

# FOOD- CONNECTS

A food strategy for  
Leuven

LEUVEN  
2030

MINDER UITSTOOT, MEER TOEKOMST

## Colophon

### Members of the steering committee

Michèle Jacobs	Leuven 2030
Erik Béatse	Riso Flemish Brabant
Brecht Gousse	Farmer
Stef Steyaert	Levuur
Hilde Van Rillaer	City of Leuven
Heidi Du Laing	City of Leuven
Evert Thys	City of Leuven
Anita Magits	City of Leuven
Nick Francois	Farmers' Union
Johan Geleyns	Farmer
Tessa Avermaete	KU Leuven
Gert Engelen	Rikolto

Tessa Avermaete and Gert Engelen

Process supervision: Stef Steyaert

Final editing: Jelle Goossens

Coordination: Michèle Jacobs

Layout: Jan Neyens

Photography: Tim Buelens

Printing: Drukkerij Goossens

In collaboration with:



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## A food strategy: food connects

A food strategy is a holistic approach to the food system in a city. Across the world, there has been a growing understanding in recent years that cities can play an important role in making the food system more sustainable. As a result, cities and municipalities in the northern and southern hemispheres have developed a local food policy. Such a policy overlaps with many other policy areas. A good policy on food fosters progress in many areas such as health, well-being, the environment, the economy, culture, rural development, education, and more. That is why it is crucial to involve various stakeholders: consumers/citizens, associations, food producers/farmers, the food processing industry, the distribution sector, storage, the retail sector, the waste processing industry, the hospitality industry and policy makers.

## A food strategy for Leuven

Many efforts are being made in and around Leuven in connection with food and agriculture. The Leuven 2030 network helped foster the development of the objective of working to-

gether with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a strategy for making the agricultural and food system more sustainable. We took inspiration from the process that other cities already went through, both in Europe and beyond. In late 2017, the "Local food strategy for Leuven" project was launched



Image: Tom Herbots



# introduction

in collaboration with the city of Leuven, the Farmers' Union Boerenbond, KU Leuven, Rikolto, Leuven 2030, Riso Flemish Brabant and many other stakeholders. It was explicitly decided to ensure that the local food strategy be drafted not by a small group of experts, but together with all stakeholders: producers, consumers, traders,

the hospitality industry, distributors, policymakers, etc. In late 2017 and early 2018, three meetings, each bringing together 50 to 70 participants, outlined the main lines for the Leuven food strategy. Together, they determined the content of the Leuven food strategy. This fulfilled an important precondition for developing a strong and supported framework.

The Leuven food strategy extends beyond the boundaries of Leuven. No strict geographical demarcation was proposed, but most of the stakeholders are from the district of Leuven.



# a few concepts

## What is a sustainable food system?

There is increasing demand for a more sustainable food system. However, the question remains as to what such a system might look like. We are using the definition of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development as our starting point.

Firstly, a sustainable food system ensures that everyone has a satisfactory and healthy diet worldwide at an acceptable price. Secondly, 'sustainable' means that the final price also reflects the actual price. The actual price is much more than just the production cost; it also includes social costs and environmental costs. Thirdly, this means that we only use raw materials and natural resources (such as soil, water and biodiversity) to the extent that they are re-produced at their rate of recovery. A sustainable food system also respects the cultural identity of food. Finally, a sustainable food system requires cooperation and efforts from the government and all stakeholders in the chain.

## What are sustainable dietary patterns?

Sustainable dietary patterns are a component of sustainable food systems and focus on consumption. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, they are dietary patterns with a low climate impact that contribute to both food safety and a healthy life for present and future generations. Such dietary patterns protect and respect biodiversity and ecosystems. They are culturally acceptable, accessible, safe, healthy and economically just and affordable. Sustainable dietary patterns make optimal use of natural and human resources without sacrificing nutritional value.

This definition recognises that the production and consumption of food are related to food needs and nutritional recommendations. It also confirms the insight that our own health cannot be considered as separate from the health of ecosystems.

## Who are prosumers?

The term 'prosumer' occasionally appears in the text. This is a term which in this context means consumers who also produce food products - possibly also process them - and sell them.

*See also: Reflection: Sustainable agricultural and food systems in Flanders*







Leuven lives and breathes healthy and sustainable food. A sustainable and healthy diet brings together residents of Leuven from all walks of life. Citizens, companies, associations and institutions all engage in various initiatives to make this happen. At home, at school, at work and in their free time.

The city and the surrounding area are becoming a foodie's heaven. The most diverse forms of sustainable agriculture and horticulture can be found in its streets. A close relationship has been forged between food producers, consumers and prosumers.

The food chain is transparent. Benefits and burdens are fairly distributed among all stakeholders in the chain. There is a broad mix of high-perfor-

mance distribution channels for products from the region, both via the short supply chain and via local traders, the hospitality industry, catering and retail. Sustainable local food is recognisable and accessible everywhere and is affordable for everyone.



# strategic objectives

# 1 promoting healthy and sustainable food

The Leuven food strategy is aimed at all residents of Leuven. Together, we have opted for healthy and sustainable food. This can only be achieved if we focus on education and awareness-raising efforts.

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- Leuven's residents are interested in healthy and sustainable food.
- Every citizen of Leuven can explain what healthy and sustainable food means in three sentences.
- Leuven's residents have opted for healthy and sustainable food.

**1.1. The local supply is visible**  
Leuven and the surrounding area are rife with efforts and initiatives around food and agriculture. A strong communication plan provides a clear overview of the supply: from kitchen garden projects to pick-up points for local food, from school gardens to short supply chains in the hospitality industry. An attractive website and a recognisable logo are also necessary for ensuring that every citizen can easily find their way to the local supply.

## 1.2. Leuven's citizens come into contact with sustainable and healthy food in various ways

Leuven is a bustling city and is home to many events aimed at various target groups taking place throughout the year. Existing events are ideal opportunities for highlighting direct food links. However,

there is also room in Leuven for new initiatives, campaigns for healthy eating and sustainable food, which can focus on connecting food producers and citizens. The Leuven food strategy can also be implemented in schools and businesses by offering balanced and healthy meals focusing, for instance, on local and sea-



Image: Dieter Daemen

sonal products, promoting a balanced diet with a responsible relationship between plant and animal nutrition, etc. Many schools in Leuven have a kitchen, but they are rarely used as a learning environment. Working with young people in the kitchen can be an important step towards a more sustainable and healthy diet.

## Longest Veggie table in Leuven

The Longest Veggie Table is an initiative of EVA vzw and is organized in Leuven together with vzw Leuven 2030 and the Leuven City Council. At the Hogeschoolplein, Leuven's residents can pull up a chair, inspire each other and discover vegetarian alternatives. Food stalls serve all kinds of low-waste vegetarian delicacies, but you can also bring your own picnic.





Inspiring well-known people from Leuven.

Chefs increasingly are increasingly becoming opinion leaders in our society. They can influence citizens and show them how to go about getting healthy and sustainable food.

### 1.3. Creating opportunities for buying healthy and sustainable food

Healthy and sustainable food must be visible to the public. More and more restaurants, traders and caterers place the emphasis on local products, but a little additional effort in this direction could do no harm.

### 1.4. Creating learning opportunities

Education offers many opportunities for turning children and young people into critical citizens. This is certainly true as regards sustainable agriculture and food. Management staff and teachers need support to turn this potential into actions. More and more schools in Leuven have a vegetable garden in which the pupils are allowed to experiment. Many farmers in the Leuven region also open up their farms to young visitors. However, a single visit is just a snapshot, and a number of farmers are asking for such visits to be made more systematic. In this way, children can learn that farmers live with the seasons.

## Farmers with class

In order to bring farmers and citizens closer together, the province of Flemish Brabant offers compensation to farmers and horticulturists who make time to welcome group and class visits to their farms. The 'Farmers with class' network now counts some 60 agricultural and horticultural businesses from Flemish-Brabant among its members. They are all ambassadors of agriculture and horticulture in the province. Walter and Koen Vanacker of Hof ter Vaeren are 'Farmers with class'. They are the third generation working on this mixed farm combining dairy cattle, beef cattle and arable farming. They also produce many farm products there. All of the products can be purchased in the farm's shop. Hof ter Vaeren is also known as a didactic farm. Groups and school children following a guided tour are a familiar sight around the farm.

More information: [www.plattelandsklasse.be](http://www.plattelandsklasse.be) and [www.straffestreek.be/producent/hof-ter-vaeren](http://www.straffestreek.be/producent/hof-ter-vaeren)



Image: Plattelandsklassen

Our educational institutions are therefore important partners. Educational projects on the farm can certainly add value in this context. The topic of agriculture and nutrition can be further detailed in teachers' educational materials, and students and researchers can contribute to the follow-up of various projects that are part of the Leuven food strategy.

#### 1.5. Open dialogue is the basis of our food strategy

Building a broad support base for a better food system requires interest groups and citizens to strive towards establishing a constructive dialogue. This means that all interest groups must respect each other and reflect about the future together. In concrete terms, this can be achieved through continuous and open dialogue such as: open platform meetings, a renewed Food and Agriculture Advisory Board (VLAR), lectures, future exploration, open plan days, etc.



# 2 bringing consumers and producers closer together

By building bridges between the production industry, the food processing industry, the distribution industry and citizens, the food strategy contributes to ensuring that everyone's efforts are properly recognised and valued.

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- Local products are more accessible, both in ordinary trade and in direct food links.
- Leuven-based hospitality businesses, business can-tees, hospitals and schools have access to a growing supply of local products.
- Direct food links become more professionalised and logistics costs will fall.
- More farmers find their way to direct food links.

## 2.1. Scaling up the capacity of direct food links

An initial inventory of direct food links activities was drawn up in 2015. However, the list is incomplete and many interesting initiatives remain unknown in Leuven. Mapping out the wide range of initiatives can bring many advantages. First of all, good practices inspire. We can learn much from initiatives happening elsewhere in the world, although every country and every city has its own specific context. Ensuring that actions happening in and around Leuven are visible is therefore a particularly valuable exercise. Larger stakeholders, such as supermarket chains and supermarkets, are requiring professional logistics from direct food links. An urban information platform is of the utmost necessity in this context. In addition to a digital application making the local supply visible, there is therefore a need for physical locations in which supply and demand can meet.

## 2.2. Large Leuven-based companies and public institutions lead by example

Our Leuven-based companies and institutions are the sign board of the Leuven food strategy: they include the City of Leuven, the Province of Flemish Brabant, the KU Leuven, the University Hospital Leuven, the school groups, associations, the Farmers' As-



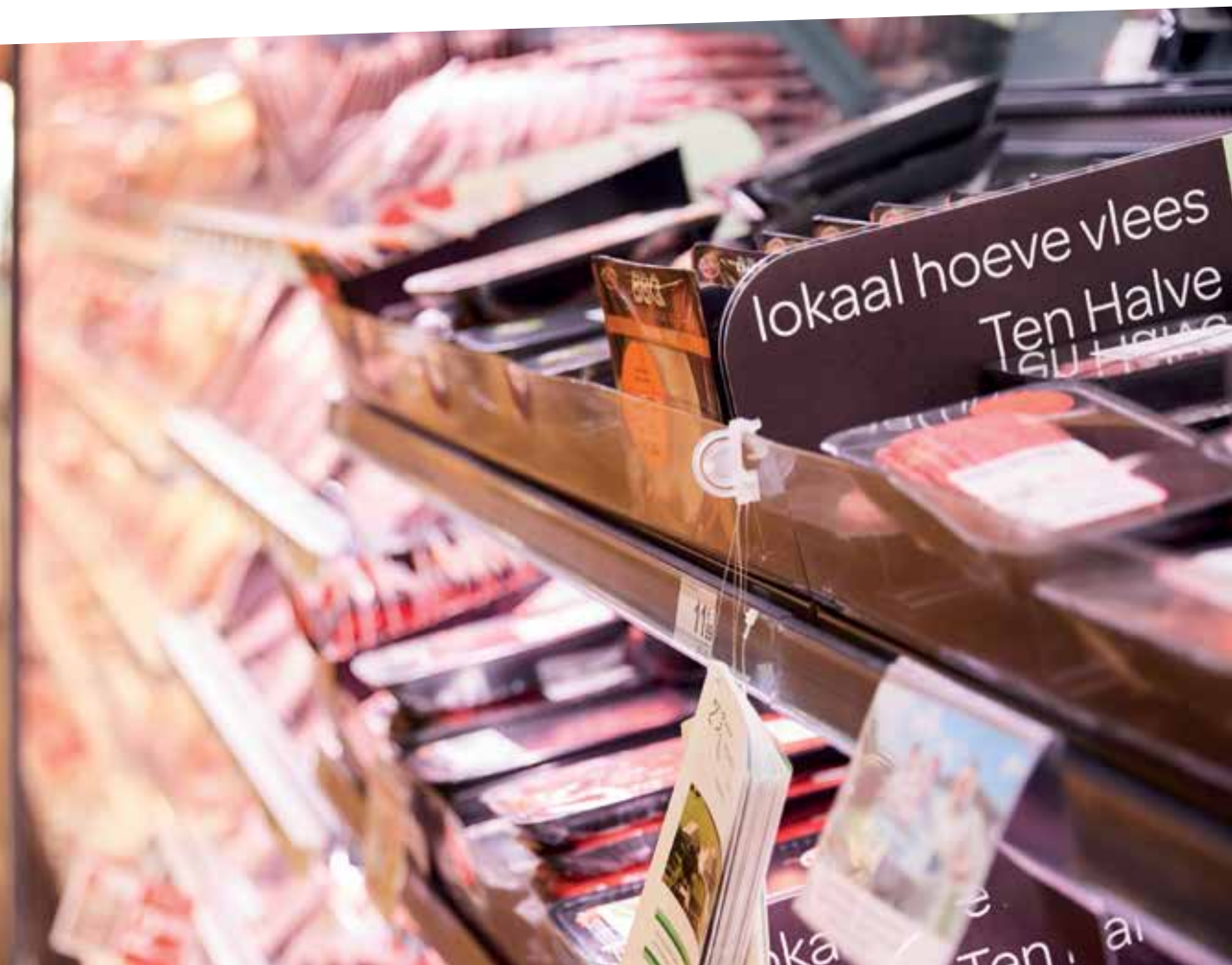


sociation, and others. They can invest in sustainable catering and developing a sustainable purchasing policy and at the same time promote healthy and sustainable food for their members, students, pupils, employees, etc.

## a local food aisle in supermarkets

Carrefour Market in Herent is working with a number of local food producers. This is the result of a deliberate choice made by Hendrik Draye, co-manager of the store: "Their products are given a prime location in the store, and a clear label identifying the grower who produced them. For example, organic vegetables from De Wriemeling farm and meat from the Paul Saelens farm can be found among the products on offer.

Familie Saelens is a family farm located at a stone's throw from the Carrefour in Herent. They farm, have beef cattle and sell their own potatoes and meat. In addition, they deliver to Carrefour in Herent. [www.tenholve.be](http://www.tenholve.be)



### 2.3. Promoting local products for local entrepreneurs and retail industry

De korte keten inbedden bij de Embedding direct food links for local entrepreneurs and the retail industry is a process that requires thorough analysis. For example, there is a need for an overview of sales points' locations, and the locations in which Leuven residents purchase or consume their food. A number of stakeholders are already shining the spotlight on direct food links. There remains a need for information on the impact of current initiatives.

For local shops, continuous availability and logistics are also paramount when deciding whether or not to invest in the short supply chain. As mentioned earlier in this food strategy, an online platform and a physical location in which supply and demand meet are basic requirements for the further professionalisation of the direct food links. Stakeholders must join forces in order to achieve this objective. Professionalisation should be accompanied by greater transparency on the distribution of risks and profits in the chain. Producers are entitled to a decent income, like every other stakeholder in the food chain.

### 2.4. The hospitality industry highlights local products

Leuven is a city with a thriving hospitality industry. The Leuven hospitality industry is therefore an important player in the Leuven food strategy. A system needs to be developed to enable citizens to easily identify dishes containing local and seasonal ingredients in cafeterias and restaurants.



## The Food Hub: food with a story

The Food Hub is an organic food store with locations in Leuven and Brussels. They offer a wide selection of organic products, the majority of which come directly from small and medium-sized producers from Belgium and the rest of Europe. This is nothing new. However, The Food Hub aims to be more than a store. The Food Hub aims to bring all stakeholders together in order to create a transparent and dynamic food economy based on the basic principles of fair trade. Twice a year, The Food Hub will invite producers to meet the customers. "We want to provide a response to consumers' actual needs and ensure a fair distribution of income. Food as a relationship. Food that creates fertile soil, healthy people, and a community. Food with a story."

More information: [www.foodhub.be](http://www.foodhub.be)

The hospitality industry's involvement entails a number of (technological) challenges. For example, there is a need for a database that can help the hospitality industry to guarantee a continuous supply. The hospitality industry's efforts can be translated into a score-card. Mobile applications, such as QR codes on menus, can provide consumers with information about the origin of the products. The City of Leuven could call on a number of knowledge institutions in the region, including KU Leuven, Leuven Mindgate and UCLL in order to meet these technological challenges.

#### 2.5. Healthy and sustainable catering

Schools, universities, high schools and companies are working out a step-by-step plan to make their catering more sustainable and to include local and seasonal products in their offering. An audit system could help caterers, as well as companies and institutions, to assess their efforts in the area of sustainable and healthy food.

## Noordoever

Noordoever is an organic restaurant located on the Vaartkom in Leuven. Noordoever works closely with local organic farmers, among others. Noordoever accommodates both large and small appetites. You can choose from a range of fresh dishes and set your plate down on the scale at the counter. This is how Noordoever contributes to the fight against food waste.

More information: [www.noordoever.be](http://www.noordoever.be)





# 3 giving space to sustainable food production

Local food production is stimulated and Leuven's residents get proper support to start their own food initiatives. Food production with respect for people, the environment and society is central to this approach.

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- The use of undeveloped land is assessed in the context of the Leuven food strategy.
- Leuven's residents are food prosumers

## 3.1. Leuven's residents are food prosumers

The link between farmers and citizens can sometimes be hard to identify. Letting citizens work in a field or on small plots can be a way to restore this link. There are many such initiatives in the Leuven region. We want to strengthen these initiatives and breathe life into new projects.

Producing food in the inner city is no longer a fanciful thought. Technology makes it possible to produce food both on roofs and on walls. Using undeveloped plots of land can contribute to making the city much greener. There is also potential for urban agriculture under the ground. Flanders already has a number of mushroom projects in its major cities.

Garden tools cost money and require maintenance. We can alleviate this burden by creating a lending system for tools (wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, etc.).

Some citizens would like to grow food but have no place in which to do so. Others have a place but may not have the time or physical capacity to work in their garden. A digital platform can help to map out supply and demand. There are many opportunities for urban agriculture and food production in and around corporate buildings: a vegetable garden around the industrial zone in Haasrode, a vegetable garden around the KU Leuven buildings, etc.

## Vegetable garden on the Heverlee campus

The Geogarden is a garden on the Arenberg campus in Heverlee. This garden is a 'living campus project' and forms a connecting link on the campus. The garden was recently created and both staff and students from the department of Earth and Environmental Sciences have joined forces to make this garden a green meeting place.

## 3.2. Leuven retains and strengthens agricultural areas

We strive to preserve agriculture in and around Leuven, to provide a rich and varied supply of edible greenery in the city.

There are many plots of land that are currently unused in Leuven. We encourage private individuals, government institutions and companies to use these available plots of land in the context of the Leuven food strategy.

A first step in this process involves mapping out the available land and facilitating a dialogue between the relevant stakeholders. Policies and regulations must support this process.



# 4 investing in sustainable agriculture

Farmers are valued as sustainable producers in Leuven

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- More farmers in the Leuven area are producing for the local market.
- There is measurable progress in the ecological parameters of the agricultural land.
- Farmers feel better acknowledged as food producers.
- There is a more balanced spread of risks and profits between the various links in the chain, with special attention given to the position of farmers.

## 4.1. Leuven is committed to ensuring the further sustainability of food production

Farmers take care of our agricultural land and animals and continue to make significant efforts to further improve the sustainability of food production. Close collaboration between farmers, advisers and the university can help make Leuven a leader in the field of sustainable food production in Flanders and Europe. Objectives and a plan of action need to be formulated to this end.

## 4.2. Farmers feel acknowledged as food producers

Farmers are acknowledged, both socially and economically, for their work.

Farmers' harvests and income are dependent on the seasons. As a result, long-term planning is of the utmost importance because farmers need a decent income in bad years too. Farmers' organisations provide help their members to develop business plans and provide support for joint selling initiatives. Collaboration between farmers and with the other stakeholders in the chain can help to better distribute risks and profits in the chain.

## 4.3. Farmers receive support for working in direct food links

Not all farmers in the region of Leuven are familiar with direct food links and its advantages. Moreover, finding suitable customers can be difficult. While some newcomers quickly manage to sell their products locally, doing so may be a new challenge for traditional farmers.





## BoerEnCompagnie: Community-Supported Agriculture in the city

The food strategy encourages farmers to come together and helps to develop partnerships that stimulate direct food links.

Agriculture is a risky business. Not only do farmers bear the risks that every entrepreneur must bear, they must also deal with unpredictable setbacks: fickle market prices, hail, heat waves or just too much rain. That is why farmers Michel, Brecht and Tom – and their company 'BoerEnCompagnie' – chose for Community Supported Agriculture. The system enables consumers to purchase a part of a harvest for a year. The price covers the farmer's costs and income. In exchange, members can harvest fruit and vegetables on their fields, located at the Abdij van 't Park, for a year. If the harvest is better than expected, then the consumer benefits from the overabundance. If the crop fails, the consumer also bears a portion of that risk.



# 5 making sustainable food products accessible to all

Food is a connecting force for increased social cohesion. The food strategy pays special attention to socially-vulnerable people.

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- Healthy and sustainable food is locally accessible and affordable for everyone.
- Projects within the framework of the food strategy bring together Leuven residents.

## 5.1. A wide range of affordable, healthy and sustainable food

Healthy and sustainable food is affordable for everyone and a wide range of it is available in Leuven's retail and wholesale sectors.

Extra efforts are being made to give socially vulnerable groups an active place in the Leuven food strategy. Such projects can be very diverse and, for example, focus on the link between citizens and farmers, or on the processing of fresh vegetables. Organisations working with these target groups are closely involved in the development of such projects. It is also possible to contribute to food aid via direct food links.

## 5.2. Food strategy builds bridges in society

The Leuven food strategy can be given a place within many current initiatives and organisations working in the areas of disadvantaged populations and (social) integration.

Working together on urban agriculture can, for example, contribute to improving the language skills of newcomers to the city and thus also enrich cultural diversity. Examples from Leuven and other Flemish cities show that garden projects in urban neighbourhoods can promote social cohesion. Working together in the garden, harvesting vegetables together, cooking together and of course eating together brings people closer together while they learn new skills. Proper follow-up can strengthen this potential and also ensure social employment.

## 5.3. Integration of food in healthcare

Nutrition is not only the source of many (welfare) illnesses, it is also key in ensuring the wellbeing of people in need and the recovery of the sick. A healthy and sustainable diet has a major impact on the health and wellbeing of residents in residential care centres, healthcare facilities, hospitals, etc. Direct food links can also be established with institutions. Here too, we are looking for opportunities for greater involvement.

## Social Grocery

In our society, eating is both a pleasure and a social act. Eating together is a component of social integration. Although Flanders is one of the richest regions in the world, access to a healthy and balanced diet is not guaranteed for everyone. At the same time, the mountain of wasted food continues to increase. The Social Grocery of Flemish Brabant aims to provide a response to this issue and has set itself the goal of ensuring access to a healthy and sustainable diet for all, based on concrete solidarity between people and simultaneously acting to eliminate food waste in our society.

More information about the Social Grocery in the region of Leuven: <http://socialekruideniervlb.be/>





1,55	1,05	1,75	0,25	1,55	0,70	0,65
2,00	1,35	2,60	1,65	2,10	1,00	1,00



1,20	1,00	1,50	1,00	0,70	0,70	0,75	1,85	1,20	1,00	0,80	0,85
1,55	1,30	1,10	1,30	1,00	1,00	1,00	2,45	1,60	1,40	0,90	1,20



0,50	0,70	0,95	0,70	0,95	1,00	0,75	1,00	0,80	0,85	1,00	1,30	0,95	0,75	1,00
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# 6 preventing food loss and re-use of surpluses

Valuing food implies that we act to further reduce food loss and food waste.

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- Less food is thrown away, the mountain of waste is reduced, both in households as in the industry.
- More surpluses are being re-used.
- Less packaging is used.
- 

## 6.1. Raising awareness, encouraging action and preventing food losses

Initiatives aimed at reducing food losses and preventing food waste have appeared around the world. Some projects require only limited (social) innovation, while others are based on high-tech innovation.

With the food strategy, we highlight good practices and encourage companies and citizens to take action themselves.

Good information is very important: How can food loss be prevented? How can food surpluses be re-used?

The hospitality industry can also contribute in this regard. For example, only a very few restaurants allow diners to choose the size of their portion. Also, more can be done to promote the use of doggie bags – i.e. taking leftovers home.

## 6.2. Leftovers get a second life

We must first and foremost avoid leftovers. However, we must ensure that any leftover food can be sent to an appropriate destination such as solidary neighbourhood shops. Some leftovers can, sometimes with the necessary processing, still be consumed or serve as feed for animals. If this is no longer possible, surpluses can be re-used as raw materials (compost) or be used to generate energy.

Here too, the main first steps are: bringing together stakeholders, mapping out leftover flows and matching supply and demand via a digital tool. Knowledge institutions and companies can also play an important role in the recovery of leftover flows.

Leuven, like many other cities and municipalities, works with a number of compost masters. These experts work towards raising awareness and help citizens to learn how to compost.

## Content: packaging-free shopping in a cosy meeting place

Content is a cooperative food store selling products directly from the farmer or producer, made with respect for people, animals and the environment. Fruit, vegetables, cereals and dry products, bread, dairy, beverages: all products that are part of the daily diet, but without excess packaging. You can bring your own boxes, jars or bags and fill them in the store. Less packaging means lower costs, less wasted energy and raw materials and less pollution. It also leads to less food waste, because you never buy more than you need.

## wegEETbox Sint-Maartensdal

The WegEETbox of the Community Work department of the city of Leuven is located in the centre of the Sint-Maartensdal neighbourhood. The wegEETbox consists of two refrigerators which local residents and other people from Leuven can use to deposit or take out food surpluses. Both private and professional food surpluses are welcome in the wegEETbox. People who need it can always get something out of it. In the past year, a number of meaningful partnerships have been entered into with organisations that often generate food surpluses. Volunteers manage the food surpluses hygienically.

For more information: [bc.sintmaartensdal@leuven.be](mailto:bc.sintmaartensdal@leuven.be)



# 7 stimulating innovation for sustainable agriculture and food

Everyone experiments and thus contributes to innovative experiments for sustainable agriculture and food. Scientists and professional farmers lead by example and can inspire others.

How to establish whether a positive change has taken place:

- Leuven has many innovative projects.
- Leuven is a hotbed for new technologies
- Social, ecological and economic indicators are systematically monitored.

## 7.1. Technological innovations for sustainable and healthy food systems

Knowledge institutes and companies are committed to innovation in the food system, both with regard to current practices and alternatives such as permaculture and agro-ecology.

KU Leuven is already particularly active in the field of food and agriculture. However, the flow of these innovations to Leuven's stakeholders in the food chain could be improved. This would allow research to inspire these stakeholders and lead to the development of affordable innovations.

## 7.2. Start-ups for social employment and projects with a social added value

Food not only fills our stomachs, it is also one of the main economic sectors that creates jobs. This could also be a growth sector in Leuven and generate new sustainable business models.

With an agri-food incubator, for example, we could create fertile soil for start-ups that work on food for the future. Food production and processing also creates numerous opportunities for social employment.

We can also look for sustainable models for ownership structures and ways to manage land as common property.

## 7.3. Researchers are experimenting with other stakeholders for a more sustainable food chain

The ambitions of this food strategy can only be achieved through experiments carried out jointly by food processors, producers, the hospitality industry, the retail industry, the transport industry, consumers/citizens, civil society organisations and policymakers. Innovation comes from new combinations of ideas and unexpected collaborations. Under the guidance of researchers, the results of these experiments can be monitored scientifically. By combining the scientific knowledge of researchers with the expertise of farmers, new insights and techniques can be developed and applied more quickly.

Integration with the university can be improved by having research projects start from the local agriculture and processing industries. New insights are shared with all involved stakeholders. This should also lead to scientifically-developed sustainability parameters for Leuven's specific context.



## EIT Food: Knowledge from Leuven for European cooperation

EIT Food is a pan-European consortium that focuses on entrepreneurship and innovation in the food industry. The members are global stakeholders in the field of food: over 50 partners from leading companies, research centres and universities from 13 countries - including KU Leuven. EIT Food wants to position Europe as a leader in food innovation and production. EIT Food wants to involve consumers in that change process, improve the nutritional value of products and making the food system more efficient, safer, more transparent and more reliable. Read more at <https://eit.europa.eu/eit-community/eit-food>



reflection

# Sustainable agricultural and food systems in Flanders

In Flanders, we have worked together with chain stakeholders and civil society organisations to develop a framework for sustainable agriculture and food systems. Below is a list of the most important aspects of this work.

## **A sustainable agricultural and food system...**

is resilient, dynamic and focused on the long term. The agricultural and food system is organised in such a way that it can accommodate developments and events from outside and within the system. Moreover, the system is not static, but evolves together with a continuously changing environment. It is a system that takes into account both the needs of current generations and the possibilities of coming generations. The stakeholders in the system recognise that current generations are only temporarily managing the world and must pass it on to the next generations in good condition. They take responsibility for this.

## **excels in diversity**

The system is characterised by a wide variety of activity, both in terms of the nature of such activity and in terms of the types of companies and structures used. The food supply meets the wide range of individual and societal needs. The system contributes to strengthening biodiversity.

## **offers space for innovation and entrepreneurship**

The stakeholders within the system are open to innovation and entrepreneurship and work on knowledge development and innovation. Sufficient physical space is available in which to produce, process, trade and consume food.

## **consists of visible links, the relationships between which are clear and characterised by respectful partnerships**

The relationships between the various links in the chain and with other chains are clear to everyone and are characterised by respectful cooperation. The parties in the chain work together based on the shared belief that they can thus strengthen their common interests.

## **ensures 'access' to sufficient food thus guaranteeing a healthy life**

Sufficient food is available, accessible and affordable to guarantee a healthy life for everyone. Food is not only geared to the needs of people, but also to the needs of the elderly, the sick or people with allergies.

## **is internationally just**

All world citizens have a minimal package of possibilities/resources that enable them to live a good life. This means that the stakeholders in the Flemish chain do not act solely in their own interests, but rather taking into account the interests of all citizens throughout the world. Therefore, they do not impose any restrictions on the possibilities or quality of life of people elsewhere in their actions.



**is efficient, not harmful to people and the environment, respects animal welfare and is economical with raw materials**

The raw materials required for producing, processing, trading and consuming food are used optimally and efficiently. The extraction of raw materials and the emissions within the chain do not exceed the capacity of the environment - neither locally nor globally. Substances that demonstrably cause harm to people and the environment are excluded from the system. The physical and psychological welfare of animals is promoted.

**offers ecological, economic, cultural and social (ethical) added value, is economically viable for all stakeholders in the system, partly through the use of a correct price**

The added value created by the stakeholders in the chain is sufficient to compensate the use of production factors for each stakeholder to the extent that this commitment can be sustained. The price of the products reflects the value of all aspects that we believe must be valued.

**gives meaning to food**  
The stakeholders in the system know, acknowledge and appreciate the importance of healthy food.

**consists of consumers who have opted for a healthy lifestyle**



The Leuven food strategy was made possible  
thanks to the efforts of dozens of individuals and organisations.  
The steering group sincerely wishes to thank each fellow thinker and stakeholder for their efforts.



