

# Feeding cities

A transdisciplinary conference on sustainable urban food systems

## Setting An Agenda To Tackle Challenges In The Food System Transformation

The Feeding Cities Conference brought together city-region practitioners along food chains to set a common research agenda. Amidst social, environmental, and economic pressures on food systems worldwide, it is important that cities take up a leading role in food system transformations.

Over two conference days over 100 participants took part in interactive sessions on the themes 1) Multi-stakeholder engagement, 2) Globalized food system, and 3) Cities, social movements and advocacy, resulting in an agenda for both action and research on food system transformation.

In the following pages we present a core **challenge** identified during the conference, along with **possible ways forward** to address it and **questions to consider** for further work on the topic.





# Challenges in the Food System Transformation

“ I am responsible for food in my administration, but I have **no political mandate** to change the food system ”

**Politics and lack of political will**

“ It is difficult to include and convince 15 different **municipality actors** while **adapting** to the different interests “

**Bureaucracy**

“ Working as civil servant is **messy** and things take **more time** than you can imagine ”

“ Without politicians’ **commitment** and an understanding of the **urgency**, it is difficult to stimulate change. ”

**Challenge 1**



**EU food governance**

“ There is **insufficient coordination** of the European food systems, and when there is, its **conflicting** (CAP vs. Green Deal) “

“ The EU doesn’t recognize that not everything can be **scaled**. Some initiatives only work in their **local** context. ”

## What to do?

**Advocacy is imperative in increasing support for sustainable food system transformation!**

**1. Advocacy within government**

**How to navigate politics and political will** ?

**How to anchor ownership over food policy in the government** ?

**2. Advocacy outside of government: social movements**

**How can social movements find common ground** ?

**How do we move from a food-based to a rights-based discourse** ?

**How can food movements collaborate with labor movements and players of the food system** ?



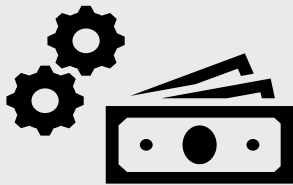
# Challenges in the Food System Transformation

“ Our main concern is to find new **funding** that allows us to continue our **temporary projects**: To create something **meaningful** under temporary conditions ”

## Funding and projectification

“ It is difficult to find **funding for food-related topics**. Often, municipalities prefer other topics, such as climate change or mobility “

### Challenge 2



Initiatives for food system transformation on all scales both within and outside governments, **rely strongly on funding from projects**

## What to do?

**Explore ways for food system transformations to exist without institutional support**

**Create alternative spaces for food to exist in cities**

**How to create something self-sustaining beyond projects** ?

**How to enhance advocacy for long-term support** ?



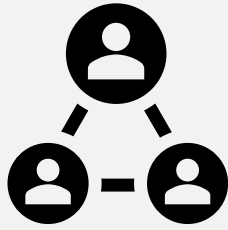
# Challenges in the Food System Transformation

“ For many participants, it is difficult to see the **long term gains**. People get **tired** as its rare to **see long term impact**, both on local and national levels. ”

“Municipalities are quite dependent on **volunteers**. They are very driven, but you do not want to 'burn them out'. “

## Stakeholder engagement

### Challenge 3



Motivating stakeholders to participate in activities for sustainable food systems is hard. **Stakeholders often become ,tired‘** of participating with input that isnt taken seriously or in **initiatives that** are often **temporary**.

## What to do?

**Shift from stakeholder engagement to being responsive to stakeholders needs**

**Move away from ‘selling the project’ to creating ownership**

**How do we respond to stakeholder needs and create ownership ?**

**How to move away from ‘stakeholder engagement’ means to let go of power for political institutions ?**



# Challenges in the Food System Transformation

“ There is a lack of time and interest, which seems to be a **financial issue**, causing a lack of capacity from SMEs to participate in **sustainable food initiatives** “

**Economic system failure**

“ Changing the food system means that some people may **lose their jobs**. How do we address that? “

## Challenge 4



Farmers and other business-oriented stakeholders, are often **stuck in economic systems**. Globalized food systems effect small scale farmers, and for some, **food system transformation** might lead to **economic losses**.

## What to do?

**Create demand for supply chain change!  
Use collective forms of demand as leverage point**

**1. Public procurement**

How can food movements work with procurement lawyers ?

**2. Food cooperatives**

How can governments support cooperatives better ?

**Create narrative around (de)growth**

How can transformation be globally fair ?

How to address the job loss caused by system change ?

How to address problems caused by economic growth ?