BRUFO2050 KU LEUVEN SYTRA

How to improve the sustainability of the Brussels food system?

Towards a roadmap for Brussels food system's actors

funded by innoviris .brussels

You want to know more about BRUFO2050? Scan the QR code to see all the related reports & video!

About Brussels & the BRUFO2050 project

Brussels is a diverse city, where many different residents, food habits and food initiatives come together, while it mainly depends on regional and global supply chains for its food. This brings both opportunities and threats for a more sustainable food system. This roadmap, based on the results of the BRUFO2050 project, invites food system actors to regularly assess the sustainability context, be aware of possible barriers, explore possible futures, and (re)prioritise actions for their own organisation.

A very low self-sufficiency

Brussels' production covers **0.3%** of Brussels' needs for key staples

Some key figures about Brussels

1,249,597 inhabitants

37% of residents have foreign nationality.

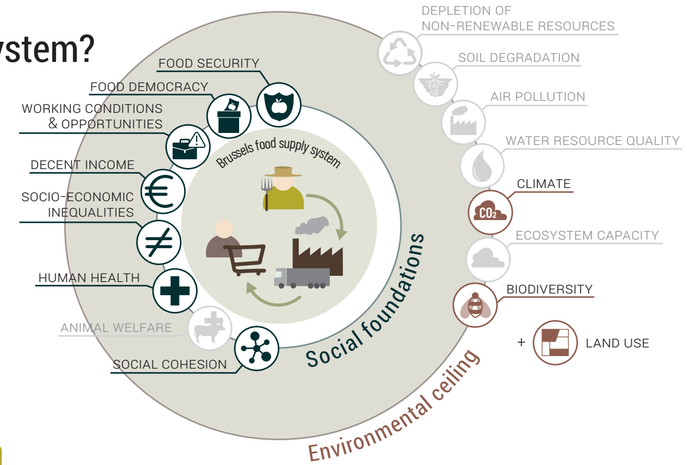
+28% daily increase in population

Step 1

How sustainable is the Brussels food system?

High · Medium · Low

We assessed the sustainability of Brussels food system relying on the sustainability donut, composed of seven environmental and eight socio-economic themes. Below, we assess each sustainability theme for a series of indicators. Due to limited data availability, some themes could not be assessed. Coloured dots show how sustainable each indicator is. Full details are in the second BRUFO2050 report (see QR code).



Socio-economic sustainability

Food security

Related indicators: affordability of food, food price inflation, geographic accessibility to food retailers, food insecurity and reliance on food aid, food self-sufficiency rate.

90,000 residents depend on food aid, a number that went up 30% since recent crises.

Decent income

Related indicators: average income, turnover of the food industry.

The average income in Brussels' agrifood sector is **€4,200**. This is lower than the average income in Brussels (€4,700).

Food democracy

Related indicators: public engagement, awareness on sustainable food system issues, equitable access to food outlets, policy framework support for socially vulnerable groups in the food system

44% of Brussels residents have access to organic shops within walking distance (10-15'). There is however a strong disparity in access among Brussels municipalities (e.g., St-Josse (17%) vs Uccle (66%)).

Socio-economic inequalities

Related indicators: poverty risk rate, BIM beneficiaries, income disparity in food spending.

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

Households with the highest income (Quartile 4) spend **82%** more on food than those with the lowest income (Quartile 1).

Working conditions & opportunities

Related indicators: number of jobs in the agri-food sector, employment contract types, employees with atypical working hours.

There are **11,883** food industry companies in Brussels. Among the contracts in the agri-food sector in Brussels, **31.3%** are temporary (compared to 9% across all sectors in Brussels).

Human health

Related indicators: prevalence of obesity and overweight, protein consumption from plant-based sources, proportion of the population meeting dietary recommendations.

44% of overweight (BMI ≥ 25) people (+18 yo)

Only **32%** of protein intake of Brussels residents are from plant-based sources.

Social cohesion

Related indicators: urban food production, community gardening, number of sales points in short supply chains.

Brussels counts **392** collective vegetable gardens and **92** weekly markets.

Environmental sustainability

Climate

Related indicator: greenhouse gas footprint of Brussels food demand.

Brussels food demand leads to the emission of **1,008** kt of CO2e per year. This represents 12% of Belgian food demand emissions.

Biodiversity

Related indicator: hectares of soyben related to Brussels food demand.

23,000 ha of soybean are required to feed the animals consumed by Brussels residents. This accounts for 15% of Brussels land use footprint.

Land use

Related indicator: land use footprint of Brussels food demand.

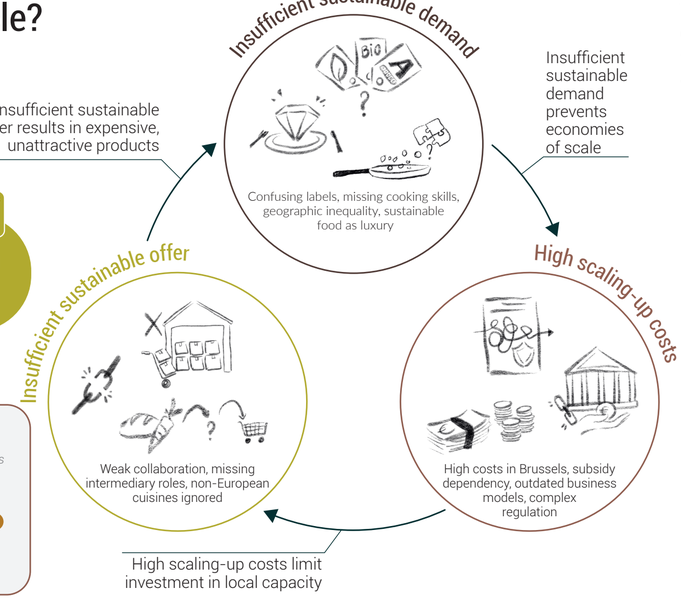
156,556 ha are required to meet Brussels' annual demand for food.

ASSESS HOW THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BRUSSELS FOOD SYSTEM EVOLVES.

Step 2

What prevents the Brussels food system from becoming more sustainable?

Three clusters of barriers explain why the transition to a more sustainable food system is difficult in Brussels. They reinforce each other in a self-sustaining loop, so none of them can be tackled in isolation.

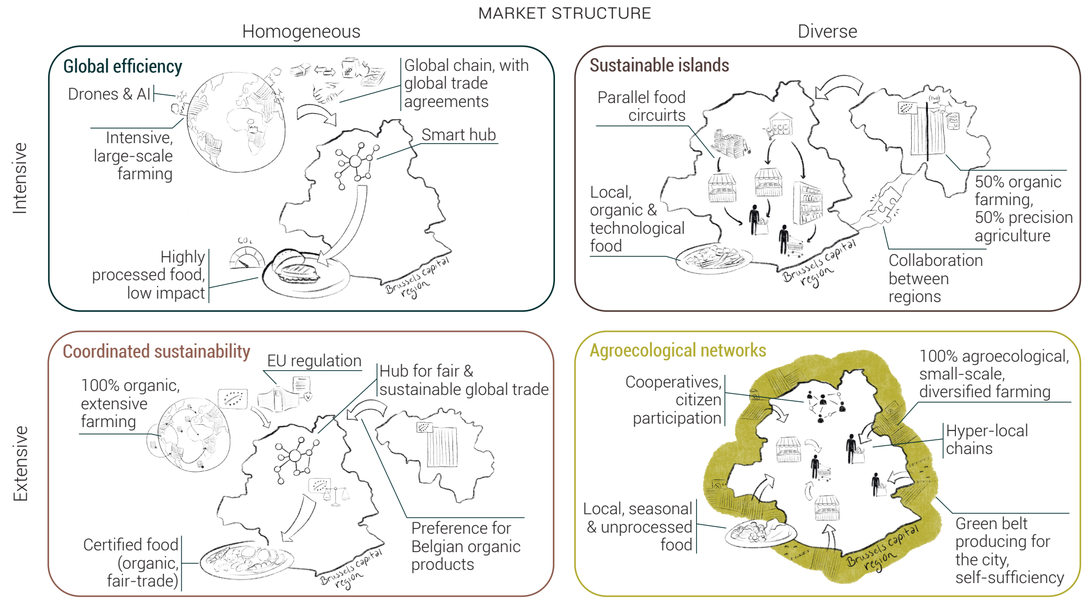


IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS PREVENTING YOUR ORGANISATION TO IMPROVE BRUSSELS FOOD SYSTEM'S SUSTAINABILITY.

Step 3

What will the future look like?

Four possible futures for the Brussels food system, based on two external factors: how food is produced (intensive or extensive) and how the market is organised (diverse or homogeneous).



IDENTIFY THE FUTURE TOWARDS WHICH WE ARE HEADING.

Step 4

What actions can be implemented to improve Brussels food system's sustainability?

The full list of actions identified during the BRUFO2050 project and their relevance in the different scenarios is presented in the A4 sheet provided with this poster.

The relevance of actions to improve Brussels food system's sustainability depends on the future we're heading towards:

- **Some actions are relevant across all four scenarios,** e.g., "Public procurement via schools".
- **Some actions are relevant across all four scenarios, but should be implemented differently according to the scenario.**
  "Framing sustainability" takes different forms depending on the scenario:
  Global efficiency: use health as entry point to better diets
  Sustainable islands: agree on a shared definition of "good food"
  Coordinated sustainability: keep the public debate on the definition alive
  Agroecological networks: explain what "agroecological" means
- **Finally, some actions are only relevant in specific scenarios.**
  "Technology" is especially important in **Global efficiency** (personalised nutrition tools), "Regulation on unhealthy food environments" is relevant in **Global efficiency** and **Sustainable islands**, but not in **Agroecological networks** and **Coordinated sustainability**, which are sustainable by definition. "Shared hubs, last mile logistics, processing and storage infrastructure" is mainly relevant in the decentralised/localised scenarios such as **Sustainable islands** and **Agroecological networks**.

REASSESS THE RELEVANCE OF THE ACTIONS YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENTS IN LIGHT OF THE FUTURE WE'RE HEADING TOWARDS.