

Marburg Action Plan for Future-Proof Food Systems in Europe

Insights and inspiration for transition



In Marburg, November 2023, kollektiv von MORGEN e.V., the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) e.V. and the Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC2020) hosted a European Action Gathering for Sustainable Food Systems, as part of the project Rural Europe Takes Action - Germany. The Marburg Action Plan for Future-Proof Food Systems was co-created with the participants of the two day event.

The Marburg Action Plan

This action plan for future-proof food systems in Europe summarises, without claiming to be exhaustive, a variety of insights and inspiration - across all areas of food systems. What all approaches have in common, is that people are taking the necessary change in food systems into their own hands, and are seeking and finding ways to do so - away from the global industrialised modes of production and trade, towards regional, holistic and sustainable approaches that focus on the health and well-being of planet and people. We are also celebrating the successes of local people who are doing this pioneering work and **shaping resilient food systems together**.

We offer the Marburg Action Plan as a collection of existing practices and inspiration from the ground,

and a call for Action: Be inspired, take the ideas that move you, look for allies, adapt everything to regional circumstances and keep going. Share results, successes and failures so that everyone can learn from them!

The goals set out in the *Marburg Action Plan for Future-proof Food Systems in Europe* were developed through participants' co-creative collaboration in the six working groups of the Gathering. Based on the many transformative actions already being implemented by a broad range of actors in Germany, France and across Europe, we have identified the following six goals as key ingredients of sustainable food systems:

Goal 1	Re-localisation and diversification of food systems with strong citizen engagement
Goal 2	Connection and coordination of local and regional food actors, initiatives and tools for regional food systems
Goal 3	Inclusion and equality for people of all ages, social classes, genders, ethnic and racial groups and sexual orientations in agri-food governance
Goal 4	Trust, cooperation and co-creation between value chain actors
Goal 5	Sustainable food markets and other forms of distribution that are easier and fairer so that sustainable food is accessible for all
Goal 6	Access to land and commons for sustainable food production



The Marburg Action Plan

Rather than an academic undertaking or a blueprint for every context in the EU, the Marburg Action Plan demonstrates that efforts to achieve coherent changes in agri-food systems are taking place through concrete actions. Scaling-up and multiplying these actions remains a challenge. The Plan is an invitation to align systems and policies. European institutions and other agri-food actors at different levels of governance can use the Marburg Action Plan to change policies where appropriate and find resources to act towards the implementation of future-proof food systems anchored in rural development and an integrated policy approach.

At the same time, we send yet another reminder to elected officials and industry actors that business-as-usual cannot continue without accounting for its true costs and consequences, and viable alternatives based on ecology, food quality, and solidarity exist. It is time now to invest in their scaling-up and consolidation, and stop their undermining or trivialisation in major EU policy proposals and reforms including the GMO deregulation, seed marketing legislation reform, or the Common Agricultural Policy.

Urgent actions for food system change

We demand immediate action on the ground and a new attempt for the EU initiative for a framework law on Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) following the EU elections directly in order to:

- 1. Stop inconsistent EU and national policy actions going fast and against sustainability:** for example GMO deregulation, toxic glyphosate renewal, “fairwashing”, the unequal distribution of Common Agricultural Policy interventions, poorly regulated trade agreements.
- 2. Create convergence among bottom-up movements, practices, engagements in the direction of sustainable food systems:** for example local food councils, local producers-consumers cooperatives, collective efforts in food education, marketing, distribution.
- 3. Fill gaps and the lack of integration in the existing regulatory, financial, governance systems:** rural, agri-food policies like the CAP are not fully equipped with the necessary framework to take joint responsibilities in the areas, such as rural resilience and wellbeing, healthy diets, access to land and commons, fair food markets.

Setting the Context

In a **spirit of open dialogue and collaboration**, over 100 people from 17 countries and many facets of society gathered for two days in Marburg in November 2023 to share their expertise and experience, and work together on future-proof food systems with an integrated approach and strong rural development component.

This gathering was the second in a series of European Rural Resilience gatherings co-hosted by ARC2020, with the first taking place in the French municipali-

ty of Plessé in September 2022. A next step was to build bridges from Plessé to rural resilience actions elsewhere in Europe, starting in Germany and with a special focus on sustainable food systems. While there are any number of regions, cities, towns and villages with a vibrant food activist environment, Marburg came to be the location for the 2023 European Action Gathering through the development of the partnership between ARC2020, AbL Germany and local partners kollektiv von MORGEN.



Photo: Adèle Violette

Why Marburg? Marburg itself is an inspiring city with many examples of alternative living. It is committed to climate policy through the political decision to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. At the same time, Marburg's surrounding area is strongly characterised by agriculture, with 40% of the land used for agriculture. Some food processing structures are also still present. And above all, there is a strong civil society alliance and pioneering political resolutions on sustainable food systems including a food council that brings together the various stakeholders in

the region and the “Marburger Gesundheitsgarten” and its wide range of offerings for citizens, four Community Supported Agriculture farms, working groups on sustainable food education, a politically viable resolution on sustainable kindergarten catering and, last but not least, various research projects that have scrutinised the region with regard to sustainable food systems.

Thinking about - and regulating - agriculture and food together

A multi-level and integrated transition to Sustainable Food Systems is needed and emerging. Many urban and rural initiatives show that this transformation is possible, and could be scaled up if regional, national and EU policymakers are ready to support it. However, there is still a lack of holistic frameworks for sustainable food systems at national and European level and in many regions, with which agriculture and food can be thought of and governed together. We strongly regret that the European Commission has abandoned the promised proposal for a European Framework law

for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS). We therefore appreciate the latest initiatives in Germany regarding a change in nutrition - both the recommendations of the Citizens' Council on "Nutrition in Transition" and the German government's nutrition strategy. However, these initiatives are primarily conceived from the perspective of food consumption, while other processes aim to change the agricultural system.

To get out of this silo mindset, we suggest a broader framework developed in the *Rural Europe Takes Action - Germany* cooperation project to bridge rural development with sustainable agri-food systems (Figure 1).

A rural bridge between sustainable agri and food policies in the EU

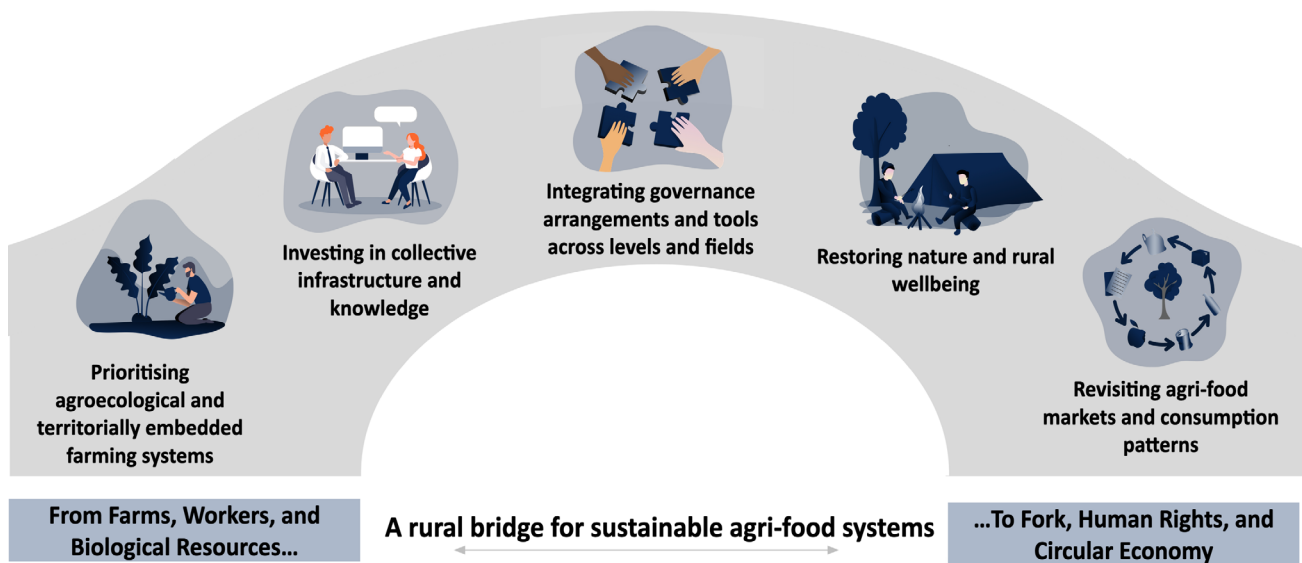


Fig. 1: A broader framework bridging rural development with sustainable agri-food systems

Moving from Visions and Principles to Actions

Transformative action is already happening **on the ground**, while European and national decision-makers are still producing visions¹ and rural pacts² without substantial support for systemic policy change in food systems. The principles of the actions we propose distance themselves from those of dominant industry actors that are strongly shaping our food systems towards individualism, loss of ecological, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, farm loss, environmental damage and inequalities.

We note that the concept of sustainability needs to include a clear positioning against false solutions and greenwashing. We need urgent actions to reverse mega-trends towards unhealthy diets, food inequality, disappearing farmers³, and environmentally damaging agri-food systems. We need rapid and viable changes in our food systems to ensure food security for the population AND improve the environmental, economic and social health of the municipality. This requires revisiting the links between development of the agri-food sector, the health of populations, and protection and development of the territory.



Photo: Adèle Violette

The result of the exchange in Marburg has been rich and exciting. As examples of successful approaches, we see strategic policy developments with an [integrated rural-](#)

[agri-food](#) approach emerging from small rural municipalities like [Plessé](#) (France) setting up a local agri-food policy or larger towns like [Marburg](#) (Germany) establishing local food councils, and in many other places in Europe where we work. Our plan builds on successes and experiences in Marburg and Plessé, and on the numerous civil society initiatives that are pushing for rapid and sustainable changes to our food systems.

Local action is a powerful starting point for climate and social justice. Local and regional autonomy in food systems is closely linked to a sense of place and identity, yet it shall support **cooperation and solidarity** with food actors further away, who also feed us and are often exploited, especially those in the European and the global south.

Diverse worldviews contribute to building a fairer food system, coherent with and respectful of social differences. We want to improve cooperation between generations in building sustainable food systems. Transition between generations on farms, in rural enterprises, education, training and social infrastructure must be sufficiently considered in rural, urban and food policies. Moreover, action for sustainable food systems must include people from **all social groups**. It is essential to stand up against all forms of discrimination and exclusion, which also exist in the food system.

Structural change in food systems requires a broader toolbox of actions than just public money or classic investments. While actions in the Marburg Action Plan are already happening in places, they require buy-in and redirection of actors from the local to EU level to be adapted and implemented in different contexts. While many **transformative actions** are driven locally, governmental and non-governmental institutions at all levels, as well as food industry actors, hold the power to back these actions with resources, collaboration and willingness to change, and by driving and advocating for these actions upwards and across sectors.

1 Long Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA): https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2021/06/30-06-2021-long-term-vision-for-rural-areas-for-stronger-connected-resilient-prosperous-eu-rural-areas

2 Rural Pact: https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/index_en

3 and also the disappearance of decentralised artisanal processing and marketing structures

Actionable Goals to Implement Future-Proof Food Systems

The six goals of the Marburg Action Plan stem from the co-creative work of participants at the European Action Gathering for Sustainable Food Systems, who collaborated on six themes: local agri-food and rural governance, access to land and commons, rural infrastructure for regional value chains, committed partnerships and collaboration, sustainable markets and consumption, and collective knowledge and capacity building for food system transformation. In this chapter, corresponding examples of Actions that should be taken and existing Inspirations that emerged from the working groups are listed for each of the six goals.

GOAL 1: Re-localisation and diversification of food systems with strong citizen engagement

Action National governments, regions and municipalities support and recognise local agri-food governance arrangements and the role of food policy councils, for example in strengthening local value chain networks.

- **Inspiration:** Food policy councils accelerate political transformation and civil society self-organisation by bringing together local food system actors in cities, municipalities and villages. They work for a sustainable transformation of regional food systems, in some cases with the participation of or in close cooperation with local governments. The [Network of Food Councils in German-speaking Countries](#) officially launched in 2023 with the motto “Food Democracy Now!”. The national level will provide advocacy and also a supraregional supportive structure for exchanging experiences, including about the establishment of local food councils.
- **Inspiration:** Territorial Food Programmes (PAT) in France are supported by a national network, [RnPAT](#). Resources for local food actors include a

[PAT observatory](#) and a [database](#) of experiences and legal information.

Action The EU and national governments create opportunities for municipalities, regions and cities to allocate EU funds in the service of sustainable local food systems.

- **Inspiration:** While this action underscores the need for systemic rural-agri-food policy transformation at EU and national levels, the case of [Plessé](#) (FR) shows how elected representatives in a municipality can take action together with inhabitants and drive food and farming transformation locally. However, since agricultural policy lies outside the competence of the municipality, the budgetary impact is a barrier to the development and spread of this initiative.



Photo: Robert Bosch Stiftung / Heinrich Völkel / Agentur Ostkreuz

GOAL 2: Connection and coordination of local and regional food actors, initiatives and tools for regional food systems

Action Municipalities, common good oriented companies and NGOs maintain and develop medium-sized storage and processing structures for regional food.

- **Inspiration:** [3 Fonteinen](#) Brewery (BE) has developed an organic farmers' cereal collective to supply 100% local raw ingredients. The brewery has taken responsibility for investing in storage and sorting equipment to ensure quality cereals for brewing. It also engaged in a participatory research focussed on different wheat and barley varieties suited to the terroir, and co-created a new pricing and risk-sharing model with the farmers.
- **Inspiration:** [Neumarkter Lammsbräu](#) brewery (DE) works together with a producers' group, which they founded, and established a centralised grain store for producers.

Action National, regional and local administrations, common good oriented companies and civil society create coordination centres for regional value creation and fund key jobs.

- **Inspiration:** [Manger Demain](#) (BE) provides Wallonia with a global vision, a working methodology and a targeted work plan on a priority theme for the next four years.
- **Inspiration:** The German Federal Government, under the [Guideline for the Promotion of Organic Value Chains](#), offers funding for the establishment and significant expansion of organic value chains for organic products, preferably in and for the region.
- **Inspiration:** The federal association for the German regional movement ([Bundesverband der Regionalbewegung](#)) established a concept for "value creation centres" as a space for exchange, education, advice, processing and marketing together on the regional level.

Action Municipalities, regional and national initiatives fund key positions for food system connectors (within farms, manufacturing companies, shops, canteens, civil society organisations and administration).

- **Inspiration:** The House of Sustainable Food Education ([MEAD](#)) in Mouans-Sartoux (FR) works to make healthy, sustainable food accessible to all of the town's inhabitants. 100% organic meals are served in the school canteens. MEAD employs a team of animators for specific missions: food quality, agricultural land, schools education, community education. Additionally, it has coordinators of projects to disseminate learnings to other territories in France and the wider Europe (BioCanteens Transfer Network, Coopération inter-PAT, URBACT BioCanteens #2).
- **Inspiration:** [RainKost Obermühle](#) in Görlitz (DE) practices community supported agriculture with an inclusive approach for restaurants, hotels, and school and kindergarten catering.

Action Local governments sponsor "speed-dating" events to connect producers, manufacturers, processors, restaurants and other food system actors.

- **Inspiration:** In succession cafes in [Plessé](#) (FR), aspiring farmers can meet with farmers who are retiring.

Action Municipalities and initiatives define the term "critical infrastructure" to encompass regional, decentralised supply structures and thus strengthen public welfare-oriented value creation and supply structures for a resilient food system.

- **Inspiration:** [The Free Bakers](#) collaboratively build fair and ecological regional value chains from seed to bread in different locations across Germany, Austria, Poland and northern Italy.
- **Inspiration:** The [LogRegio - rethinking regional value chains](#) project (DE) is working together with the [nearbuy](#) organisation on the digital implementation of logistics functions for regional value chains.

GOAL 3: Inclusion and equality for people of all ages, social classes, genders, ethnic and racial groups and sexual orientations in agri-food governance

Action Municipalities put in place community-based governance involving all inhabitants who wish to engage in the definition of local agricultural and food policy.

- **Inspiration:** In [Plessé](#) (FR) the municipality is committed to **participatory democracy**. Policies are constructed together with local residents. Everyone in Plessé, from the age of 14, is invited to get involved and become a VIP: Volunteer Invested in Plessé.
- **Inspiration:** The youth centre [Jugendbildungswerk Marburg](#) (DE) focuses on the topic of nutrition as a part of its health-oriented activities. Participants regularly cook together and raise awareness of organic, fair trade, seasonal and regional ingredients.

Action Develop a food community programme that integrates and connects existing structures including schools, sports groups, senior homes, trade unions, co-ops, churches.

- **Inspiration:** Marburg's first [LebensMittelPunkt](#) was established in the city district of Wehrda (DE). In addition to a seasonal garden project and gardening projects for children and adults, there is a neighbourhood market and soon a regional shop. The aim is to create neighbourhood meeting places around the topic of food, and to pursue an ambitious goal: food sovereignty for the district by 2030. The "LebensMittelPunkt" (wordplay merging "food" and "centre point") is a project of the Marburg Food Council and is supported by funds from the state of Hesse and the city of Marburg.
- **Inspiration:** The Berlin Food Strategy (DE) has a number of projects relating to food and community. For example, "enjoyment ambassadors" are trained in healthy, wholesome family cooking ([Genussbotschafterinnen und Genussbotschafter für Familien](#)).

Action Civil society and municipalities communicate on social and individual benefits of sustainable food systems to get out of our echo chambers.

- **Inspiration:** The [ABCD Innovation Center](#) (Armenia) energises change and development from within the community, finding the area where local assets meet local needs. ABCD is not trying to "fix" communities, but rather help them to unleash their true potential.

Action Vocational schools, educational institutions in rural areas, and rural women's organisations provide easy access to soft skills training for communication, mediation, presentation and participation.

- **Inspiration:** The [CIVAM](#) network for agroecological transition (FR) spotlights gender diversity as an emancipatory space for learning. Through its committee on gender in rural areas, CIVAM showcases the work of rural women and facilitates access to machinery and physical practices, and provides tools for emancipation and autonomy.

Action Support experimentation, experimenters and volunteers at local level.

- **Inspiration:** [Weidehof](#) in Gilserberg, Hesse (DE) is a 130 hectare mixed family farm that has been farming organically for 30 years and has a focus on soil fertility and health. The generation change from parents to young farmer is currently taking place. The latter is experimenting with different crops and cultivation methods and running inspiring collaborations including with a local bakery chain. His parents support their son's ambitious plans. The joy of experimentation is limited by the capacity constraints of a family farm with no additional employees.

Action National, regional and local authorities promote and create participatory processes for citizen participation and civil society involvement in the development and implementation of strategies for sustainable food, without reducing civil society to services.

- **Inspiration:** [Manger Demain](#) or “Eating Tomorrow” (BE) is a strategy and an organisation that aims to coordinate, link and facilitate local and regional initiatives around sustainable food. Adopted by the Walloon Government in 2018 and voted unanimously by the Walloon Parliament in April 2019,

Manger Demain provides Wallonia with a global vision, a working methodology and a targeted work plan to 2024.

- **Inspiration:** [Fair Trade Towns](#) and fair trade districts, like Marburg and the Marburg-Biedenkopf district, are the result of a successful network of actors from civil society, politics and business who work together to promote fair trade at a local level. Critiques of the Fairtrade movement notwithstanding, the mobilisation and commitment of so many people and communities shows that change is possible. Programmes like this can be an entry point for the process of developing a food strategy.



“Food for Action” inclusive panel debate, Marburg, 8 November 2023: (l-r) Oliver Conz, State Secretary of the Hesse Ministry for the Environment, Climate Protection, Agriculture and Consumer Protection; Saskia Richartz, Network of Food Policy Councils in Germany; Tim Treis, Hessen Organic Farming Association (VÖL Hessen e. V.) and Hessian alliance for the agricultural and food transition; Thierry Lohr, Municipality of Plessé; moderators Hannes Lorenzen (ARC2020) and Merle Drusenbaum (Kollektiv von Morgen); Claudia Smolka, AbL Hessen; Nadine Bernshausen, Mayor of the City of Marburg; Phillip Brändle, AbL and coordinator of German Platform of Associations on the CAP; Silvia Bender, German State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture. The empty chair in the middle is for the European Commission (DG AGRI and SANTE), which declined the invitation to participate. Photo: Adèle Violette



Photo: Robert Bosch Stiftung / Heinrich Völkel / Agentur Ostkreuz

GOAL 4: Trust, cooperation and co-creation between value chain actors

Action Regions, municipalities, businesses, education institutions and civil society empower food system actors through partnerships.

- **Inspiration:** The research network [VÖL-Hessen e.V.](#) (DE) facilitates tandem partnerships where scientists and farmers have jointly designed and implemented projects, learning from each other in practice.
- **Inspiration:** [Université des Sciences et Pratiques Gastronomiques](#) (FR) works with farmers and agronomists to train cooks in how to prepare local, seasonal dishes.
- **Inspiration:** [RainKost Obermühle](#) in Görlitz (DE) practices community supported agriculture with an inclusive approach for the catering and hotel industry.

Action Regions, local governments and civil society develop partnerships and model regions together with incentives and support systems for improved networking of all stakeholders working for regional, fair and ecological food systems.

- **Inspiration:** The emerging partnership between Plessé and Marburg is just one example highlighting the power in connecting with experiences and movements in different countries.

- **Inspiration:** In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture is promoting model regions for the [Ernährungswende in der Region](#) (regional nutrition transition), in order to support innovative concepts for healthy and sustainable food in different regions of Germany that are transferable to other regions and are developed in dialogue with different social groups.

Action Küchenstammtische (regular kitchen get-togethers) on a regional level

- **Inspiration:** [House of Food Frankfurt](#) (DE) uses out-of-home catering as a lever for food transition. It links kitchen and canteen managers who already focus on more sustainability and those who would like to change to more organic regional food and more sustainable processes.

Action Civil society connects with and through established networks (inter-regional and between local, regional, national and EU levels) and shares best practices, challenges and solutions, empathy and solidarity and hope.

- **Inspiration:** [Good Food Good Farming](#) is a civil society alliance that campaigns for sustainable food and farming across Europe, bringing together groups and organisations who are active at local, national and EU level to put pressure on decision makers for a transition of EU food and farming policies.

GOAL 5: Sustainable food markets and other forms of distribution that are easier and fairer so that sustainable food is accessible for all

Action National, regional and local authorities, food industry actors and civil society adapt bureaucracy to make sustainable food markets easier, just, and beneficial for all actors.

- **Inspiration:** [Manger Demain](#) (DE) created and animates a toolbox for helping producers and canteens with meeting the food market requirements (e.g., templates, participatory events to understand and adapt rules, list of good practices). Moreover, governments can provide financial support for small producers to meet food rules or showcase positive examples where enabling bureaucracy made a difference for sustainable food practices.
- **Inspiration:** To sell farm products directly the [association of direct sellers in Hesse](#) (DE) collaborated with supermarket chain REWE on the “Landmarkt” programme. There are special shelves in each store and the farmers themselves define the prices.
- **Inspiration:** [Ökomodellregion Schwalm-Eder](#) (DE), a programme of the Hessian Ministry for the Environment, is bringing stakeholders together to develop transparent rules and processes for “Weidetierschuss”, allowing on-farm slaughter of livestock in certain cases, in order to avoid the stress of transport for animals. This is a response to the diminishing slaughter infrastructure for operations outside the industrial mould.

Action Regions, municipalities and local initiatives use public canteens as a lever to provide and support ecological, healthy, fair, regional food.

- **Inspiration:** Mouans-Sartoux (FR) serves 100% organic school meals with most of the produce coming from the municipal farm.
- **Inspiration:** The [Offene Schule Waldau](#) in Kassel (DE) serves 100% organic food and pupils and parents participate in the running of it for learning opportunities as well as affordability.



Photo: Adèle Violette

Action Regions, local governments and civil society create a green canteen certification with multidimensional sustainability criteria.

- **Inspiration:** Through the [Eco-Schools](#) programme, young people can have a say in the environmental management policies of their schools and steer them towards “Green Flag” certification.
- **Inspiration:** The [En Cuisine ecocert for canteens](#) (FR) takes into account societal, environmental and public health factors. The criteria relate not just to the food served but also to the overall running of the canteen: use of local, organic, fair and healthy produce; meat-free menus; sustainable logistics, ecological waste management and energy and water usage.

Action Nations, regions, municipalities and food industry actors simplify and enable access to “expensive” regional and organic food

- **Inspiration:** The Wallonian Regional Authority (BE) reimbursed up to 50% or 70% of the invoices respectively for local and organic food in public procurement (canteens, schools, hospitals).
- **Inspiration:** The Wallonian Regional Authority and [Manger Demain](#) (BE) issued vouchers for €2 to €10 to incentivise consumers to buy food in a network of local shops.
- **Inspiration:** Aligning sustainability and digitalisation, [OpenOlitor GHS](#) (DE) offers digital support to CSAs, and is building a Germany-wide hosting community for the open source application.

Action Municipalities, civil society and public institutions build a network of sustainable canteens to join in the process

- **Inspiration:** In 2005, the city of Marburg decided that municipal kindergartens should be supported in switching to organic or regional food. To this end, the kitchen staff in the kindergartens were trained by an employee of the health department and supported in the procurement process.
- **Inspiration:** The networking centre [Vernetzungsstelle Schulverpflegung Hessen](#) (DE) is the service point for all stakeholders in the integration of a comprehensive concept for health promotion in schools. It is linked to the Hessian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. The aim is to support schools in Hesse in providing

healthy, accepted and economically viable meals. School catering is a key component of this.

Action Local governments make an inventory of studies on the true cost of the current food system, communicating the data in a simple and intelligible manner as evidence for the required transformation.

- **Inspiration:** The FAO recently published [a study](#) which found that agrifood systems impose costs equivalent to at least \$10 trillion dollars a year on health, the environment and society.
- **Inspiration:** [Manger Demain](#) is organising a public event in February 2024 with market experts, consumers and producers to estimate and raise awareness about the true cost behind the food we eat.



Photo: Robert Bosch Stiftung / Heinrich Völkel / Agentur Ostkreuz

GOAL 6: Access to land and commons for sustainable food production

Action Municipalities, farmers and civil society form alliances and citizen initiatives to stop land grabbing.

- **Inspiration:** [Terre de Liens](#) acquires agricultural land to facilitate the installation of existing and future farmers and preserve peasant and organic agriculture in France.
- **Inspiration:** [Netzwerk Flächensicherung](#) is an alliance of initiatives in Germany that secures land for more ecological, regional and peasant farming.

Action Municipalities make land available for agriculture.

- **Inspiration:** The Ulm model whereby the city owns about 40% of the land and actively prevents speculation.
- **Inspiration:** In France, there are [two legislative tools](#) to protect agricultural land: Protected Agricultural Zones (ZAP) and Perimeters for the Protection of Peri-urban Agricultural and Natural Zones (PAEN).
- **Inspiration:** SAFER rural development agencies in France have the first right to purchase agricultural land. The agency acts as a supervisory body that ensures that the land remains in agricultural use in the long term when it is sold.

Action Countries, regions, municipalities and research institutions assess the land available in the municipality through a food sovereignty lens, to identify deficits in specific products.

- **Inspiration:** In France, the Territorial Food Programme (Projet Alimentaire du Territorial or P.A.T.), led by Redon Agglomération (a grouping of local authorities), showed a marked deficit in fruits, vegetables and other types of food in the area. [Plessé](#) municipality recognises the need to accommodate the diversified farming models proposed by new entrants. To achieve this, the mayor's office

connects new entrants in the area with farms that share a similar energy.

- **Inspiration:** The LogRegio project (DE) [analysed](#) land use in the state of Hesse comparing how many people could be fed with the planetary health diet vs with current diets.

Action Local and national governments together with civil society and citizen initiatives promote more sustainable ownership and leasing structures that ensure sustainable land use in the long term (including communal forms of land ownership).

- **Inspiration:** The AbL common good leasing initiative ([Gemeinwohl-orientierte Verpachtung](#)) provides criteria for municipalities and private landowners to guide decisions on who should get to lease the land. Going above and beyond market considerations, criteria include climate protection, nature conservation, labour rights, maintenance and development of peasant farms.

Action Civil society and regional authorities create a “Tinder for farms” centralising and simplifying access, transfer, regulation and management of agricultural land with the objective of leading the agroecological transformation.

- **Inspiration:** The municipality of [Plessé](#) (FR) offers support in the handover of farms to all farmers approaching retirement age. This is one measure taken in pursuit of the goal to maintain the number of farms in the area.

Action Public and private investments as well as citizen initiatives provide financial and community support for new entrants.

- **Inspiration:** [Terre de Liens](#) (FR) supports candidates to enter farming and landowners handing over. The organisation follows up with farmers installed to perform the duties of the landowner (maintenance, works) and maintain contact with the farmer.

What Comes Next? Share Your Stories of Food System Changes

The Marburg Action Plan is a snapshot of the transition. The actions and inspiration to change our food systems are not stopping here, nor can they. In this section we share some additional stories of how this stream of action continues on local, regional, national and European level after the gathering in Marburg:

Example 1. kollektiv von MORGEN

The kollektiv von MORGEN e.V. is an association of people from Marburg and the surrounding region who use their skills in education for sustainable development (ESD) and facilitation (e.g. in citizen participation processes, event planning and conception, moderation and communication) to promote sustainability issues in the city and district at various levels.

At the local level, the European Action Gathering for Sustainable Food Systems was the kick-off for the Rural Europe Takes Action (RETA) - Germany project, which is funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation until the end of February 2025. Within this framework, at the local level kollektiv von MORGEN will continue to accompany and support the newly initiated and already existing networks in the region as well as the realisation of project ideas and actions in the context of the action plan, with the aim of achieving concrete changes. We see it as our task to...

- ... bring together already active players and initiatives in the Marburg area who are pursuing similar ideas.
- ... sensitise and inspire citizens, politicians and administration with good arguments, educational and lobbying work on the need for action for sustainable food systems
- ... tell success stories and highlight the scope for action that encourages people to work towards a food transition, and to provide contacts to existing projects.
- ... initiate cooperation and, if necessary and desired, to accompany processes through advice,

moderation, etc., as well as to invite actors to networking exchange events.

We will pursue individual action points from this document in the region in cooperation with organisations and initiatives that are also active in these areas, such as the local food council (Ernährungsrat Marburg und Umgebung, EMU), AbL Hessen, LogRegio, the creativity and social innovation hub (CIM), Green Office Marburg, the working group on nutrition education (Arbeitskreis Ernährungsbildung) and others:

1. We will cooperate with (pilot) canteens and look for ways to make it easier for them to switch to sourcing local and sustainable food.
2. To improve the regional infrastructure for local value chains, we are looking for interested parties, financing options and adapted shareholder models for the purchase of a potato peeling machine in the district.
3. We support local efforts to develop a land policy geared towards the common good and a local food strategy.
4. All of this requires accompanying educational work, for which we will initiate the development of a food education strategy.

We will also work with regional organisations on other topics to further develop the actions proposed in this document, always drawing inspiration from examples such as the projects of the municipalities of Plessé and Mouans-Sartoux, and continuing to support the formation of partnerships within the region, such as between the Sarah Wiener Foundation and the Health Department.

We hope that by the end of 2024, we will be a big step closer to a sustainable food system in our region. And of course, we will stick to our approach of participation and co-creation in these processes!

Example 2: Ariège Territorial Food Programme

In the south of France, the Ariège Territorial Food Programme (Projet alimentaire territorial – PAT) is a cooperation between 237 rural municipalities (led by the PETR - Pôle d'Equilibre Territorial et Rural de l'Ariège) that is elaborating a local food strategy with the help of a Local Food Council. Making the long journey from Ariège to Marburg, the programme officer, along with the mayor of the village of Pailhès, were impressed by the diversity of actors at the gathering, and the strength of citizen-centred initiatives. They take back learnings from Marburg to their committees and projects, and look forward to sharing the action plan with their community. Going forward, they plan to weave connections wherever possible between the Ariège PAT and Marburg.

Encouraged by the experiences and concrete actions that can be replicated in terms of agroecology and short supply chains for healthy, sustainable products, as set out in the Marbourg Action Plan, the elected representatives of the village of Pailhès in Ariège, France, have decided to take action in favour of virtuous food systems such as those encouraged by the PETR in Ariège. As a result, **Pailhès is planning to set up a municipal farm (an orchard and market garden) on a 2.5 hectare plot of land, in partnership with women farmers** who are currently producing aromatic and medicinal plants and berries, under the umbrella of a public-private structure – such as a non-profit association, or a cooperative (SCIC) – to manage production/marketing. The objectives are as follows:

- Citizen engagement and shared governance to ensure local and sustainable produce for schools, markets, cafes and restaurants, and potentially supply the departmental platform with local produce.
- Creation of a “nourishing” third space to reconnect agriculture and food by building community and weaving intergenerational, cross-sector and complementary ties.

- Transition and adaptation to climate change through agroecology, and an increase in biodiversity in terms of quantity and quality.
- Experimentation and innovation in the mobilisation of all stakeholders in relation to key social issues (socio-economic, environmental, health, local planning, etc.).

Example 3: “Future is served: Shaping food systems together”

There are many good reasons for local authorities to think about nutrition. Our food shapes our landscapes, cities and villages, it can contribute to climate protection and resilience, and it influences the health of citizens. With the **Future is served** programme, the Robert Bosch Stiftung wants to support municipalities in rural areas in engaging with local people in order to shape regional food systems in a participatory way.

Municipalities wanted for active food policy!

The Robert Bosch Stiftung is supporting up to 10 municipalities in rural areas in Germany with a total of €1.2 million. Politicians, civil society and the (rural) economy are working together with citizens to examine their local food system and explore possible ways of shaping it. During a 2-year funding phase, the selected municipalities and initiatives will receive professional support in the development of their projects, networking and the implementation of measures.

More information at: <https://www.bosch-stiftung.de/de/projekt/zukunft-aufgetischt>

Call for Action and Alignment among Food System Actors

We call on a diverse range of actors to ally and find synergies for the stories reported in this document to become the rule, not stay niche. Networks of local food councils and policies, as seen in France, Germany and beyond, need to become the space for transformative policy change and democratic development of viable alternatives to the business-as-usual mindset. Farmers and other rural actors all over Europe must be reached and included at the local level with the aim of converging multiple territorial and social justice perspectives in agri-food developments.

We demand and advocate for political commitment and resources where **action for the development and preservation of fair and ecological food systems is already happening**. We acknowledge that, with agricultural and agri-food practices and policy so tightly interconnected, in co-evolution, it is difficult to bring about deep changes in our food systems. How can we get the dominant players in the system, especially the big corporations, to take part in the collective effort for greater sustainability? Establishing a meaningful dialogue means shifting the balance of power from corporations to communities. We need to put in place governance processes and spaces, where the voices, demands and proposals of civil society and social movements are heard.

EU legislation reaches deep into and shapes national and regional structures, but sufficient alignment between the EU policies and those at national, regional and local level is often missing. Yet neither civil society, local communities, regional, national governments nor the EU alone can find solutions to the major challenges and crises we face. Rather, **coherence and collaboration** is needed between multiple governance levels and perspectives intersecting in food systems, from farming to health, education, trade, infrastructure and quality of life in rural areas.

Because it is informed by effective local food policies and initiatives, this Action Plan could be one of the foundations of a national and European policy framework for sustainable food systems. With the ideas in this document we can break away from a farming system based CAP-direct-payments discussion towards the acknowledgement of a whole food system approach, which takes into account all actors and interactions of food value chains. The Action Plan can be a complementary document to the suggestions developed by the first German citizens council established on the topic of “transition of our food system”.

With the Marburg Action Plan for Future-proof Food Systems, we commit to long-term cooperation across political and social boundaries between local actors, cooperatives and similar organisations, rural and urban municipalities and communities to reach **critical mass for the necessary system changes**.

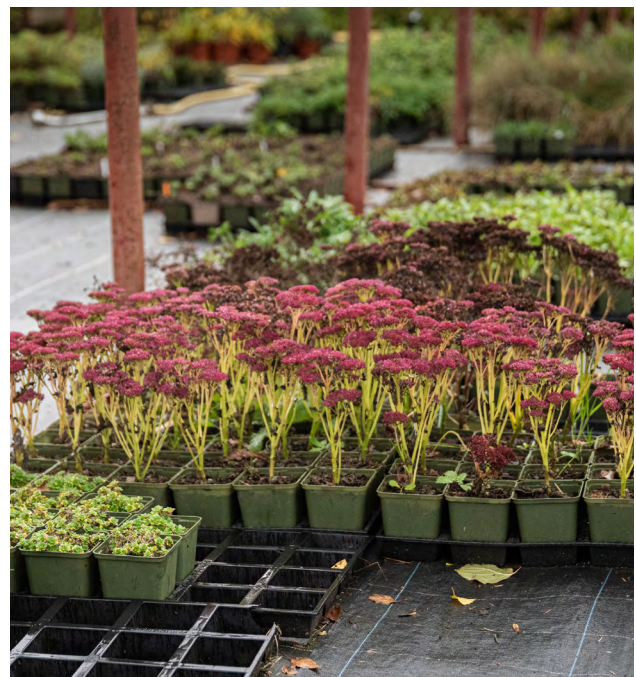


Photo: Robert Bosch Stiftung / Heinrich Völkel / Agentur Ostkreuz

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