



Climate-KIC

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Workshop Report:

# Shifting Urban Diets in the Nordics

November 26, 2020



# Introduction

**Cities are uniquely positioned** to drive the great food transformation. Governors, mayors, and local authorities work closest to citizens, better understanding their needs, and often have substantial scope to take action.

In the Nordic region, cities are working to apply an integrated food systems approach to improve the health of their population and reduce their climate footprint. Three Nordic capital cities – Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm – have signed the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration, setting ambitious targets for achieving a Planetary Health Diet for all by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, intermediary cities, such as Lejre in Denmark and Malmö and Södertälje in Sweden, have been working to improve their food procurement practices and citizen engagement mechanisms, among other activities.

To further advance the urban food systems agenda, the City of Copenhagen and EAT convened a virtual workshop on November 26, 2020 with the goal of kickstarting collaboration among city leaders in the Nordic region.

Serving 70,000 meals each day, Copenhagen has taken significant steps to increase its share of organic food procurement to 87 percent. Under the umbrella of the 2019 Food Strategy, the city will now be working towards reducing its food-related GHG emissions by 25 percent by 2025, decrease food waste, and serve 90 percent of organic food in public kitchens.

Building on the Shifting Urban Diets project, led by EAT with the support of EIT Climate-KIC, the workshop had the following objectives:

1. **To build relationships among city government representatives and experts**, with potential to collaborate in the future to advance food systems transformation in the Nordics.
2. **To exchange information and take stock of actions and initiatives**, including in regard to ongoing projects at the local level that can catalyze food systems action.

3. **To identify pathways for how the Shifting Urban Diets project can support knowledge sharing and city efforts** to promote healthy and sustainable food systems in the region.

The workshop took place alongside the global newscast series EAT@Home,<sup>2</sup> using an interactive format comprising presentations interspersed with collaborative exercises. Through the discussions, participants shared knowledge and interests and provided feedback that can help both the City of Copenhagen and EAT advance food systems change in the Nordic region.

A total of 26 participants attended the workshop on behalf of municipalities, metropolitan authorities, innovation agencies, research institutions, and international organizations – with 7 cities represented. The workshop agenda and full list of participants can be found in Annexes A and B, respectively.

# Key Takeaways

**Throughout the different workshop discussions,** participants explored strengths, challenges, and potential opportunities for collaboration during a dedicated working groups segment. Using an interactive virtual board, the working groups discussed three main topics for shifting urban diets: 1) climate-friendly food, 2) food environments, and 3) public meals and procurement. To kick off the conversation, city officials presented their work in these areas, and afterwards, each group worked to answer a set of pre-defined questions using sticky notes on the virtual board. The questions for discussion were:

- What are the strengths and opportunities in this area?
- What barriers do we experience and/or what challenges do we foresee?
- What are the next steps? And what can we do together?

## **Climate-friendly food**

Workshop participants determined climate-friendly food to be a unifying theme across multiple sectors and initiatives. Keywords identified around this concept include locally

sourced, plant-forward, produced with renewable resources, and with minimal food loss and waste. Initiatives that follow these considerations are well-placed to deliver climate-friendly food to city dwellers, and ultimately, to use food systems as a lever for accelerating climate action in the Nordics, as well as globally.

Several initiatives are already making headway in increasing the uptake of climate-friendly food in the Nordic region. For instance, multiple cities, including Copenhagen and Malmö, have used school food programs as an entry point to improve the urban food system. This approach has not only enabled cities to reduce their food-related climate footprint, but to also serve healthier meals to target groups, including children, youth, and senior citizens.

Yet, the disconnect between political leaders and “do-ers” on the ground, such as public kitchen staff and schoolteachers, needs to be recognized in order to bridge current policy and implementation gaps. Educators, in particular, have a big role to play in building food literacy

## **About the Shifting Urban Diets project**

*‘Shifting Urban Diets: Operationalizing Food System Targets for Health and Sustainability’ works with the City of Copenhagen and partners to translate the findings of the EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health<sup>3</sup> into local action and interventions.*

*The three-year project, launched in April 2019, and funded by EIT Climate-KIC, aims to enable cities to set smarter and more ambitious food system targets with greater accountability and measurable benefits to climate, environment, public health, and wellbeing. With City of Copenhagen as a prototype and other cities consulted throughout, the project ultimately intends to demonstrate how scientific targets for food systems can be operationalized in the city context.*

*The project is being implemented along four main workstreams. The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), the University of Copenhagen, and the World Resources Institute (WRI) work to downscale the global EAT-Lancet report to the city level by establishing a baseline and science-based target for Copenhagen’s food system. Meanwhile, urban design and research firm Gehl focuses on building the understanding of how neighborhood-level food environments influence young people’s food choices. In parallel, City of Copenhagen is building capacity of and reshaping public kitchens to prepare healthy and sustainable meals that align with the EAT-Lancet recommendations. Pulling these strands together, EAT works to disseminate and replicate the methods being developed across the science, policy, and business communities.*

*With this project, City of Copenhagen is one of the first cities to put global consensus on food systems for sustainability, climate, and health into action, as demonstrated in 2019 upon signing the Good Food Cities Declaration. In the future, the goal will be to scale and replicate elements of the project in other city contexts.*

and encouraging behavioral shifts towards climate-friendly diets – especially among school children, in order to build their capacity as “food ambassadors” at home and in their communities. Policies and capacity building programs that empower school staff will be, therefore, crucial for optimizing this entry point.

Data access and harmonization across cities could be a challenge in setting climate targets. While there are different methods available for establishing baselines for a city’s food-related GHG emissions, the quality of existing data will be a determining factor in methodology selection. In addition, aggregating data from the city to the regional, and even global, level remains a gap to identify the exact contribution cities can make towards delivering climate agendas.

To scale up climate-friendly food, suggested next steps include building the capacity in public kitchens and of city officials to serve both healthy and low-emission meals; connecting school curricula and meal planning activities to engage both students and teachers in food preparation; and expanding government policies and guidelines to integrate climate considerations. More broadly, there is opportunity in leveraging existing city networks and regional initiatives working on health or climate, in order to incorporate food in their programs and draw from their expertise.

Ability to cook delicious climate-friendly food (also healthy!)

To serve climate friendly food to elderly people

AMBITIOUS GHG REDUCTION GOALS

Cross-city and cross-sector collaboration

Children as food ambassadors

Connecting school curriculum & canteen

## THE PLACES WHERE WE MEET THE FOOD SYSTEM

*Needs  
political  
will*

**Urban  
planning can  
help change  
behaviors**

Lack of public voice,  
the food industry is  
dictating what people  
eat; "Safe, fast and  
cheap"

**Shop design.  
Food labels will  
only take us so far,  
shop design is far  
more powerful in  
affecting consumer  
choices.**

### Urban food environments

Participants defined food environments as an all-encompassing term that illustrates where people meet the food system; the socio-economic conditions that influence food choices; indoor and outdoor environments where food consumption takes place; and places where the food system becomes tangible. Food environments can also be digital places, which – particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic – have become a popular medium for people to source their food. Together, these food places are critical for sustainable urban development and achieving food system transformation as they shape people's food behavior by defining their physical distance from, the visible marketing of, and economic access to food.

However, a systems approach is needed to effectively address the different types of food environments. Often, there are siloes between municipal departments influencing them, hindering rapid and holistic action. Also, people's perception of healthy food and a lack of devolution can limit a city's capacity to act.

Still, some immediate opportunities identified include expanding urban farming initiatives, addressing marketing regulation, improving public marketplaces, and transitioning into food-sensitive urban planning and design. The latter

was of particular interest as it could unlock a city-wide laboratory for food action, bringing together schools, supermarkets, community farms, and different municipal departments. Political support will be a key success factor for any initiative. Other urban stakeholders should, therefore, aim to work closely with local authorities to make sure actions can be sustained over the long term.

Participants also discussed vulnerabilities within urban food environments. Young people are often bombarded with advertisements and are not guaranteed (physical) access to healthy and sustainable food places. Urban planners are thus a key stakeholder group to engage with in the fight against malnutrition and unhealthy eating habits.

Looking ahead, some actions that cities could take to trigger change include working with city planners and property developers to make sure all new urban areas are developed with Planetary Health Diet<sup>4</sup> considerations; reducing unhealthy food advertisements in public spaces; working with designers so shop interiors encourage healthy food consumption; and establishing participation mechanisms to make sure the voices of children, youth, and other minority groups are heard.

## Public meals and procurement

Improving public procurement and public meals was recognized as perhaps the most meaningful action cities can take to transform food systems. As more people live in urban environments, their connection with food is shifting. Large cities, like Stockholm, occupy large areas and might require further effort to re-sensitize people on where their food comes from. Integral procurement strategies and getting healthy, sustainable foods on people's plates, can help place a spotlight once again on the relationship between food consumption and arable land.

A few key success factors for public meals and procurement initiatives were identified by the working group participants. First, securing political will and the right policy framework – at both the national and subnational levels – is needed to set ambitious targets and gather the financial resources needed for implementation. Second, capacity building within public kitchens is a crucial step for connecting policies and actions, i.e., decision makers with implementers on the ground. Third, interdepartmental collaboration, such as between the departments of health, education, and urban environment, is required for a holistic design and delivery of programs.

The age of beneficiaries can be another consideration in planning public meals and procurement initiatives. For instance, the ages at which young people are introduced to certain food types is critical for developing their preference towards tasty, healthier, and more climate-friendly foods. Similarly, young people's involvement in the kitchen, as in the case of the Copenhagen "food schools," is another ingredient for developing their acceptance towards these kinds of foods – while reducing temptations of the urban food environment, such as fast food.

Yet, cities located within EU member states can experience challenges in policy coordination and implementation between the regional, national, and subnational levels, in particular when it comes to organic food sourcing. Some experiences from Nordic cities also demonstrate that the requirements for purchasing local products can create additional barriers, for example, through time-consuming administrative and logistical efforts for small-scale farmers who then become preoccupied with sales and delivery. A proposed solution for this challenge could be to create city-region transportation systems where larger municipalities, often harboring mid- to large-scale suppliers, can coordinate a more effective exchange of food across different municipalities.

CAN WORK AS  
A DRIVER FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
PRODUCTION AND  
CONSUMPTION

Communication  
and changing  
acceptance for the  
end-user - > doesn't  
come by itself

National action  
plan: organic  
conversation ---  
this is a driver

*Right policy  
framework*

## Considerations

Multiple initiatives in the Nordic region are already underway and are heading in the right direction for a sustainable and healthy food future. Yet, questions remain on how the sum of best practices can lead to changing the food system in a transformative, sustainable manner. Participants identified the following as key points to consider moving forward:

- **Context matters.** Each city is unique; therefore, interventions will have to be adapted and tailored to each city's context. Still, insights and lessons learned can be shared to inspire and help inform others on how to take action.
- **Building relationships.** Comprehensive stakeholder engagement was identified as a common barrier for expanding and sustaining actions. City leaders and other stakeholders will need to find new ways of working with highly influential actors within the food system, particularly businesses, who can play a big role in maturing the food market. Building relationships and testing new models of collaboration could help unlock how different stakeholders – public to private, city-level to community-level – can work closely together in the future.
- **Addressing complexity.** The food system is highly complex and unpredictable. Raising an understanding of the food system's complexity is, therefore, critical to systematically address the challenges it presents. Food education was discussed as a first step towards raising complexity, enabling citizens to understand the systems within the system. Small and intermediary cities could also be the testbed for raising complexity given the size of their populations. In the end, addressing complexity could help make healthy and sustainable food the “new norm.”



# What cities are doing:

## Lejre, Denmark

Lejre Municipality's Food Policy, now in its second iteration, aims to raise awareness and capacity among the population on healthy and sustainable food – moving from a focus on organic food procurement for public kitchens to a whole systems approach. Through this, a sense of belonging and enjoyment can be built among citizens, given that Lejre's population lives in rural settings and comprises small-scale farmers.

The municipality manages operations for a significant number of public kitchens, with those located in elderly homes representing a large part of the work. A training gap among the elderly homes staff has been identified as a major challenge for delivering on the goals of the food policy. As a result, the municipality has invested efforts in building the capacity of public kitchen staff. A staff rotation model allows placing highly experienced staff where they are most needed for one week, for others to learn from. This model also allows for budget savings and to strengthen the professional network of public kitchen staff.

The Lejre Municipality issues an annual organic food procurement report to track progress made towards achieving its targets. More broadly, the municipality also works to connect food producers, businesses, and other communities to achieve co-benefits across the health, environments, and rural development sectors.



### **Malmö, Sweden**

Public meals have served as a powerful entry point for the City of Malmö to advance climate action. Each year, the city serves an estimated 21 million meals spread across schools, pre-schools, and elderly homes.

Through the implementation of the [Policy for Sustainable Development and Food](#), issued in 2010, the city achieved a 70 percent transition to organic food procurement in 2020. In addition, that same year, the city accomplished a 29 percent decrease of food related GHG emissions, from a 2002 baseline. Central to this work has been a shift in weekly menus within public kitchens, moving from meat-based menu planning towards more plant-forward meals.

In parallel, the Food Malmö project, kickstarted in 2018, has enabled city leaders to make progress towards developing a collective food strategy. Citizens have been re-connected with the food system through a series of multi-stakeholder workshops, study tours, and other community engagement activities. As a result, the city has taken significant steps towards the establishment of the first food policy council – comprised of public, private, academic, and non-profit actors – and a cost-free incubator for food entrepreneurs.



### **Oslo, Norway**

Sustainable food is a key focus area for the City of Oslo – a signatory of the Good Food Cities Declaration. In 2015, the city decided to increase its share of organic food procurement to 50 percent, while in parallel, increase the share of fair trade products being purchased. Later in 2019, the city set additional goals for achieving a sustainable food system, such as reducing the city's food waste by 50 percent by 2030; halve meat consumption in public kitchens by 2023; and setting specific requirements for animal products to support sustainable production and animal welfare. The city utilizes public procurement as a strategy to achieve its sustainability goals.

The City of Oslo has also established three city-wide agreements on fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and groceries. The agreements have enabled the city to purchase sustainable food items at a better price and opened opportunities to demand for better production practices, i.e., organically produced and fair trade. Preliminary results illustrate how procurement practices are heading in the right direction; for instance, by mid-2020, 25 percent of all coffee purchased was fair trade.

Going forward, the city will be working to develop a procurement category strategy for food and beverage to further make progress. In addition, the city plans to introduce a free vegetarian meal for all students, ages 15-18, in the fall of 2022, led by the municipal health and education agencies.

### **Region Hovedstaden (Capital Region of Denmark)**

Copenhagen's metropolitan authorities coordinate operations for eight large public hospital kitchens spread across the region. Since 2016, Region Hovedstaden (Region H) has been working to achieve a transition to organic food procurement. Measures taken to reduce the kitchens' climate and environmental footprint include reductions of all single use packaging and of food waste, in addition to organic food purchasing.

After achieving a 60 percent target for organic food procurement established for 2019, Region H has revisited its ambitions. City officials aim to accomplish a 90 percent transition to organic food procurement by 2025. New actions taken include setting baselines on GHG emissions resulting from food purchases that can inform menu planning in the hospital kitchens, as well as increasing the sourcing of local food products in collaboration with small-scale suppliers and in alignment with the European Union's procurement regulations.

Preliminary results are already showcasing that a shift towards more plant-forward meals will be needed to attain the city's goals. Looking ahead, Region H will be working to highlight the role public food procurement can play in delivering climate and sustainability agendas.

### **Södertälje, Sweden**

Södertälje Municipality has taken significant strides to improve its urban food system for nearly two decades. In 2001, the city made the political decision to use food purchase as a channel for environmental action. By 2010, a municipal dietary policy had been established. Shortly after, the municipality developed the [Diet for a Green Planet](#) initiative – becoming the key focus of the city's food systems work.

At its core, the Diet for a Green Planet initiative takes a holistic approach to climate, ocean health, biodiversity and soil fertility, land use, and human health. Activities include serving healthy and sustainable meals in 90 of the city's canteens, including by building capacity of kitchen personnel, collaborating with local producers and SMEs, and developing educational materials for the public, among others.

The municipality also works to engage citizens in the implementation of the Farming Strategy and Food Supply Strategy. At a metropolitan scale, Södertälje Municipality is a partner of the [MatLust](#) project, an EU project aiming to strengthen and improve sustainability of the food industry in the Stockholm region by 2021.

# The way forward

**The workshop was a first step towards** a longer-term exchange to collectively shift urban diets in the Nordic region. Cities have taken promising actions and hold a wealth of knowledge to learn from.

There is no single entry point to changing urban food systems. Whether it's school canteens, home kitchens, or food retailers, all need to be shifted to transform the wider food system. New models of collaboration will have to be sought to work closely with the private sector. Politicians will need to be brought on board through advocacy and citizen engagement, creating the right policy environment to enact change.

For City of Copenhagen, the race is on towards reaching carbon neutrality by 2025, and afterwards, a new climate action plan will have to be developed. Food could be a prominent topic in this process as a key lever for reducing consumption-based emissions. Together with others, Copenhagen is part of a city-led movement in the Nordics, as well as globally, to build healthy and sustainable food systems.

The Shifting Urban Diets project will continue to integrate insights from city-to-city discussions to further understand how the methodologies developed through the project can help drive change in other contexts, mindful of each city's needs and characteristics. Actions will be taken to continue engaging with this Nordic cohort of cities, acting as an enabler for knowledge exchange and for building relationships among the policy, science, and business communities.

Cities in the Nordic region have set ambitious goals. City of Copenhagen and EAT will continue to build on this momentum to inspire and catalyze food systems action.

## Image credit

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Page 9: © Lejre Kommune

Page 10: © Malmö stad

Page 12: Absalon Copenhagen © Giuseppe Liverino

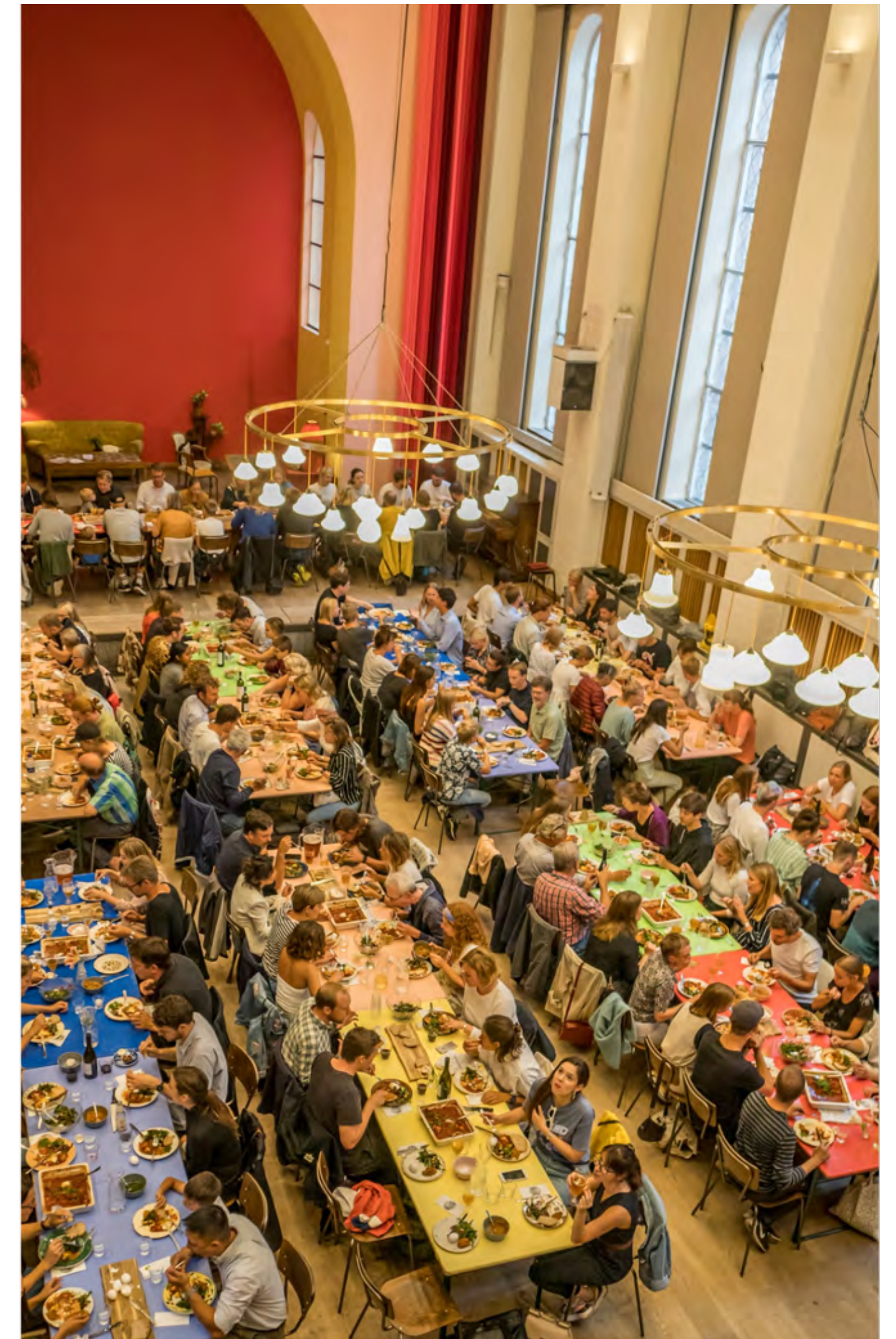
## Literature

<sup>1</sup> About the Good Food Cities Declaration:  
<https://www.c40.org/other/good-food-cities>

<sup>2</sup> About EAT@Home:  
<https://eatforum.org/event/eat-home/>

<sup>3</sup> About the EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health:  
<https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/>

<sup>4</sup> About the Planetary Health Diet:  
<https://eatforum.org/learn-and-discover/the-planetary-health-diet/>



EAT@HOME SIDE SESSION

# Shifting Urban Diets in the Nordics

Thursday, November 26. 13:00–15:30 CET  
Hosted by: City of Copenhagen, EAT

Facilitated by Marie Persson, Nordic Council of Ministers

The goal of this short, interactive workshop is to exchange experiences among city leaders in the region, including in regard to ongoing local-level initiatives that can catalyze food systems action, and to share learnings and approaches that can help overcome barriers. The discussion will also build on the work of the [Shifting Urban Diets](#) project, through which participants will be able to share knowledge and interests and provide feedback that can help us advance food systems transformation in the Nordics.

## Workshop Agenda

12:55	Participants log in on Zoom
13:00	Introduction & housekeeping rules
13:05	Welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Amalie Østergaard, City of Copenhagen</li><li>Emily Norford, EAT</li></ul>
13:15	Shifting Urban Diets: The Copenhagen Pilot <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Emily Norford, EAT</li><li>Jeff Risom, Gehl</li><li>Emil Kiær Lund, City of Copenhagen</li><li>Ingram Jaccard, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)</li></ul> Q&A segment
13:45	Breakout rooms <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Climate-friendly food, facilitated by PIK &amp; EAT</li><li>Urban food environments, facilitated by Gehl</li><li>Public meals &amp; procurement, facilitated by City of Copenhagen</li></ol>
14:35	Coffee break
14:45	Joint discussion: Shifting Urban Diets in the Nordics
15:10	Wrap-up & next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Amalie Østergaard, City of Copenhagen</li><li>Emily Norford, EAT</li></ul>
15:25	Workshop survey
15:30	Thanks & goodbye

Name	City/Organization
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Andrea Oyuela	<i>EAT</i>
Amalie Østergaard	<i>City of Copenhagen</i>
Emil Kiær Lund	<i>City of Copenhagen</i>
Ingram Jaccard	<i>Potsdam Institute for Climate Research (PIK)</i>
Christian Bugge Henriksen	<i>University of Copenhagen</i>
Adam Addis Prag	<i>University of Copenhagen</i>
Jeff Risom	<i>Gehl</i>
Marie Persson	<i>Nordic Council of Ministers</i>
Line Tveiten	<i>City of Oslo</i>
Mariann Karlstad	<i>City of Oslo</i>
Benedikte Wiig Sørensen	<i>City of Oslo</i>
Signe Anette Oden	<i>City of Oslo</i>

Name	City/Organization
Tina Unger	<i>Lejre Municipality</i>
Mads Petersen	<i>Capital Region of Denmark (Region Hovedstaden)</i>
Gunilla Andersson	<i>City of Malmö</i>
Carlos Rojas Carvajal	<i>City of Malmö</i>
Maria Micha	<i>Södertälje Municipality</i>
Hans von Essen	<i>Södertälje Municipality</i>
Svavar Jósefsson	<i>City of Reykjavík</i>
Jenny Sjöblom	<i>Vinnova</i>
Alexander Alvsilver	<i>Vinnova</i>
Carina Borgström-Hansson	<i>WWF Sweden</i>
Ulrika Backlund	<i>Swedish Food Agency</i>
Anna-Karin Quetel	<i>Swedish Food Agency</i>