

**LOGIN/SIGN UP TO SAVE**

Policy Briefs February 2023

Four priority actions for cities to build healthy and sustainable food systems

[Climate Action Planning](#)[Food](#)Author(s): **C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, C40 Knowledge Hub**

A vast amount of the food produced globally is consumed – and wasted – in cities. Urban diets and access to healthy food have huge public health and environmental implications. Food production, especially from animal-sourced food, and the disposal of wasted food in landfill produce large quantities of methane (CH_4), a very powerful greenhouse gas (GHG), as well as carbon dioxide (CO_2). Food production is also a major contributor to biodiversity loss, freshwater use, change in land use and deforestation. Meanwhile, many urban residents still struggle to access healthy food.

Here are the most impactful actions that cities can take to reduce emissions from food consumption while improving access to healthy food and helping to enable the global food system to provide a balanced, nutritional diet for everyone.

1. Align municipal food procurement with the Planetary Health Diet

- The Planetary Health Diet is a locally adaptable, balanced and nutritional diet. It is a diet rich in whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables and pulses, and low in meat and foods that are highly processed and/or high in fat, sugar and salt.
- Introduce or update food procurement policies, guidelines and/or standards on what can be served by city-run kitchens, such as in schools. If your city cannot directly control menus, seek to incentivise and influence school feeding programmes.
- Introduce voluntary schemes, such as ‘meatless Monday’, and certificate programmes to recognise high-achieving institutions and boost ambition on the path to legally binding requirements.



English

2. Improve the availability, affordability and marketing of healthy plant-based foods to help people shift to better diets

- Promote healthy food retail in underserved areas, eliminating ‘food deserts’, to ensure all residents can easily purchase affordable, healthy food. Consider pursuing a ‘15-minute city’ strategy with a focus on access to healthy food.
- Integrate nutritional guidelines aligned with the Planetary Health Diet into food-insecurity/food-aid programmes to provide healthy, sustainable food to people in need. Also incorporate city-supported urban/peri-urban agriculture into these programmes.
- If possible, restrict the availability of unhealthy food in priority areas, such as areas close to schools or hospitals.
- Work with restaurants and caterers to improve the quality of meals served and encourage consumers to make healthier choices.
- Run food campaigns with positive messaging and, where the city has the power to do so, limit the advertising of junk foods.

3. Reduce food loss and waste by 50% through incentives and support

- Quantify and characterise the food currently lost and wasted. This will establish a baseline and inform a strategy to reduce it 25% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 – the globally accepted best-practice target.
- Introduce volume-based waste-collection fees or incentives for food-waste minimisation, such as discounted waste fees for surplus food donation.
- Conduct local campaigns to raise awareness of why and how households should reduce their food waste.
- Provide guidance, financial assistance and other incentives to businesses to encourage food waste reduction and recovery.
- Expand systems for the safe donation of surplus food through food banks and charities, and collaborate with food retailers to connect food-surplus hotspots with food-aid programmes to ensure this food is donated to those who need it most.

4. Provide citywide segregated waste collection and make food waste a resource

- Cities without universal collection and safe disposal should focus on the collection, disposal and treatment of organic waste, while also implementing food-waste prevention and reduction

programmes.

 English

- Work with formal- and informal-sector waste-management operators to increase separate food waste collection or drop-off. Run pilots, initially targeting the largest producers, and build towards universal segregated collection. Offer incentives, such as more frequent or (where waste collection fees are charged) free food waste collection. Ultimately, implement universal three-stream waste segregation, collecting food/organics, recyclables and non-recyclables separately.
- Use composting and/or anaerobic digestion to produce compost, bio-gas, heat, bio-fertilisers and other products. Resource-constrained cities should focus on composting, as it is simpler and cheaper. Compost can then be used in local agricultural programmes.
- Avoid investing in waste incineration, especially if your waste stream has high organic content.





Article Feedback

Please help us improve the relevance and utility of our content by answering the questions below:

Where are you currently employed? *

- By a C40 Member City By a city that is not a member of C40 I do not work for a city

What is your opinion of the quality of this article? *

- Very High High Average Low Very Low

Are you able to take an action* based on this article? *

- Yes No

If you used the translation feature (a machine translation tool), did you find it helpful?

- Not Used Very Helpful Somewhat Helpful Not Helpful

Additional feedback:

Submit