



UPDATED CONCEPT NOTE: OCTOBER 2017

TOWARDS A COMMON FOOD POLICY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION A 3-year process of research, reflection and citizen engagement

Over 2016-2019, IPES-Food is undertaking a collaborative process of research and reflection to identify what tools would be required to deliver sustainable food systems in Europe. The 'Common Food Policy' vision that emerges will offer a Plan B for the EU as it considers reforming the Common Agricultural Policy and other policy frameworks. Through a series of multi-stakeholder 'policy labs' in Brussels and around Europe, the process will bridge the different policy areas (agriculture, trade, environment, health, etc.) and different policy levels (EU, national, local) through which food systems are governed, identifying priorities for reform and bringing them together under a single roof. The sustainable food scoreboard that emerges will align various policies and incentives with the goal of delivering sustainable food systems, while building around the grassroots initiatives already reshaping food systems at the local level.

Why does Europe need a 'Common Food Policy'?

European citizens may choose the food they put into their shopping baskets, but they have not chosen the food systems that serve up that food. **There is currently no EU 'food policy'**. Instead, the food we eat and the food systems we enjoy are shaped by a variety of distinct policy frameworks: agriculture, food safety and public health, trade, environmental protection, climate and energy, economic and social cohesion, rural development and international development, employment and education.

These policies are developed largely in isolation from each other. They are formed by policymakers working within their specific policy areas, in dialogue with industry groups, civil society organizations and scientific bodies whose own interests are often bounded by the same political and disciplinary siloes. **Policies at various governance levels are also disconnected from each other.** Few attempts have been made to systematically link local-level initiatives affecting food systems (e.g. arising from city-level authorities or local civil society groups) to policies adopted at the national or EU levels. Food systems are therefore subject to imperatives that potentially conflict and counter-act each other, while major opportunities are missed to build on local initiatives in order to accelerate collective learning.

The need for new policy responses is made all the more pressing by the **multiple crises now afflicting food systems** in the EU and around the world, from burgeoning obesity to environmental degradation and pressures on farmers' livelihoods. Our current decision-making processes and policy frameworks are ill-equipped to address these crises. Rather



than responding to a set of publically-agreed priorities, our food systems are the by-product of political compromises struck between competing interests in various fora. The lack of a coherent food policy, cutting across sectors and joining up different levels of governance, means that accountability is hugely dispersed. When poor outcomes arise, no-one can be held to account. With neither a pilot nor a flight plan, it is possible to ignore how badly food systems have veered off-course.

What does a 'Common Food Policy' mean, and how do we get there?

This is both a problem and a major opportunity. Food is an entry point for joined-up policymaking across multiple sectors and governance levels, and for reconnecting European citizens with the policy measures put in place by their elected representatives.

Consultations on the future of the CAP are already underway, while a mid-term review of the EU's 2014-2020 budget is also being undertaken. However, examining the efficacy of the CAP is only one part of what is needed to lay the foundations for sustainable food systems in Europe. Moreover, EU-level policies are only one piece of the puzzle. What is required is to bridge the different policy areas (agriculture, trade, environment, health etc) and different policy levels (EU, national, local) through which food systems are governed. In April 2016, IPES-Food launched a **three-year process of research and reflection** to co-develop this vision. The 'Common Food Policy' roadmap that emerges will align various policies and incentives with the goal of delivering sustainable food systems, ensuring that healthy diets, resilient ecosystems and decent livelihoods for farmers and food workers are key objectives – not footnotes – of the policies affecting food systems. Rather than implementing policies and hoping they will spark sustainable food systems around Europe, this process will build policies around the grassroots initiatives already reshaping food systems at the local level. The vision that emerges will offer a **'Plan B' for the EU** as it considers reforming the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other EU policy frameworks for the post-2020 period.

The **research and reflection process** is structured around a series of multi-stakeholder meetings co-organized by IPES-Food and a range of partners in Brussels (**Policy Labs**) and around Europe (**Local Labs**). In parallel, IPES-Food will develop a series of written outputs (**Policy Briefs**) to capture the findings of the discussions and to explore reform opportunities. The process will culminate in a **major public event in Spring 2018** serving as a **deliberative forum** to co-construct the final phases of the Common Food Policy vision and as a **rallying point for Europe's sustainable food movements**. The briefs and the 2018 forum will feed into a **final report** to be delivered to EU policymakers in late 2018.

By widening the lens from agriculture to food systems, and by building from local initiatives upward, the project will aim to tap into and strengthen the **citizen engagement** around reforming food and farming systems. Supporting the emergence of a unified **sustainable food movement** in Europe is both a *means* to building a Common Food Policy vision, and an *end*: the process of co-construction and the forming of alliances are as important as the



final content - the "sustainable food scoreboard" we shall aim to arrive at. Each Lab will act as a stepping stone in developing mutual ownership, shared visions and coalitions of interest - ranging from environmental NGOs to public health professional associations, from grassroots cooperative initiatives to EU level farming and food industry groups. And crucially, extending to the **policymakers** whose involvement and buy-in will be essential to ensure that a viable policy vision emerges.

These different components of the project, and the latest timetable of meetings, are described in the annexes below.

ANNEX 1: Policy Labs

The **Policy Labs** at the heart of this process will see IPES-Food convene 25-30 people, including scientists, policymakers, civil society and food and farming sector actors, to engage in 3-hour round-table discussions. The Labs will be hosted in the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels, but participation will not be limited to Brussels-based organizations and institutions. Each Lab will be focused on a key *nexus* in food systems, i.e. the focal points where various policy imperatives, regulations, incentives and trends converge to shape our food systems (see Provisional Roadmap below). As such, the Labs are designed to bridge policy areas and constituencies that are typically kept apart (e.g. agriculture and nutrition, trade and environment). The discussions will take place under Chatham House rules, allowing for open dialogue and for common ground to be sought between different positions.

ANNEX 2: Local Labs

While the Policy Labs held in Brussels focus on the disconnects between policy areas, a complementary series of 'Local Labs' will zoom in on specific city-regions to see how efforts to build sustainable food systems locally are affected by policies and imperatives at different levels. Local labs will be co-convened by IPES-Food and a local research/advocacy-based partner. While all 'local labs' will involve reflections on multi-level governance of a 'Common Food Policy', they will feed into, support and take place within existing processes/forums for developing local food policies. They will typically involve around 50 participants, including local level policymakers, representatives of food policy councils, members of research institutions, members of local sustainable food, circular economy and transition initiatives (e.g. producers, consumers and retailers), those responsible for institutional procurement (e.g. schools, hospitals), and urban and regional planners. The labs will also seek to engage regional and national-level actors (e.g. regional confederations of CSAs, national farm unions, civil society coalitions, agriculture ministries) in order to connect the opportunities and challenges at different levels. More specifically, the Local Labs will be structured around the following objectives:

- Supporting efforts to build sustainable food systems at the local and regional level, by bringing together different strands of local food policy activity (e.g. city administration-led processes and civil society or research-led fora) where there is scope for greater cohesion and mutual information-sharing; bringing the voices of cities into the debate on the future of food and farming systems across Europe, and raising the profile of 'city-regions' as a locus of food system transition;
- Understanding how imperatives at the EU and national level (including implementation of EU policies) help or hinder efforts to build sustainable local/territorial food systems; stimulating local actors to think about and engage with the opportunities and blockages that result from EU-level policies;
- Providing a space for dialogue and alliance-building between those advocating for



food systems reform from various *entry points* (health, environment, etc), and at *various levels*: local, regional, national and European.

ANNEX 3: Policy Briefs

A series of **Policy Briefs** will be developed and published by IPES-Food throughout the three-year process, building on independent research and on the discussions at the Policy Labs and Local Labs. The Policy Briefs will act as component parts or initial installments of the Common Food Policy vision, and will start to trace out the sustainable food scoreboard we will ultimately build. Each Policy Brief will address a specific nexus of issues and describe the various interactions between policy areas and between different levels of government, as well as identifying the types of action, alliances and policy measures that might have the greatest multiplier effects in terms of improving multiple outcomes across food systems.

The Policy Briefs and the 2018 forum (see Annex 4) will feed into the **final report** IPES-Food will deliver to policymakers in 2018. The experiences and exchanges aired at the Local Labs will also be built into the Policy Briefs and the final report, acting as mini-case studies to bring insights from different food systems within the European food system, and ensuring that the final Common Food Policy vision remains focused on putting EU-level policies at the service of supporting diverse locally-defined sustainable food systems. Additional written outputs may be developed by IPES-Food and co-convening partners following the Local Labs.

ANNEX 4: Major public event (Spring 2018)

In 2018, IPES-Food plans to organize a major multi-stakeholder event as the culmination of the process thus far. The event would bring together many of those involved along the way in the Policy Labs and Local Labs, as well as actors yet to be engaged in the process. Those assembled would include policy-makers, NGOs, social movements, scientific researchers and farming and food industry actors. Crucially, the event would unite the actors and processes building sustainable food systems at various levels, including the key actors of various national-level processes towards "people's food policies" (similar processes are underway in the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden, and may be launched in Denmark, France and the UK).

Over the course of a two and a half day event in Brussels, these actors will work collaboratively to refine the Common Food Policy vision and map out the way forward through a process of collective intelligence, combining plenary discussions and discussions in workshop-format. The discussions and findings to date of the Common Food Policy process, documented in the Policy Briefs (see Annex 3), will provide a starting point for discussions. Actors at the event will build on these findings, while reflecting on



the way forward and engaging in collective priority-setting, in order to arrive at a "sustainable food scoreboard": a set of objectives, associated with indicators to measure progress, and with a precise timeline and allocation of responsibilities across different levels of governance. As a tool to stimulate discussion, the 'scoreboard' will identify within the various sectors that should be integrated in a Common Food Policy not only the priorities but also when and by whom (e.g. EU institutions, EU Member States) the actions should be taken.

While the event will act as a crucial step in defining a specific 'Common Food Policy' vision, it also represents a broadening out of the process to a wider and more open-ended form of engagement and deliberative democracy. **Key partners with whom IPES-Food has been collaborating closely throughout the process will be approached to co-organize and co-convene the event.** As indicated above, a 'Common Food Policy' refers to an integrated set of policies aligned around delivering 'sustainable food systems'. It is hoped that a wide range of actors can embrace, advocate for and help to build a 'Common Food Policy' approach, even if their own priorities and interpretations are not fully reflected in IPES-Food's written outputs. Furthermore, the event will aim to **strengthen and bring visibility to the emergence of a broad, EU-wide alliance (a 'sustainable food movement')** across different constituencies and different scales and locuses of action, and act as a rallying point for placing integrated policies for sustainable food systems at the top of the political agenda. The event will be designed in order to serve and accommodate the different ends of different partners : advocacy NGOs shall raise the profile of their campaigns ; grassroots actors shall network with their counterparts in different regions ; policymakers shall interact with and be exposed to the breadth of food systems stakeholders and alternatives ; new alliances will emerge ; and all will learn. The event will build on IPES-Food's policy labs and local labs, but also on a range of reflections on food and farming system reform convened by civil society groups and other actors over the coming months. The 2018 event will pick up where these reflections have left off, both in terms of the content of discussions and the actors involved.

ANNEX 5: Private sector engagement

Throughout this process IPES-Food seeks meaningful engagement with food industry actors, from start-up restaurants to national coops to multi-national food processors and retailers. **One of the key challenges facing the European and global food industry is to reconcile the competing requirements of consumers – for *cheap* food, and for *quality* food.** Too often, the bargaining power of highly consolidated industry players has been used to push down farmgate prices and to sell foods at low and discounted prices, helping to create an expectation of cheap food among consumers, and thus locking the food industry into this model. With few alternatives to the dominant buyers and retailers, farmers have found their margins squeezed to breaking point and struggle to break even – let alone to be able to consider a transition to the sustainable practices increasingly demanded by consumers. IPES-Food seeks to bring food industry players, farmers' groups

and other actors together to find a way to exit this treadmill. While these questions will be addressed in the Policy Labs and Local Labs, IPES-Food will also seek to engage in **dedicated consultation with food industry actors**, in order to pave the way for meaningful interactions, and to ensure that the Common Food Policy vision reflects the realities and aspirations of progressive-minded food industry actors. IPES-Food is therefore considering to convene a **private sector workshop** based around mutually-framed goals.

ANNEX 6: Timeline of activities

2016	
Policy Lab 1: June 27, 2016 (Brussels)	The agriculture-food-health nexus in the EU: How could diets (and the incidence of diet-related non-communicable diseases) be improved by the type of agriculture that is practiced and the policies supporting it? Can these outcomes be improved by policies favouring agricultural and dietary diversity? What is the role of nutritional guidelines in this regard, and how can such guidelines influence agricultural production?
Policy Lab 2: December 7, 2016 (Brussels)	The Food Environment: How and to what extent are consumer food choices determined by the role of advertising, food education, supermarket discounting, portion sizes, and other elements of the 'food environment'? How could policies and regulations be adapted to make this environment more conducive to healthy diets?
2017	
Policy Lab 3: March 29, 2017 (Brussels – European Parliament)	Alternative food systems in the EU: Which regulatory and policy frameworks can best support local-level initiatives towards sustainable food systems in the form of short supply chains or other alternative systems? Are alternative food systems accessible and affordable to a majority of producers and consumers, and what complementary tools might be needed to bring the benefits of these alternatives to a wider range of food system actors?
Policy Brief 1: April 2017	Publication & launch of Policy Brief 1, ' A Common Food Policy that promotes healthier diets ' (drawing on Policy Labs 1 & 2)
Policy Lab 4: May 2, 2017 (Brussels – European Economic	The trade-development-environment nexus: Taking into account the impacts of agri-food policies on developing countries, how could the requirement of policy coherence for

and Social Committee)	development and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) influence CAP and MFF mid-term reviews? How do trade policies shape agronomic choices and their environmental consequences, as well as their impacts on rural development? This Policy Lab will examine the extent to which trade policies support sustainable food systems and sustainable development in third countries.
Local Lab 1 – Turin: 13 July 2017	To be co-convened in partnership with IUC-Torino , bringing together various food policy and alternative food networks in the city.
Policy Brief 2: July 2017	Publication & launch of Policy Brief 2: ‘Building sustainable food systems from the ground up: local-level alternatives’ (drawing on Policy Lab 3 and Local Lab 1)
Policy Lab 5: 16/17 October 2017, coinciding with World Food Day and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Brussels – co-host TBC)	Access to Healthy Diets for Low-Income Families in the EU: How does poverty affect access to healthy diets in Europe? What are the different faces of urban/rural poverty, and how do consumption habits relate to socio-economic deprivation and education levels? What type of policies could improve access to healthy diets? Could different fiscal arrangements (e.g. shifting the burden of taxation away from workers), or the reform of food aid, help to break the cycles of poverty and cheap food?
Local Lab 2 – Milan: September/October 2017 (Specific date TBC)	To be co-convened with ESTA (Economía e Sostenibilitat), a key actor in developing Milan’s food policy and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.
Policy Brief 3: October 2017	The trade-development-environment nexus (Drawing on Policy Lab 4 and Local Labs 1-2)
Local Lab 3 – Montpellier: November 2017 (Specific date TBC)	To be co-convened with CIRAD/UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems, building on existing collaboration between researchers and the city of Montpellier to develop local food policies.
2018	
Local Lab 4 – Slovenia: Location and Dates TBC	Potential partners are encouraged to contact IPES-Food with proposals for location/format.

Local Lab 5 - Germany/Poland: Location & Dates TBC	Potential partners are encouraged to contact IPES-Food with proposals for location/format.
Policy Brief 3: March 2018	Publication & launch of Policy Brief 3, ' Access to healthy diets in an age of inequalities: new food-scapes and new economic paradigms to make good food and healthy diets accessible to all ' (building on Policy Lab 5 and the Local Labs)
2018 Public Event /Deliberative Forum: Brussels, Spring 2018 (Date TBC)	See description in Annex 4.
Final Report: Autumn 2018	Publication and launch of final report bringing together the Policy Briefs and drawing further on the Local labs and the Deliberative Forum. Launch event TBC.
2019-	
Ongoing - TBC	Additional advocacy, dissemination and outreach activities to continue building support around the Common Food Policy vision and to continue building a European 'sustainable food movement'.

GET IN TOUCH

All tenets of the Common Food Policy process rely on extensive collaboration with a range of actors and organizations inside and outside Brussels. Partnerships with a variety of actors, taking a variety of forms and complementing the work many organizations are already doing on this front, are therefore to be welcomed. All of those wishing to know more or to explore partnership opportunities with IPES-Food are invited to contact nick.jacobs@ipes-food.org and chantal.clement@ipes-food.org.