



Enhancing cultivated biodiversity through food policies in European food systems



KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ The integration of cultivated biodiversity in city-region (i.e., territorial) food systems requires a multilevel framework of legislation, policy and funding. All governance levels must be active and coordinated to generate an enabling environment, supported by context-specific strategies. Municipalities and regions can use the LiveSeeding Manual [1] as a practical starting point to guide implementation.
- ❑ At the EU level, a legal anchor for food system transformation is needed through the explicit integration of the right to food into EU legislation, recognising cultivated biodiversity as one of its components.
- ❑ The upcoming revision of EU public procurement legislation should embed strong sustainability criteria, including organic and biodiversity-based approaches, and support its effective implementation by national, local and regional authorities.
- ❑ Cultivated biodiversity is not only a concern for agricultural production in rural areas. Urban settings drive most food consumption and have a responsibility to establish appropriate food governance and management frameworks, working in collaboration with nearby rural areas through a territorial food system approach.
- ❑ Cultivated biodiversity and locally adapted seeds must be integrated across all areas of the food system, in food production, as well as in food processing, distribution and consumption policies. Strengthening them requires a territorial approach with dedicated EU fundings.
- ❑ Cultivated biodiversity can be embedded at any stage of food policy, at the early stages of a strategy as well as an already well-established one. The actions proposed in this document and detailed in the LiveSeeding Manual offer options suited to different levels of development.
- ❑ Alliances amplify the impact of food policies. Municipalities, regions, national governments and EU institutions can collaborate with civil society organisations already working on these issues, and with other governance levels through networks, to exchange experiences and strengthen initiatives.

BACKGROUND AND TERMINOLOGY

CULTIVATED BIODIVERSITY

Seeds are both a living heritage and a strategic resource. Their diversity is essential to address environmental, economic and geopolitical challenges. Cultivated biodiversity lies at the heart of sustainable food systems. It encompasses the conservation and dynamic management of landraces and heirloom varieties, the selection and cultivation of farmers' varieties and populations, and the breeding of resilient cultivars through organic plant breeding programmes, with particular focus on participatory and open-source seed systems. It also includes the knowledge, practices and collective infrastructures maintained by farmers, gardeners, community seed banks, seed libraries and seed networks. As such, it contributes to a shift away from vulnerable, input-dependent monocultures toward more resilient systems composed of diverse, locally adapted species and cultivars. Organic and agroecology-oriented farming strongly participate in the enhancement of cultivated biodiversity; they aim for diverse, adaptable plant genetic resources and create demand for locally adapted cultivars.

AGROECOLOGY-ORIENTED FOOD POLICIES

Food policies are public policies designed to transform how food is produced, processed, distributed and consumed. When grounded in agroecology, an approach that integrates organic farming practices with social, cultural, political and economic dimensions of the food system, these policies improve public health, foster more nutritious and diverse food systems, generate quality employment, and strengthen local economies and their cultural identity. Their core objectives are:

- To improve access to sustainable, local, fair and healthy food for the entire population;
- To apply a food systems perspective that links rural and urban areas;
- To promote organic farming and the restoration of ecological cycles (water, nutrients, organic matter, etc.);
- To protect peri-urban farmland for agroecology-oriented production;

- To reduce the distance between production and consumption through coordinated distribution strategies; and
- To foster collaboration between local governments and social and economic actors through participatory processes.

TERRITORIAL FOOD SYSTEMS

This approach recognises food systems as the functional link that unites urban and rural areas within a territory. It promotes urban-rural partnerships and intermunicipal cooperation that go beyond traditional administrative boundaries and seeks to build more integrated, resilient and sustainable food systems, bringing together all the actors, processes and relationships involved in food production, processing, distribution and consumption within a defined city- region territory.

MULTILEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This governance approach refers to the dispersion of policymaking authority regarding food and agriculture issues across multiple vertical levels, including local, regional, national, and supranational (e.g., EU). It emphasises collaborative, coordinated decision-making to address complex issues such as the transformation of the food system.

Scientific and technical innovation alone is not sufficient to achieve systemic food system transformation. The uptake, scaling and long-term impact of innovations, such as diverse, locally adapted organic seeds, depend on the policy and governance frameworks in which they are embedded. In this context, the right to food can provide a structural and durable legal anchor, defining what food systems should deliver and link this directly to cultivated biodiversity, which underpins resilient, diverse and locally adapted food systems.

LiveSeeding promotion of food policies that start from the seeds: the Granollers Manifesto

LiveSeeding Innovation Action promotes agroecology-oriented food policies that encourage sustainable use and dynamic management of cultivated biodiversity from seed to plate. The first European Symposium "Fostering Cultivated Biodiversity through Local Food Policies", held on 29–30 April 2025 in Granollers, Spain, brought together experts from all over Europe working on municipal action, multilevel food policies, organic production, agroecology and plant genetic resources. During the event, the Granollers Manifesto "Fostering Cultivated Biodiversity in European Municipalities" [2] was presented. It calls for food policies that prioritise city region-based food systems delivering healthy and tasty food, based on cultivated biodiversity and locally adapted seeds, within planetary boundaries, while ensuring economically viable livelihoods for local communities.



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MULTILEVEL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

To integrate cultivated biodiversity into city-region sustainable and healthy food systems, coordinated action is needed across all governance levels:

European Union

Strengthen organic and agroecological criteria in public procurement legislation; increase the support to food policies, organic farming and cultivated biodiversity in Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), European Structural and Cohesion Funds; ensure the future Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) regulation facilitates the use of cultivated biodiversity; prioritise cultivated biodiversity and agroecological transition in the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Food; provide a legal anchor for food system transformation by explicitly integrating the right to food into EU legislation and recognising cultivated biodiversity as one of its components; recognise cultivated biodiversity as a component of the Right to Food; and include local food policies and agroecological agri-food transformation within European research agendas.

National

Develop roadmaps for 100% organic seed use by 2036; establish national support plans including support to biodiverse and sustainable procurement; include cultivated biodiversity in food, climate and ecological transition strategies; and implement comprehensive labelling systems.

Regional

Integrate local seeds and organic food in procurement tenders; create regional catalogues of local varieties; launch funding programmes for biodiversity-related entrepreneurship; develop specific regulatory frameworks; and facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity-building programmes for municipal staff and food policy stakeholders.

Municipal

Embed cultivated biodiversity actions across all six Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) action areas: governance, sustainable diets, social equity, food production, supply and distribution, and food waste.

Food policies for cultivated diversity: the local level

As level of government closest to the citizens, **municipalities** are well placed to be dynamic and innovative, and capable of leading the design and development of more inclusive, sustainable and healthier local food systems. Although municipalities are not always the places where the food consumed by their citizens is produced, they hold a wide range of competences - from urban planning and public procurement to waste management, social services and cultural promotion - that can be strategically mobilised to shape food systems. With political will and creativity, these competences can be combined into coherent, systemic local food policies.

Integrating cultivated biodiversity into these policies is a strategic lever for resilience, food sovereignty and community well-being.

European municipalities as innovation laboratories - Over the past decade, European municipalities have demonstrated a strong capacity to innovate, becoming laboratories for for integrated territorial development and local food policies.

The Granollers Manifesto calls on municipalities to implement 32 concrete strategic actions to integrate cultivated biodiversity in the six MUFPP categories with the following goals:



Download the manual here: <https://zenodo.org/records/15914176>



1. Governance:

These actions seek to strengthen local organisations active in community and dynamic cultivated biodiversity management, generate alliances and multi-stakeholder participation, as well as foster inter- and intra-municipal and multi-level collaboration for genuine participatory governance.

⇒ E.g., Food Councils, local actors map, new public departments and working groups, common projects with farmers, policy monitoring frameworks.



2. Sustainable diets and nutrition:

These actions aim to raise awareness and mobilise different target groups in the municipality on the importance of organic, biodiverse and geographically and culturally appropriate, plant-rich diets.

⇒ E.g., awareness campaigns for the school community, training activities for mass catering, research and dissemination of nutritional characteristics of cultivated biodiversity.



3. Social and economic equity:

Municipalities seek to promote the incorporation of cultivated biodiversity in local food projects within the social and solidarity economy, and actions linked to the realisation of the right to food for all.

⇒ E.g., food banks, food labs, community kitchens, training activities in culturally significant gastronomy.



4. Food production:

These actions aim to strengthen formal, farmer-managed and community-based seed systems to boost local and decentralised organic seed production and breeding.

⇒ E.g., urban agriculture programmes; community seed banks, seed libraries and farmers' networks, recovery and testing of local and traditional varieties, support to organic plant breeding, organic seeds and seedling distribution.



5. Food supply and distribution:

These actions aim to embed cultivated biodiversity throughout the entire local food chain, supporting entrepreneurship and creating frameworks that give visibility to products resulting from respectful productive and processing methods.

⇒ E.g., sustainable public food procurement, local incubators, local short value chains, labels for biodiversity, artisanal and mild food processing.



6. Food waste:

Actions in this category aim to support circular economy approaches within production, processing, and retail initiatives that prioritise the use of local and traditional varieties and populations, derived from organic, participatory or open-source breeding systems, as a means to foster their horizontal proliferation.

⇒ E.g., gleaning projects, local composting sites, integrating surplus produce in local chains.

Food policies for cultivated diversity: the national level

National governments play a pivotal role in establishing the legislative, financial and institutional framework within which regional and municipal food policies operate. They define the regulatory conditions for food systems whose scope and complexity vary across European countries according to the competences devolved to regions and provinces. Without national-level commitment, local and regional efforts risk remaining fragmented and under-resourced. National decision-makers are uniquely positioned to set binding targets, mobilise financing, and create the institutional infrastructure that enables action at every other level of governance.

At the national level, decision-makers can:

 **Analyse the demand and supply of organic seeds and establish national roadmap or decision-trees** to achieve 100% organic seed use in organic agriculture by 2036 and gradually phase-out derogations. The LiveSeeding project developed several tools to support national competent authorities in this process, including:

- A comparative [report \[3\]](#) analysing existing national plans to identify best practices and inspire Member States that have not yet adopted such strategies; and
- The [seeds4organic \(S4O\)](#) platform, which provides a centralised overview of organic PRM availability across Europe, supporting market actors and authorities in identifying supply gaps.

 Develop national action plans, with adequate **financing mechanisms** for municipalities and civil society, in line with the [FAO Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#).

 Establish a national support programme to enable regional and local authorities to foster **sustainable public procurement** and integrate related sustainable procurement criteria (minimum organic and biodiverse foods) in food procurement tenders.

 Include cultivated biodiversity and related cultural knowledge support in **national food and climate strategies and just ecological transition plans**.

 Implement **comprehensive labelling systems** that enable food products to be rated based on multiple criteria, such as recognised production methods (e.g., organic), place of origin, seasonality, and breeding techniques used.

THE FAO HIGHLIGHTS THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF CULTIVATED BIODIVERSITY

Thanks to the process generated by LiveSeeding with the support of the Spanish City Network for Agroecology, Resolution 5/2025, adopted at the 11th Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Lima, November 2025), explicitly incorporates collaboration with municipalities and municipal networks in urban and peri-urban food systems as key actors in the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and promotes their participation in its Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use.

Food policies for cultivated diversity: the European level

The European Union sets the overarching regulatory, financial and strategic framework within which many national, regional and municipal food policies operate. Through instruments such as the Common Agricultural Policy, regional and cohesion funds, procurement legislation and research agendas, EU decision-makers have the power to create or remove the enabling conditions for cultivated biodiversity to thrive across food systems in Europe. Aligning these instruments with the goals of agroecological transition and food sovereignty is essential to ensure that local, regional and national efforts are supported, rather than constrained, by the European regulatory environment.

EU decision-makers should:

🌱 Make “sustainable public food procurement” an integral part of the **upcoming revision of the Public Procurement Directive** with mandatory minimum criteria for organic and fair food, and extra marks awarded for agroecology-oriented practices, such as the use of cultivated biodiversity, beyond the minimum organic requirement criteria.

🌱 Strengthen support to food policies and cultivated biodiversity in **European Regional Development and Social Cohesion funds for municipalities**.

🌱 Increase support for organic farming in current **CAP national strategic plans**, in the social conditionality framework, ensuring that the budget set for organic agriculture and cultivated biodiversity is safeguarded.

🌱 Ensure that the future **EU regulation on production & marketing of Plant Reproductive Material (PRM)** effectively facilitates the integration of cultivated biodiversity into local agri-food systems.

🌱 Integrate in the **Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Food** cultivated biodiversity and agroecological transition as a priority for sustainable food systems.

🌱 Explicitly integrate the **Right to Food** in European law, and establish a common framework enabling Member States to recognise and safeguard cultivated biodiversity as an essential component of the Right to Food.

🌱 Include local food policies and agroecological agri-food transformation within European research agendas, ensuring a stronger presence of local entities and municipal networks in European innovation platforms.

Funding for organic and cultivated biodiversity in the new CAP

In the upcoming CAP, ringfence budget for organic farming to ensure all Member states must actively and significantly support financially organic and cultivated biodiversity in their National Regional Partnership Plan (NRPP).

Conclusion

This Policy Brief is a call to action for European municipalities and higher levels of governance. In light of the growing unpredictability threatening European food security, cultivated biodiversity is a key lever for establishing sustainable and healthy local food systems across Europe from seed to plate.

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ABOUT THIS POLICY BRIEF

This brief is part of a series aiming to provide recommendations to policymakers based on technical and socio-economic research findings, consulted through LiveSeeding partners, ECO-PB members and IFOAM Organics Europe Seed expert group. This brief does not necessarily reflect the views of each LiveSeeding project partner.

Publisher: FiBL Europe (contact: liveseeding@fibl.org)

Authors: María Carrascosa-García (RMAe), Mariano Iossa (FiBL Europe), Mariateresa Lazzaro (FiBL CH), Véronique Chable (INRAE), Giuseppe De Santis (RSR), Caroline Formont (IFOAM OE), Francesca Gori (RSR), Matthias Gudinchet (PSR), Gabriele Maneo (EC-LLD)

Reviewers: Mariano Iossa (FiBL Europe), Mariateresa Lazzaro (FiBL-CH)

Designed by: Anamarija Ćorić (IPS Konzalting)

Editing: Mariateresa Lazzaro

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(contact: IPS Konzalting, info@ips-konzalting.hr)



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