

## Context

Our food system is broken: millions suffer due to diet-related diseases like obesity, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes<sup>1</sup>. In Europe, 90 million people face food insecurity, with higher rates in cities than in rural areas<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, European C40 cities have the highest rates of household food waste<sup>3</sup>. When not treated correctly, this food waste generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By 2050, cities will consume 80% of the world's food, making

their role in transforming food systems crucial<sup>1</sup>.

C40 research shows that food consumption accounts for 13% of greenhouse gas emissions in C40 cities, with 75% from animal-sourced foods<sup>4</sup>. In addition to reducing cities' emissions, increasing plant-rich food consumption could prevent about 30,000 premature deaths in European C40 cities<sup>3</sup>.

## Policy Asks

### 1. SUPPORT A STRATEGIC USE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Governments can drive food system transformation by using public procurement to promote healthier and more sustainable food. Cities are leading this change, but their efforts need support from all levels of government. National-level minimum mandatory food procurement criteria, supported by expert groups and capacity building, can help address food system imbalances through effective procurement practices.

### 2. DEVELOP A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO FOOD SYSTEMS FOR FOOD SECURITY

With 90 million people in Europe facing food insecurity, especially in cities, addressing food systems requires a holistic approach. Policies on agriculture, production, and consumption must be integrated. Cities are shifting demand towards healthier and sustainable food, but need support for this transition. We call on the next European Commission

to prioritise sustainable food systems and propose a legislative framework recognising cities' strategic roles.

### 3. CREATE FOOD ENVIRONMENTS THAT PROMOTE THE CONSUMPTION OF HEALTHY PLANT-RICH FOOD

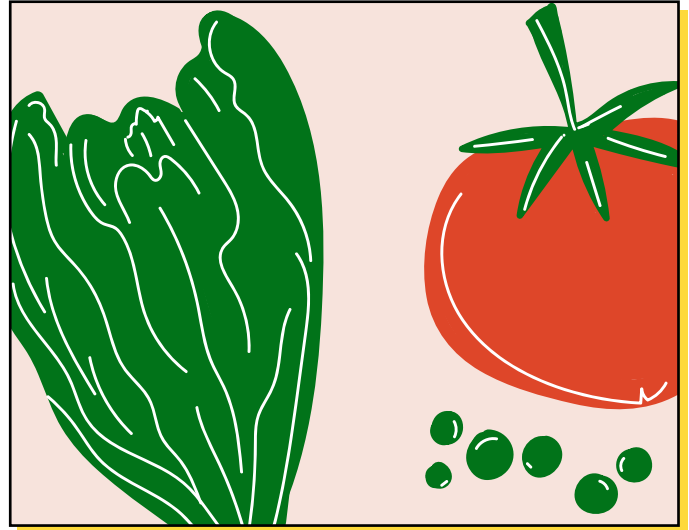
C40 research estimates that 30,000 premature deaths could be prevented in European C40 cities through a shift to healthy, plant-rich diets. Cities are creating supportive food environments, but need collaboration across all government levels and sectors. We urge the European Commission to develop policies that promote dietary shifts towards plant-rich foods, starting with local food environments, to support healthier eating.

# SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

C40  
CITIES

## 4. ALIGN FOOD WASTE REDUCTION PLANS WITH SDG AMBITIONS

Cities are working to reduce food waste but need more support. Developing city-wide plans with specific targets for households, food services, and retail can further this effort. We ask the European Commission to align the 2030 EU food waste targets with SDG ambitions, building on the recent waste directive revision, to support cities in achieving their food waste reduction goals.



## City Action

**BARCELONA** introduced guidelines for public food procurement that prioritise fresh, sustainably produced, low-carbon foods. This supports the city's 2030 Food Strategy, promoting healthy, sustainable food and increasing food system resilience. Expected outcomes include improved public health, reduced carbon emissions, and a more resilient food supply.

**MILAN'S** Food Waste Hubs recover surplus food from retailers and distribute it to people in need. This model, now replicated in C40 cities globally, reduces food waste and improves access to fresh produce. Outcomes include decreased food waste and enhanced nutrition for vulnerable populations.

**PARIS** collaborates with agencies in the Seine River catchment to promote a sustainable urban-rural food system. The city aims to procure 100% sustainable food, with 50% from its bio-region and

75% from organic sources. Expected outcomes include increased consumption of locally relevant sustainable food, reduced food transport emissions, and local economic prosperity.



<sup>1</sup> Ellen MacArthur Foundation. (n.d.) [Cities and circular economy for food.](#)

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. (2020). The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2020.

<sup>3</sup> C40 Knowledge Hub. (2019). [In Focus: Addressing food-related consumption-based emissions in C40 Cities.](#)

<sup>4</sup> C40 Cities, Arup and The University of Leeds. (2019). [The Future of Urban Consumption in a 1.5°C World.](#)