

Promising Pathways towards a Circular Society

**A Roadmap towards a
Sustainable Food System**



Authors

Anna Schmid, Isabel Froes and Mohina Gandhi

Department of Management, Society and Communication
Copenhagen Business School

Project PI

Prof. Lucia A. Reisch

Department of Management, Society and Communication
Copenhagen Business School

El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Policy
University of Cambridge

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THE PROJECT

OVERVIEW

BEACON – Behavioural Insights for a Circular Society was a four-year research initiative (2021–2025) funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation and led by Copenhagen Business School in close collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the City of Copenhagen. The project explored and tested behavioural changes that support more sustainable lifestyles and contribute to building a circular society. The research focused on urban food systems and real-world experiments in Copenhagen.

The project addressed two pressing challenges within urban food systems:

- How to move consumers toward “peak meat” consumption and reduce avoidable food waste
- How to design more resilient food systems and food environments

To pursue these objectives, the project first mapped and systematised state-of-the-art knowledge on behavioural insights as tools for change. It then conducted two field experiments in Copenhagen, the first during a food festival, testing interventions to encourage sustainable meal choices. The second experiment ran in a municipality-owned restaurant, focusing on reducing food waste. In the final phase, the project examined how human-centred design can support the transition toward a resilient circular society in an urban context. This was explored through co-creation workshops with stakeholders in Copenhagen and beyond.

BEACON adopted an innovative transdisciplinary approach that combined insights from behavioural economics, sustainable consumption and production research, and systems thinking. The research team worked closely with policymakers, businesses, and local communities to co-create and test practical solutions in the real-world setting of Copenhagen. Through this co-creation and human-centred design approach, the project fostered community engagement and collaborative events that explored how everyday food environments can be re-designed to make sustainable choices easier, more appealing, and the default option for urban citizens.

THE PROJECT

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Behavioural insights as tools for change:

Dewies, M., & Reisch, L. A. (2025). META BI: A tool for describing behavioural interventions. *Behavioural Public Policy*, 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2025.10015>

Lohmann, P., Pizzo, A., Bauer, J. M., Khanna, T., Flecke, S. L., Callaghan, M., Minx, J., & Reisch, L. A. (2025). Demand-side interventions for sustainable food systems: A meta-analysis of food-policy interventions targeting food consumption and waste behaviours. *Nature Food* (accepted)

Behavioural experiments:

Pizzo, A., Suter, M., Bauer, J. M., & Reisch, L. A. (2025). Food waste salience and task knowledge to reduce individual food waste: A field experiment in a restaurant setting. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, 117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socrec.2025.102375>

Pizzo, A., Bauer, J. M., & Reisch, L. A. (2024). What shapes sustainable food choices? A field experiment on the impact of a behaviorally informed intervention and a price variation on vegetarian food choices. *SSRN Working Paper*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4927360>

Pizzo, A., Gravert, C., Bauer, J. M., & Reisch, L. A. (2024). Carbon Taxes Crowd Out Climate Concern: Experimental Evidence from Sustainable Consumer Choices. *SSRN Working Paper*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5147485>

THE ROADMAP’S FOCUS

1. SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS AND EDUCATION

Sustainable food systems ensure food security and nutrition for all while safeguarding the economic, social, and environmental foundations necessary to sustain these outcomes for future generations. It encompasses the entire food chain from production and processing through packaging, distribution, consumption, and waste management, integrating efficiency with equity and resilience. Such systems balance the need to meet current demands with the responsibility to preserve ecosystems, support livelihoods, and foster inclusive and just pathways toward long-term sustainability (UN, 2023). To provide the transition towards a sustainable food system, education and capacity building play major roles, educating not only consumers, but all practitioners in the system.

2. PROCUREMENT AND LEGAL MATTERS

Procurement refers to the process by which public authorities or organisations acquire goods, services, and work from external providers. According to the European Commission, public procurement is not only a mechanism to ensure efficient and transparent spending of public funds but also a strategic instrument to advance broader policy goals, including sustainability, innovation, social inclusion, and fair competition. Within food systems, sustainable procurement frameworks integrate environmental and social criteria such as reduced carbon footprints, support for local producers, and ethical labor practices into tendering and contracting processes.

Legal matters encompass the laws, regulations, and institutional frameworks that underpin procurement and broader food governance. These include EU directives and national laws governing competition, transparency, equal treatment of suppliers, food safety, and environmental protection. Legal frameworks operate both as constraints by setting compliance obligations and as enablers by embedding sustainability, equity, and justice into legal obligations, thereby shaping how procurement can be mobilised as a driver of systemic change in food systems (FAO, 2018; European Commission, 2020).

References:

European Commission. (2020). Public procurement. Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/public-procurement_en

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2018). Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework. FAO. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>

United Nations (UN). (2023). Fast facts: What are sustainable food systems? United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fast-facts-what-are-sustainable-food-systems/>

THE ROADMAP’S FOCUS

3. COMMUNICATION

Communication enables the circulation of knowledge, practices, and perspectives across diverse actors, to support inclusive decision-making (GSDRC, 2012). Sustainability outcomes can be strengthened by fostering dialogue among farmers, policymakers, researchers, and consumers to co-design solutions. As both a knowledge infrastructure and a driver of systemic transformation, communication is essential for building trust, fostering collaboration, and co-creating pathways toward resilient, just, and equitable food systems.

Effective communication, whether addressing issues such as food waste, dietary choices, or expiration dates, plays a crucial role in raising awareness about the environmental and social impacts of food systems, thereby fostering sustainable consumer behavior and strengthening trust among stakeholders. Moreover, it facilitates the translation of complex scientific and policy knowledge into clear and accessible messages (FAO, 2021).

References:

GSDRC. (2012). Communication and governance. In A. McLoughlin (Ed.), Topic guide on governance (2nd ed., pp. 85–92). University of Birmingham. <https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/communication-and-governance/>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2021). Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets: Volume 1. FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7960en>

INTRODUCTION TO THE ROADMAP

The transition towards more sustainable food systems is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. From environmental degradation and food waste to social inequalities and resource inefficiencies, the current food systems face multiple crises that demand urgent and collaborative action (United Nations, 2024). Transitioning to more sustainable food systems requires systemic change that brings together perspectives from across the industry to create practical, impactful and long lasting solutions.

This booklet and roadmap results from a co-creation process that brought together diverse stakeholders from the food industry, including farmers, producers, retailers, policymakers, NGOs, and researchers. Through a series of workshops held in Copenhagen between March 2024 and March 2025, facilitated by Copenhagen Business School, participants worked collectively to identify key challenges and systemic barriers in the transition. The workshops resulted in the design of actionable pathways towards more sustainable food systems. The collaborative approach reflects real-world needs in the urban context of Copenhagen, industry expertise, and shared responsibility for driving change.

Focusing on education, procurement, and communication, the roadmap is structured into current, near-future, and long-term actions, to provide a clear framework for change. It outlines immediate steps that can be implemented today, strategic shifts required in the coming years, and long-term transformations essential for creating truly sustainable food systems. By emphasising collaboration, innovation, and accountability, this roadmap serves as a guide for businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders committed to shaping a more resilient and responsible food future in urban settings.

References:
United Nations Environment Programme, (2024), Food Waste Index Report 2024. Think Eat Save: Tracking Progress to Halve Global Food Waste, <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/45230>

ROADMAP DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

March 2024

Two Workshops on “Co-creating the new Circular-normal”

Participants: Retailers, food producers, private sector, public authority
Objectives: Identify challenges and barriers faced in the transition towards sustainable food production and consumption
Outcomes: Set of barriers, challenges, needs, wishes, and opportunities identified by actors in the field

September 2025

One Workshop on “Co-creating the new Circular-normal”

Participants: Retailers, food producers, private sector, public authority, ministry, academia, and NGOs
Objectives: Discuss concrete actions to move towards a circular food sector and understand the effort and impact associated with the identified actions
Outcomes: Set of concrete actions and a roadmap to move towards a circular food sector

March 2025

Presentation of the roadmap at “Hack for Food - The event”, a cross-project initiative on just and sustainable food systems

May 2025

Presentation of the roadmap to the Danish Vegetarian Association

May 2025

Presentation of the roadmap to the Municipality of Copenhagen

ROADMAP FOR A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM



Current Actions

Immediate actions that can be taken soon

Near-future Actions

Actions and strategic shifts that must happen in the coming years

Long-term Actions

Actions for fundamental system changes in the coming years

BEACON's roadmap is based on a co-creation process that brought together a broad range of stakeholders from the food industry, including producers, retailers, public authorities, policymakers, and research. By emphasising collaboration, innovation, and accountability, this roadmap serves as a guide for actors committed to shaping a more resilient and responsible food future.

- Relevant Stakeholders**
- Public Authorities
 - Schools
 - Higher Education Institutes
 - Canteens
 - Farmers
 - Industry
 - NGO/Associations

Capacity Building

- Promote learning to cook and effectively use plant-based ingredients
- Implement food education programs for teachers (higher and elementary education), canteen staff, chefs, and farmers
- Prioritise sustainable food education in schools
- Provide education on cooking: teach basic cooking skills in schools, with a focus on a healthy diets
- Develop tenders for public authorities and municipalities
- Invest in sustainable pilot projects within supermarkets, schools, and municipalities

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ● ◆ ● ▲

Procurement

- Integrate learnings and partnerships into procurement processes
- Establish food procurement teams within public procurement initiatives
- Foster closer communication between canteens and consumers to promote plant-based diets

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ●

Change in Communication

- Reframe the concept and perception of freshness
- Develop communication strategies and choose language and vocabulary for consistent use across sectors

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ● ◆ ● ▲ ■ ■

Application in Context

- Integrate and expand education on healthy, nutritious, and plant-based diets in schools and higher education institutes
- Offer healthy, nutritious, and plant-based meals in public and private canteens to position institutions as role models
- Promote social community kitchens and local food networks
- Provide recipes and meal ideas at supermarket points of sale to encourage sustainable food choices

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ◆ ●

Develop Policy Recommendations

- Develop recommendations and guidelines for packaging, food resources, and accurate impact measurements
- Incentivise local and seasonal food production to promote sustainability
- Create funding schemes to support the transition in food and agriculture
- Offer incentives and funding for innovative solutions to reduce food waste

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ●

Deploy Cross-sectoral Campaigns

- Organise city-wide events that engage all actors across the food chain
- Host restaurant events to promote sustainable food practices
- Facilitate municipal food events that foster collaboration among producers, suppliers, and consumers

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ● ◆ ● ▲ ■ ■

Expand Education

- Establish holistic food schools to educate and train about sustainable food practices
- Develop tools for accurate food forecasting to minimise waste
- Implement urban farming initiatives in elderly homes and schools to promote local food production
- Build strong relationships with local farmers to support sustainable sourcing
- Encourage wholesale of vegetables and legumes to reduce food waste
- Reduce shelf space for animal-based foods and prioritise plant-based options in retail spaces
- Advocate for regenerative agriculture practices, moving beyond organic to focus on sustainability

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ● ◆ ●

Adjust and Change Legislation

- Provide financial support and incentives for circular initiatives to promote sustainability
- Implement changes in taxation and pricing structures to support sustainable agriculture practices
- Advocate for EU legislative changes to favor local farming and develop alternatives to plastic packaging
- Promote legislative changes that foster regenerative agriculture to enhance long-term food system sustainability

Relevant Stakeholders ■

Shift Perception to New Normal

- Develop parallel programs to influence and shift public understanding, making circular initiatives the new norm
- Establish awareness campaigns to normalise circular practices and encourage widespread adoption

Relevant Stakeholders ■ ● ◆ ● ▲ ■ ■

AFFILIATION



FUNDING



PARTNERS



CURRENT ACTIONS

Capacity Building

Current capacity-building efforts in the food sector should focus on equipping people and institutions with the knowledge, skills, and supportive environments required to build more sustainable food systems. This includes promoting opportunities for people to learn how to cook and make effective use of plant-based ingredients, encouraging a shift towards healthier, more climate-friendly diets. Co-designed food education programs need to be integrated into curriculum and work plans for teachers, both in higher and elementary education, as well as for canteen staff, chefs, and farmers, ensuring that everyone who plays a role in the food system has the tools to promote sustainable practices.

Capacity building should also encompass cooking education for students beyond providing basic cooking classes that teach children and young adults practical skills and healthy eating habits but, in the case of schools, should also create designated spaces where students can sit down and eat mindfully, helping to build awareness about food resources and food waste. Using existing educational programs as platforms to promote circular initiatives can amplify their impact, while extending lessons to include planning, caring for, and harvesting seasonal fruits and vegetables help connect students with nature and the full food cycle.

Practical initiatives, such as teaching about appropriate portion sizes, aim to reduce food waste in everyday settings. Successful projects like the public-private partnership between Copenhagen Municipality and Meyers group, which involves the training of personnel responsible for school meals to build better knowledge towards impacting food quality, production, and consumption, can lead to better, more nutritious, tastier meals, and less waste. Courses on preserving, curing, fermenting, dehydrating etc., can help reduce food waste while also allowing for flavour rich diets.

In parallel, strengthening sustainable procurement practices for public authorities and municipalities ensures that sustainability is embedded in institutional food provision, laying the base for food education. Finally, investing in pilot projects in supermarkets, schools, and municipalities allows new ideas to be tested and scaled, making sustainable choices easier, more visible, and more appealing to everyone.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities, schools, higher education institutes, canteens, and farmers

INSPIRATION



THE MELTING POT FOUNDATION

CULINARY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Melting Pot Foundation (Meyers group), founded in 2011 by Claus Meyer, uses food education and hospitality as tools for social change. Its mission is to empower marginalised groups, such as youth, refugees, and people with criminal backgrounds, through culinary training, education, and entrepreneurship. The foundation has launched projects worldwide, including a chef school in Morocco, the Brownsville Community Culinary Center in New York, events where children experience fine dining and capacity cooking classes for public schools in Denmark. Overall, the foundation promotes community, opportunity, and sustainability by combining local food culture with social empowerment.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



MADKUNDSKAB

SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Food science (Madkundskab) is a subject offered at Danish primary schools that focuses on food, meals, health, and sustainability.

The subject aims to combine practical cooking with knowledge about food, taste, health, and food culture. Students learn to cook, develop their taste buds, and make conscious choices about food and meals. Food science also aims to increase students' awareness of sustainability and the impact of food on the environment and health.

In food science, students work with:

- Cooking skills
- Food awareness
- Food culture

Food science is a practical and sensory subject that enables students to develop skills and knowledge relevant to their everyday lives and future choices as consumers.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



CURRENT ACTIONS

Procurement

Current actions within food procurement should be focused on strengthening how sustainability, collaboration, and behavioural insights are integrated into purchasing decisions and everyday food services. This means building on integrated learnings and partnerships to ensure that procurement processes not only meet cost and quality standards but also actively support healthier and more sustainable food systems. For example, introducing dedicated food procurement teams within public procurement initiatives can help align purchasing decisions with broader sustainability goals and make it easier to source more plant-based, locally produced, and seasonal ingredients.

Practical examples such as the potato kit program, which connects food education and procurement by supplying schools with potatoes for children to grow, harvest, and eat, highlight both the potential and the challenges of this approach. While initiatives like this strengthen connections between procurement, education, and local production, they can be demanding to implement and sustain, particularly for municipalities that face resource constraints and competing priorities. Ensuring sufficient funding, staff capacity, and long-term support is therefore vital to successfully carry out such programs and scale them to include a broader variety of vegetables and schools.

Overall, these actions demonstrate how thoughtful procurement strategies, supported by partnerships, dedicated teams, and practical, locally rooted initiatives, can help make sustainable, plant-based choices the default across public food services.

A key element is fostering closer communication and feedback between canteen chefs and personal and the professionals responsible for the procurement. By understanding consumer preferences and using behavioural nudges, canteens can make plant-based and sustainable options more visible, appealing, and accessible, ultimately encouraging healthier eating habits in workplaces, schools, and public institutions.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities and canteens

INSPIRATION



THE POTATO KIT PROGRAM

COPENHAGEN MUNICIPALITY

As part of its sustainable procurement efforts, Copenhagen Municipality has focused on opening public tenders to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and small-scale farmers, with the goal of promoting local and seasonal sourcing of food.

As part of these efforts, the municipality has introduced the innovative Potato Kit Program, which connects food provision of schools with its educational activities. Besides providing potatoes for the school meals, the farmer develops potato-kits for the students to take home and grow their own potatoes. The project aims to foster children's knowledge of organic potato farming, helping them understand the details of production, agricultural methods, and the farm-to-table process.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



LEGAL GUIDE ON FARM TO FORK PROCUREMENT

COPENHAGEN MUNICIPALITY

This guide provides practical legal guidance for public procurers and stakeholders seeking to link public food procurement with small-scale farmers and SMEs, with an emphasis on short food supply chains. It outlines procurement approaches, organisational models, and selection criteria that align with the mission to promote healthy, sustainable, and affordable food from local producers. The toolkit also offers strategies to make tendering more accessible to SMEs and farmers, addressing issues such as legal aspects of below-threshold tenders, criteria for above-threshold tenders, and innovative practices like dynamic food procurement.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



CURRENT ACTIONS

Change in Communication

Efforts to improve communication in the food sector should focus on how ideas, values, and everyday choices about sustainable food are framed and understood, both within organisations and across sectors. A key priority is to rethink the concept and perception of freshness. Shifting the narrative of freshness, communicators can help consumers make more sustainable choices without feeling they are sacrificing quality. By highlighting that foods are still safe to eat and moreover enjoyable beyond regular sales, their activities show the potential to shift the perception and communicate more sustainable food behaviour.

Changing the way freshness is communicated can influence how consumers perceive food and reduce avoidable food waste. For instance, shifting from rigid terms like “expires on” to more flexible wording such as “best before” helps people feel confident that products remain safe and enjoyable beyond the printed date. The “Best before, often good after” initiative, which adds a clarifying phrase to labels, encourages consumers to trust their senses (look, smell, and taste) rather than automatically discard food.

Another critical step is to define clear language and vocabulary for consistent internal communication within organisations, so that everyone, from policymakers and procurement teams to kitchen staff and educators, is aligned when discussing sustainability goals and actions. Building on this step, developing broader communication strategies that use shared language and messaging across sectors helps ensure that citizens, businesses, and institutions receive clear and consistent information that makes sustainable behaviour feel normal, desirable, and achievable.

Together, these actions show how thoughtful and aligned communication can change perceptions, build trust, and make sustainable choices more transparent and easier for everyone, provided that the right resources and partnerships are in place to put words into actions.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities, schools, higher education institutes, canteens, retailers, farmers, industry, and NGO/ associations

INSPIRATION



SKAGENFOOD

FOOD WASTE BOX

Skagenfood, a meal box provider, offers its surplus foods resulting from quality based sorting in food waste boxes. At the end of each week food waste boxes are assorted and sold for reasonable prices to customers to avoid food waste. Through its offer, the initiative saves perfectly fine fruits and vegetables as well as dry goods and communicates their quality and safety for further use. The initiative supports the narrative that the selected foods are perfectly fine and safe to eat.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



FOODSHARING CPH

MULTI ACTOR INITIATIVE

Foodsharing Copenhagen is a volunteer-driven grassroots movement that rescues surplus food from businesses and redistributes it for free to the public, aiming to fight food waste and promote sustainability. Founded in 2016 with inspiration from Germany’s foodsharing movement, it has grown into one of Denmark’s largest volunteer organisations, supported by hundreds of active members and numerous food donors. The group organises weekly food-sharing events, attracting hundreds of participants, and also hosts workshops, cooking gatherings, and educational activities to raise awareness about mindful consumption and food waste reduction.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



NEAR FUTURE ACTIONS

Application in Context

Looking ahead, advancing a circular society requires translating knowledge into practice and demonstrating how sustainable food systems can be embedded into everyday life. Educational institutions, from schools to universities, play an important role by serving as visible exemplars of sustainable practices. This involves integrating comprehensive food education across curricula, ensuring the provision of nutritious, vegetable-rich meals in both public and private canteens, and empowering staff and students to act as ambassadors for climate-conscious eating habits that extend beyond the institutional setting.

Equally important is the promotion of community-based initiatives such as social kitchens and local food networks. For example, Copenhagen’s Junk Food initiative, transforms surplus ingredients into nutritious meals for people in need. Such initiatives not only reduce food waste but also foster inclusive community spaces and strengthen local resilience.

In parallel, retail actors can reinforce these efforts by offering practical tools, such as affordable plant-based recipes and meal suggestions at the point of sale, thereby lowering barriers for households to adopt sustainable diets. Piloting such initiatives in specific neighborhoods, aligned with food education in local schools, would allow for the development of scalable models that respond to community demand while building the foundations for systemic change.

In summary, advancing from knowledge and training to sustained daily practice requires the implementation of concrete case studies that engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders across diverse contexts. This includes integrating sustainability into school meal programs, fostering community-driven initiatives, and ensuring that climate-friendly options are both accessible and prominently positioned within the environments where people purchase, prepare, and consume food.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Schools, higher education institute, canteens, and retail

INSPIRATION



JUNK FOOD

MEANINGFUL MEALS FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

JunkFood is a Copenhagen-based nonprofit organisation that prepares and distributes nutritious meals to people experiencing homelessness. Founded during the COVID-19 pandemic by chef Rasmus Munk, the initiative uses surplus food to create warm, high-quality meals every day. By combining social care with food waste reduction, JunkFood promotes dignity, inclusion, and sustainability in the city’s food system.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



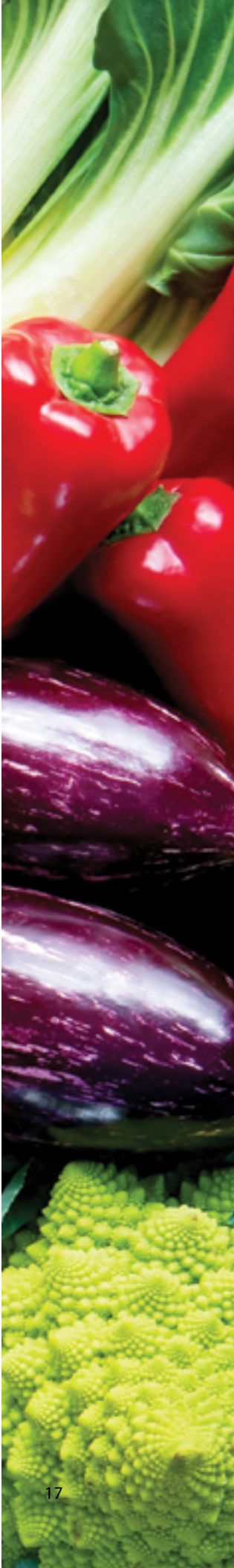
BISPEBJERG HOSPITAL

HOSPITAL KITCHEN IN METROPOLITAN REGION COPENHAGEN

At Bispebjerg Hospital in Copenhagen, all meals, including bread, sauces, and pastries, are prepared in-house and from scratch. The kitchen has adjusted its food procurement to prioritise local and seasonal products, maintaining close contact with both local and national producers. By optimising order sizes and timing, it has successfully reduced its food waste production.

The team has also worked on developing a shared culinary language among staff and created five patient personas to represent typical eating profiles, helping kitchen and care staff plan menus around patients’ nutritional needs. In addition, selected employees were trained as taste agents, gaining skills in tasting, presentation, and patient-centered service.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



NEAR FUTURE ACTIONS

Develop Policy Recommendations

Building on the current efforts to strengthen procurement practices, near-future actions should focus on developing robust policy recommendations and practical guidelines to help institutions, businesses, and communities make more sustainable food choices the norm. This includes drafting clear recommendations on topics like packaging standards, responsible sourcing of food resources, and reliable ways to measure and track environmental impacts, ensuring that sustainability claims are accurate and transparent.

Incentivising local and seasonal production is another important step. For example, supermarkets could highlight seasonal produce more prominently, such as placing local fruits and vegetables at the entrance of the store or at the front of the vegetable section, helping customers choose seasonal without needing extra knowledge or effort. Using simple language like “regionally grown & in season” is a powerful, accessible way to make these choices visible and attractive to everyone.

Developing new funding schemes is also essential to support the food and agricultural sector in transitioning to more sustainable and regenerative models. This includes providing incentives for farmers and producers to grow diverse, seasonal crops. Incentives should support innovative solutions to reduce food waste, from smarter supply chains to new technologies that extend shelf life or find new uses for surplus food. Policies that enable shorter procurement routes, connecting producers more directly with consumers, can help keep value in local communities and reduce food miles.

Examples such as the Danish Action Plan for Plant-based Foods and Copenhagen’s Food and Meal Strategy illustrate how national and local frameworks can create supportive environments for these changes. Building on these frameworks, future recommendations can align procurement practices with broader climate and circular economy goals.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities, canteens, farmers, and industry

INSPIRATION

DANISH ACTION PLAN FOR PLANT-BASED FOODS

MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES OF DENMARK

In 2023, Denmark introduced the world’s first comprehensive national action plan focused exclusively on promoting plant-based foods. The plan aims to facilitate a systemic transition toward more sustainable and health-promoting diets by enhancing plant-based consumption, supporting agricultural diversification, and stimulating innovation within the food sector. It outlines initiatives across public procurement, vocational training, research, and market development, with over EUR 100 million allocated to implementation.

Developed in collaboration with stakeholders from across the food system, the action plan positions Denmark as a global leader in the advancement of sustainable, plant-based food strategies.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

FOOD AND MEAL STRATEGY

MUNICIPALITY OF COPENHAGEN

The City of Copenhagen's Food and Meal Strategy, initiated in 2019, aims to integrate health, sustainability, and social equity into public food systems. Building upon the city's longstanding commitment to organic food procurement (achieving nearly 90% organic sourcing in public meals) the strategy sets ambitious targets to reduce the carbon footprint of municipal food services by 25% by 2025, compared to 2018 levels. The strategy encompasses five key objectives:

- Nutritional quality and health
- Taste and food appreciation
- Sustainability and climate responsibility
- Social communities and food culture

In 2025, the strategy is undergoing further development to align with evolving climate goals and social needs.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

NEAR FUTURE ACTIONS

Deploy Cross-sectoral Campaigns

Extending communication efforts, near-future actions for communication should focus on deploying cross-sectoral campaigns that bring together people and organisations across food systems to inspire, inform, and make sustainable practices visible and attractive. A key step is to organise city-wide events that actively engage all relevant actors, from schools and universities to elderly homes, local businesses, and public institutions, fostering a shared sense of ownership and excitement around sustainable food choices.

Restaurants also play an important role by hosting special initiatives that showcase sustainable food practices, such as plant-based tasting menus, local ingredient pop-ups, or zero-waste dining experiences that invite customers to try new ideas and spread the word. In parallel, municipalities can facilitate local food events that bring producers, suppliers, and consumers together. For example, markets, harvest festivals, or cooking workshops build stronger relationships within local food networks and help to shorten supply chains.

These actions can be strengthened through a focus on food diplomacy, using food as a bridge to foster dialogue, collaboration, and trust between different sectors, communities, and even cities. The Food 2030 network is an example of a joint effort among various initiatives in the food sector with a strong focus on food diplomacy and advocacy. By positioning food as both a practical and cultural connector, cross-sectoral campaigns can help make sustainable food choices part of everyday life and civic identity moving from individual actions to a collective movement.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities, schools, higher education institutes, canteens, retail, farmers, industry, and NGO/ associations

INSPIRATION

FOOD 2030 NETWORK

CROSS PROJECT PLATFORM AND NETWORK

The Food2030 online platform serves as a shared hub for projects, partnerships, networks, and living labs dedicated to transforming food systems for both people and the planet. It brings together a wide range of resources, toolkits, initiatives, and innovation spaces to support learning and foster collaboration around sustainable food system change.

Through its network the initiative supports cross-sector communication, project collaboration and event promotion.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

FOOD NATION

MULTI ACTOR INITIATIVE

Food Nation serves as a non-profit public-private consortium that promotes Denmark's agri-food sector on international markets, particularly emphasising sustainability, organic practices, and climate-friendly innovation. It provides a rich marketing toolbox including white papers, case studies, and visual assets that spotlight Danish expertise in sustainable solutions and can be freely adopted by companies.

Through insight reports, Food Nation showcases how international decision-makers increasingly value greenhouse-gas-reducing products, food safety, and low-environmental-impact solutions, positioning these attributes as key competitive strengths. Their visitor centre, webinars, and digital campaigns support Denmark's sustainable food cluster through networking, and interactive events.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

Expand Education

Long-term actions for capacity building should focus on expanding education to embed sustainability deeply into how we produce, source, and consume food. A vital step will be to establish holistic food schools that provide practical training and education on sustainable food practices, not just for students, but for food professionals, public authorities, and retailers. Education initiatives can serve as living laboratories for experimenting with innovative approaches to cooking, sourcing, retail, and food-waste reduction.

Alongside education, developing better tools for accurate food forecasting will help institutions and businesses plan their supply more effectively and minimise avoidable food-waste. Integrating urban farming initiatives in places like schools and senior homes can provide people of all ages with hands-on experience in growing food locally, reconnecting communities with the source of their food and reducing supply chain distances. The idea that school outdoor spaces can serve not only for play but also for growing food, learning, and fostering climate awareness reflects a broader shift in mindset. It emphasises the potential of school grounds and community areas to become active environments for education, sustainability, and community engagement.

Building strong, direct relationships with local farmers will be essential to support sustainable sourcing and ensure fair returns for producers. Encouraging wholesale opportunities for vegetables and legumes, alongside smarter distribution channels, can further reduce food waste and make seasonal, plant-based options more available and affordable.

In the retail environment, shifting the balance of choice by reducing shelf space for animal-based foods and prioritising plant-based products can help nudge consumer habits towards healthier diets for both people and the planet. At the production level, advocating for a transition to regenerative agriculture practices, moving beyond organic to restore soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem resilience, will support a truly sustainable food system for the long term. Taken together, these actions show how a sustained focus on education, practical tools, local relationships, and systems change can create a food culture that is not only sustainable but also resilient, fair, and deeply rooted in local communities.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities, schools, higher education institutes, canteens, retail, and farmers

INSPIRATION

ØSTERGRO

URBAN ROOF TOP FARM

ØsterGRO is Denmark’s first rooftop farm, located in central Copenhagen. Founded in 2014, it grows organic vegetables, herbs, and flowers on 600 m² of urban rooftop space. Operated as a community supported agriculture (CSA) initiative, it supplies weekly harvests to paying members through a volunteer network. ØsterGRO also hosts Gro Spiseri, a rooftop restaurant serving seasonal meals. The farm promotes urban biodiversity, food literacy, and sustainable city living. Its success has led to a sister farm and restaurant in Copenhagen, Øens Have.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

WORLDCHIEFS

CULINARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Worldchefs is a global association committed to elevating culinary standards through education and training. Recognised as a leading entity in the field, it serves as the collective voice of chefs worldwide on matters shaping the culinary profession. Together with culinary experts and scientists, the association offers sustainability education for culinary professionals. This program equips chefs with essential knowledge on sustainability and empowers them to drive positive change in their workplaces.

The initiative also offers a network for professionals to share and expand their knowledge and education on sustainable food practices.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



LONG-TERM ACTIONS

Adjust and Change Legislation

In the long term, developing strong policy recommendations must go hand-in-hand with adjusting and strengthening legislation to ensure that sustainability and circularity are not just encouraged, but built into the way food systems operate. A key step will be to provide financial support and incentives for circular initiatives, helping farmers, businesses, schools, and communities invest in practices that reduce food-waste, lower emissions, and keep resources in use for longer, promoting a more sustainable food system.

It will be essential to implement a robust legal framework for measuring food waste, especially in food procurement. By requiring all relevant actors, schools, canteens, public kitchens, and large-scale caterers, to monitor and report on food waste, cities and governments can gain the data they need to track progress, identify gaps, and hold organisations accountable for waste reduction targets.

Adjusting taxation and pricing structures can also play a transformative role. By incentivising sustainable farming methods and penalising practices that degrade soil and ecosystems, taxation can send clear market signals that support farmers in making the shift. In the same way, advocating for EU-level legislative changes to favour local and seasonal farming and develop practical, scalable alternatives to plastic packaging can drive systemic change across the EU.

Promoting legislative support for regenerative agriculture is equally important. Moving beyond organic certification, regenerative practices focus on restoring soil health, enhancing biodiversity, and building climate resilience, cornerstones of a truly sustainable food system.

It is essential to establish robust procedures for systematically tracking and evaluating progress over time. The capacity to measure key indicators, such as waste generation, emissions reductions, and the restoration of soil health, will be critical to ensuring that current policy recommendations remain both relevant and effective in addressing future challenges. This underscores the need for rigor and clarity in strategy development at the present stage to consider: What can we build into our current plans that will lay the legal and practical foundations for the food system we want in ten, twenty, or fifty years?

Relevant actors to involve: Public authorities, retailers, and canteens

INSPIRATION

AGREEMENT ON A GREEN DENMARK

NATIONAL AGREEMENT ON CARBON TAXATION

Denmark has expanded its carbon tax framework through the “Agreement on a Green Denmark”. From 2025, industries will face a higher CO₂ tax, and from 2030, a new levy will apply to agricultural emissions such as livestock and fertiliser use. The reform covers a wide range of sectors and is designed to cut millions of tons of emissions to help meet the country’s 70% reduction target by 2030. Key measures include differentiated tax rates for firms inside and outside the EU emissions trading system, deductions for captured CO₂, and the creation of a substantial green investment fund.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

BAN OF JUNK FOOD ADVERTISEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE, GOVERNMENT UNITED KINGDOM

The UK government is introducing new restrictions to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing. From October 2025, advertisements for foods high in fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) will be banned on television before 9 pm and completely restricted in paid online advertising.

The policy targets products like sugary drinks, snacks, and fast food, aiming to combat rising childhood obesity rates. Brand-only ads without specific products will still be allowed. The measures are part of a broader strategy to lower the exposure of young children to unhealthy foods to create a more sustainable food environment from an early age.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

Shift Perception to New Normal

In the long term, communication efforts must focus on shifting mindsets and cultural norms so that circular and sustainable food practices become an everyday reality rather than an exception or alternative. This means developing parallel programs that run alongside policy changes and local initiatives, using strategic communication to influence public understanding and make circularity feel familiar, accessible, and desirable.

A key step will be to allocate dedicated funding to the marketing and dissemination of success stories. Sharing real-world examples from schools with thriving gardens to communities dramatically cutting food waste can show what is possible and inspire others to take similar actions. These stories should highlight both the practical benefits and the sense of pride and ownership that come with building a more circular food culture.

In addition, establishing awareness campaigns that normalise circular practices will help encourage widespread adoption across different groups, from families and schools to restaurants and retailers. These campaigns can use simple, clear language to reframe ideas about freshness, waste, and value, making sustainable choices visible and aspirational. For example, Wefood and Too Good To Go aim to normalise the perception that expired food is perfectly fine to be consumed. They can also include local ambassadors or role models who help build trust and show that change is not only feasible but rewarding.

Together, these long-term actions aim to create the social momentum needed to support systemic change, ensuring that sustainability is not just written into policies and business strategies but rooted in everyday choices, shared community values, and the stories people tell about what good food means.

Relevant stakeholders to involve: Public authorities, schools, higher education institutes, canteens, retail, farmers, industry, and NGO/ associations

INSPIRATION

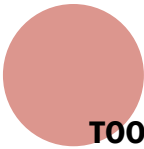


WE FOOD

SUPERMARKET TO AVOID FOOD WASTE

Wefood is Denmark’s first surplus food store, offering products with damaged packaging, labelling errors, expired best-before dates, and seasonal surplus items. By shopping at Wefood, customers help reduce food waste while supporting humanitarian projects that fight hunger in vulnerable communities around the world, including in Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe. All store profits are directed toward these development efforts.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



TOO GOOD TO GO

SAVE GOOD FOOD FROM GOING TO WASTE

Too Good To Go is a global app-based initiative that tackles food waste by connecting consumers with local businesses that have surplus, unsold food. Through the app, users can purchase “Surprise Bags” of perfectly edible food at reduced prices, helping to prevent waste while supporting more sustainable consumption. Founded in Copenhagen, the platform now operates in over 19 countries, saving millions of meals and raising awareness about the value of food.

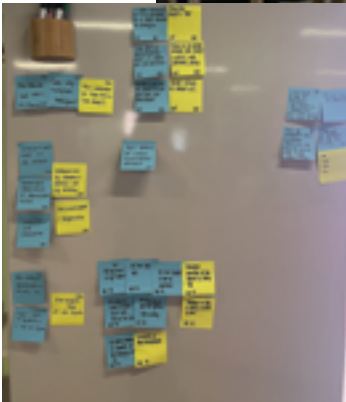
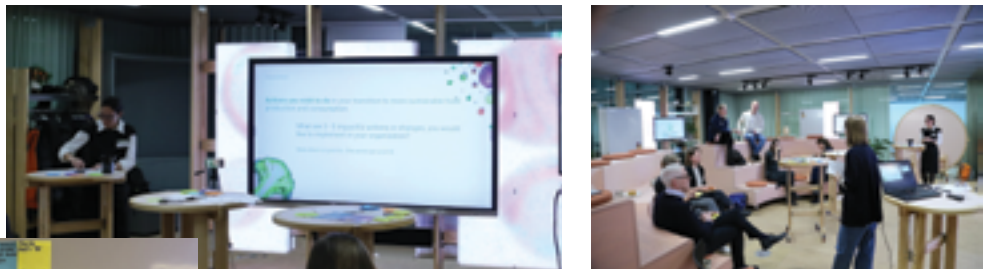
Too Good To Go also initiated the cross-European initiative to add a clarifying phrase after the legally required “best before” date. Together with other food producers and retailers they initiated the “Best before, also good after” labeling. The initiative encourages consumers to use their senses (look, smell, taste) rather than discard food automatically.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE.](#)



THE WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1&2



Workshop 3



OUR RESEARCH TEAM

Lucia A. Reisch^(a,b), Ethymios Altsitsiadis ^(b), Jan M. Bauer ^(b),
Mohina Gandhi ^(b), Alice Pizzo ^(b), Anna Schmid ^(b), Isabel Froes ^(b),
Malte Dewies ^(b) and Paul Lohmann ^(b)

a) Department of Management, Society and Communication,
Copenhagen Business School

b) El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Policy,
University of Cambridge

Stay in contact and further information



Website

LinkedIn

