

# Cities call for four actions to improve EU food systems



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The mayors of over 200 large cities are calling for the new European Commission to ensure they are given a central role in future decisions on the transformation of European food systems.

At the high-level Food Trails conference in Brussels, city leaders in the Eurocities network and signatories of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, have stated that European food systems must shift towards more sustainable and resilient models that protect food security, address environmental challenges and protect rural communities.

Cities are at the forefront of sustainable food system transformation. Through the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, Eurocities and projects like Food Trails, cities share experiences and practices strengthening competences and knowledge among policy makers and food policy officers across Europe and beyond,

says Anna Scavuzzo, Deputy Mayor of Milan and Eurocities Shadow Commissioner for Sustainable Food Systems.

Mayors are at the centre of decision-making processes related to the sustainability agenda and they act through food systems to shape the future of their communities. We welcome the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU Agriculture, in particular the need to improve food environments so all citizens have access to nutritious food.

Cities call on European leaders to:

1. Include cities in the European Board on Agri-Food: With 75% of Europe's population living in cities, cities expertise must be formally represented in the proposed European Board on Agri-Food to ensure that local food policies are part of the EU's sustainability agenda.

Local governments have the power to drive change on the

ground. The new European Board on Agri-Food is a crucial opportunity to formally integrate cities' expertise and ensure that our food systems work for citizens,

says André Sobczak, Eurocities Secretary General.

2. Provide more funding for local food policies: The European Commission and national governments should provide more funding to support local food policies, social innovation, and living labs that test new solutions, ensuring that cities can continue innovating and driving sustainable food transformation, as was recommended by the Strategic Dialogue.

3. Recognise urban food systems in EU portfolios: The portfolios of the new European Commissioners-designate for Agriculture and Food, and for Health and Animal Welfare, currently lack a clear focus on food systems. Cities call for recognition of food systems, including in urban settings, in these portfolios, to ensure a coordinated approach to food-related issues.

4. Make the EU Strategic Dialogue recommendations the foundation for future work: Cities support the recommendations outlined in the EU's Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture, which will serve as a foundation for new European Commissioner Hansen's work, but they call on the EU to ensure the views of cities are incorporated in future EU discussion of food policy.

Marta Messa, Slow Food Secretary General, says: "Our food systems need to reflect the needs of both people and the planet, and cities are vital to making this shift towards agroecology. The EU Strategic Dialogue's recommendations are an important step forward, and cities must be fully integrated into this process.

With 75% of Europe's population living in urban areas, local governments have the unique ability to drive transformative change, from reshaping food environments to promoting agroecological practices. We need European institutions and governments to work in synergy with cities to build resilient, sustainable and fair food systems that protect both rural and urban communities.

- The Strategic Dialogue for Agriculture, convened by President von der Leyen, was established to address debates surrounding food and

agriculture. It brought together a wide range of stakeholders, who, despite their diverse interests, reached a consensus on a set of recommendations for the future of Europe's food systems. These recommendations present a vision for 2035-2040, in which European food systems operate within planetary boundaries, delivering nutritious, sustainable, and affordable food for all.

- The Food Trails project is a collaboration of 11 European cities, three universities and five organisations working to build more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban food systems. The final conference is being held in Brussels on 3 October 2024, bringing together policymakers, researchers, and urban leaders to discuss the future of food systems in Europe.
- The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact(MUFPP) is a global commitment of mayors to promote sustainable urban food systems. With 281 signatory cities representing 490 million people across six regions, it serves as a key framework for shaping innovative urban food policies. Since 2015, MUFPP has been supporting cities by facilitating the exchange of best practices and organizing capacity-building activities.
- Eurocities wants to make cities places where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life, is able to move around safely, access quality and inclusive public services and benefit from a healthy environment. We do this by networking more than 200 larger European cities, which together represent some 150 million people across 38 countries, and by gathering evidence of how policy making impacts on people to inspire other cities and EU decision makers. Connect with us at <https://eurocities.eu/> or by following our Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts.

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