



Flanders
State of
the Art

Place-based food strategies in Flanders

An overview of multi-level governance and local anchoring

**FLEMISH
LAND
AGENCY**

EU Rural Pact Conference 2025
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Flemish Land Agency (VLM)

- ▶ **Public Agency under Ministry of Environment, Government of Flanders (Belgium)**
- ▶ **Promote and protect the Flanders' countryside and open spaces:**
 - Rural Development Policy and Programmes
 - Manure policy
 - Water and Soil Quality
 - Biodiversity
 - Combatting flooding and erosion
 - Designing open spaces
 - Bying, selling and exchanging land
- ▶ **Together with stakeholders and coalitions with farmers, nature associations, provinces, municipalities, citizens, researchers**



Rural Development Unit

- Rural Development Policy for Flanders

Sustainable Local Economy

food
bioeconomy

Social cohesion

community
gardens &
connected
neighbourhoods

Landscape

Small landscape
elements,
conservation of
hedgerows

- Main instruments: LEADER & call for proposals



- 2025: start of Rural Pact Trayectory

plattelandspact



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Transition to sustainable food systems



= **focus area of the rural development strategy** in Flanders, and rural development programmes (LEADER)

In 2024: **evaluation study** examining the contribution of rural projects to a resilient local food system in Flanders



insights, practical inspiration, policy recommendations

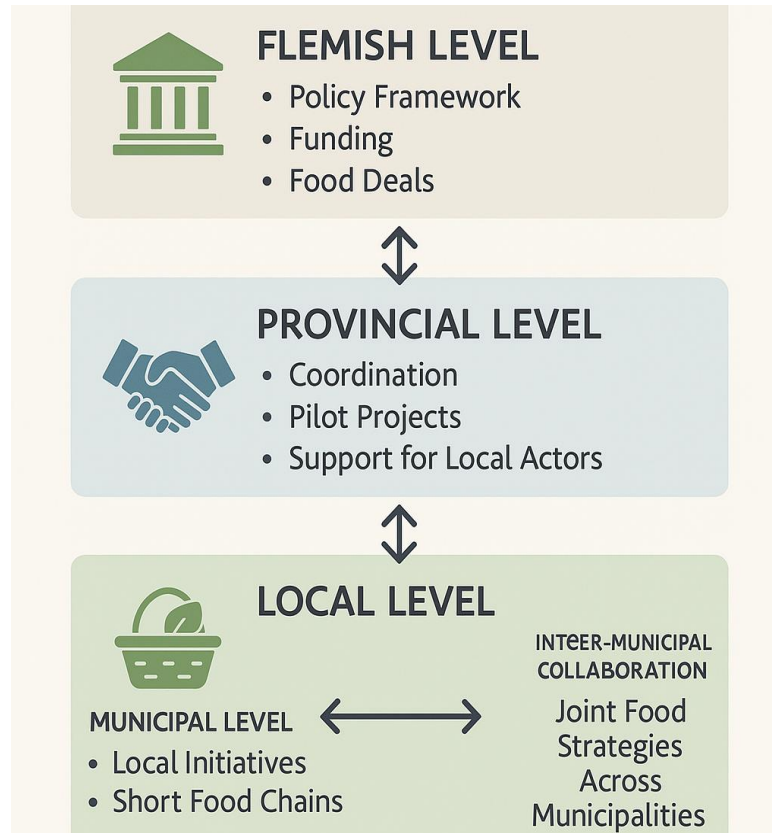


Importance of strategic approach and framework on food on different levels



Place-based aspect

Food strategies in Flanders



► Flemish Level

- [Flanders Food Strategy Go4Food – Dept Agriculture](#)
- Policy Framework
- Food Deals

► Provincial Level

- Coordination
- Pilot Projects
- Support for Local Actors

► Local Level

- **Municipal Level:** Local food strategy, local initiatives, short food chains
- **Inter-Municipal Collaboration:** Joint food strategies across municipalities

Local food strategies: a place-based approach

Territorially Embedded

Food systems are rooted in place, shaped by specific regional and cultural contexts.

Tailored to Local Needs

They reflect local characteristics, address local challenges, and harness local opportunities.

Locally Engaged

Driven by community participation and grounded in local resources and capacities.

Experimental & Learning-Based

Enable hands-on innovation through local experimentation and learning-by-doing.

Ecologically & Socially Fair

Promote environmental sustainability and social equity across the food chain.

Cross-Sector Integration

Connect food with health, education, economy, and climate for systemic impact.

Multi-Level Collaboration

Foster coordination and cooperation across all levels of governance.

Strong Rural–Urban Linkages

Reconnect cities with rural areas through local food production and short supply chains.

How does VLM support local municipalities?

Local4Food: accelerator for local food policy

- Supports Flemish cities and municipalities in building fair, local, and sustainable food systems
- Connects citizens, producers, schools, healthcare, and neighbourhoods
- Offers online labs, tailored mentoring and networking to inspire and activate
- Turns ambitions into action: from healthy school meals to sustainable procurement



Local Food Coordinators



Pilot projects in rural areas launched in 2024 by VLM



a person or team dedicated to developing local food systems.



build alliances between farmers and other food actors, and foster new forms of collaboration.



Their role includes raising awareness of local food production and entrepreneurship.



They connect food initiatives with landscape value and local experiences.



More info [here](#)

Inspiration: "Feeding the Local Appetite: A Cookbook for Circular Food Strategies"

De lokale
honger
stillen

Kookboek voor
circulair
voedselbeleid

inspiratienota



VLAAMSE
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MAATSCHAPPIJ

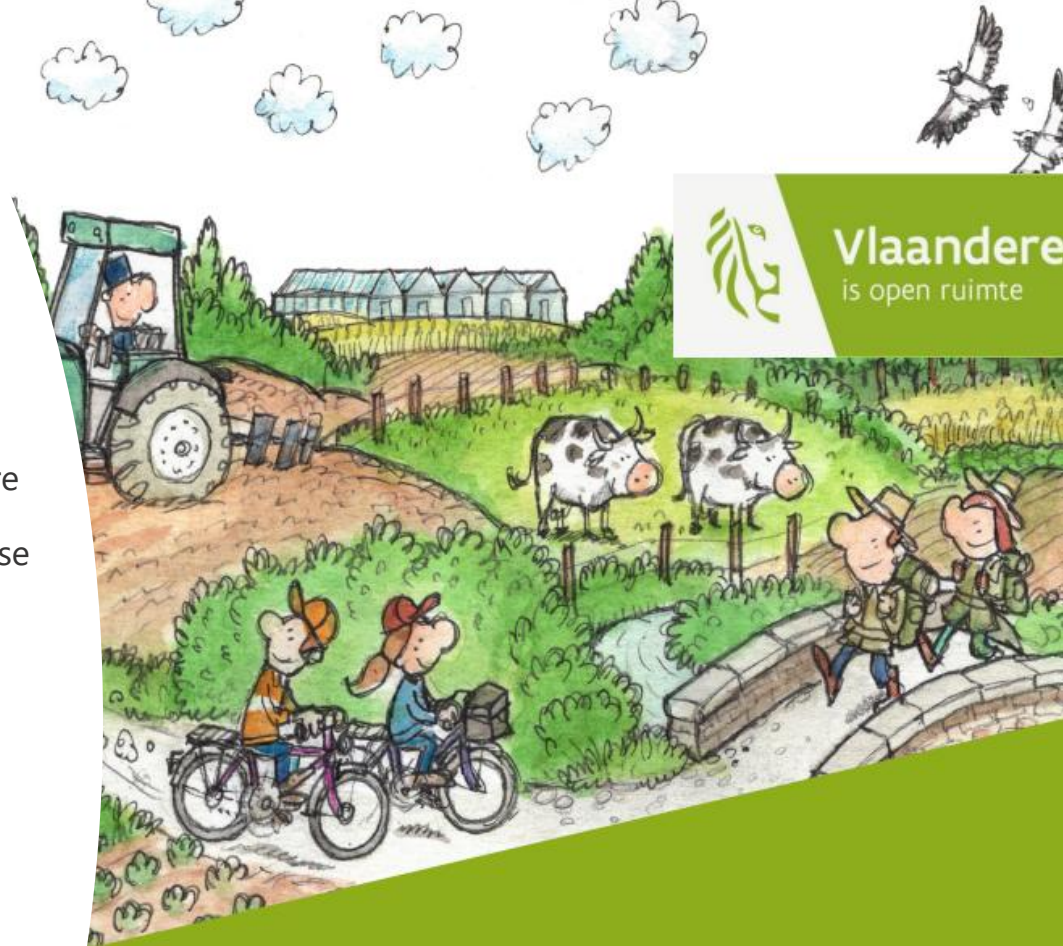
Practical and inspirational guide by VLM and VVSG for local governments to develop and implement a circular and sustainable food policy

It is the result of a three-year trajectory (2020–2022) with over 150 municipalities.

Shares lessons and examples from rural food strategies

Inspirational guide– Food Landscapes at the rural-urban interface

- ▶ A **food landscape** is an open space area where local partnerships address multiple rural and environmental challenges simultaneously. These include:
 - **Local food production and sales**
 - **Landscape enhancement and biodiversity**
 - **Climate adaptation and renewable energy**
 - **Soil and water management**
 - **Accessibility and rural experience**
- ▶ Farmers play a **central role**, working together with local governments, civil society, and entrepreneurs.
- ▶ **Inspirational guide** [here](#)



Vlaanderen
is open ruimte

Voedsellandschap
Inspiratieboek

Recommendations on the connection between territories, food and people:

- ▶ Strengthen **locally embedded food systems & strategies**
- ▶ Promote **short food supply chains** to keep value in rural areas and to connect rural-peri-urban-urban areas (eg food hubs)
+ Strengthen the **role of public procurement**
- ▶ **Foster collaboration** accross the whole value chain & strengthen **connecting roles** (eg food facilitators)
- ▶ Secure & protect land for food (Flanders: **public land for sustainable food production**)
- ▶ ...

More information

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