundaries, governmental/jurisdictional structure, natural resources, surface, demographics, socioeconomic situation, food security and health status, food infrastructure, land use, water resources, food prices and accessibility, import/production data. Identify any existing data gaps.

The living lab approach is characterized by the ability to account for the uniqueness of each CRFS in its context, governance structure and the food system itself. As such, the findings from the situation analysis can be used to identify region-specific food dependencies, potential weaknesses, and pressure points. The situation analysis provides an opportunity for city regions to assess their food system to plan interventions that address local key issues and needs based on context assessment. The final goal of this stage is to gain an understanding of the vulnerabilities and obstacles of UFSE and the impact of CFRS on society and citizens. This assessment supports the labs approach to policy making to support the transitioning towards a sustainable CRFS.

Determine CRFS Activities

The context assessment is the base on which CRFS activities can be determined, i.e. the identified policy gaps are the basis on which activities are determined. The CRFS activities should aim at filling the policy gap and thereby focus at those points where there is a lack of activity or policy and the suggested activities are expected to have a positive impact on reaching sustainable CRFS. For each activity the lab takes on, the relationship between the lab activities and the policy gap/context assessment should be clarified.

Cities2030 embraces the bottom-up approach as a method to include actors in local communities to support the development of sustainable CRFS. The Bruges food lab has experience with the bottom-up approach and when needed it can provide information on bottom-up food strategy development and local stakeholder inclusion. The final goal of this phase is to develop targeted strategies that fit the challenges and needs of each individual region.

Define Purpose

The policy lab vision creation phase is finalized by defining the purpose of the policy lab by specifying the project goal. The purpose of the lab is defined based on the policy gap and the activities that fill that gap most effectively in the specific context of the CRFS. The potential of these activities within the CRFS rationale should be clarified. Based on this information a rough work plan can be developed. This gives an overview of the lab context, stakeholders involved, activities that the lab aims to accomplish and how these activities will link into the gaps of the current policy context.
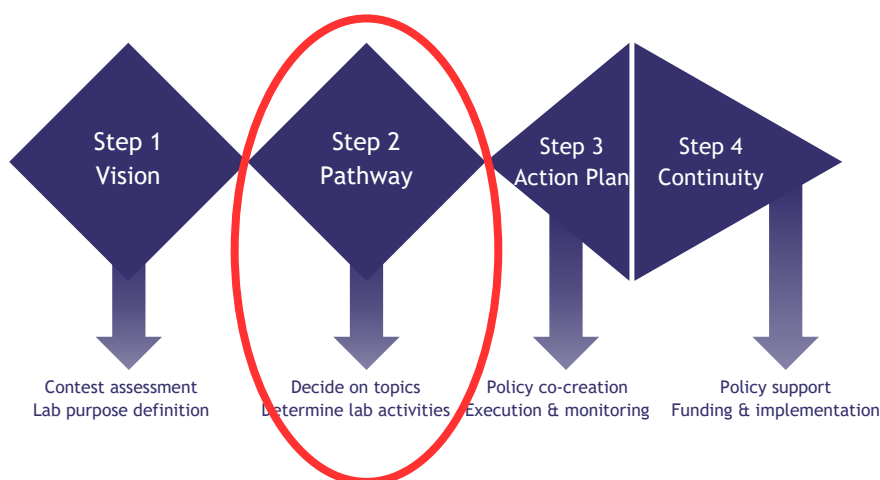
Step 2
Pathway Development

Table 5   Pathway Development

Lab phase		Lab actions
Resources	Data collection	Data collection
Analysis	Data assessment	SWOT
Decide topics	Define pathway	Set priorities Define boundaries CRFS
	Determine activities	Define SMART goals Create agenda

The pathway development stage builds onto the vision and aims to develop a concrete plan for activities to be executed. This stage consists of an in-depth assessment of activities that took place in the vision creation phase and the initial interactions with stakeholders. More elaborate data will be collected, either through using existing resources or through stakeholder engagement. The gaps that have been identified in the vision creation phase will be assessed more thoroughly through a SWOT analysis. Priorities are set and the CRFS elements are defined while the boundaries of the CRFS are clearly defined. Based on this information the final lab goals can be defined as SMART goals and the lab agenda is formulated.

Resources

Review the data collected or assessed during the setup phase, or commence data collection, using data sources identified previously. This provides the possibility for informed decision-making and provides clarity in stakeholder dialogues. It is the labs responsibility to identify which data types are most useful in determining which activities best serve the CRFS. The text box below lists examples of data used by CRFS labs in the context of the MUFPP the pilot labs can refer to for clarification (FAO, 2023).

Table 6   Data collection examples

Data type	Examples
government structures and bodies	government bodies involved in CRFS functioning and governance, responsibilities and mandate
natural resources	surface areas, urban/rural divide, urban growth patterns, water (amount/quality)
demographic data	inhabitants, urban/rural numbers, gender, age, ethnicity, geographical distribution of population
socioeconomic data	SE status division, household income, poverty, employment, spatial distribution of socioeconomic characteristics
health & culture	food security, hunger, malnutrition, poverty obesity rates, diet-related disease incidence
food infrastructure	access to culturally suitable and nutritious diets across population/income group
land use	road infrastructure, distribution networks, markets, production, processing, storage and retail
resilience	agriculture, production systems, open spaces in municipal area and in city region, land prices/land availability
	regional consumption, food import per food groups, origin, regional/national/global imports)

The use of spatial data is encouraged, as this provides insight into the flow of resources and allows for active participation of stakeholders. One method of using spatial data in multi-actor and multidisciplinary settings is the use of interactive surface tables (or large tablets) that visualize data, such as geographical maps, infrastructure, land use and demographic information. The interactive nature of such a tablet supports discussions across stakeholders with varying interests and can support the learning process of stakeholders to understand the interactive nature of CRFS elements under discussion and the complexities surrounding solution-searching in CRFS contexts. The participatory nature of this approach can support the application of modeling tools that leverage expert knowledge instead of applying complex and detailed simulation models. This approach has an added benefit of stimulating stakeholder interaction, thereby supporting the multi-actor approach that is essential to come to effective and enforceable solutions in the CRFS reality.

Analysis

Data assessment

SWOT analysis is a planning tool that consists of the SWOT elements Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as depicted in table 7. It is a type of extended situation analysis and a diagnostic tool that is commonly used to gain an understanding of internal and external factors that influence the pilot (Namugenyi et al., 2019).

It assists in gaining an understanding of key factors in the city/region pilot. The SWOT analysis builds onto the pilot objective (or vision) by identifying any factors that impact the realization of the vision and ultimately aims to support decision making by assessing the best course of action. This approach is particularly suited for CRFS pilots as it supports self-assessment and is highly flexible, adjusting to a wide array of CRFS contexts and characteristics.

Table 7   SWOT Analysis

	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

Strenghts

Strengths are considered positive attributes that are internal to an organization, within the organization's control and can be both tangible and intangible. The main questions one should ask when formulating the strength is "What characteristics of the pilot policy lab (could) drive the policy lab vision forward? Which elements of the vision does this strength affect? Through which methods would these attributes cause a positive development?"

Opportunities

Opportunities are external positive factors that provide chances for development of the policy lab or realization of policy lab elements. The questions one should ask in formulating an opportunity is "Which elements of the policy lab context could drive the policy lab vision forward? Which elements of the vision? Is there a time-frame for this opportunity? Through which methods could these attributes be utilized to create a positive development?"

Weaknesses

Weaknesses are internal factors that are under the organizations' control and negatively impact the organisations' ability to achieve the vision or the overall goal. The questions one can ask to determine an organization's weakness are "which areas could the organization improve to produce outcomes closer to its goals or vision? Which elements of the vision is this linked to? And are these areas difficult to change?"

Threats

Threats are external factors that are beyond the organization's control but have a negative impact on the organizations' ability to reach the pilot vision or goal. More established pilots may have contingency plans for long-standing structural threats.

If they are, their effectiveness should be assessed and included in the SWOT analysis. The severity and probability of occurrence should be assessed for each threat. The main questions to assess threats are "What effect can this threat be expected to have on the realization of the pilot vision? What elements of the vision will this threat impact? Is there an (effective) contingency plan to minimize the threat?"

Be aware that the quality of the SWOT analysis is greatly dependent on the quality of the data included. One example is the effect of including inflation in long-term financial data. The quality or detail of the information included in the SWOT can change its outcome completely. Therefore, the lab should ensure that the data represents all elements that make up the CRFS or the context in which the actor operates. Additionally, the SWOT analysis approach entails a certain degree of simplification. This should be assessed with care to ensure the SWOT provides an accurate depiction of the CRFS. Particularly when dealing with the viewpoints of several stakeholders, it is advisable to critically assess whether the SWOT correctly aligns perspectives held across the parties and feed into potential stakeholder resistance.

The SWOT analysis ultimately creates insights into the current CRFS situation based on information on both the internal/external axis and positive/negative axis. These insights can be useful in identifying the activities that have high impact in the effect of the pilot. The CRFS pilot will benefit from building onto the SWOT analysis; by applying the main outcomes through playing on the CRFS strengths and weaknesses. This will support the process of defining goals, and ultimately activities, to focus on. The following step describes how goals and activities can be defined and prioritised.

Decide topics

The data collection and assessment activities feed into the decision-making process of selecting priority topics for the pilot. This consists of narrowing down the potential activities the lab could take on and providing focus through priority setting and defining the boundaries of the pilot, and secondly determining the activities by formulating SMART goals and ultimately creating the pilot agenda.

Define pathway

Set priorities

A clear definition of key priorities is required to accurately define the pilot goals, as priorities inform the selection process of which activities receive priority action to optimize the impact of activities. The priorities can be based on the SWOT analysis in two ways. The first is to assess if it has become evident in the data collection process and the SWOT analysis that there is a lack of adequate information. In that case it can be a priority to address this lack of information and assess if the pilot would benefit from data collection to such an extent that this should be prioritized. Potential priority activities could consist for example of consultative stakeholder meetings to collect qualitative information, or quantitative approaches such as spatial mapping of food system flows or environmental effects.

A second way in which the SWOT analysis can be utilized is to assess the information captured in the analysis. If any element stands out as being particularly limiting to regional food system transformation, there may be value in overcoming that weakness or threat. Similarly, the elements that have been identified as driving food system transformation can be further exploited by prioritizing expansion of the opportunity or strength. However, when prioritizing actions always take the expected impact of the pilot into consideration. The final goal of prioritization is to optimize the impact of the policy labs.

Define boundaries CRFS

The boundaries of the pilot should be clearly formulated to correctly define the CRFS. A clear CRFS border is highly unlikely, as a CRFS itself is made up of multiple systems with varying boundaries that can spread outside the city-region borders. In addition, each food system contains relationships that exist with national and global systems.

Ultimately, the processes of prioritization and boundary definition will feed back into the vision and a revised version of the vision can be created that is in line with the pilots internal and external influences and will maximize the impact of lab activities.

Determine activities: SMART goals

The activities within the CRFS lab are based on the pathway definition and will be defined as SMART goals. These goals include criteria of goals and objectives to be achieved. The SMART approach is based on acronyms that stand for Specific - Measurable - Attainable - Relevant and Time-based, as listed in table 8.

Table 8   SMART goals

S	Specific
M	Measurable
A	Attainable
R	Relevant
T	Time-based

Specific - The Specific criteria entails that the activity needs to be described explicitly with adequate detail to minimize misinterpretation about the definition, purpose or execution of the goal. Think critically about the different elements of the execution of the goal and ensure that they are all addressed in the description of the goal.

Questions one can ask to make a goal specific include: what needs to be done to reach the goal? What outcomes can be expected from these activities? What is the significance of these activities to the vision of the CRFS pilot? Who is and who should be involved in the execution of this task? Do other stakeholders need to be involved? What requirements are involved in reaching the goals? Can any barriers be anticipated?

Measurable - The Measurable element of the SMART goal specifies the method of assessing the activity effectiveness. This entails the assessment of objectives, which can be based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data assessment allows for easier assessment of pilot results, but the data collection and assessment methods should be planned and described in this section. Effectiveness assessment is more challenging for qualitative elements. In these cases, indicators or data proxies should be described so an assessment process is planned.

Questions that contribute to formulating the measurability of the pilot goal can be formulated as; what data is required to measure progress on this goal? what data is available? Is there a data gap that should be addressed prior to formulating assessment methods? What assessment methods can be applied? What indicators are applicable in this context?

Attainable - The Attainable criteria reflects the need for objectives to be defined at the right level, where change is both noticeable and can be achieved. The correct level of change will be motivating for stakeholders and pilot partners to work toward, and the key component is realism.

Questions that assist in formulating realistic and attainable goals center around identifying the limiting and stimulating factors in attaining goals; what are the constraints in reaching this goal? Are there specific limitations in place? If so, what is the contingency plan? Is the time-frame realistic? Are resources available to execute the plans as planned? Is this plan realistic?

Relevant - All partners and stakeholders should recognise the relevance of this particular pilot goal to the overall pilot objective. As such, it is vital to emphasize the link of activities with the pilot vision. Emphasizing the relevance of each goal also ensures that goals are aligned and serve a shared goal or vision.

Questions one can ask to articulate the relevance of a goal are; what is the expected outcome of this action? Why is this important? Does this action fall within the boundaries of the CRFS? Is this action optimal for this specific CRFS (policy) context?

Time-based - Consider the deadlines that apply to this goal. List them and ensure they are accessible for all stakeholders and partners involved with the task. Even when no hard deadlines exist, state the important moments for the task and a clear completion date as deadlines create a sense of urgency and ensure that tasks are not under-prioritized.
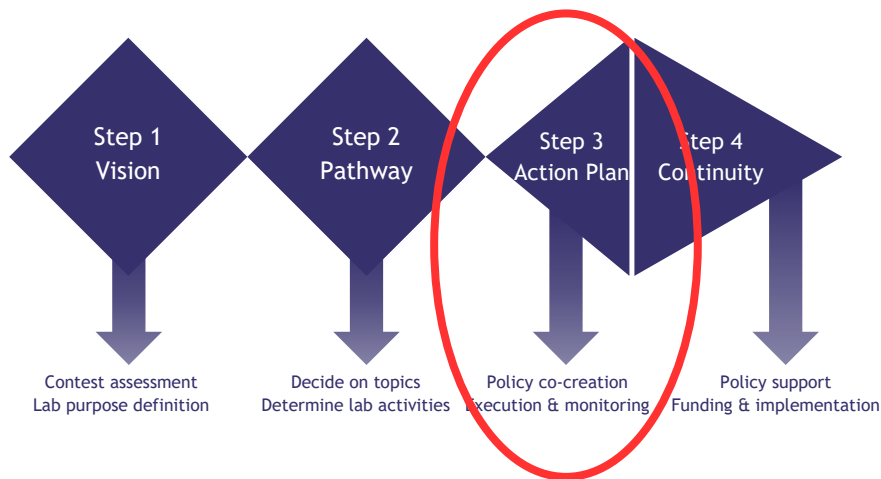
Step 3
Action Plan

Table 9   Action Plan

Lab phase		Lab actions
Contextualization	CRFS-specific context	Re-iterate previous steps
Execution plan	Task planning	Create SMART task list Allocate & prioritize tasks
Evaluation plan	Evaluation planning	Plan monitoring & evaluation Identify resources & indicators
	Outreach planning	Identify deadlines & milestones Plan visualization & communication

The action plan aims to provide direction by emphasising critical tasks and outlining concrete actions needed to reach the specified pilot goals. Action plans are distinctly different from project plans; project plans are quite detailed whereas the action plan provides a high-level overview.

The action plan is divided into three sections; (1) contextualization, where the pilot is evaluated in the context of the assessments conducted in the previous steps; (2) an execution plan, which takes the form of a list of tasks and resources that assist in reaching pilot goals; and (3) an evaluation plan, where vital communication opportunities are identified and necessary data for communication and evaluation are anticipated. One particularly useful characteristic of an action plan is that it breaks down complex and multifaceted processes into smaller tasks in such a way that the process becomes more manageable and has specific tasks assigned to partners and at specific times.

Contextualization

The action plan translates the previously defined vision, pilot context and goals into concrete and actionable steps. As such, this is an appropriate moment to re-iterate and reflect on the CRFS assessment in the previous steps. The step-by-step guide presents the pilot as consisting of a linear process, although in reality this is an iterative process with several feedback loops. For example, the lab vision may be altered after the SWOT analysis to align with the newly found insights in the lab's strengths and weaknesses. Such reverse alterations are natural in pilot processes and are even encouraged at this stage to assure that the actions set out in the action plan are in line with the assessment and definitions from previous steps. This is referred to here as contextualisation, as it aims to align the pilot actions to the several definitions and context assessments performed earlier in the pilot process.

CRFS-specific context

The action plan translates the previously defined vision, pilot context and goals into concrete and actionable steps. As such, this is an appropriate moment to re-iterate and reflect on the CRFS assessment in the previous steps. The step-by-step guide presents the pilot as consisting of a linear process, although in reality this is an iterative process with several feedback loops. For example, the lab vision may be altered after the SWOT analysis to align with the newly found insights in the lab's strengths and weaknesses. Such reverse alterations are natural in pilot processes and are even encouraged at this stage to assure that the actions set out in the action plan are in line with the assessment and definitions from previous steps. This is referred to here as contextualisation, as it aims to align the pilot actions to the several definitions and context assessments performed earlier in the pilot process.

Execution plan

The next phase in the action plan consists of translating the information captured in previous steps into concrete actions. This execution plan can be structured as in table 6. Pilot labs are free to use the columns and are encouraged to assess how useful this degree of execution planning is for them. It is expected that this may not add much value to some of the more established labs, in which case this may be reported on with limited detail.

Task planning

The insights built in the CRFS assessment are here translated into concrete tasks. This process is initiated by reviewing the SMART goals that have been defined in step 3: pathway to action. A first step is to carefully scrutinize the completeness and the definition of this list of SMART goals to ensure that they are in line with potential new insights. The (updated) SMART goals are listed in the first column and their execution will be specified in the following columns.

Table 10   Execution plan reporting

SMART goal	Execution plan		
SMART task	Responsibility	Timeframe	Prioritization
SMART task	Responsibility	Timeframe	Prioritization

SMART task list

All SMART goals are defined in the specific SMART format (described in step 2) that facilitates assigning actions to each goal. Concrete tasks are identified to each of these goals. These actions should describe as specific as possible HOW these goals are accomplished using the same SMART-criteria as the pilot goals. The tasks should therefore contain the elements (Specific - Measurable - Attainable - Realistic - Time-bound). The task list is complete when the SMART goals will be fully realized if the activities listed have been completed.

Allocate & prioritize tasks

Once the SMART tasks are fully defined, they are allocated to the responsible actors. The majority of tasks will likely be assigned to project partners, but tasks may be assigned to other stakeholders. However, this is under the condition that stakeholders are fully aware of the responsibilities, are able to execute the task according to the specific SMART task definition and have explicitly agreed to take on the task. The time frame should be included for each task to facilitate planning at individual partner level.

Prioritization of tasks is necessary particularly in those instances where labs are under pressure due to (resource) constraints. Prioritization can be indicated dichotomously, by simply specifying "yes" or "no" under prioritization. Some partners may prefer a scoring system, where a task is allocated a priority score on a scale from 1-5 for example. Details on the prioritization methods are best defined on lab or partner level, but it is advisable to keep this simple and in line with the preferences of the actors responsible for the execution.

Evaluation plan

The action plan should include assessment of the evaluation of the pilot. This is divided into the evaluation of the pilot in terms of effectiveness and final lab output and the planning of outreach activities (i.e. activities aiming at expanding awareness and promoting the pilot). The outreach and evaluation elements each entail their own goals and activities.

Evaluation planning

The ex-ante pilot evaluation seems far away at this point, but consideration should be given to the final pilot assessment to anticipate future needs for data availability and activity tracking, so the necessary resources are available to support the assessment of the pilot effectiveness. This is heavily linked to the impact assessment that is under development in CITIES2030. It is advisable for policy labs to check the development of this deliverable when they arrive at this phase as this can assist in the evaluation of the pilot lab effectiveness. Until these materials have been made available to the pilots, policy labs are encouraged to use the methods described underneath to create a rudimentary evaluation plan that can be expanded and refined once the project-wide evaluation methodology has been developed. The goal of the activities described below is to develop an approach towards the evaluation activities and ensure that activities are tracked and recorded, and any data required to assess the effect of the pilot is collected.

Table 11   Evaluation plan reporting

SMART goal		Execution plan		
SMART task	...	Data collection	Indicators	Monitoring
SMART task	...	Data collection	Indicators	Monitoring

Identify resources & indicators

Successful evaluation of reaching pilot goals requires a clear definition of the status quo, i.e. a baseline scenario, and the desired situation the pilot works towards. Ideally both these situations should be expressed, either qualitatively or quantitatively, but always in a format that allows before-and-after comparisons. In many cases the SMART definition of pilot goal and

tasks include an element of measurability that provides enough information to define a baseline and/or pilot goal. Data collection aims specifically to support the comparison of the baseline and goal at evaluation stages of the CRFS pilot. Labs are encouraged to use existing data sources, but if these are not available pilot labs often use surveys across households, government institutions and businesses, expert consultations through focus group discussions or expert interviews, or, if the lab has a more quantitative approach, food flow mapping.

However, data that supports ex-ante pilot assessment is not always readily available. In that case labs are referred to the <u>CRFS indicator framework</u>; a valuable source of inspiration for CRFS pilots. It provides an overview of the main themes identified in previous CRFS labs and potential outcomes and impact areas. Additionally, it lists indicators that may be used for each objective, along with suggestions for data sources that support the use of these indicators. Even when the data collection process is straightforward, it is advisable to review this framework to validate the methods and assess if additional or less labor intensive data sources can be used.

Plan monitoring & evaluation

The potential indicators for lab impact and data collection methods have now been defined. The monitoring of this resource collection and the execution of goal-related general tasks should now be assessed. There is no standardized form for the lab monitoring; labs should setup a monitoring system that is both efficient and sufficient for them. It can be as simple as having a excel spreadsheet in which activities are listed, with core elements of each activity added to the listing.

Monitoring these activities fulfils several purposes. On the lab level, monitoring supports ex-ante assessment of the lab and can thereby support capacity building and/or lab promotion activities by providing information on the effectiveness of activities mid-process. Tracking activities and outcomes facilitates the identification of elements that support or block the pilot execution. Additionally, it supports labs on reporting activities as the information is kept in a central repository and can be easily accessed, presented, and summarized on request. On project level activity monitoring is useful to gain insight into lab progression and into factors that determine the successful pilot execution.

Outreach planning

Outreach consists of all activities that aim to promote or advocate the CRFS pilot. These activities stretch over a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from promotion at the regional level with political or business actors to education initiatives at local schools. The ultimate goal of outreach is to maximize the impact of the pilot, through increasing public awareness and educating CRFS stakeholders. Additionally, outreach activities may increase stakeholder inclusion and increase political will due to education of the CRFS approach, increasing awareness and future projections on social, health, environmental, economic and resilience aspects of CRFS. These activities are broad and often fall into the capacity building activities.

Table 12   Outreach plan reporting

SMART goal		Outreach	
SMART task	...	Milestones	Communication
SMART task	...	Milestones	Communication

Identify deadlines & milestones

Each pilot process contains moments in which project milestones are reached; these results could be used to highlight the pilots activities and importance. Pilot milestones are excellent moments to take stock of the pilot activities and the impact it has on the regional CRFS. A first step in this process is to identify which moments can be considered milestones. Commonly these centre around the completion of a deadline or a particularly impactful task in the task list.

Plan visualization & communication

Once milestones are identified, assess whether additional opportunities exist to promote the CRFS pilot and which form would be most fitting. A technical report is rarely an effective method to appeal to the public, project partners or stakeholders. This phase has room for creativity and a proactive approach. In previous steps pilots were advised to collect data as they progressed through the CRFS processes. Communication with policymakers as well as other target groups benefits from selecting the more fitting communication option, consisting of concise information with visual cues - such as fact sheets, maps or videos -, or in-person communication through public events and communication tailored to a specific audience. In this phase labs can review the SMART goals, and particularly the M -element (measurability). Pilot partners will have given consideration to the measurability of the pilot goal, which often consists of a form of data collection of event tracing. This data can be utilized to maximize the impact of the lab. The presentation and visualization of data should be carefully considered, particularly keeping in mind the target audience.

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