

Healthy Lives from Sustainable Food Systems October 2022

Food Planning for Sustainable Consumption and Healthier Living

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Background

In the past decade, the development of several public strategic documents has shown that food and health are priorities on public agendas. Food strategies point out the direction of food-related policies at different governance levels, such as the municipal (local), regional, national and international level.

Food planning refers to the integration of food into societal planning and policies, which is primarily implemented through two mechanisms: spatial planning and the development of food strategies. Spatial planning is the coordination of policies and practices organizing lived environments, whereas food strategies are the policy visions setting out long-term measures affecting the food system. Bringing together these domains means that a diversity of stakeholders must be involved in shaping food planning at different governance levels, which is broadly aimed at creating a more sustainable food system that is better aligned with the societal goals of public health, ecological integrity and social justice.

Food strategies and spatial planning consist of many different activities of implementation, which result in different food system outcomes, such as improved access to food, better food

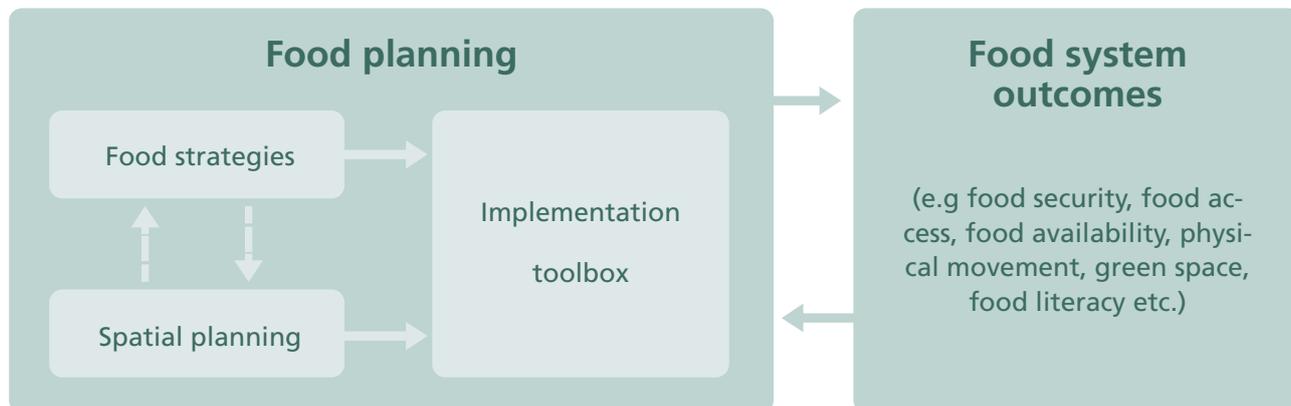
availability and affordability, improved public health and nutrition, and greater consideration of environmental impacts (Figure 1). Implementation can take the form of collaborative arrangements, citizen engagement, changes in landscapes for physical activities, and making food more visible in the landscape.

Approach

The objectives of this workshop were to explore how different tools in the planning toolbox can promote increased food awareness, healthier food consumption and physical activity as well as to exemplify the need for and potential of food planning and discuss how different applications can be implemented in practice. Twenty-five participants from eight countries – who come from the public sector, private businesses, NGO's and academia – contributed to the workshop.

The workshop was introduced by two inspirational speakers. Professor Kevin Morgan from Cardiff University stressed that society needs more effective food planning if we are to create a more sustainable food system that is better aligned with the societal goals of public health, ecological integrity and social justice. He emphasized that this can best be done by

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUALIZING FOOD PLANNING



empowering communities and utilizing existing policy levers to move the food system onto a more desirable trajectory. He used the example of municipalities that are able to consult and interact with citizens on the creation of sustainable foodscapes and that direct ways to influence the food system through policy levers like food procurement. Associate professor Chiara Tornaghi from Coventry University raised the grassroots perspective on food system change and the need to include food actors across society, as well as to engage activists in food-related questions in spatial planning and the development of food strategies. She argued that food system change is a transdisciplinary endeavour that should rest upon the principle that everyone can help in generating new knowledge and practices in their food environments. In this respect, food planning and policy-making need to be more radical, more equitable and include multiple forms of collaboration for change-making.

The following discussion pinpointed that grassroots activists may not need planners, but planners, by virtue of their profession, need to be part of the movement if we are to reshape and reframe the food system. This stresses the need for an inclusive and participatory approach to food planning.

In the following creative workshop, more specific questions related to food planning were discussed. Through a 'brainstorming session', Post-it Notes were successively added to a larger whiteboard reflecting the main take-aways from the group discussions. The results may be used to further explore the realm of food planning so as to develop the food planning toolbox. Four questions were in focus:

- WHAT are the challenges (hardest-to-solve issues) in the current food systems?
- WHY? What are the desired OUTCOMES of food planning?
- HOW to do it? What tools, models, recommendations could be used?
- WHO should be part of food planning and who – from the grassroots to authorities and the private sector – is missing?

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Identify the food system challenges for which food planning can make a difference.

The workshop identified numerous challenges that need to be resolved, where food planning could prove important. These were assigned to the following ten categories:

1. Accessibility and Affordability of food: related to access, pricing, value, purchasing, sovereignty, security and exposure.
2. Nutrition and Health: nutrition, the role of the industry, marketing and distributors, food safety & security and food labelling.

3. Resources: efficiency, land scarcity, production, shocks, and land planning.
4. Technologies: recycling.
5. Culture: the rising middle class, cultural habits, lifestyles and what is accepted.
6. Food Waste: production and resource inefficiency.
7. Measuring: difficult-to-measure outcomes, data deficiency and traceability.
8. Economy: challenges related to current forms of capitalist economic systems.
9. Communication and Education: influencers and children not knowing where food comes from and how to cook.
10. Governance: building bridges, food and social policies, rules and regulations regarding the selling of food.

Recommendation 2. Specify the goals of food planning. What are the desired outcomes?

Food planning should be used to respond to these various food system challenges and drive changes towards more sustainable food system outcomes. Such desirable outcomes could be:

1. Improved health: e.g., individual health, societal health, environmental health, food safety and a resilient food system (sustaining the accessibility of healthy food also in times of crisis).
2. Knowledge and Education: e.g., improved knowledge and interest in healthy and sustainable food.
3. Improved (food) infrastructure: city planning, healthy environments/landscapes on both local, regional and national scales, regenerative agriculture.
4. Involvement of multiple stakeholders: e.g., food suppliers, consumers, politicians, corporations and the food system itself.

Recommendation 3. Map all possible actors who need to be involved to have an impact; develop methods to involve these actors.

The workshop results indicated several central actors:

1. Government: politicians in general, empowered/engaged people, policies and both bottom-up and top-down initiatives.
2. Farmers, producers and service providers.
3. Consumers: future generations (children and youth), senior citizens, companies, families, vulnerable people and chefs.
4. Industry: multi-national food industry companies and government.

The participants believed that the hardest problems to solve related to global collaboration were the challenge of persuading the public about the holistic risks involved in our current food behaviours (e.g., our individual food desires,



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people's reluctance to change food behaviours, politicians' unwillingness to deal with sensitive topics) as well as the scale of the system, lack of transparency and the many players involved.

Recommendation 4. Continue the work to develop a "food planning toolbox" with different approaches at different foodscape levels.

Numerous tentative tools, many of them already in use in different countries and contexts, were brought together. Here, the results have been divided into six categories, briefly summarized in Table 1. Further work to systematically develop the food planning toolbox will be needed, as these are only examples derived from the workshop. A participatory approach is recommended, and methodologies should be developed.

Recommendation 5. Continue to develop processes for food planning, align actors at different foodscape levels with common goals, develop a common food planning agenda.

Through a final survey, the workshop pointed out those instruments in the elaborative food planning toolbox they thought could be of most importance. The result indicated the following:

1. Taxes, legislation and regulations
2. Various collaborations with the stakeholders
3. Empowerment
4. Transparency
5. Knowledge sharing
6. Youth engagement
7. Holistic planning approach including spatial planning, social science and public health

FOOD PLANNING AREA	EXAMPLE OF FOOD PLANNING TOOLS
Agriculture	Facilitation and promotion of, e.g., regenerative agriculture, Land Capability for Agriculture (LCA), spatial crop modelling, urban agriculture, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Nutrition and Health	Screening malnutrition in elderly and reformulation of products to produce healthier products
Education and Knowledge	Citizen empowerment, visualization and education concerning the effects of food/diet, meeting places, information campaigns, labelling, data sharing and transparency around product and consumer behaviour
Strategies and Policies	Subsidies, taxation, investments in sustainability practices, urban planning, procurement, land use and legislations
Measurement	Digitalization and novel technologies, evidence-based recommendations. Two examples: phone apps to link surplus food with food banks and a food system dashboard in Nigeria
Support	Food banks, farmers markets, agricultural subsidies, taxation, both empowerment and nudging

TABLE 1. THE FOOD PLANNING TOOLS CAN ADDRESS DIFFERENT FOOD PLANNING AREAS, AND THEY ARE VARIOUS AND DIVERSE

The food planning toolbox has yet to be more systematically developed. The conclusion is that food planning can play an important role in the transition towards a more sustainable food system. Methods for collaboration and participation need to be further developed, and if we are to make change happen, initiatives must be taken at all foodscape levels.

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Invited speakers: Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University and Chiara Tornaghi, Coventry University

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