



Policy Brief

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT THROUGH FOOD POLICY COUNCIL: DRIVING SOLUTIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ADDRESS LOCAL FOOD CHALLENGE

The Bordeaux Métropole Experience

September, 2024



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The project has been funded by Horizon 2020 Grant agreement N. 101020812



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Foreword



Addressing the complex challenges of urban food systems demands a systemic and collaborative approach that engages stakeholders across the entire food supply chain. From producers to consumers, including government officials, researchers, community members, and local organizations, the collective involvement of all actors is crucial for driving meaningful and lasting change.

In this context, participatory governance models such as Food Councils have emerged as essential tools for fostering community engagement, food system stakeholders collaboration, co-creating and implementing effective, locally tailored food policies, and ensuring local ownership over food initiatives.

As the first French authority to establish a Food Policy Council IN 2017, Bordeaux Métropole strengthened its role in food

governance by co-creating its Food Policy in 2022, positioning the council as the governing body for its implementation. This participatory approach has fostered strong commitment from more than 300 local stakeholders, ensuring that sustainable food initiatives are both inclusive and impactful.

Drawing on the experience of Bordeaux Métropole's Food Trails Living Lab, this policy brief showcases the process of establishing and operating a Food Policy Council, offering insights into its governance structure, key functions, and role in supporting the transition to a more resilient and sustainable local food system.

While the experience is based in France and focuses on a metropolitan context, the approach and process are highly relevant for other levels of governance and European local authorities.

Introduction

Cities are now home to more than half of the global population, and the growing pace of urbanization has radically altered the structure of our food systems, gradually expanding the distance between producers and consumers. And yet, the choices we make regarding our food – from sourcing to the practices used in the production, processing, and distribution of foodstuffs – have major consequences for the environment, for our health, and for the strength of the social ties that bind us.



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Bordeaux Métropole is certainly not immune to such problems. Published in 2011, the Quévremont Report laid bare the food supply vulnerability of the metropolitan territory: at the time, the total volume of fresh food produced in the metropolitan area each year was not enough to cover even a single day of consumption.

The creeping urbanization of the Bordeaux metropolis also has consequences for the sustainability of its food system: with 819,604 residents in 2023, the population of the metropolitan area has grown by an average of 8,700 people every year since 2008. The artificialization of soils, the

disappearance of the agricultural green belt, the importance of viticulture in the region, and existing regulations concerning flood zones all represent obstacles to the creation of a sustainable food system.

With the local food production from its 5,500 hectares of agricultural land and 148 farms which could only feed its inhabitants for one day a year, Bordeaux Métropole faces crucial challenges to feed its inhabitants. The metropolis was relying quite heavily on imports from near and far. To face its challenges, Bordeaux Métropole launched a partnership initiative bringing together various stakeholders to establish a joint diagnosis of the territorial food situation.

A series of events and workshops yielded a collective definition of the challenges involved in re-establishing a functioning local food system, not least the need to preserve agricultural land and find new forms of reciprocity between urban and rural areas, in the interest of promoting local produce and creating jobs in the food sector which cannot be relocated elsewhere. There are already numerous initiatives thriving in the area. It has become clear that the top priority is to sustain this momentum, capitalize on current strengths, and collaborate across the board to develop a more sustainable food system.

Bordeaux Métropole decided to hold on to the conviction that big changes come from strong cooperation and a democratic implementation. In 2017, building on collaboration with local organizations since 2014, Bordeaux Métropole became **the first French territory to establish a Food Policy Council.**

The Council comprises local agricultural

and food sector participants, including policymakers, municipalities, food producers, processors, retailers, and other supporting organizations. Today, 130 organizations have signed the charter and are official members of the Food Policy Council.

As part of the EU-funded FoodTrails project, Bordeaux Métropole has been working for four years to enhance the Food Policy Council. In 2022, Bordeaux Métropole convened the members of the Council to collaboratively design an ambitious and inclusive food policy (around 300 stakeholders involved). This co-creation process addressed the needs of local stakeholders. It led to the launch of a new Food Policy in 2022, prompting Bordeaux Métropole to double its food budget and pursue even more ambitious goals. The Local Food Council has since become the official governance body, tasked with ensuring the implementation of actions aimed at creating a fair and sustainable food system for the future.



“The inter-territorial collaboration among diverse stakeholders represents Food Trails Bordeaux’s leverage to build a futureproof resilient Food System. We hope our experience can foster new collaborative initiatives, the same way we learned from the other Food Trails members’ experiences.”

Celine Papin, Vice-Mayor in charge of International Relations in Bordeaux Métropole

What are Food Policy Councils?



The role and purpose of food governance councils

An interface between local authorities and society to guide the food system to improved sustainability

Food policy councils (FPC) interface local authorities and civil society. This space for dialogue can be initiated by the local authority or by citizens. In both cases, the role of federating the diverse range of stakeholders is ensured for the most part by the FPC. Most councils are structured around the same purpose, i.e., to guide the local food system to improved sustainability. The FPC demonstrates two complementary approaches: (1) the guidance of public policies as a driving force of proposals and close articulation with policymakers, and (2) the monitoring of operational projects coordinated by a joint roadmap with actions and the roll-out of resources. Beyond the federating and networking role, two other roles frequently taken on by the FPC are the advisory role in guiding public policy and spreading information.

To organize this link with local authorities and society, FPCs are formalized within various legal structures. The FPC can be divided into two major categories: those “hosted” by local authorities and those set up as a separate legal entity from the local authority. In both cases, the links between local authority and civil society are formed through their governance, by allocating seats to local authority representatives within the associative FPC and inversely.

Bordeaux Métropole experience:

Thus, in 2015 in signing the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, Bordeaux Métropole committed to a food governance approach with three main objectives:

- Ensure the role of sustainable food issues in Metropolitan Strategy
- Promote complementarity skills between administrative levels and food system players
- Provide local authorities and regional stakeholders with the means to promote and foster original initiatives for the relocation of the food system.

To achieve these objectives, on 19 May 2017, Bordeaux Métropole enacted the creation of the **Advisory Council for Sustainable Food Governance (Conseil Consultatif de Gouvernance Alimentaire Durable or CCGAD in French)** by ruling of the Metropolitan Council. The goal of this body is to raise awareness of the inherently cross-cutting nature of sustainable food policy, positioning it as a force for innovation as we tackle the ecological, social, and economic challenges facing our territories. The vote in 2017 stated that Bordeaux Métropole would be responsible for the coordination of the FPC, which would be free to define its organizational structure. Moreover, Bordeaux Métropole would determine which subjects it would like to see addressed, while the members of the FPC would be free to add any other topics they considered to be pertinent. Also, the facilitators of the FPC are officers of Bordeaux Métropole.

Food Policy Council, a body to shape the local food system

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) are networks that include a diverse range of stakeholders such as local government representatives, NGOs, farmers, food businesses, experts, and community members. This diversity is crucial as it brings together a wide array of perspectives and expertise, ensuring that food policies are inclusive and address the varied needs of the population. The involvement of multiple actors also promotes cross-sector collaboration, enhancing decision-making processes and leading to more sustainable and equitable solutions for local food systems.

Bordeaux Métropole experience:



“The strength of the Food Policy Council lies in the diversity of stakeholders involved, aiming to be representative of the local food system”.

Patrick Papadato, Vice-Mayor in charge of Nature, Biodiversity and Food Resilience in Bordeaux Métropole

The membership of the BM's FPC represents a broad cross-section of those involved in the local food system. That includes representatives of local authorities, associations, the private sector, financial backers, and more. etc. With the ambition of representing the food system in its entirety, the BM's FPC is open to all comers who share its values and who have real expertise (skills, knowledge, or experience) to bring to the table in at least one area of the food system.

Over time, the Food Policy Council acquired its legitimacy through its work and the quality of its members. To maintain its relevance, the Food Policy Council must consistently ensure the diversity of its members. Some individuals may require additional time to connect and be persuaded to join. It's an ongoing effort for the coordination team to guarantee that the Food Policy Council is as representative as possible of the local food system.

Even today, some stakeholders, such as private restaurants and grocery stores, are challenging to reach. Some specific groups, like farmers, demand continuous effort from Bordeaux Métropole to secure their participation. Plus, Bordeaux Métropole should keep in mind the interest of the former members. Political commitment is required to create strong connections between the stakeholders and the local authorities.

Being understood and considered by elected representatives can convince local stakeholders to engage themselves in the activities of the local authority.



“There's a tendency only to involve experts, but the food council has allowed us to think about involving everyone more specifically the actors on the field. It's essential because they are involved when moving from theory to action.”

Carla Quiviger, food officer at Bordeaux Métropole



The actions of food Governance Councils

Broad action plans reflecting global ambitions for the region, combined



“You have to dare to think big, think long-term, and be open to involving everyone.”

Meriem Bozzo-Rey, Co-President of the Food Policy Council

Usually, Food Policy Councils don't have a detailed action plan, though they promote their regions' food strategy action plans, which were formed collectively: workshops led to the identification of priority issues among participants, and these subjects were then revised and streamlined in smaller working groups. These plans list either recommended actions to strengthen the sustainability of the local food system (strategic proposal), or actions led or planned by stakeholders of the local food system. Some organizations, without an operational action plan, hold annual or bi-annual programming meetings to define priority focus points or tasks.

Bordeaux Métropole experience:

After the official launch of BM's FPC; several workshops took place to “build upon the inventory of existing projects and identify opportunities for collective action.” The FPC's action plan takes the form of a table listing 25 actions organized according to the four roles of the network. This plan was highly ambitious and combines operational actions drawing on the network's' expertise, very generic actions like Bordeaux Métropole's aims for a sustainable food strategy, and finally, actions to guide the food system towards sustainability which call more on the stakeholders of this system. The FPC historically wasn't designed to guide the food system's transition, so at first the initial action plan was ineffective. After several years of implementation, it became clear that the action plan was too broad to be effective. It was quickly abandoned and replaced by the action plan of the food policy. Indeed, the objectives of Bordeaux Métropole's Food Policy Council are now those outlined in the food policy since its adoption.

Engage in other bodies and include various local departments: a way to broaden the influence of FPC

Food is, by its very nature, a cross-cutting concern. Within local authorities, actions involving food and agriculture are spread across various departments. To boost the awareness of food as a transversal issue among local authorities, the Food Policy Council aims to inform, transmit, and guide certain decisions through all inner departments and between local authorities at different scales (between cities and metropole, or regions).

Bordeaux Métropole experience:

One of the objectives of Bordeaux Métropole's food policy is to ensure that food and agricultural resilience is a key consideration in all metropolitan policies and that all local authorities align their action plans and complement each other. The launch of the Food Policy Council (FPC) has been an experiment aimed at achieving this objective. All Bordeaux Métropole's officers involved in food-related actions are involved in the FPC's work: they do not sign the charter of the members – so they are not “real” members – but participate in the various actions implemented. For example, colleagues

assist the food officers in organizing FPC meetings. In this context, a meeting on nutrition is jointly organized by both the health and food teams. This cross-sector collaboration is also reflected in the different administrative levels involved in the FPC's actions, from the officers of the 28 municipalities to the regional and national levels. This approach allows the Council to cover as many food-related competencies as possible. By participating in the FPC meetings and working together as a network, public officers create a common framework among all the departments of Bordeaux Métropole and facilitate the multi-level governance necessary to transform the regional food system.



Photo credits: Charlotte Barbier



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Food Policy Council, a lab to innovate regarding horizontal decision-making

Organisational modes between a limited core group and broader working groups

With the systematic aim of rallying regional food stakeholders, FPC boasts large numbers of members. Councils have two ranges of members: all contributors to general considerations, particularly within the framework of working groups representing substantial numbers of members, and the core group of active members. Each Food Policy Council has to define its decision-making circle: selected members, roles, and meetings.

Bordeaux Métropole experience:

The governance structure of BM's FPC aims to embody this ambition for threefold interdisciplinarity, in both the diversity of its membership and the way that members are directly involved in decision-making. The members are categorized by theme to easily connect with professionals in their field and to facilitate follow-up. Facilitators track member participation inside and outside of the groups. Indeed, five groups, representatives of the different components of the food chain, were created at the beginning of the FPC. Each group defines its objective with all its members. The members of the FPC share the benefits of their experience and expertise via these constituent groups, to implement the FPC's action strategy. The Food Policy Council is organized into five colleges representative of the five groups: (1) public services (20%), (2) food agriculture (15%), (3) processing sector (8%), (4) distribution sector (27%) and (5) food consumption (30%). The members of the colleges vote for 4 or 5 stakeholders to represent their college in the technical steering committee. This committee should give a realistic sample of the local food system and aims to support the implementation of the FP actions plan. They also attend plenary to maintain the dialogue between Bordeaux Métropole and the network's members, monitor the implementation of the action strategy, and share initiatives and best practices. The steering committee of the network brings together representatives of these groups and the co-presidents of the network – the vice-mayor responsible for food actions and a technical member of the FPC, to define the FPC's annual targets and monitor and assess its work but also the way the food policy can be implemented.

Engaging Key Players to Transform the Local Agriculture and Food System



The collaboration among diverse food system stakeholders represented Bordeaux Métropole's approach to building a more resilient food system for the future, a future where local communities can collaborate for sustainability.

"Bordeaux Métropole is actively working on a comprehensive food policy, involving diverse stakeholders and implementing various actions. To do so, the Métropole staff is leading on different fronts, setting a very high bar in the European and international context."

Expert on the "innovation and community empowerment" pillar for the FoodTrails project.

"Bordeaux's approach to food policy is not just a local endeavor but a global lesson in fostering comprehensive strategies, civic engagement, and transversal thinking. This city is not just satisfying the palate; it's nurturing a resilient and empowered community for the future."

Expert on "Nutrition" Pillar for FoodTrails project.

Connecting Local Stakeholders: Strengthening Bonds Between Elected Officials and the Local Food System

"It is really important to have a shared vision of a sustainable food system, to not have only a top-down way of working with stakeholders but really to have a more collective way of thinking about the food system"

Patrick Papadato, Bordeaux Métropole's Vice Mayor in charge of nature, biodiversity, food and agriculture, and Co-President of the Food Policy Council.



Photo credits: Charlotte Barbier



From the beginning, the aim was to connect political representatives from Bordeaux Métropole to stakeholders. In the internal regulations of the network, a co-presidency of the network was established, "shared by the elected representative of Bordeaux Métropole in charge of food and a voluntary member from the actor college representatives ". However, until 2020, the presidency was not very functional, and network members regretted not having a direct link with metropolitan elected officials and thus not having a concrete role in shaping metropolitan public policies. The new mandate of 2020 created a delegation for "Nature Strategy, Biodiversity, and Food Resilience." This delegation provided a direct link with local actors, and strong political support within the networks, and was crucial for implementing the planned actions. In practice, the vice-mayor has met in the field stakeholders and local projects. He has also officiated meetings of the Food Policy Council. In the assessment of the network, the direct link to the vice-mayor is often quoted as a strength. Stakeholders have the feeling of being known, understood, and listened to. This close connection also helps the Council members understand what is happening at the metropole level and connect.

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Co-designing a food policy with local stakeholders

In 2021, Bordeaux Métropole decided to build a local Food Policy with members of the Food Policy Council, neighboring territories, colleagues from Bordeaux Métropole involved in the subjects and other stakeholders. The Food Policy aims to:

- Consider the entire food system, in a transversal way (agricultural production, supply chain, public catering, food education, etc.)
- Increase the coherence and the promotion of Bordeaux Métropole's food system actions
- Build and implement operational actions to collectively transform the local food system
- Facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

Between 2021 and 2022, Bordeaux Métropole built its Food Policy, according to three major steps:

- Updating the agricultural and food diagnosis to have today's view of Bordeaux Métropole food system
- Organizing meetings with the stakeholders to build together the issues and the objectives of the Food Policy in 2021 and the action plan in 2022

Formalizing the Food Policy with the pilot committee (composed of metropolitan elected representatives) and steering committee (partners and members of the Food Policy Council).

The consultation was a crucial step in jointly defining the challenges and objectives that form the basis of the strategy. It involved creating an action plan in partnership with various local stakeholders, including those from the agriculture and food sectors, as well as representatives from municipalities and neighboring territories.

The consultation phase included 1 seminar and 2 series of working groups:

- **1 seminar** held in July 2021 to introduce the overall approach and identify the main stakes in play
- **4 working groups** (Agriculture, Canteens, Food activities and logistics, Access to food), organized in November 2021, which yielded the first draft version of the action program associated with the Food & Agriculture Resilience Strategy;
- **8 working groups** (Good Food for All, Local and Short Distribution Channels, Operating Conditions, Education, Land, Collective Catering, Transmission - Installation – Training, Sustainable Farms), held over March-April 2022, which yielded drafts of some of the actions included in the final program incorporated into the Food & Agriculture Resilience Strategy.

A formalization phase involving the official approval of the policy objectives followed the consultation. As a result, twelve strategic targets have been identified for the period to 2030, backed up with a plan of action and based on an initial three-year budgetary cycle covering the period 2023-2025. This strategy covers the entire food system in a cross-cutting manner, from production through to consumption, encompassing food processing, distribution, and retail, as well as the management of the system as a whole.



Photo credits: Jean-Baptiste Menges

“The ambitious food policy that we have today is thanks to the Food Policy Council. If we hadn’t involved the stakeholders, we might have made different decisions.”

Patrick Papadato, Vice-Mayor in charge of Nature, Biodiversity and Food Resilience in Bordeaux Métropole

In 2020, Bordeaux Métropole assessed the Food Policy Council and agreed that the initiative should be scaled up from an experiment to something more formal. The Food Policy Council was assigned a new role: to influence public policies.

As we mentioned before, in 2021/2022, Bordeaux Métropole engaged over 400 people and organizations to create the food policy that reflected local needs and aspirations.

Adequate governance of food and agriculture is a matter of facilitating the participation and collaboration of all actors involved in the system, as well as implementing a consistent and effective raft of public policies and ensuring their transparency. To oversee the development of the Food Policy which is both consistent and broadly accepted by all stakeholders in the local food system, Bordeaux Métropole will coordinate the various organs of governance responsible for overseeing the political and technical implementation of the project. Plus, in 2023, the Food Policy Council officially became the governance body for the Food Policy, further enhancing its influence on actions and cementing the shared nature of achieving goals. This new, more direct role of the Council is a way to improve the link between consultation and action.

Align resources with ambitions.

Until 2020, no specific budget had been allocated to the actions of the FPC, which contributed to the network's lack of operational efficiency. During the drafting of the food policy, an inventory of actions and their budgets was conducted. This revealed gaps in both actions and funding, allowing for the necessary increases to be planned. With the adoption of the food policy, an additional budget of 1 million euros was allocated, bringing the total budget to 4 million euros. This overall budget, covering all actions related to agriculture and food, underscores the importance of these areas in metropolitan policies.

A projected budget for the first three years of the program was also approved, ensuring visibility during implementation, although the budgets are annualized. The food policy actions are primarily funded by Bordeaux Métropole. However, the technical team is seeking other sources of funding to strengthen these actions, increase their visibility at the national and international levels, and position the Métropole as a model in this field. Attentiveness and availability/time are key criteria to build trust with all the potential partners.

Beyond the involvement of the representatives, much of the network's success today depends on the technical team of Bordeaux Métropole. The time of coordination should not be underestimated; and should be an objective on its own to secure time compared to more operational tasks. The number of staff must take into account the level of ambition and should be enough to meet it. If internal resources are limited, the authority should define co-responsibilities with key stakeholders to share the ambitions and actions.

Building Long-term Collective Ambition: Trust is the Key to Success

“Some stakeholders, namely those more active in the field, are harder to involve because they often have little time, so it's up to us to make them realize the value of participating: If they don't come, they miss out on something.”

Carla Quiviger, Food Officer

The trickiest and yet the most valuable lesson from Bordeaux's council is to insist on engaging with all relevant local actors.

In 2021, the Food Policy Council assessment revealed that the council's main strength lay in its stakeholders, who valued the opportunity to convene and exchange ideas.

However, some actors were still missing from the represented groups.

Building trust over time is the key to developing an operational and efficient Food Policy Council. All the members of the network should have the space to share their needs and aspirations, to improve the facilitation of the network to answer to their needs. The facilitation of a Food Policy Council not only requires time to create collective tools and organize meetings but also to provide support to each member as needed. To reach all the stakeholders of the food system, the objectives of the Food Policy Council must be crossdisciplinary and concrete. As a public organization, Bordeaux Métropole must strike a balance between the administration's timeline and the stakeholders' desire for quick results.

This trust enables Bordeaux Métropole to play a key role by being perceived as a facilitator within the network of local initiatives. The major success was the ability to write collectively an ambitious food policy that answers the local players' needs. This trust endures over time, demonstrated by the consistent attendance of 80-120 stakeholders at each Food Policy Council meeting.

“When we created the food policy, we were ready to change, we were ready to trust the local NGOs and stakeholders to do the work too because we had been working together for many years.”

Meriem Bozzo-Rey, Co-President of the Food Policy Council



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Useful links:



- Video “*Bordeaux - Establishing a Food Policy Council*”: realized for the candidature at the Eurocities Awards 2024, on the categories ‘Sustainable food systems: empowering people’ https://youtu.be/Dyb_UrZuHmA?si=TNnWvpTqxR4zNX9Y
- Video “Bordeaux Metropole - A Food Trails story” - The video is part of the series focusing on project living labs activities and results. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhJIBt0kl5c>
- “Bordeaux says "Yes" to its new food policy” article by Eurocities on The Metropole activities within Food Trails. <https://foodtrails.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/bordeaux-says-yes-to-its-new-food-policy/>
- Projet Alimentaire de Territoire [https://www.bordeaux-metropole.fr/metropole/projets-en-cours/developpement-economique-innovation/filieres-economiques/filiere-2#:~:text=Projet%20Alimentaire%20de%20Territoire%20\(PAT,de%20priorit%C3%A9s%20de%20la%20M%C3%A9tropole](https://www.bordeaux-metropole.fr/metropole/projets-en-cours/developpement-economique-innovation/filieres-economiques/filiere-2#:~:text=Projet%20Alimentaire%20de%20Territoire%20(PAT,de%20priorit%C3%A9s%20de%20la%20M%C3%A9tropole)