



Flanders
State of the Art



DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES

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COLOPHON

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FOREWORD

The Flemish food strategy is a reality. It forms the basis for working on a better food system in Flanders and for tackling urgent challenges in various fields: health, environment and climate, economic and social resilience, innovation.

The availability of and access to healthy and sustainable food is a basic need and critical for the entire population, young and old. Today's challenges make us realise more than ever that we need to cherish all that goodness we have. Affordable and healthy food produced in a sustainable way, using innovation, locally and with respect for our farmers and our environment! These are therefore the foundations of our Flemish food strategy.

We are also justifiably proud of our farmers and food producers, who are highly regarded abroad as well. We excel in craftsmanship and combine tradition with innovation. But we are facing an important and urgent transformation today. This includes the shift to a circular food system, which creates opportunities within our ecological boundaries. Just as we cherish all that goodness and health, we do the same with our landscape and nature.

In the food strategy, therefore, we deliberately apply a systems approach, because everyone, from field to fork, is involved in the transformation of our food system. The topic transcends policy areas and includes many social and economic actors.

This strategy could only come about by creating a broad base of support. It involved a veritable food coalition composed of representatives from the agri-food chain, civil society, research and policy. We have gone through quite a journey together. Thank you very much for everyone's constructive contributions.

The Flemish food strategy is not alone. Through our food affairs, we are also supporting food changemakers who were selected during the Go4Food call in the summer of 2021. There are also cross-policy food projects on various topics, from sustainable protein supply through combatting food loss to promoting local food.

The food strategy also includes working pathways for achieving goals, to which concrete actions can be linked. I appeal to all the actors in the food system to work on this in the coming years. We are already engaging with several deals, promising leverage actions where several partners step up and fill gaps in action, research and policy in a targeted manner.

We are going for a better performing food system, with healthy and sustainable food for all, a food economy in which every link gets performance-related remuneration, a system that respects the limits of the planet and in which there is a strong connection between all players, from farmer to citizen.

Go4Food, the Flemish food strategy for tomorrow!

Jo Brouns

Flemish Minister for Agriculture, Economy, Innovation, Work & Social Economy

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1 WHY A FLEMISH FOOD STRATEGY?

“Proper calibration of the compass helps all societal actors to move towards the end goal in a timely manner.”

A great many activities and actors are directly or indirectly related to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food. Together, they form a complex, open and connected food system. This system touches upon a range of policy areas and levels and is embedded in an international context. It impacts other systems, such as energy, climate and the economy.

The food system clearly shows some vulnerabilities – economically, ecologically and socially. Systemic challenges such as climate change, food waste, fair farming income, food inequality and healthy eating are best approached and addressed in a cross-chain, cross-sector and cross-discipline manner. A unified vision is a necessary first step for making the system more sustainable.

What is our common ambition? Everyone benefits from ensuring that we and future generations can live healthy lives. We want a society where all children and young people have access to sufficient, healthy and sustainable food, and have the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices. Meals should meet people’s individual needs and preferences, and fit their sociocultural and philosophical backgrounds. The food system must both respect the planet’s capacity to bear it and be socially just.

A sustainable Flemish food system must start from the citizens, the economy, the agricultural sector, the environment and the climate. This means, for example, that a healthy and environmentally responsible diet is widespread and that food waste is minimised. In the food economy, every link, from farmer to plate, gets performance-related remuneration. The negative impact on the environment and climate is minimised.

Flanders is committed to joining forces through various policy areas and stakeholders to create a coherent food policy. The way to get there needs a compass, which is also supplemented by continuous feedback, as is the case with modern GPS systems. The route may be adjusted when all the road users indicate it should be. There is also a need for stopovers. One of these is the Flemish Food Summit in November 2022. Proper calibration of the compass helps all societal actors to move towards the end goal in a timely manner and with no detours.

Where exactly does the added value of the food strategy lie? It creates a framework for policy and action, puts a systemic approach at the centre to identify any gaps, synergies and unintended or undesirable side effects, provides structure, experimental space and support for a long-term change process, while guiding commitments to improve our food system through collaboration.

2 FROM INTERNATIONAL TO LOCAL POLICY

“The Flemish food strategy does not operate in a vacuum, but builds upon efforts at the international, national and local levels.”

The way we consume and produce food will look different in the coming decades than it does today, just as we have seen evolutions in previous decades as well. Flanders, as an innovative food region, must respond to this. A great many efforts toward sustainability and innovation are already taking place in the various links of the agri-food chain. Each policy level has its role to play. Flanders’ food strategy does not operate in a vacuum, but builds upon efforts at the international, national and local levels. At the same time, Go4Food could be a starting point for developing local food policy.

In 2020, as part of the European ‘Green Deal’, the European Commission launched the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system. The strategy’s ambitions are fourfold:

- to reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system
- to increase the resilience of the food system
- to ensure food security, despite climate change and biodiversity loss
- to lead a global transition towards a sustainable food system, while also tapping into new opportunities associated with this transition

The United Nations hosted a food systems summit on 23 September 2021. The international community collected best practices and developed some pathways for ensuring sufficient, healthy, affordable, safe and sustainably produced food in the future.

In Belgium, the federal government is responsible for a number of important areas relating to food, including public health and food safety. The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) is looking into the safety of our food chain. The FPS Health is working on a new Federal Food and Health Plan, in which ‘healthy and sustainable nutrition for all’ is one of the priorities.

In 2016, the Brussels-Capital Region was the first region in this country to create a sustainable food strategy. The second version of ‘Good Food’ was published in 2022 and aims to improve diets for all. Wallonia has had a food strategy called ‘Manger Demain’ (‘Eat Tomorrow’) since 2018.

Local governments are responsible for the well-being of their citizens and for sustainable development in their territories. They are closest to the citizens, and food is a perfect topic for making a number of environmental, health and climate issues concrete for their residents. Cities, municipalities and provinces alike are active in Flanders in drawing up local food strategies. In 2013, for example, Ghent pioneered its ‘Gent en Garde’ food strategy. The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) is supporting local governments in the design and implementation of a cross-cutting and local circular food policy and published a cookbook and a commitment statement on the subject in 2022.

Not only policymakers are focusing on making the food system more sustainable. A great many efforts toward sustainability and innovation are already taking place in the various links of the agri-food chain. Initiatives are also being taken to achieve chain collaboration, such as the transformation project “Making the Food Chain Sustainable.” This project aimed to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to achieving a sustainable agricultural and food system. To this end, the chain partners developed a strategic plan that built upon the long-term vision development previously issued by The New Food Frontier.

3 TOWARDS A SUPPORTED, INCLUSIVE STRATEGY

“All social actors must work together to provide direction for a transformational process, which can still be adjusted during the process.”

The food system is facing many challenges, both inside and outside the food system, which are highly interconnected. The formulation of a food strategy therefore requires a systematic approach. All social actors must work together to provide direction for a transformational process. Advancing insight will allow us to make further adjustments during the process. In drafting this text, organisations from policy, research, the agri-food chain and civil society have collaborated to create broad support.

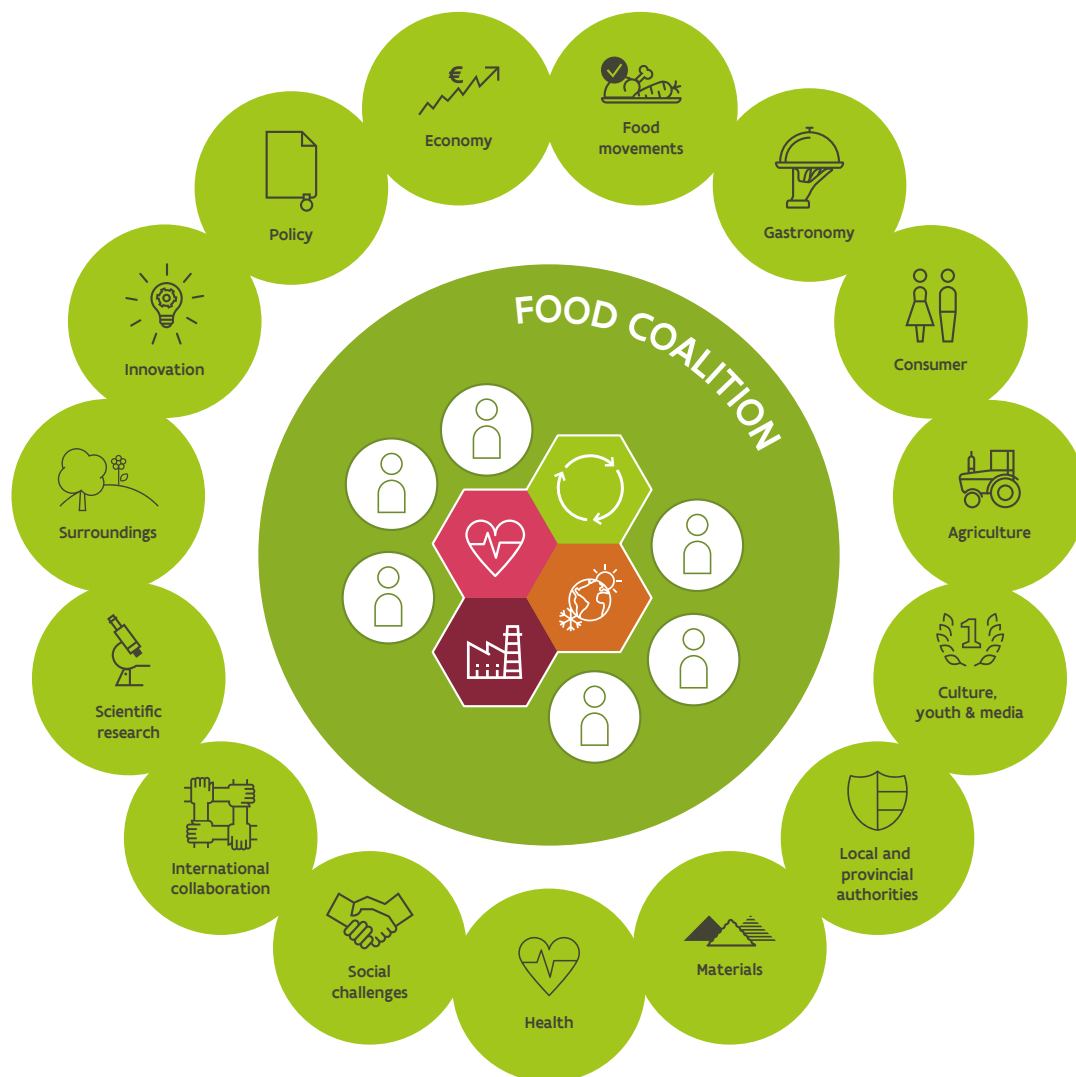
Within the Flemish government, the Food Policy Network was established to collaborate on food across policy areas. This has led to the development of ‘food projects’: collaborations across policy areas around specific food topics that seek to achieve predefined objectives in innovative ways and in close collaboration with stakeholders. These are covered in the ‘Food Projects in Action’ report (only in Dutch).

- Integrated research agenda
- Integration of environmentally responsible food into food triangle
- Integrated school approach
- Foodscapes-programme
- Flemish protein strategy
- Strategic plan for the Flemish cuisine & Flanders Culinary Centre
- Working agenda for Circular Flanders food chain
- Food environment
- Action plan for circular food loss and biomass (residual) flows
- Local food charter
- Local and circular food policy
- Strategic vision for short chain
- Strategic plan for organic farming

The Flemish food strategy connects the various projects, policy frameworks and stakeholder initiatives and identifies the gaps to be filled.

The 2019-2024 Flemish Coalition Agreement gave a political mandate to work on a strong food policy. Healthy, sustainable, sufficient and safe food at the right price for every link in the food chain is central to this. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries was given a leadership role to engage with all relevant policy areas, levels and stakeholders. In the autumn of 2020, former Flemish Minister of Agriculture and Food Hilde Crevits called on everyone to participate in a Flemish food strategy.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries convened a food coalition to draw out the food strategy and also propagate it. The coalition consists of organisations from agri-food chain, research, civil society and policy. With these partners, the relevant themes and values in the food system will have a place at the table.



- General Farmers' Syndicate (ABS)
- Agency for Care and Health (AZG)
- Belgian Feed Association (BFA)
- Belgian Farmers Union (Boerenbond)
- Bond Beter Leefmilieu (BBL, the federation of Flemish Environmental NGOs)
- Comeos
- The Social Innovation Factory
- Department of Economy, Science and Innovation
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Department of Environment and Spatial Development
- European Institute of Innovation and Technology FOOD (EIT Food)
- Fevia Flanders
- Flanders' FOOD
- Groene Kring ('Green Circle')
- ILVO
- KU Leuven

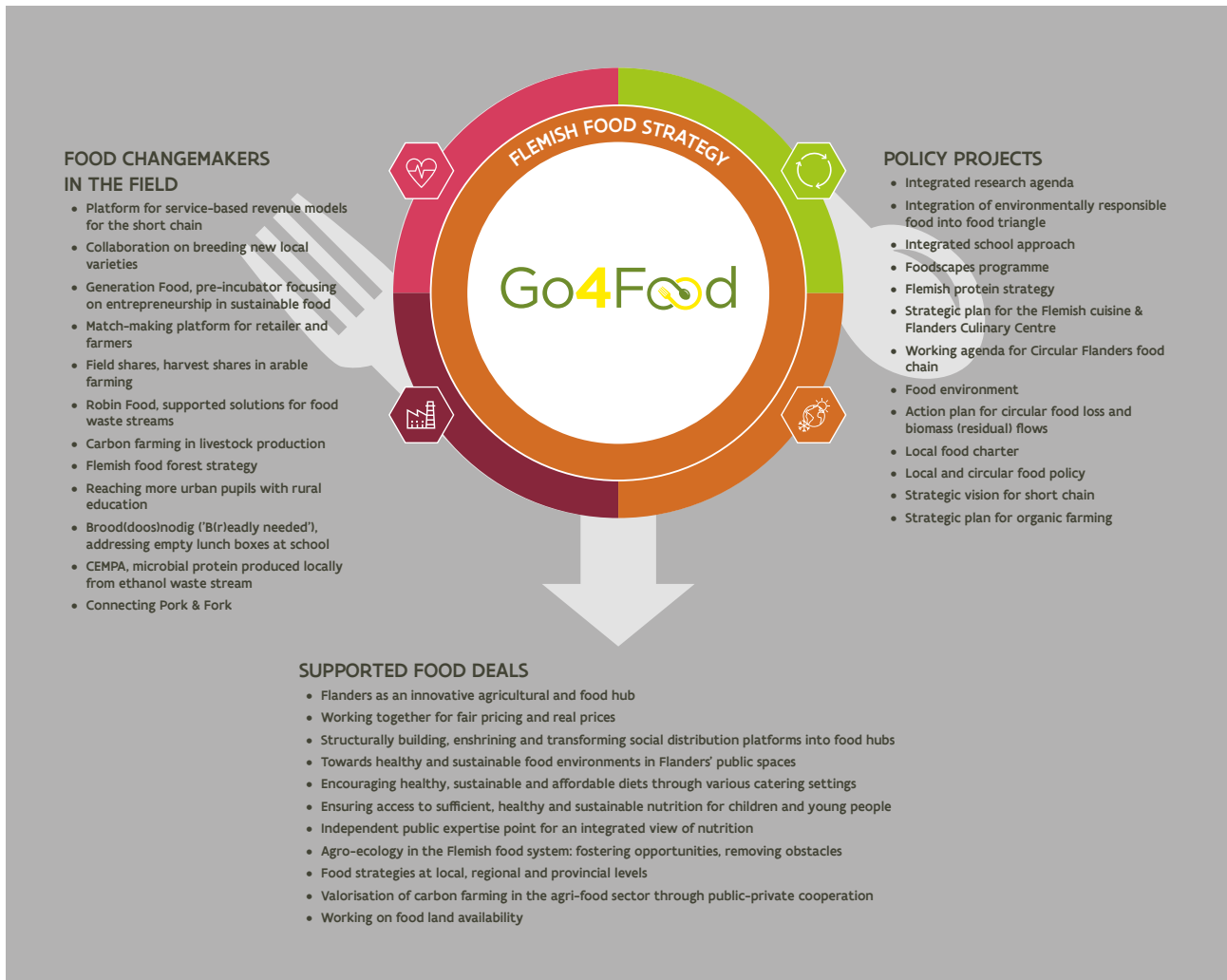
- Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM)
- Platform for Agriculture and Food Research
- Pulse Transition Network
- Rikolto
- Strategic Advisory Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (SALV)
- Visit Flanders
- University of Ghent
- Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)
- Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP)
- Flanders Institute for Healthy Living (Vlaams Instituut Gezond Leven)
- Circular Flanders
- VLAIO (Flanders innovation & entrepreneurship)
- Flanders' Agricultural Marketing Board
- Flemish Land Agency (VLM)
- Voedsel Anders ('Food Differently')
- Wageningen UR

In order to arrive at the food strategy, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries drew up a plan of action for the process and coordinated it with the food coalition. The six steps are: engaging, developing a vision, exploration, consolidation, delivery and enshrining. The external agency Möbius guaranteed neutral and professional facilitation of the stakeholder process. A broader group of stakeholders was involved in the process through feedback, including the Platform for Agricultural and Food Research and the Strategic Advisory Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (SALV).

Scientists from the Food Coalition and policymakers from the Food Policy Network guided the writing process and were the first critical test for arriving at a scientifically based, substantively correct and supported text.

As a bottom-up project for the Flemish food strategy, the Go4Food call in the summer of 2021 focused on food innovators with a promising idea around food for the future. Based on the selection, some “food tables” emerged, in which food changemakers received support from food coalition members in the form of their expertise and network. Five projects received one-time start-up grants in late 2021. From the project calls around the protein strategy, and collaboration and digitalisation in the agriculture and horticulture sector, two additional projects were selected as inspiring food changemakers. The 12 food changemakers presented their results at the Flemish Food Summit and feature in the ‘Food changemakers at work’ report (only in Dutch). The food changemakers provide inspiring ideas for a better food system in the future. Lessons learned can be included in the further roll-out of the Flemish food strategy.

- Platform for service-based business models for short-chain producer sector (Ghent University)
- Local community-based breeding of new varieties such as sweet potato, yacón and outdoor tomato (Vives University of Applied Sciences)
- Generation Food, pre-incubator focusing on entrepreneurship in sustainable food (Rikolto Belgium)
- Match-making platform for innovation and sustainability for farmers and retailers (Colruyt Group)
- Field shares: for crops such as quinoa and lentils, consumers can already subscribe to one or more harvest shares between sowing and harvest (Flemish Brabant Agricultural Practice Centre)
- Robin Food processes food waste from local farmers, collaborates with the social economy and makes healthy food more accessible to vulnerable people (SAAMO Flemish Brabant and ILVO)
- Carbon Farming: livestock farmers remove carbon from the air and capture it in the agricultural soil (Colruyt Group)
- Food forest strategy for Flanders (Food Forest Institute)
- Connecting more urban school children to agriculture and horticulture (Inagro and Plattelandsklassen)
- Brood(doos)nodig (‘(B)rea(d)ly needed’) tackles the issue of empty lunch boxes at school (Enchanté)
- Producing CEMPA, microbial protein as a feed ingredient locally from ethanol, a waste stream from steel production (Ghent University – CMET, Kemin Europe, ArcelorMittal and Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant)
- Connecting Pork & Fork, association of producers and processors to make the pork chain ecologically and economically sustainable through transparency and data-sharing (Flemish Pig Breeders Association, Dekeyzer-Ossaer and Agfo-Made)







4 THE FOOD STRATEGY, A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

“The roadmap is not a detailed blueprint for the future, but does provide a common framework, structures the change process and mobilises actors to work with policy to improve future prospects.”

The Flemish food strategy consists of four strategic pillars, inspired by the European Commission’s Food 2030 research policy framework:

1.  Healthy and sustainable food for all
2.  Food system within ecological limits
3.  Full commitment to a resilient food economy
4.  Food connects farmers to citizens

Under these four strategic pillars, linked centrally to emphasise the importance of the systematic approach, a roadmap was developed with 19 strategic objectives (SOs). Under the SOs, 98 working pathways have been formulated. The SOs, along with the working pathways, form the roadmap of this strategy.

In order to get started with this strategy, some ambitious and high-impact leverage actions were initiated at launch, known as ‘food deals’. They respond to frequently cited working pathways (support), contribute to the achievement of multiple objectives (impact), and there is not yet a fully-fledged instrument or policy initiative focusing on them (added value). A number of actors in the food coalition are also willing to throw their weight behind achieving some concrete results. The deals were prepared and reviewed with representatives from the agri-food chain, civil society civil society, research and policy.

The roadmap is not a detailed blueprint for the future, with binding targets around food production and consumption. The roadmap does, however, provide an integrated picture of the food system we envision, what goals we want to achieve and how we want to achieve them together. It provides a common framework and future prospects, and facilitates and enhances the commitment of organisations and policymakers to collaborate across themes and policy areas.

We do not start from a blank page when it comes to strategy, because a great deal is already happening in the field. The strategy actively searches for gaps and seeks to connect the various strategic objectives. Moreover, not for every strategic objective or working pathway do the levers lie at the Flemish level.



HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD FOR ALL

- SO 1: Healthy and sustainable diets as a shared mission
- SO 2: Creating food environments where healthy and sustainable choices are the easiest choices
- SO 3: Combatting food inequality
- SO 4: Pursuing a food culture in which every citizen is food-literate



FOOD SYSTEM WITHIN ECOLOGICAL LIMITS

- SO 5: Accelerating the shift towards a circular food system
- SO 6: Caring for the environment, soil, biodiversity and animal welfare
- SO 7: A climate-neutral and climate-smart food system
- SO 8: Minimising chain-wide food losses and utilising food waste streams in the best way possible
- SO 9: Making protein production and consumption more sustainable and diversifying it



FULL COMMITMENT TO A RESILIENT FOOD ECONOMY

- SO 10: Strengthening collaboration and trust in the chain
- SO 11: Strengthening agility in a world of change
- SO 12: Achieving fair pricing for the primary producer
- SO 13: Ensuring high-quality inflow of primary producers and providing them with sustainable future prospects
- SO 14: Promoting employment throughout the food chain
- SO 15: Putting Flanders on the culinary map
- SO 16: Promoting fair and sustainable trade



FOOD CONNECTS FARMERS TO CITIZENS

- SO 17: Connecting people, nature and food
- SO 18: Charging the true price of food
- SO 19: Increasing citizen confidence in food



4.2 SYSTEMIC HEART WITH THREE CHAMBERS

Every systemic change needs a beating systemic heart. Each of the strategic objectives meets or is perfused by this systemic heart. The heart has three chambers.

“An effective and inclusive change process questions the existing situation and structures, while encouraging emerging initiatives and practices.”

Chamber 1: Systemic thinking and acting

We approach the food system as a whole rather than looking at separate elements, actors or policy areas. In doing so, we create mutual understanding and synergy and can ensure that the responsibility for making the system sustainable is shared by all stakeholders. Moreover, the impact on or cohesion with other actors, actions and objectives is always considered when developing actions.

1. We are committed to horizontal and vertical policy and knowledge integration.
2. We recognise the role of local governments in accelerating transformation.
3. We provide connections, dialogue and participation for developing solutions and optimising policies.

Chamber 2: Learning to change

Learning to change involves recognising that change often feels uncomfortable and that it is a long-term process that can always be adjusted based on advancing insight. An effective and inclusive change process questions the existing situation and structures, while encouraging emerging initiatives and practices.

1. We pursue evidence-based policies in the transformation to a sustainable food system.
2. We provide space for and proactively and purposefully facilitate experimentation and innovation.
3. We regularly monitor and evaluate progress to ensure a dynamic process.

Chamber 3: Collaborating across borders

The food system challenges go beyond Flanders' borders. They are European and global and thus require an international approach and exchange.

1. We share knowledge and experience internationally and seek opportunities for collaboration.
2. We participate in and proactively contribute to international coalitions around global food challenges.
3. We are committed to sustainable international collaboration.
4. We create policy coherence and synergies between Flemish, Belgian and European food policies.

4.3 PILLAR 1: HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD FOR ALL

“We encourage healthy and sustainable diets for all and remove barriers for those in socially vulnerable situations.”

SO 1: Healthy and sustainable diets as a shared mission

With a ‘balanced plate’, we aim to encourage a healthy and sustainable diet for all the people of Flanders. The Flemish food triangle is the basis for a healthy and environmentally responsible diet. The economic and social component (fair compensation for producer, affordability for consumer) deserves some additional attention here. It is a collective responsibility of the whole chain and the various policy areas and levels. Human health is inextricably intertwined with the health of animals, habitats and ecosystems.

1. We communicate with consumers and raise awareness about healthy and sustainable diets.
2. We are developing a chain-wide agreement framework that incorporates new and existing initiatives and encourages collaboration.
3. We are growing support for this mission by also giving greater responsibility to non-food sectors and integrating more knowledge about healthy and sustainable diets into relevant training.
4. We are investing in healthy eating patterns as an essential element in a preventative health policy.
5. We are incorporating the One Health principle throughout the chain and in policy.

SO 2: Creating food environments where healthy and sustainable choices are the easiest choices

In order to encourage healthy and sustainable diets, they need to be more supported and encouraged through appropriate food environments. This applies, for example, at school, at home, on the road, at work, at restaurants and to specific target groups such as older persons.

1. We identify food environments and consumer behaviour better through targeted research and monitoring.
2. We are tightening regulations and making public-private agreements on marketing, information and supply to jointly create a healthier and more sustainable food environment.
3. We deploy legal frameworks, regulations and legal instruments at various policy levels to adjust the food environment.
4. We maintain a pricing policy that encourages healthy and sustainable choices.
5. We strive to ensure that healthy and sustainable diets become the norm in public buildings, schools and government institutions.
6. We research effective labels and deploy them purposefully to help consumers make healthy and sustainable choices.
7. We accelerate the development of healthier and more sustainable products.

SO 3: Combatting food inequality

Having access to safe and healthy food is a basic right of every human being. We encourage healthy and sustainable diets for all and remove barriers for those in socially vulnerable situations.

1. We reduce food poverty and prevent the problem structurally by increasing the purchasing power of vulnerable groups.
2. We are establishing healthy and sustainable living and food environments in vulnerable neighbourhoods.
3. We are enhancing the role of schools as a lever against food inequality.
4. We are making product offerings in social food supplies healthier and more sustainable.
5. We are building and enhancing the existing network of social distribution platforms.

SO 4: Pursuing a food culture in which every citizen is food-literate

In the search for ways to get people to eat healthier and more sustainably, the suggestion of enhancing their food skills is coming up more and more often. Making people more food-literate can help them build a lifelong conscious and healthy relationship with food.

1. We encourage a holistic view of food from an early age through high-quality and appropriate food education, embedded within a broader sustainability narrative.
2. We are continuing to build an accessible and independent expertise network where consumers can go for objective information about food in all its aspects.
3. We are developing a broad strategy and tools for behavioural change around the food triangle and working on lifelong food skills.
4. We identify diversity in food cultures in Flanders and encourage cross-fertilisation.
5. We support civil society organisations working around food as key intermediary partners of food policy.

4.4 PILLAR 2: FOOD SYSTEM WITHIN ECOLOGICAL LIMITS

“We are working with all actors on actions to make the food system carbon-neutral by 2050.”

SO 5: Accelerating the shift towards a circular food system

Together, we are accelerating the shift towards a circular food system. We are making it an economic success story for Flanders and arming ourselves against resource scarcity and climate change. The food chain work agenda, a partnership within Circular Flanders, encourages companies, governments, knowledge institutes, civil society organisations and others to take concrete actions that contribute to the ambitions and working pathways.

1. We make optimum use of bio-resources.
2. We make optimum use of nutrition.
3. We make optimum use of waste streams.
4. We are committed to a sustainable packaging policy.

SO 6: Caring for the environment, soil, biodiversity and animal welfare

More than ever, we are focusing on the basic elements on which a food system builds: healthy soil and water management, a living environment that encourages biodiversity, sustainable stock control of natural resources and constructively enshrining our food production in the landscape. In doing so, we take into account the (local) ecological capacity and place a high value on animal welfare.

1. We are setting out a long-term policy pathway for incremental and achievable ecological sustainability of food production
2. We research, support and promote organic farming, agro-ecological methods and precision agriculture, creating a policy framework for this.
3. We strive for an integrated landscape vision in which the various functions are given a place, taking into account the (local) ecological capacity.
4. We continue to elevate animal welfare in a viable manner and employ systems thinking and standards to achieve sustainable animal production.
5. We ensure sustainable management of soil, as the basis of food production.
6. We are strongly committed to further reducing the use of chemical plant protection products and antibiotics in food production.
7. We protect, restore and enhance natural (agro)biodiversity and promote pollinator populations in Flanders.
8. We build sustainable water management into our food chain.

SO 7: A climate-neutral and climate-smart food system

We are working with all actors on actions to make the food system carbon-neutral by 2050. We facilitate climate mitigation and adaptation and together reduce emissions in the food system.

1. We facilitate climate mitigation agriculture and remove barriers for climate efforts and new methods.
2. We facilitate climate-adaptive agriculture and commit to climate-robust crops and genetic diversity.
3. We support renewable energy production and reduce energy consumption in the food chain.

SO 8: Minimising chain-wide food losses and utilising food waste streams in the best way possible

We reduce food losses on the production and consumption side. This helps to feed a growing world population, reduce pressure on natural resources, achieve a circular food system and combat climate change. The actions are included in the Food Waste & Circular Biomass Waste Streams 2021-2025 Action Plan.

1. We encourage collaboration within product chains.
2. We set up sector-specific Target-Measure-Act programmes.
3. We reduce food waste at consumer level from within the chain.
4. We scale up social circular business strategies for food surpluses.
5. We support the start-up and impact of food waste innovators.
6. We support local governments in their local governing role in preventing food waste.
7. We encourage circular systems at home.
8. We re-evaluate and adjust policies that encourage unintended food waste or low-value valorisation.

SO 9: Making protein production and consumption more sustainable and diversifying it

Representatives from the agri-food chain, knowledge institutes and policy are joining forces to push for local, sustainable and healthy proteins from farm to fork. By 2030, we aim to achieve a more sustainable, diverse and forward-looking protein supply, while raising European protein self-sufficiency. The working pathways are listed in the Flemish Protein Strategy 2021-2030.

1. We progress the sustainability of protein sources for animal feed.
2. We progress the sustainability of animal production.
3. We produce more vegetable proteins.
4. We develop alternative protein sources.
5. We encourage diversity in processing so as to achieve diversity in supply.
6. We pursue sustainable protein consumption.

4.5 PILLAR 3: FULL COMMITMENT TO A RESILIENT FOOD ECONOMY

“A resilient food system requires fair compensation for primary producers and proper distribution of the costs and risks across all the links in the chain.”

SO 10: Strengthening collaboration and trust in the chain

A resilient food system needs transparent and innovative chains in which different chain actors join forces. Close collaboration and knowledge-sharing makes all the difference when the chain comes under pressure. Particular regard is given to enhancing local chains and improving the position of the primary producer in the chain.

1. We encourage structural consultation, knowledge-sharing and (cooperative) collaboration in the chain.
2. We review existing regulations and draw up new ones to establish fair chains.
3. We enhance the position of the primary producer in the chain.
4. We promote and support short and local chains.

SO 11: Strengthening agility in a world of change

We want to make our food system resilient to long-term (geopolitical) conflicts, cross-border pests and diseases, and other threats. We will find out how to develop concrete tools to support our food system in its agility in the face of changing societal expectations and needs.

1. We support the agility of the food system with forward-looking policies and regulations.
2. We provide structural funding for research, innovation and investment specifically aimed at a sustainable food system.
3. We encourage collaboration and co-creation between knowledge institutes, companies, government and citizens in what is known as the quadruple helix.
4. We are developing forward-looking revenue models.

SO 12: Achieving fair pricing for the primary producer

A resilient food system requires fair compensation for primary producers and proper distribution of the costs and risks across all the links in the chain. A system change provides an opportunity to thoughtfully deal with the cost-sharing and reimbursement of food production and the ancillary services that a food producer provides.

1. We seek fair rules of the game at a European level.
2. We create price transparency in the food chain.
3. We encourage sustainable collaboration with consumers.
4. We explore a fair-trade system for local food.
5. We compensate for the provision of social and ecosystem services.

SO 13: Ensuring high-quality inflow of primary producers and providing them with sustainable future prospects

Primary producers face challenges such as income insecurity, pressure on open spaces, difficult inflow and welfare problems. We are working on a policy framework and context that prioritises certainty and reduces complexity, helps accommodate risk, encourages innovation and leaves room for experimentation and enterprise.

1. We increase the welfare of primary producers.
2. We guarantee the availability of food production space.
3. We make the occupation of primary producer an attractive one.

SO 14: Promoting employment throughout the food chain

The food chain is already a very important employer in Flanders, but the labour market is very tight. We can do even more to match the right profiles to the right sectors, align training with industry demands and link jobseekers to demand from agriculture, the food industry, retail and hospitality.

1. We increase the attractiveness of the food chain as an employer, conduct promotion around it and address bottlenecks in employment and training.
2. We fully exploit the potential of the social food economy.
3. We cash in on the potential of food innovations and food experiences for new employment.

SO 15: Putting Flanders on the culinary map

Flanders is renowned in the culinary field, and this also bears fruit for tourism. We want to put Flanders even more on the map as a welcoming, gastronomic, innovative and sustainable food region. Tourism Flanders includes this in its strategic plan.

1. We build a Flanders Culinary Centre.
2. We identify, develop and promote culinary experiences around products.
3. We promote Flanders internationally as a culinary destination.

SO 16: Promoting fair and sustainable trade

Flanders has an open economy, so we must take responsibility around our international impact. We will contribute to making international supply chains more sustainable and fair, and include consumers in this matter.

1. We attach higher social and sustainability criteria to international trade.
2. As Flanders, we invest smartly in international trade with sustainable added value.
3. We take responsibility for sustainable and fair international supply chains.
4. We raise awareness and encourage consumers and businesses toward more fair and sustainable trade.

4.6 PILLAR 4: FOOD CONNECTS FARMERS TO CITIZENS

“Consumers want to know what is on their plates, where it comes from and how it is produced.”

SO 17: Connecting people, nature and food

We want to increase people's sense of the origin, value and impact of food and make people aware of the importance of open spaces and nature for food production. We strive for more knowledge about that connection, more social appreciation for food (producers), as well as for greater well-being and perception around food.

1. We provide a connection through food ambassadors.
2. We deploy local and regional spatial renewal for connection and perception around food.
3. We value primary production in all its functions for the general public.
4. We are doing participatory citizen science to get citizens closer to food.
5. We collaborate locally and regionally on food strategies, engaging citizens and other actors.

SO 18: Charging the true price of food

The price tag for the food we purchase does not adequately take into account social, environmental and economic long-term consequences of production and/or consumption. Setting the real price helps food producers produce as sustainably as possible, helps conscious consumers choose the right product, and ensures that governments are properly driving the economy and systemic change.

1. We analyse and define ways to implement true pricing of food and propagate this to other Member States in the EU.
2. We make consumers aware of the true price of food.
3. We are developing policies that support and encourage true pricing, taking into account vulnerable groups.
4. We make the entire chain responsible for the development and implementation of true pricing of food.

SO 19: Increasing citizen confidence in food

Consumers want to know what is on their plates, where it comes from and how it is produced. We strive to increase trust by focusing on transparency. A safe, healthy and sustainable food chain is important for everyone.

1. We guarantee food safety and traceability and play this as an asset.
2. We measure and increase citizens' understanding of and confidence in food through awareness-raising and education

4.7 FOOD DEALS OR LEVERAGE ACTIONS FOOD STRATEGY

At the Flemish Food Summit, we will show that we are serious about developing the food strategy. We will initiate 11 food deals from the Flemish food strategy. These have the potential to impact multiple strategic objectives and fill any gaps that arise. A range of actors in the food system are committed to working on them. The food coalition has been sounded out on the deals. In the coming months, we will refine the food deals and then see whether any additional deals are needed.

- Flanders as an innovative agricultural and food hub
- Working together for fair pricing and real prices
- Structurally building, enshrining and transforming social distribution platforms into food hubs
- Towards healthy and sustainable food environments in Flanders' public spaces
- Encouraging healthy, sustainable and affordable diets through various catering settings
- Ensuring access to sufficient, healthy and sustainable nutrition for children and young people
- Independent public expertise point for an integrated view of nutrition
- Agro-ecology in the Flemish food system: fostering opportunities, removing obstacles
- Food strategies at local, regional and provincial levels
- Valorisation of carbon farming in the agri-food sector through public-private cooperation
- Working on food land availability

5 THE FOOD SUMMIT AND A LOOK AHEAD

“The food summit is not an end point, but an initial milestone in a journey towards further sustainability of the food system.”

At the Flemish Food Summit on 29 November 2022, Minister Jo Brouns will solemnly present the food strategy, including goals, working pathways and food deals. That day, companies and organisations in the food system will also open their doors to show what is already happening in terms of sustainability and innovation. A stakeholder conference will be held on 2 December, where the strategy and deals will be discussed in more detail, and the food changemakers will present their results.

The food summit is not an end point, but an initial milestone in a journey towards further sustainability of the food system. Drawing up the Flemish food strategy was the first step: creating a living and dynamic reference document to give direction to the rest of this journey. How do we see the next steps?

In the next phase, we will commence implementation and realisation. To this end, the food deals chosen during the drafting of the Flemish food strategy are an initial impetus for actions. These will first see some further refinement before they are actually launched. In addition, it is also important to provide proper assurance and guidance, so as to enshrine the strategy and keep it top of mind as a reference document. To this end, a number of issues need to be worked out in close consultation with the food coalition, which we will keep active, lively and involved, and within the Food Policy Network:

- Long-term roadmap
- Structural enshrinement
- Further development of working pathways and considering additional deals
- Monitoring and evaluation

We will continue to work together towards the next milestone: the Belgian EU Presidency in the first semester of 2024. We will put food policy on the agenda and help shape the discussion on the new legislative framework for sustainable food systems under the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy, which the European Commission will present by the end of 2023. In addition, the Flemish government, in consultation with other governments, will organise an ‘Open Food’ week that will focus on food strategies and the necessary interaction between policy, research and practice.

