

Session Proposal

“Transformative Changes for Biodiversity and Health” Alternet Conference, 14 – 17 June 2022

Name and Institutions of Chair and Co-Chairs:

Chair: Giorgia Dalla Libera Marchiori (Campaign Coordinator - Sustainable Public Food Procurement, ICLEI Europe)

Co-Chairs: TBD

Session title: Public Food Procurement as driver of Food Systems Transformation

Session abstract:

Biodiversity is linked to food production with a double node. From one side, we need rich and diverse ecosystems to ensure sustainable and resilient food production; from the other side it is essential to have food systems that preserve and ensure healthy and balanced ecosystems. Unfortunately, the current food systems are responsible for one third of total greenhouse gases emissions globally (1), contributing to climate change, soil degradation, water pollution, and, indeed, biodiversity loss, as well as the surge of new human pathogens and the spread of antimicrobial resistance. Therefore, there is an urgent need for food systems transformation, as recognized by the European Union with the Farm to Fork strategy, aligned with the most recent scientific research (2, 3) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

However, achieving system change is challenging and requires focusing on the right leverage points (4). Public Food Procurement is perfectly positioned as leverage to trigger and achieve food systems transformation. In fact, public institutions have the mandate to ensure the health of their citizens, and consequently of the environment that we all depend upon. Therefore, public procurement can, and should, put pressure on production to transition towards more sustainable practices, which care about animal welfare and biodiversity, resulting in more sustainable, healthy and fairly produced food choices for the consumers. Many local governments, including the municipality of Ghent (5), have understood the potential of public food procurement, but more attention especially at the national and European policy level is needed to channel this potential and achieve food systems transformation.

The Buy Better Food Campaign is a newly born initiative that aims to highlight the pivotal role of public food procurement by amplifying the good practices that already exist, without forgetting to mention the challenges currently faced by local authorities which new policies should address. During this session, we would like to invite participants to discuss the potential of food procurement in protecting and nurturing biodiversity and the direct consequences on citizens' health. We will invite procurement experts to present their experience and discuss with other participants, such as biodiversity and health experts, gaining new perspectives on the topic of public procurement from the angle of biodiversity and health.

Type of session: Roundtable

Intended outputs: Connect public procurement and biodiversity. Share experiences and gain new insights to achieve food systems transformation. Collect key messages the campaign could use to highlight the importance of public food procurement in achieving food systems transformation.

Duration: 2 hours

References:

1. Crippa, M., Solazzo, E., Guizzardi, D., Monforti-Ferrario, F., Tubiello, F.N. and Leip, A.J.N.F., 2021. Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions. *Nature Food*, 2 (3), pp.198-209.
2. Clark, M.A., Springmann, M., Hill, J. and Tilman, D., 2019. Multiple health and environmental impacts of foods. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(46), pp.23357-23362.
3. Willett, W., Rockström, J., Loken, B., Springmann, M., Lang, T., Vermeulen, S., Garnett, T., Tilman, D. and Declerck, F., 2019. The Lancet Commissions Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems.
4. Hjorth, P. and Bagheri, A., 2006. Navigating towards sustainable development: A system dynamics approach. *Futures*, 38(1), pp.74-92.
5. FAO, Alliance of Bioversity International, CIAT, 2021. Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets – Volume 1. *Editores da UFRGS*, pp.87.