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EN  
GARDE**

From strategic to operational goals for the

# GENT EN GARDE FOOD POLICY

Recommendations  
of the food policy council

# INTRODUCTION

## Five strategic goals for a sustainable food system

In 2013 the City of Ghent launched 'Gent en Garde', a food policy that includes five strategic goals to pave the way for a sustainable food system for Ghent. These goals were decided upon based on various stakeholder discussions, input from the city administration and political agreement.

1. A shorter, more visible food chain
2. More sustainable food production and consumption
3. The creation of more social added value for food initiatives
4. Reduce food waste
5. Optimum reuse of food waste as raw materials

Inspired by a similar approach in Bristol and Toronto, the City of Ghent set up a 'food council'. The Gent en Garde food policy council consists of about 25 members (see annex) from various sectors, i.e. agriculture, associations, knowledge institutions and commerce. The policy group acts as a sounding board for the city's policy on food, issuing recommendations on new or existing projects, proposing new ideas, discussing the city's strategic vision and acting as a major ambassador to help promote the city's vision on sustainable food production and consumption.

Within this food policy council, a core team was put together to refine the Gent en Garde global goals and to translate them into concrete operational goals. This core team met four times from September 2015 to January 2016. During this process, the team reported to the food policy council twice. The latter then gave its feedback on the insights it had been provided with. The process was led by Levuur and Vredeseilanden. This document contains a set of guidelines for the development of the City of Ghent's food policy. It is an open invitation to companies, organisations, citizens, associations, knowledge institutions, cultural centres and governments to jointly and creatively develop innovative, local and sustainable food strategies. This document does not mark the end of the process, but rather a step towards a sustainable future for the City of Ghent in a society where sustainability and equity take centre stage.

## Members of the food policy council

Core team members in bold

City of Ghent Tine Heyse	Bioforum Esmeralda Borgo	EVA <b>Melanie Jaecques</b>	Ugent Riet Van de Velde David van der Ha
City of Ghent <b>Christophe Rogolle</b>	CSA Michiel Van Poucke	Labeur Ron Hermans	CDO <b>Wouter Vanhove</b>
Boerenbond <b>Stijn De Roo</b>	Urban agriculture working group <b>Maarten Crivits</b>	Trafiek <b>Hilde Verschaeve</b>	Province of East Flanders Didier Huyghens Georges Hadewych
Landelijke Gilden <b>Eddy Matthys- De Sutter</b>	<b>Benny Van de Velde</b> <b>Jos Willemse</b>	Vooruit Willy Verhoysen	Stad Gent <b>Katrien Verbeke</b>
VAC Wim Moyaert	Samenlevingsopbouw <b>Wannes</b> <b>Degelin Dimitri</b> <b>Vandenbergh</b>	Oxfam Wereldwinkels Katrien Lenaerts	City of Ghent <b>Joyca Lepiae</b>
ABS <b>Paul Cerpentier</b>		Velt Leentje Speybroeck	
		PCSW Joris Beaumon	

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## Gent en Garde contributes to the development of a sustainable food system, but what exactly does that entail?

A sustainable food system guarantees the right to food, respects the principle of food sovereignty, allows everyone across the globe access to healthy food in sufficient quantities and at a reasonable price, and ensures that the final price of products does not only reflect all the production costs, but also takes into account external social and environmental costs.

Ingredients and resources are used (including labour and natural resources, such as soil, water and biodiversity), albeit without exhausting them, and the various components of the food culture are respected. All links in the food chain must contribute to the creation of a sound, sustainable food system.

Source: Federal Council for Sustainable Development Belgium (FRDO)

## Ghent goes international

In 2015 the United Nations presented its Sustainable Development Goals, as a successor to the Millennium Development Goals, not only to combat hunger, poverty and inequality, but also as a global sustainability plan for all the nations worldwide. These 17 targets also explicitly mention the need for sustainable cities, decent work and a production and consumption system that respects the planet's capacity.

That same year, a new global climate agreement was signed, just in time, to keep global warming below 2°C.

A ray of hope? Definitely! That being said, the scope and complexity of these topics often leads people to think they, as individuals, cannot make a difference. Yet they certainly can! All over the world, cities are taking a leading role in the search for local solutions to global challenges. An example? In January 2009, the Ghent was the first city in Flanders to sign the Covenant of Mayors, an initiative to encourage local authorities to take a stand against climate change.

More and more cities are now also investing in food policies.

As part of the Food Smart Cities for Development project, Ghent joined forces with nine other cities. The key question in this project was "What role can city councils play in the shift to sustainable production and consumption models so as to build inclusive, resilient and fair (local) food systems?"

Ghent is the first Flemish city to have developed a food policy.

Its goal is to reduce the negative impact each link in the food chain has on the climate and to make the food system more sustainable.



In October 2013 the City of Ghent launched an extensive policy plan, Gent en Garde. Following the success of the initiative Thursday Veggie Day, launched in 2009, Ghent wants to once again be a pioneer with a strategy to make the food system more sustainable and to turn Ghent into a climate-neutral city by 2050.

The debate on sustainable food provision for cities is heating up. In fact, it was one of the topics at the Milan Expo in 2015, where over a hundred cities from across the globe signed the Urban Food Policy Pact on 15 October 2015. As part of this initiative they commit to developing sustainable local food policies within their urban context. All over the world innovative systems and (corporate) models are being launched in an attempt to meet the challenges at hand. We also see that cities across the globe are taking the lead, both with words and actions.

As an active member of the Food Smart Cities for Development project, the City of Ghent organised the international seminar Local Urban Food Policies in the Global Food Sovereignty Debate on 11 and 12 June 2015. During this debate, practices from various cities were discussed extensively, including Cape Town, Montreal, Lisbon, Havana, Chennai and Tegucigalpa. The case studies, which refer to diverse urban contexts, gave an insight into the way (peri)urban food systems contribute to promoting sustainability. The exchange of practices and knowledge provided inspiration for the international network and for the further refinement of the goals of Gent en Garde.

## A local, sustainable food system is connected with the world

- Sustainable food is food that is produced, processed and consumed with respect for its environment and the labour that went into it, anywhere in the world.
- Sustainable food contributes to biodiversity and has a positive impact on both the climate and mankind thanks to sustainable consumption choices and production methods, as well as honest trade relations.
- Sustainable food is preferably produced with as little impact as possible on the climate. Food production should also always guarantee a chance at decent work and an income higher than the production cost, even when local production is not possible, so as to sustain the producer's family and society.
- Sustainable food is culturally and financially accessible, and also healthy for all.
- Sustainable food brings people together and offers them opportunities.

## The advantages of urban agriculture

A greater focus on urban agriculture will contribute not only to restoring the relationship between farmers and urban dwellers, but it will also make the city, and maybe the farmer too, less dependent on the global market. Urban agriculture refers to the production, processing and sale of food, as well as related products and services in and near the city, using urban resources and waste. There are many forms of urban agriculture, and each one is linked to various sectors and interests. Urban agriculture contributes to achieving social, environmental and economic targets. Linking the city and farmland also serves as a source of inspiration for innovative and creative entrepreneurship. In fact, farmers who are often not in a position to further extend their business can offer their products and/or services to the city and its inhabitants as a means of developing new strategies and generating additional income.

The core team translated the five strategic goals of Gent en Garde into operational goals, taking account of the food policy council's feedback. This document illustrates our ambitions for each of these five goals. Enjoy discovering what we have achieved so far in our joint efforts with citizens, companies, knowledge institutions and civil society organisations, including concrete examples.



## STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 1 A SHORTER, MORE VISIBLE FOOD CHAIN

Our first goal focuses on boosting contacts and relationships between producers and consumers. We strive to eliminate the intermediaries between producers and consumers as much as possible, so as to create fair, efficient food chains, allowing consumers to get an idea of the real value of their food. This will ultimately result in more respect between producers and consumers, as well as more space for agriculture, both in and around the city.



### The Ledeborg farmers' market

In 2015 we launched a new weekly farmers' market in Ledeborg. The participating farmers and market traders offer a vast range of fresh, local products, from free-range eggs to cheese and dairy, fruit and vegetables, potatoes, bread, flour, organic beef, fresh herbs etc. Ghent has six farmers' markets in all: at Gentbrugge, Oostakker, Sint-Amandsberg, Brugse Poort/Roigem, Blaisantvest and Ledeborg.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 1.1 Know your producer

In a more visible, shorter food chain, the consumer knows the producer. We strive to strengthen links between local producers and consumers by giving the latter an insight into how a product takes shape. In what way exactly, you ask? By showcasing the producer and his work in shops, at the market, in magazines, online etc. The result? Consumers will show more respect and appreciation for the people producing our food.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 1.2 Greater access to local products

We aim to facilitate access to and the sale of local products in the city, particularly products from the city and its outskirts. That will give farmers new gateways to local markets, where consumers can easily find them and discover their products.

We are starting off by developing a network of local partners to bring local food to consumers via short supply chains. Consumers tend to buy their food mainly from supermarkets, grocers and the weekly market. Putting products from short supply chains in the spotlight at these locations can have an immediate and significant impact. People also like to eat out. Therefore, we are also targeting restaurants and catering companies, encouraging them to include local products in their menus.

The second step in this process is to work on new solutions for the distribution of local food. The greatest challenge in projects focusing on short supply chains and urban agriculture is to efficiently bring local produce from producers to consumers.

Considering producers are typically scattered around a large area, it is no easy feat for them to deliver their products in the busy city (centre). In the next few years we will be working on new logistics solutions to overcome this obstacle.

We are not starting from scratch. The aim of this project is to act as a platform to encourage and coordinate the various market players who are already distributing their products around the city, such as the non-profit organisation Voedselteams and other players supplying vegetable baskets. These new distribution solutions will mainly target commerce.

Thirdly, we want to experiment with short-chain food hubs in the suburbs to encourage contact between producers and consumers. The main challenge in doing so, is the development of a business model for this concept, which then needs to be linked to the existing structures.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 1.3 Space for professional food production

We aim to give local food production in Ghent a new boost, and to do so, we first of all need space and farmland. Therefore, we are going to create a better synergy between the supply of and the demand for farmland via the Gent en Garde online platform, and through an internal working group facilitating supply and demand. Moreover, the city can also ease access to public and private farmland to allow for sustainable food production in the city. Last but not least, urban planning tools should better protect areas for food production. We aim to use agricultural land mainly for food production, e.g. by tackling horsification, gardening and other activities which do not belong in that particular area.



### BE O: a fresh-produce market at Bourdon Arcade

BE O (Be Organic) is a shop selling organic products that draws on the principle of the early-morning fresh market. This shop mainly sells products supplied directly by the producer, without the need for intermediaries, from fruit and vegetables to cheese, bread, rice, quinoa, millet, dried fruit, olive oil, wine, coffee and other dried goods. Meat is offered cut and vacuum packed. This new shop goes by the motto "from farmer to plate, from field to fork" and targets not only consumers, but also caterers and restaurants.

### Vooruitcafé serves authentic Ghent products

Vooruit Arts Centre wants to serve authentic Ghent products by using locally cultivated and processed foods as much as possible. The chefs are joining forces with suppliers and new partners to look for sustainable alternatives.

Day in, day out, 150 to 200 meals are consumed at Vooruit. Given these quantities, Vooruit can guarantee both suppliers and partners stable sales volumes, motivating them to make a shift towards a more sustainable food production. In this framework, Vooruit was one of the two winners of the Korte Keten Wedstrijd, a competition organised by the City of Ghent focusing on short supply chains.

## OPERATIONAL GOAL 1.4 Space for individual and joint non-professional food production

The local food policy aims to create opportunities for farming, but not only for professional farmers. There are also countless possibilities to produce food on a smaller scale for individual citizens, neighbourhoods and associations. We aim to facilitate the creation of neighbourhood vegetable gardens, communal and shared private gardens. Moreover, we want to bring together land owners and seekers.

When developing new areas, we aim to create space for professional farming, as well as areas for individual food production for private use.



### Oogstgoed: where farming and heritage go hand in hand

Oogstgoed is a CSA farm (Community Supported Agriculture) managed by two farmers, Rony Nekkebroeck and Benny Van de Velde, at the Coninxdonck castle in Gentbrugge. Rony was given the opportunity to lease a 2-hectare field on the castle estate. Following discussions with the City of Ghent, Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos (the Agency for Nature and Forestry) and Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed (Flanders Heritage Agency), business took off. Rony and Benny are using 1 hectare of this land to cultivate vegetables, and they are also restoring the old, historic orchard to its former glory.

### Heiveld: brownfields get a green touch

Brownfields owned by the PCSW residential care centre Het Heiveld in Sint-Amandsberg are being used by the social workplaces Compaan and Labeur to cultivate vegetables and herbs, which are used at Le Petit Botanique, a restaurant in the city centre which uses produce from urban farms. Both the restaurant and the urban-agriculture project promote social employment, and the elderly inhabitants of Het Heiveld enthusiastically share their gardening experience as well.

### Shared gardens: looking for the perfect match

A shared garden is (part of) a private garden that is leased to someone who wants to cultivate vegetables. Do you have a green thumb but no garden? Or do you have a garden but no time to maintain it? Go to [www.gentengarde.be](http://www.gentengarde.be) to find people willing to share and lease (part of) their gardens via simple ads.



## STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 2 More sustainable food production and consumption

Individually, jointly or professionally - our aim is to guarantee a safe, sustainable, high-quality, honest and healthy food production, with an eye for animal welfare. We also strive for more sustainable consumption patterns. We go for initiatives that aim to bring sustainable food to the table day in, day out. Food for thought!



### The Boerenbond innovation support centre

Innovatiesteunpunt (innovation support centre) is an initiative launched by Boerenbond (the Farmers' Union) and Landelijke Gilden (the Rural Guilds) in collaboration with Cera and KBC. It is a specialised service that assists agricultural and horticultural companies in their quest for change. The centre's consultants answer farmers' questions on energy and environmental engineering (energy-saving measures, renewable energy production, waste recycling etc.), business development (HR policy, product development, marketing strategies, creation of added value) and rural innovation (cooperation between local governments, inhabitants and entrepreneurs in the countryside).

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 2.1 Encourage food producers and processors to use sustainable production methods

We want to give the production of sustainable agricultural produce on our territory a boost. Therefore, we are developing a supporting policy for sustainable agriculture which focuses on direct delivery to the city. Agricultural models based on a set of social and environmental principles, such as organic farming, are a source of inspiration in this framework. Assistance is also provided to local farmers and processing companies on how to adopt sustainable production methods step by step.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 2.2 Encourage consumers to buy sustainable products

In the city we aim to raise awareness among citizens, organisations, city services and companies on the importance of sustainable consumption patterns, which can be achieved by eating less meat and opting for organic, fair trade, local and seasonal food. In this framework, we are developing targeted communication in collaboration with various organisations. The idea is to inspire and support citizens with concrete and innovative concepts that allow for structural behavioural changes.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 2.3 Encourage organisations and businesses to buy sustainable products and services

The government is an important player in our economy via its tendering processes, as it can help steer demand, and consequently also supply. The City of Ghent can use this leverage to upscale sustainable food and thus take on an exemplary role, inspiring other players, including schools, hospitals and companies to do the same. Since the offer often still fails to meet the requirements of major users, it is important that the various players learn from each other's purchasing processes.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 2.4 Sustainable food at events

Concerts, receptions, neighbourhood gatherings, you name it... events are the ideal place to introduce people to sustainable food in a fun setting.

In recent years, the Ghent Festivities have also hosted various initiatives, such as the 'organic square' coordinated by Bioforum. The non-profit organisation EVA often mans a stand offering tasty vegetarian food. Moreover, in the past few years, a food tent was also set up, introducing people to 'forgotten' products from throughout the city, such as rapidly growing invasive species and Canadian geese that would otherwise not be used for consumption. That being said, there is still no general policy on sustainable food for the Ghent Festivities. The experiences and initiatives launched in recent years could form the basis for such a policy.

The City of Ghent also wants to set an example with its own receptions, by including more and more organic and fair trade products in its purchasing criteria and menus. At receptions held on Thursdays only vegetarian food is served.



### Landwijzer gives aspiring organic farmers a helping hand

The non-profit organisation Landwijzer is a specialised training centre in Flanders for organic and biodynamic agriculture and food, offering both courses and assistance to established organic farming businesses and aspiring organic farmers alike.

Landwijzer supports the development of biodynamic agriculture, natural beekeeping, CSA initiatives and access to farming for young, aspiring farmers.



### Thursday Veggie Day

If we reduce our meat intake, we also drastically reduce the carbon footprint of our diet immediately. Why? Because cattle breeding and meat consumption have a major impact on the environment. The Thursday Veggie Day campaign aims to encourage everyone to eat a tasty vegetarian dish at least once a week. Skipping meat and/or fish once a week, and eating lots of fruit and vegetables instead, that is the idea behind this initiative. If all the inhabitants of Ghent jumped in, the city would register a CO2 reduction equalling 19,300 fewer cars on the road.

In 2009, Ghent was the first city to officially introduce Thursday Veggie Day. We have since constantly encouraged the inhabitants of the city to eat vegetarian food once a week through countless events and publications, such as a city map with lots of veggie tips. The city's hotels and catering establishments, schools and staff canteens have meanwhile jumped on board.

### School lunches? Local, environmentally-friendly and fair-trade!

On 27 April 2015 the approximately 200 pupils of Freinet school De Vlieger were served a 'LEF' lunch. LEF stands for Local, Environmentally-friendly and Fair-trade, the three criteria that the non-profit organisation Wervel uses in its bid to make agriculture more sustainable from an economic, environmental and social point of view. The local, environmentally-friendly and fair-trade ingredients used for this lunch were supplied by five local organic farmers. Restaurant Avalon, which is located in the city centre, and the Ghent-based bicycle courier Cargo Vélo joined forces to ensure the children enjoyed a tasty, fresh, seasonal and healthy meal.

Through this concrete initiative, the Urban Agriculture Working Group Ghent wants to prove it can achieve its goal of making school lunches more sustainable. The Working Group feels the City of Ghent, with its 4,500 school lunches a day, holds the key to achieving various targets in its coalition agreement. What's more, urban agriculture can give local farmers a serious boost. Moreover, it could create new jobs at catering companies and school kitchens.



## STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 3

### Create more social added value for food initiatives

A sustainable food system in Ghent must also guarantee everyone has access to it. Moreover, it should create social added value. Our focus is on strong social cohesion and more social employment. Education must maximise our efforts in the long term. We also need sound knowledge building on access to food, among other topics, so as to develop well-founded actions.





### Urban agriculture hub seeking new business models

Urban agriculture comes with many benefits, both from a private and from a social perspective. The development of a multidisciplinary hub with an important advisory role can lead to an increase in the area designated for urban agriculture, boost productivity, result in more sustainable food and have a greater social impact. With this in mind, the urban agriculture hub is working to achieve the following five goals:

1. Development of expertise on urban agriculture
2. Creation of a business model
3. Development of information packs for start-ups
4. Assuming an advisory role
5. Building a network

This project is coordinated by Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Vives and VELT.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 3.1 Build on links with existing networks and social players

Ghent has been blessed with countless social initiatives on food launched by, among others, the PCSW, the Kras services, Samenlevingsopbouw, Voedselbanken, VELT, Burger Boef, social grocers, local health centres etc. Needless to say, we are linking our initiatives to the existing networks and social players.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 3.2 Access to affordable, sustainable and healthy food for everyone

Sustainable food must also be affordable. Therefore, we are developing initiatives that allow access to affordable, sustainable, local and healthy food. We still have a long way to go, but some promising steps have been taken, such as initiatives to make school meals more sustainable and healthier, and workshops on intercultural and affordable vegetarian food.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 3.3 Knowledge building on food systems

The development of a resilient local food system is largely a pioneering task, as we still need to explore and decide upon the necessary know-how and tools. Where do people buy their food? Which business models are viable? What are the legislative hurdles? As a university city, we strive for knowledge development on local food systems and their links with the global food system, and we want this know-how to eventually be accessible to other cities all over the world. The existing knowledge must be disseminated more efficiently. As such, we are providing even more support to both the inhabitants of Ghent individually and to schools looking to create a vegetable garden. Knowledge on the food system and its global impact, linked to our local context in Ghent, must become mainstream.

### Fair Food Fest brings the (new) inhabitants of Ghent together

Fair Food Fest is a celebration of international solidarity promoting sustainable food, i.e. fair-trade and/or local products. Fair Food Fest takes place in Ledeborg, a working-class neighbourhood of Ghent, involving all the local targets groups. Local participation allows for the development of an accessible awareness-raising campaign for various groups highlighting the importance of fair trade in local and global food chains. The Fair Food Fest also organised a series of Fair Food Days, between December 2015 and May 2016, to increase participation among local residents and specific target groups. These events consist mainly of a series of fun evenings where the participants prepare dishes from their country or region in a fun, interactive setting. Moreover, fair-trade products and the story behind them are put in the spotlight. It all starts with a local workshop moderator presenting a specific dish which contains one or more fair-trade and local products.



## Supporting vegetable gardens at schools

Various players are committed to giving children an insight into food production. Landelijke Gilden helps primary schools in Flanders create vegetable gardens on site, allowing children to get acquainted with and enjoy the world of gardening. The organisation provides both financial and educational support. VELT offers workshops and educational packs on sustainable food and also focuses on school vegetable gardens. Last but not least, experts from the City of Ghent assist schools in the management of their vegetable gardens and organise workshops for schools.



### OPERATIONAL GOAL 3.4 More social cohesion and integration

Sustainable food brings people together, regardless of age, sex and income, which can give social cohesion a serious boost. In this framework, we try to involve minority groups in various initiatives. De Site, a project at the Rabot neighbourhood, is a great example of the local social fabric being strengthened through food production and social economy.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 3.5 Social employment through food

The development of a sustainable food system can help boost social employment, e.g. by creating jobs at social restaurants and grocers, and in the processing and distribution of food surpluses.

## STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 4 Reduce food waste



Nowadays, about one third of the food produced is wasted, mainly at the beginning and at the end of the chain. We are therefore doing all we can to make our food system more efficient, by looking for new markets and alternative processing opportunities for food surpluses.



**OPERATIONAL GOAL 4.1**  
**Set up systems and services to reduce food wastage**

We aim to set up systems and services in the city that contribute to reducing food waste in every link of the local food chain. To do so, we are joining forces with relevant players, such as supermarkets, food producers and processors, restaurants and caterers. A first small step towards achieving this goal and changing people's behaviour is the growing number of restaurants where you can ask for a Restorestje box for leftovers.

**OPERATIONAL GOAL 4.2**  
**Recovery and redistribution of food surpluses**

We aim to recover, store and redistribute food surpluses to people in need. Food surpluses can become a powerful tool to combat poverty in the city and to give citizens better access to affordable, healthy foods.



**The Restorestje box: take your leftovers home without shame**

In 2015, 100 restaurants in Ghent distributed a total of 11,000 boxes to their customers to take home their leftovers. No need to be ashamed! These restaurants will gladly give you a compostable box, called Restorestje. The result? Less food ends up in the bin and you can enjoy your delicious leftovers at home.

In just one year, 100 restaurants in Ghent have jumped on the bandwagon, and every month, more and more establishments are added to the list. Every week, these restaurants give some 25 Restorestje boxes to customers who want to take their leftovers home. We organised a survey in which all participating restaurants agreed that customers are very happy with this initiative.

**OPERATIONAL GOAL 4.3**  
**Education on small-scale purchasing, processing and storing**

Last but not least, we want to encourage the inhabitants of Ghent to pay more attention to what they buy, to store food properly and to process it better. There is still scope for many interesting educational packs and workshops on how to better store and ferment food.



**System to distribute food surpluses to social organisations**

The Ghent CPSW has joined forces with the city administration to develop a system to distribute food surpluses from retail and other sources to a range of social organisations, so as to reach the most vulnerable inhabitants of the city.

To achieve this, we need to explore how the available food surpluses can be used to provide people living in poverty with healthy, affordable (or even free) food, whilst respecting their dignity. As part of a preparatory study we carried out a survey among supermarkets, distributors and food banks to find out which initiatives currently exist. Using their answers as a basis we came up with three scenarios

of the possible roles the new distribution system could play in addition to, and in support of, the ongoing initiatives.

We eventually decided to go for the scenario that includes transport support and interim storage.



**STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 5**  
**Optimum reuse of food waste as raw materials**

**Even when food ends up as waste, it needn't be lost. This waste can be reused as a raw material, creating environmental added value.**

## Het Spilvarken: the city as a food cycle

In 2014 the non-profit organisation Het Spilvarken launched a pilot project as part of Atelier De Stad (The City Studio): raising three pigs in the city at the Bijloke site. Can pig raising be re-introduced in the city? A core team joined forces to study this question in a creative manner. They identified local food waste streams and used them as pig feed. Over 40 neighbours joined the initiative as 'co-farmers' to help take care of the pigs. The three pigs became a link in a small, yet precious cycle that created added value in many fields: local food waste was processed, unused space was temporarily put to good use, more nature was introduced to the city and a dynamic debate was launched on (meat) consumption and the food industry. Last but not least, sustainable meat was produced.

In the next few years, Het Spilvarken wants to introduce pigs and chickens to several neighbourhoods around the city. Moreover, a 'food lab' will be set up to develop or support small-scale partner projects focusing on food in the city. Het Spilvarken sees the city as one large food cycle. The aim is to tap into unused spaces, waste and other surpluses, linking them to social energy, know-how and time. Het Spilvarken wants to map out this ecosystem involving raw materials and players to create new links and create added value from an environmental, economic and social point of view.



### OPERATIONAL GOAL 5.1 Try out new business models

The reuse of food waste offers potential for new business models, which we want to further explore and test. In doing so, we want to put the pioneering work of interesting niche players in the spotlight. An example is the non-profit organisation Het Spilvarken.

Small-scale initiative focusing on the prevention and reuse of food waste often clash with strict regulations on hygiene which have been drawn up to meet the needs of larger, professional food processors. The city aims to pinpoint where the obstacles lie and inform the higher authorities to help them find targeted solutions.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 5.2 Get more organic waste from residual waste

IVAGO, the local waste collection and treatment company, is taking its efforts in Ghent one step further with the collection and processing of food waste. This initiative ties in with our efforts to achieve a more selective waste collection, with a clearer distinction between organic and residual waste. Efforts are also underway to experiment with the valorisation of waste streams from the restaurants in the city.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 5.3 Recover waste streams locally Close waste cycles

Food waste streams are recovered locally as much as possible by closing waste cycles. In this framework, we encourage composting, both at home and as a neighbourhood.

### OPERATIONAL GOAL 5.4 Turn low-value waste into high-quality food

Food waste needn't be lost. It can become a new raw material for high-value food. A well-known example? The production of oyster mushrooms on used coffee grounds.

### Aquaponics: a closed-loop system for fish, vegetables and herbs

Urban Smartfarm launched an aquaponics pilot project in which fish are farmed and vegetables are cultivated together in a closed-loop system. Two sea containers were converted into mobile production units. One is used to grow plants based on hydroculture, while the other contains water with fish that fertilise the plants. On the roof of the containers herbs are cultivated in vertical herb gardens bathing in natural light. Inside the containers LED lights are used. This system is sustainable in more ways than one: optimum use of space because temporary brown-fields are equipped with mobile systems and vertical cultivation methods are used; a low impact on mobility thanks to urban production and transport using cargo bikes; and last but not least, very efficient use of raw materials as there is no need for additional fertilisers or irrigation.

The fish, vegetables and herbs produced are supplied to hotels, restaurants, shops and distributors of local food packages.





## A FEW CLOSING REMARKS

All over the world, cities are experimenting with local and sustainable food systems. Ghent was the first city in Flanders to have developed a food policy, called *Gent en Garde*, with 5 strategic goals that have been translated into 21 concrete operational goals, as described in this document. These goals are used in our quest to create a concrete sustainable food system. This document contains a set of guidelines to further fine-tune the City of Ghent's five strategic goals. Moreover, it aims to encourage all players - both those who are already involved and those showing an interest - to actively take part in this process.

### Challenges in various fields

Local governments are faced with a major challenge, i.e. how to organise food systems from a multi-stakeholder perspective (producers, companies, governments, consumers/citizens etc.) and via cross-cutting policies (agriculture, health, spatial planning, economy etc.). Which processes are required to support local food systems and to encourage both citizens and entrepreneurs to take

part? How can a government build legitimacy in this framework and at the same time guarantee efficiency?

A high degree of food security in a specific city or region depends both on the availability of sufficient high-quality food and on citizens' and consumers' willingness and possibility to buy this food. Equal attention must be paid to the offer (sufficient production capacity in or around the city) and to the demand (can all citizen groups, institutions and companies truly purchase the food on offer?). These questions are also directly linked to the increased sustainability of food production, the organisation of the distribution process and the involvement/commitment of individual consumers and professional buyers.

The link between the urban market and the surrounding countryside is essential for a successful development of local urban food systems. Which interventions are necessary to gear the markets and the production systems to one another?

These questions are key when trying to figure out how local food systems can contribute to food sovereignty, how these local food systems can become complementary and how they can facilitate fair, sustainable supply chains. In fact, every local food system is connected to supply chains that stretch across regions or even continents. As such, their impact is not limited to the local level.

The challenge may be richly layered and complex, yet most people will recognise there is a shared, collective agenda: how can an urban food system contribute to a socially equitable transition into a more sustainable world that promotes the integration of all population groups? We acknowledge that these questions and challenges are parallel to one another and that they may sound all too familiar, yet they need to be tackled in different ways, in line with their specific contexts. There is no such thing as a standard approach. Customisation is the key to success.

When developing local food policies, it is important to adopt rational, motivational and emotional approaches to achieve success. A well-thought-out policy is based on figures and analyses.



# OVERVIEW: STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL GOALS

In our case, we need more information and insights into the links between informal and formal production, trade and consumption.

A well-thought-out policy also requires a broad support base, with participants feeling they are considered as co-owners. All relevant stakeholders need to be involved, from the inhabitants of the city as citizens and consumers to associations, traders and companies, municipal services, producers, etc.

We will need to thoroughly explore and forge links across boundaries so as to get a better insight into the complexity of a sustainable food system. The development of local food system requires a policy that encompasses various fields, from spatial planning to social affairs, agriculture, environment, mobility, trade, etc.

The City of Ghent is no stand-alone entity. How does the local policy relate to the regional and global food system? How can the City of Ghent make its voice heard when it comes to topics at different government levels?

## **A few short-term recommendations:**

- Create an overview of facts and figures on production, distribution and consumption patterns, including bottlenecks and opportunities.
- Support and facilitate - with a participatory approach - co-creation processes and instructional multi-player experiments starting from key operational goals included in this document.
- Develop quick 'feedback loops' with the food policy council and the policy itself, encouraging learning, information linking and upscaling.

**We aim for an open, transparent, participatory approach to translate the operational goals into new action plans together with the relevant stakeholders. The City of Ghent is also giving participants in the policy group the opportunity to set up working groups, which will be one of the first steps in developing a concrete approach using this document.**

## **Strategic goal no. 1:**

### **A shorter, more visible food chain**

- 1.1 Know your producer
- 1.2 Greater access to local products
- 1.3 Space for professional food production
- 1.4 Space for individual and joint non-professional food production

## **Strategic goal no. 2:**

### **More sustainable food production and consumption**

- 2.1 Encourage food producers and processors to use sustainable production methods
- 2.2 Encourage consumers to buy sustainable products
- 2.3 Encourage organisations and businesses to buy sustainable products and services
- 2.4 Sustainable food at events

## **Strategic goal no. 3:**

### **Create more social added value for food initiatives**

- 3.1 Build on links with existing networks and social players
- 3.2 Access to affordable, sustainable and healthy food for everyone
- 3.3 Knowledge building on food systems
- 3.4 More social cohesion and integration
- 3.5 Social employment through food

## **Strategic goal no. 4:**

### **Reduce food waste**

- 4.1 Set up systems and services to reduce food wastage
- 4.2 Recovery and redistribution of food surpluses
- 4.3 Education on small-scale purchasing, processing and storing

## **Strategic goal no. 5:**

### **Optimum reuse of food waste as raw materials**

- 5.1 Try out new business models
- 5.2 Get more organic waste from residual waste
- 5.3 Recover waste streams locally and close waste cycles
- 5.4 Turn low-value waste into high-quality food

Editor: Jelle Goossens  
Lay-out: Jack.pm

R.P. Paul Teerlinck, City Manager  
City Hall, Botermarkt 1  
9000 Ghent  
Belgium

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Vertaling Nederlands-Engels  
Dit is de vertaling naar het Engels van "Voedselstrategie Gent en Garde" en bevat identiek dezelfde informatie als de Nederlandse tekst. Deze vertaling mag enkel verspreid worden met de originele brontekst "Voedselstrategie Gent en Garde".





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