

# ‘Sustainable, Healthy and Fair Food’ Urban and Regional Food Declaration

Food is fundamental to life and health. Increasing urbanization, the industrialization of agriculture and a changing climate are adversely impacting many parts of the global food system. This interconnected food system includes production, processing, distribution, consumption, waste management, and meaning creation. The food system faces compounding global challenges and variable local issues. The scale of these challenges and issues is reflected in local concerns about food security, producer livelihoods, local economies, damage to ecosystems, persistently high levels of hunger and malnutrition, a pandemic of dietary-related illness and disease, and biodiversity reduction.

Many organization and government policy areas—including health, planning, transport, infrastructure, economic development, education, trade, biosecurity and environment—are relevant to the food system. A coherent long-term food policy, at whatever level and scale of governance, enables the integration of these different areas. Cities and regions need a sustainable, fair and resilient food system that provides dignified access to healthy food for all citizens, offers viable livelihoods for local producers, and engenders careful stewardship of regional ecosystems.

## **Purpose**

To achieve a vision of a sustainable, healthy and fair food system, integrated action is needed from individuals, communities, businesses, organizations and governments. The purpose of this Declaration is to encourage such action through offering the following:

- A set of agreed principles;
- A lexicon of agreed definitions and common language
- A generalized framework for policy and legislative changes;
- A set of tools for mobilization and advocacy; and
- An associated set of tools for assessment and analysis.

## **Vision**

Signatories to this ‘Urban and Regional Food Declaration’ share a vision of a sustainable, healthy and fair food system. We commit to the following characteristics as shaping our approach towards such a system:

- A thriving diversity of food production throughout our towns and cities and countryside, from networks of backyard, community and school gardens, to market gardens, ethical animal rearing, orchards, vineyards and food forests in our peri-urban and regional areas.
- A valuing of food producers as caretakers of the land and ecosystems, and as guarantors of our present and future food security.
- An expansion of farmers’ markets, a wide variety of farm-gate shops and trails, and high streets revitalised with shops that burst with local and seasonal produce, all supporting a growing local food economy that generates jobs and livelihoods for communities.

- A food system supports the health and well-being of all, recognising that access to good food is a basic and universal human right.

The food system is a complex set of practices that face unique and unprecedented challenges. This Declaration and its principles are based upon four domains as expressed in Figure 1: **Circles of Social Life**<sup>1</sup>.

## Principles<sup>2</sup>

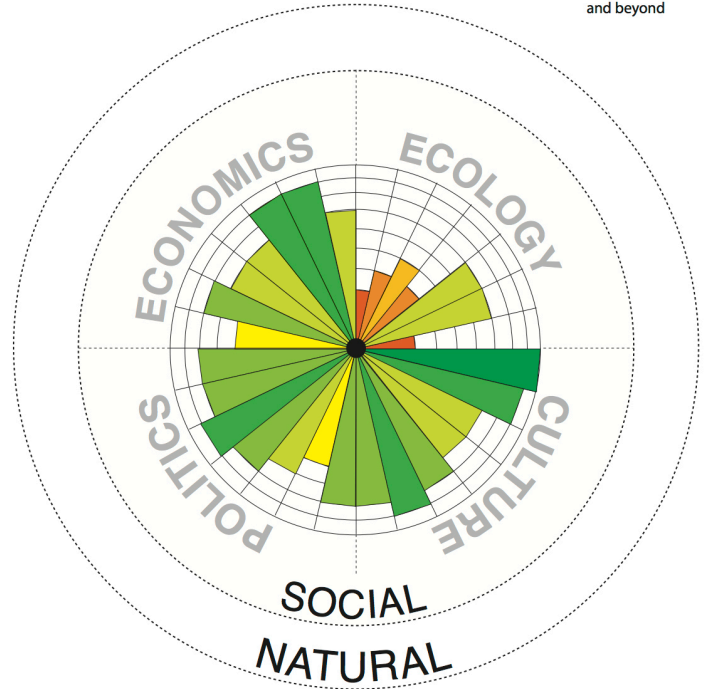
**Ecology:** Our food system should actively maintain the health and integrity of the natural environment on which it depends, seeking to maintain the health of existing ecosystems and enhance biodiversity.

**Economics:** Our food system should support, create and sustain local and regional livelihoods while building a resilient food industry.

**Politics:** Our governments and organizations should collaborate and work holistically, both internally and externally, while proactively engaging with communities to inform policy, planning and legislative actions relating to environmental stewardship, food security, health and wellbeing, and urban and regional livelihoods.

**Culture:** Our food system should embrace the diverse and cultural significance of food, recognizing its central role in promoting social cohesion, life-long and intergenerational learning, and community health and wellbeing.

## CIRCLES of SOCIAL LIFE and beyond



### DOMAINS OF THE SOCIAL

#### ECONOMICS

Production & Resourcing  
Exchange & Transfer  
Accounting & Regulation  
Consumption & Use  
Labour & Welfare  
Technology & Infrastructure  
Wealth & Distribution

#### POLITICS

Organization & Governance  
Law & Justice  
Communication & Critique  
Representation & Negotiation  
Security & Accord  
Dialogue & Reconciliation  
Ethics & Accountability

#### ECOLOGY

Materials & Energy  
Water & Air  
Flora & Fauna  
Habitat & Settlements  
Built-form & Transport  
Embodiment & Sustainance  
Emission & Waste

#### CULTURE

Identity & Engagement  
Creativity & Recreation  
Memory & Projection  
Belief & Meaning  
Gender & Generations  
Enquiry & Learning  
Wellbeing & Health

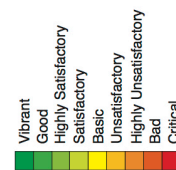


Figure 1. Circles of Social Life

An understanding of and agreement with these principles provide the basis to engage in further collaborative action.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see [www.CirclesofFood.org](http://www.CirclesofFood.org) and P. James et al., *Urban Sustainability in Theory and Practice: Circles of Sustainability*, Routledge, London, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This set of principles represents an adaption of the *Circles of Social Life* and *Circles of Sustainability* approach developed by Metropolis (World Association of the Major Metropolises) and the UN Global Compact Cities Programme.

## Appendix 1. Second-Level Principles

The following elaboration of the principles is intended only to provide a starting point for negotiation and dialogue over the question of what is to be done across the ecological, economic, political and cultural domains of the food system. They are not intended as fixed prescriptions.

### ***Ecology***

Our food system should actively maintain the health and integrity of the natural environment on which it depends, seeking to maintain the health of existing ecosystems and enhance biodiversity:

- 1.1. With food production and processing based as much as possible on organic fertilizing, recyclable materials and use of renewable energy with distributed generation;
- 1.2. With water for food production sourced sustainably as far as possible without impacting adversely upon regional ecological complexity;
- 1.3. With agricultural land, both urban and regional, complemented by zones and linear parks providing continuing habitat for indigenous flora and fauna;
- 1.4. With urban settlements planned so as to both restrict suburban encroachment upon fertile farming land and allow significant local food production within urban boundaries—including through dedicated spaces being set aside for community food gardens;
- 1.5. With the food system organized to minimize transport distances from sites of production to consumption;
- 1.6. With the food system contributing to secure access to healthy food for all; and
- 1.7. With waste management in all aspects of the food system directed fundamentally towards green composting and hard-rubbish minimization.

### ***Economics***

Our food system should support, create and sustain local and regional livelihoods while building a resilient food industry:

- 2.1. With food production and exchange shifted from an emphasis on production-for-global-export towards generating local mixed food economies and sustainable local livelihoods;
- 2.2. With financing and co-financing of prioritized aspects of the food system built into all relevant municipal annual budgets and services spending;
- 2.3. With the accounting and regulation of different aspects of the food system recognizing that food is a social good rather than just another commodity;
- 2.4. With a stronger relationship developed between producers and consumers through a diverse array of local produce outlets;
- 2.5. With food production workplaces brought back into closer spatial relation to residential areas, taking into account issues of personal infringement (such as processing smells and noise) through sustainable and appropriate processing methods and waste-management;
- 2.6. With appropriate technologies used for food production and processing, respecting the given limits of nature (sustainable agriculture? Ethical production?), including seasonal production; and
- 2.7. With healthy, fresh and where possible, local, organic food made available to those who cannot afford it through redistributive processes.

### ***Politics***

Our governments and organizations should collaborate and work holistically, both internally and externally, while proactively engaging with communities to inform policy, planning and legislative actions relating to environmental stewardship, food security, health and wellbeing, and urban and regional livelihoods:

- 3.1. With food governance conducted through deliberative and participatory democratic processes that bring together substantive community engagement, expert knowledge, and adequate public debate about all aspects of the food system;
- 3.2. With legislation enacted for sustainable and fair food production and exchange;
- 3.3. With public communication services and media outlets supported to generate debates about sustainable and fair food;
- 3.4. With political participation in decisions and processes about food production and consumption going deeper than passive engagement;
- 3.5. With basic 'food security' afforded to all citizens;
- 3.6. With all actors in the food system actively acknowledging the need for on-going reconciliation with the original inhabitants of the land—particularly in relation to land-use; and
- 3.7. With ethical debates concerning how we produce and consume food becoming a mainstream aspect of social life.

### ***Culture***

Our food system should embrace the diverse and cultural significance of food, recognizing its central role in promoting social cohesion, life-long and intergenerational learning, and community health and wellbeing:

- 4.1. With food consumption recognizing and celebrating the complex layers of community-based identity that have made and are making our region;
- 4.2. With active support for creative engagement with the culture of food through festivals, shows, celebrations and other public events;
- 4.3. With museums, cultural centres and other public spaces dedicating some of their ongoing space to comprehensive ecological histories of the local-global food system;
- 4.4. With locally relevant beliefs about the food system from across the globe woven into the fabric of the built environment: symbolically, artistically and practically;
- 4.5. With conditions for gender equality pursued in all aspects of the food system;
- 4.6. With the opportunities for facilitated enquiry and learning about food available to all, from birth to old age across people's lives—not just through formal training in the food industry; and
- 4.7. With public spaces and buildings designed and curated to enhance the sense that food is part of the everyday health and wellbeing of people.