

Democratising good food

Mapping Sustainable, Inclusive and Healthy Gastronomy Initiatives



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Photo: Jose Pablo Portas

Who are the people behind sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy initiatives around the world? How do these frontrunners operate? What results are they achieving? What can we learn from these initiatives?

In this brief, we will answer these questions and present a preliminary global mapping of sustainable gastronomy initiatives. The global mapping is presented online and is accompanied with five case studies presenting the inner workings behind successful initiatives spanning six continents.

Why gastronomy?

Gastronomy – which boils down to the art of cooking and enjoying food – taps into the **creative, cultural, and emotional dimensions of food** rather than focusing solely on prescriptive nutritional guidance and the provision of information to consumers. It acknowledges that food is much more than just nourishing or feeding oneself. Gastronomy also places emphasis on the less tangible dimensions that result from the enjoyment of food and focuses on the art of cooking with natural, diverse ingredients.

Sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy presents a host of new opportunities to address

the interrelated social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges that our food systems are currently facing. For instance, gastronomy can help move beyond traditional, more rational approaches to changing consumption patterns that have shown limited success in the past. It can also **involve change-makers that are often overlooked when dealing with the food system**. Such is the case of women, who play a key role in producing, selling, buying, cooking and distributing most of the food we eat. Similarly, the informal food sector – comprised mainly of women – provides **access to home-made nutritious, tasty and low-cost food**, especially for the urban poor in markets and other places in our food environments. With its multitude of actors, ranging from high-end restaurants to street food stalls and home-cooked meals, **gastronomy leverages everyone's desire for a tasty, healthy, and fun meal to become a powerful driver of change**. By working through actors' relationships across the food system, sustainable gastronomy drives positive change from production to consumption.

A global map of sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy initiatives

A myriad of initiatives and policies focused on sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy have been mushrooming across the globe in recent years. But the concept is broad, contextual and

evolving. There is a need to take stock of existing initiatives to begin to understand the state-of-the-art and the potential for development, replication and scaling up. For this reason, we have carried out a preliminary mapping exercise of the various **sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy initiatives and policies** taking place around the world.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY GASTRONOMY?

The concept of "sustainable gastronomy" has different meanings, shapes and forms depending on the context, pressing issues faced by a given community and the available resources to address them.

Sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy refers to food and meals and is characterized by the following principles:

1. Grown locally as and when appropriate
2. Grown seasonally as and when appropriate
3. From diversified agroecological and circular production systems
4. Safeguarding biodiversity and cultural heritage
5. Produced in a fair and inclusive way, including gender and youth
6. Nutritious, clean and safe
7. Accessible and affordable to all
8. With a responsible balance between animal-based and plant-based ingredients
9. With minimized food losses and waste
10. Sourced from production systems that significantly minimize their impacts on nature and on the environment, and that stay well within planetary boundaries.

These principles were developed by the participants* in the "Sustainable, Healthy & Inclusive Gastronomy Workshop" held in Costa Rica in February 2019 during the 2nd Global Conference of the Sustainable Food Systems Programme of the UN One Planet Network. A global movement was created to work on sustainable gastronomy under these endorsed principles.

Many cross-cutting gastronomy initiatives are holistically addressing the multiple challenges and inequalities across the food system, while others focus on a particular challenge or objective. Below we outline some of the core themes that have emerged from an initial mapping of sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy initiatives and policies.

Chefs are becoming increasingly political

Gastronomy is no longer just about cooking fancy food. Around the world, many chefs, cooks and other food service professionals have understood the impact of food on society and the environment. They are now speaking up and becoming champions of sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy. Bottom-up initiatives like MIGA in Bolivia, the



Chefs' Manifesto of the SDG2 Advocacy Hub and the Slow Food Chefs' Alliance are leading to change at local, national and regional levels by influencing legislation, empowering and motivating consumers, and/or bringing new voices to the debate.

Waste not, want not

Many initiatives focus on better use of food resources to feed more people and generate less organic waste. For some restaurants, this also has a positive economic impact in terms of cost reduction. In other cases, such as FEAST by Oz Harvest in Australia, hands-on food waste education is being taught in schools through cooking and inquiry-based learning.

Loss of diversity

Growing awareness about the rapid loss of diversity in our food systems – be it cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge or agrobiodiversity – is a key driver behind the development of sustainable gastronomy initiatives. Initiatives such as the CACORE Gastronomic Laboratory in Costa Rica and the Alliance for Our Tortilla in Mexico are often centred around addressing the lack of dietary diversity by reintroducing indigenous and local knowledge, practices and ingredients to menus. Initiatives such as the Zambia Local Food Chefs Network and the global Recipes for Change programme aim to protect and preserve endangered species and varieties of edible plants and animals, as well as their environments. Chefs and farmers work together to adapt to the real impacts of climate change in their communities.

Sustainable gastronomy provides new opportunities for economic diversification

From urban to rural households, sustainable gastronomy initiatives are making it easier for many individuals and their families to offer culinary experiences to locals and tourists alike. Initiatives such as the C.O.O.K. Alliance in the USA and the Puncte Gastronomice Locale in Romania are creating inclusive opportunities in food and stronger and better-connected communities.

A powerful "social equalizer"

The gastronomic sector provides job opportunities for those who may otherwise have difficulty in entering the job market (including immigrant women, the unemployed, the disabled, etc.). Chefs, cooks, caterers, street food vendors and other actors who cook and sell food can count on a steady demand, especially in the context of urbanizing populations. Social gastronomy initiatives such as the Gastromotiva, active in many countries including Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, South Africa, bring gastronomy-related solutions to social challenges for the poor and marginalized, with a focus on women, youths, people in prisons, people eating at community kitchens, and others. Creative initiatives such as Gastromotiva and the Social Gastronomy Movement focus on ending hunger, fighting poverty, reducing food waste, empowering women, improving gender equality, providing training and job opportunities for youth and women.

Future change-makers

Various initiatives such as Courageous Kitchen in Thailand and Youth4Food, a transnational co-operation project, focus specifically on younger generations, whether it's through hands-on education programs or through the teaching of practical skills in the kitchen. Other initiatives such as the Slow Food Youth Network activate and bring youth movements and networks together to enact change. Food education, including cooking lessons, is often seen as an important stepping-stone to shape behaviour that leads to more desirable and sustainable food systems.

Soft food policy is an emerging tactic

From Gastro 2025 in Denmark to El Menú de Chile, many governments are developing soft policy measures – such as national cooking competitions and education initiatives – to preserve food culture and heritage, or even providing education for restaurants and chefs to offer healthier and more sustainable options on their menus.

All on board!

While many initiatives start at the grassroots level, they often grow to involve local or national authorities such as food safety, health, nutrition, and agricultural authorities. Such is the case of Cocina Escolar del Mundo by Laboratorio Gastronómico Junaeb in Chile and FUCOGA in Costa Rica.

Healthy and sustainable gastronomy initiatives in action

A deep dive into five successful gastronomy initiatives conducted by Hivos, the Humanist Organisation for International Development and the Nordic Food Policy Lab of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

<https://sustainablediets4all.org/publications/>

Food diplomacy and cross-pollination of ideas

Sustainable, inclusive and healthy gastronomy has no boundaries. Some initiatives start in one nation or region and are then adopted by others somewhere else. In other cases, an idea is co-developed to include numerous actors representing international organizations, diplomatic missions, civil society organisations, and chefs from around the world. Global initiatives include the Refugee Food Festival, World Central Kitchen, Food for the Soul and One Planet Plate.

Interactive map

For an online version of this brief with detailed case studies, please go to norden.org/en/mapping. Here you can find the interactive map of over 100+ sustainable gastronomy initiatives worldwide: <https://tinyurl.com/y3szl4n8>

The online map will be updated periodically. If you would like to have your initiative included on the map, please get in touch with Afton Halloran (afthal@norden.org) or Marie Persson (marper@norden.org).

This brief and the Sustainable Gastronomy Initiatives Map is a collaboration between Nordic Food Policy Lab of the Nordic Council of Ministers and HIVOS, the Humanist Organisation for International Development. A special thanks to Afton Halloran, Erick Vargas, Sacha Slootheer, Michael Mulet Solon, Isidora Dias, Alexandria Whiteoak, Andrei Constantin and Elina Pantelimon for their contributions to mapping the sustainable gastronomy initiatives.

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