

How does the Brussels food system operate?

A data-driven look at consumption, diet, product flows and supply in the Brussels-Capital Region.

Swipe for the key figures →

Who eats in Brussels?

A lot of mouths to feed



1.249.597 residents of the Brussels-Capital Region

37% of residents hold a foreign nationality - three times higher than in Flanders or Wallonia.

Daytime population increases by **28%**:
+ 399.800 commuters, 35.000 students
and 19.000 tourists

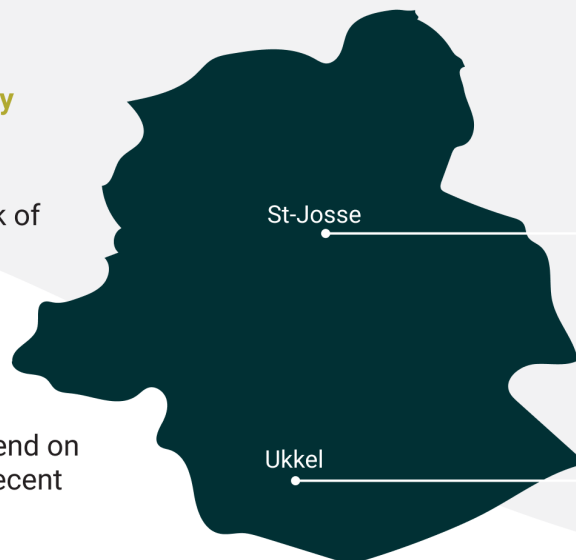
Top foreign nationalities:

1. France
2. Romania
3. Italy

Not everyone eats equally

37% of residents are at risk of poverty or social exclusion

90,000 residents (7%) depend on food aid — up 30% since recent crises



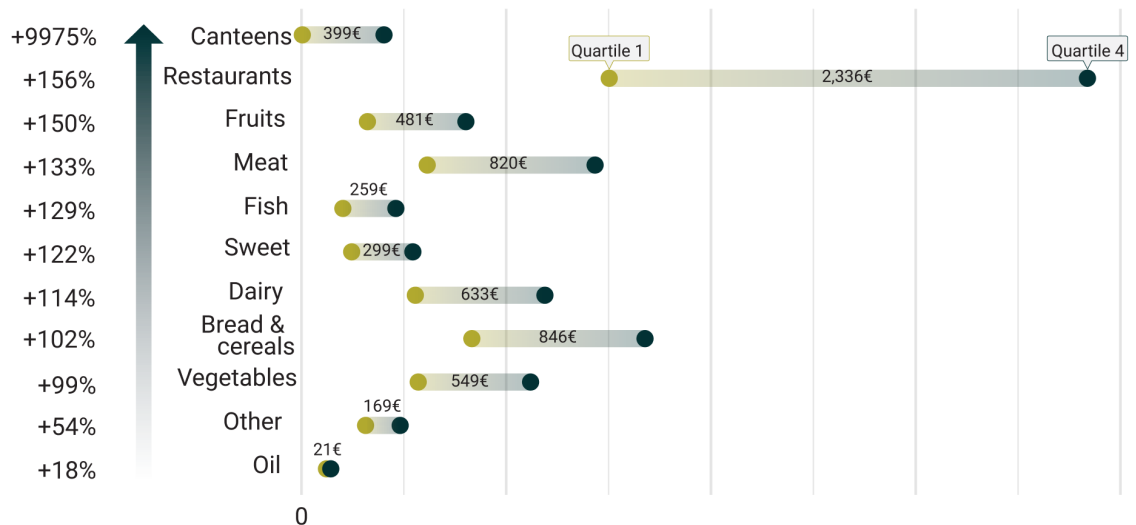
12,987€

The median income in Uccle is double that of Saint-Josse

26,354€

Where the food budget goes

The richest quartile spends more on every food category, but the gap is by far the widest for canteens and restaurants.

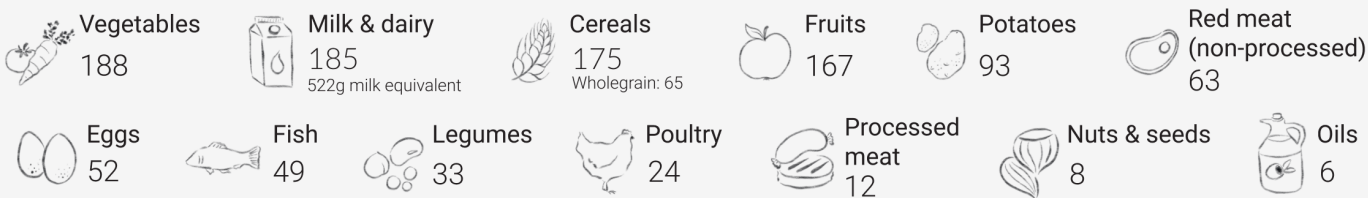


Annual spending per household (€)

What's on the Brussels plate?

Daily intake

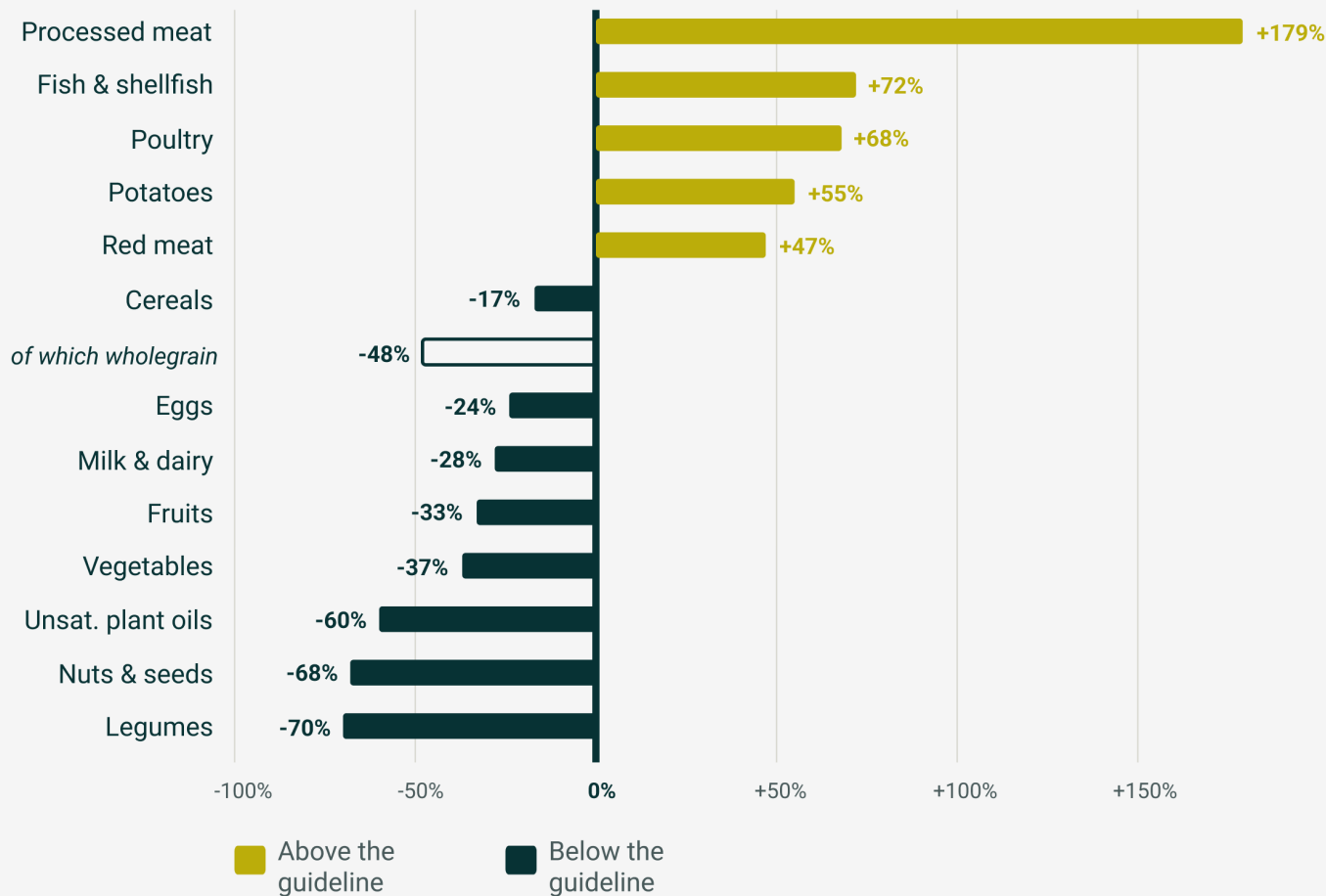
(g/capita/day)



Brussels diet vs. dietary guidelines

Less than 25% of Brussels adults meet the Belgian dietary guidelines overall

Difference from the recommended intake (%)



Hollow bar = subset of the category above, not an additional category.

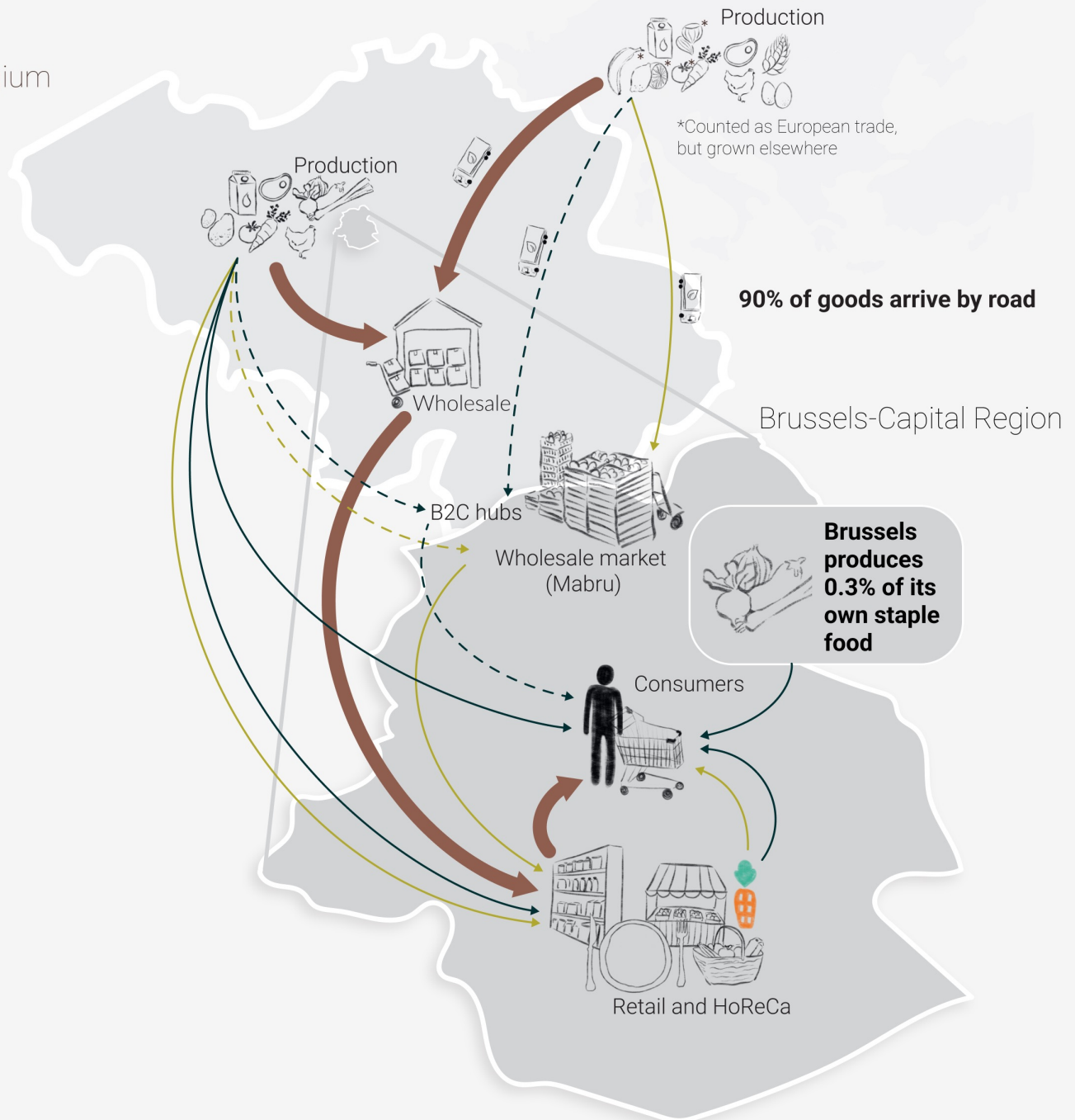
How does food reach Brussels?

One channel dominates

Three supply circuits feed a region that grows 0.3% of its own staple food

Europe

Belgium



Integrated network - 95% of purchases

Supermarket chains buy centrally and deliver to their own stores

Independent network - part of the remaining 5%

Independent shops and HoReCa buy through wholesale hubs such as Mabru

Short supply chains - part of the remaining 5%

At most one intermediary between producer and consumer

The report's key findings

Consumption

Brussels is young, diverse and unequal: nearly 1 in 5 residents struggles to afford a healthy, balanced diet, and 90.000 people rely on food aid, a 30% increase in recent years.

Diet

The Brussels diet aligns better with the dietary guidelines than the Belgian average. Yet, fewer than 1 in 4 adults actually meet the recommendations.

Product & money flows

Brussels produces just 0,3% of its own food needs and runs a €776 million annual food trade deficit. It mainly functions as a European transit hub.

Actor mapping

HoReCa accounts for half of all food-related actors. A handful of integrated retail chains dominate, alongside a growing network of short-chain and niche players.

Economic activity

Retail and HoReCa form the backbone of Brussels' food economy. Local food manufacturing is small but resilient, concentrated in bakery products.

Policy

Competences are split across five governance levels. The regional Good Food 2 strategy drives sustainable food policy, while federal and EU frameworks lag behind.

Read the full report →

<https://sytra.be/publication/brufo2050/>