Organic Food Systems in practice

The world faces serious challenges to becoming a truly sustainable place. The problem – globally and locally – is not that we don’t yet have enough answers but that we don’t have enough people taking action on them. We are now at a stage of evolution – societally, ecologically, economically and technologically – where the need for change is increasingly urgent and the opportunities to achieve it within reach. Organic-based best practices in production and consumption are a promising way forward that can be made even better. They can contribute positively to:

- food quality and consumer satisfaction
- healthy diets and lifestyles
- sustainable agriculture and animal welfare
- a safer and more resilient environment
- sustainable economic growth and jobs
- food security and food sovereignty
- cultural preservation.

Shared Challenges, Local Contexts

A precondition for all our work for practical implementation is listening to questions of vital importance for the local stakeholders, sharing experience and competence and in an open dialogue defining a pathway for further cooperation in learning networks. We aim to understand the local context such as climate, culture, history, and nutritional and dietary knowledge and habits, preferences for taste, availability and affordability of food.

The Organic Food System Program – Enhancing transformation

The Organic Food System Program finds the best examples so far, and supports, recognizes, and strengthens them. We facilitate their adoptability by more communities.

By practicing common values, taking a common approach and using common messaging, participating communities, organizations, and individuals simultaneously validate their own work and that of the global movement as a whole. They learn from each other and build the collective work, bringing benefits to themselves and others. Multiplication globally validates community action locally and enables shared learning and ongoing
improvement.

**Going to Scale**
The OFSP breaks down barriers to engaging stakeholders and enables them to move toward best practice. Demand for healthy food supports healthy and sustainable production practices. Good, healthy food and a renewed connection to its source becomes a way of life and is part of public awareness and policy. Food value chains become values-based food systems, and food products represent and reflect a way of life.

**Building Learning Networks**
business enterprises; government authorities; community organizers and NGOs; scientists, researchers, and educators; private citizens.

**A Living Laboratory**
With access to a global network in more than 120 countries, the OFSP represents a unique opportunity for research, concept development and activities for practical implementation. They demonstrate transformation to sustainable societies.

**Diets for a Green Planet**
The OFSP works with proven and innovative diet models. Partners of the OFSP have detailed knowledge of various regional diets such as Mediterranean Diet and New Nordic Diet. Studies of the relationships between health and environment flow into a knowledge base that can be used to prove and improve production and consumption patterns.

- Nutritious, healthy and tasty food – well prepared using local knowledge and improved appropriate technologies
- Organically grown, ideally from eco intensified regenerative farms – higher nutrient density and less toxic residues
- More vegetables and whole grain – whole grain products in preference to refined equivalents are more filling, have higher nutritional value and create less waste.
• Less meat – Animals are needed in farming systems; their number however should not exceed the system’s own ability to feed them. Animals should be raised under good conditions and fish should come from sustainable fishing. The majority of meat consumed should come from ruminants. A global average benchmark is for a maximum 20% of the ingredients to be meat and fish. (Dairy products and eggs are not included in the 20%.)
• Seasonal food – A product which is produced locally in its natural season can be ecologically friendly, fresh and low cost at the same time.
• Locally produced – The definition of “local” varies according to the particular product and market. The origin of animal fodder and other inputs should also be taken into account.
• Reduced waste – Wastage must be minimized; in production, in processing, in distribution, in catering, and from the plate itself.

Local Sustainable Food Societies

Local Sustainable Food Societies (LSFS) are networks of all actors in the food system from farmers to consumers, local authorities, research, education initiatives and NGOs. The LSFS are created based on the local context of environmental, societal, cultural, economic and legal framework. They bring the different people in the chain closer together, and educate consumers to enable them to make informed choices.

Common Attributes
1. Inclusiveness – All actors are invited to move toward best practices. There are virtually no barriers to participating, only a willingness to commit to ongoing improvement and accountability. Co-creation among farmers, processors, traders, policy makers, consumers and researchers reduces barriers to participation and incentivizes producers and consumers toward better practices.
2. Gender equity – A primary consideration in all activities involves enabling women greater opportunity to participate and share in leadership to have better balance between men and women.
3. True costs and responsibility accounting – Soil, water, biodiversity, energy use, waste reduction, livelihoods, product quality, and human health all must be improved. Communities together evolve and use a common framework to guide and measure paradigm change.
4. Coordination of research & innovation – The OFSP engages scientists from all over the world in the fields of agriculture, food and nutrition security, health and environment. Studies at local and regional levels are shared and coordinated
globally. LSFS share experiences and learn from each other, using their systems as living laboratories. Education and research institutions partner with the OFSP and governments to set priorities based on the greatest needs identified in the given context. The OFSP aims to study, share, enrich, and describe these food systems so that their achievements may be systematized, identified and measurable. The work is simultaneously fed into relevant networks and platforms (e.g. UN 10YFP, C40, ICLEI, TIPI, etc.).

5. **Consumer awareness and behaviors** – Through school education programs, public messaging and awareness campaigns and cultural events (e.g. harvest festivals, food fairs, celebrations), consumer awareness is raised and incentivized to support local production, ecological stewardship, and reduce waste, as well as enhancing their experience of the preparation and enjoyment of food. *Diet for a Green Planet* serves as a model and benchmark for consumption.

6. **Strengthening value chains and relationships** – Producers, processors, distributors, and traders are preferentially linked to economic reward based on a combination of their absolute performance and continuous improvement. Institutional purchasing supports them accordingly. Taxes and subsidies incentivize practices based on a common true cost/responsibility accounting framework and are reflective of *Diet for a Green Planet*.

7. **Transparency** – OFSP participants share performance data, equal opportunity for obtaining public resources, and fair enforcement of policies and regulations. There is access to credible information, opportunity for exchange, and recourse for all interested persons, for quality assurance and educational purposes.

**General starting characteristics for a Local Sustainable Food Society**

- Organic farming being practiced as an important feature in the area
- The availability of extension service/ competence in organic farming practices
- Organic food potentially or actually introduced in public meals
- Availability of organic food in shops, markets etc
- The presence of other interested food chain actors such as distributors, wholesalers, shops and restaurants
- Involvement of local authorities creating favorable public policies with a focus on public awareness raising and education.
- Willingness among producers and other value chain actors to convert to and/or incentivize regenerative agriculture
- Presence of an able contact person/persons/group and the willingness to cooperate with OFSP, to share and showcase competence and aspirations in a global network.

**Learning Centers**
Learning Centers are meeting places – more or less formal, depending on local preferences - that help Local Sustainable Food Societies form and thrive. Learning Centers are both in rural and urban areas. They can be on a farm, a university, a school, an NGO office, a shop, restaurant etc. based on local preferences and opportunities.

**General characteristics**

- Regenerative agriculture based on organic principles and practices and/or consumption and promotion of products therefrom are central activities
- Presence of a contact person/persons/group able to communicate and engage a network
- Availability of a relevant physical place
- Competence either *in situ* or in the network in several of the areas of a sustainable food systems from farmer to consumer, policymaking, research, education, networking skills etc
- Ability to attract/engage participants

**General starting characteristics**

- Organic production, consumption and promotion are central activities
- Availability of a relevant physical place
- Engagement with the OFSP
- Ability to attract/engage participants

**Organic Food System Program: Competences and Resources**

Close link between research, education, concept development and practical implementation.

- Results and findings from global and regional research such as on Mediterranean Diet, New Nordic Diet, and Diet for a Green Planet, true cost accounting studies that include environmental, human health, and socioeconomic impacts.
- Guidelines, handbooks and recommendations on regenerative agriculture practices and sustainable diets

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1 We realize that local initiatives may not always use the exact same terms to express their particular co-creative initiative. Terms like “Ecovillage”, “Bioregion”, “Green Region”, “Food Cluster”, “Food Hub”, “Name of an Area/Landscape/ Natural Park”, “Sustainable City” are similar in intent to Local Sustainable Food Society. The same could be with the term “Learning Center,” where a variety of equivalent terms might be used.

2 Please see [https://organicfoodsystem.net/](https://organicfoodsystem.net/) for deeper description of work areas and projects.
• Education and training programs such as IFOAM – Organic International “Organic Academy” with leadership courses and training and BERAS “Farmers University”
• Support in policy making
• Monitoring and benchmarking the transformation process
• Access to a global network of practical initiatives
• Access to communications and promotional media

Outcomes
• An established global network of Local Sustainable Food Societies (LSFS) and Learning Centers integrated under the Organic Food System Program, allowing for the exchange of experiences among stakeholders including the whole value chain, policy makers, consumer groups, and researchers.
• Normalized and contextualized recommendations for establishing Local Sustainable Food Societies and Learning Centers, including a focus on sustainable diets.
• Deepening the study and understanding of sustainable food systems with focus on healthy and environmental friendly diets; proving and improving the concept based on existing and new data, in order to further refine models in situ;
• Evolution of public policies in favor of more sustainable production and consumption patterns using a common accountability framework.
• Identification of challenges and gaps towards further implementation of best practice organic food systems as a model for sustainable food systems.
• Description of further steps for further implementation and improvement of the OFSP, with ongoing refinement of local action plans.

Measurable Impacts
• More Local Sustainable Food Societies and Learning Centers,
• More producers affected
• More researchers/research projects engaged;
• Bigger population served,
• The impetus toward more widespread conversion to organic practices, with corresponding increases in quantity and diversity of organically produced raw and processed goods available to consumers;
• Increased sustainable/organic food consumption, measurable by market data (percentage share), and/or the number of public institutions, restaurants, etc. that have their primary food service provision;
• Improvements in operator (primary producer, processor, trader) performance across a spectrum of sustainability dimensions – ecological, human health, economic, cultural, and social.
Organization

1. Global Coordination
1.1 Identifying, organizing, and activating a global network of new and existing local sustainable food societies, with specification of actors at different geographical scales;
1.2 Collection of good/best practice examples connecting healthy consumption and sustainable production within one system;
1.3 A communications and dissemination plan both within the existing network and beyond to publicize and generate interest in the OFSP and creation of LSFS
1.4 Development and dissemination of information packages and protocols (using existing materials as a start) for establishing LSFS and Learning Centers, including training, coordination, and assessment materials for farmers, processors, traders, consumers, policy makers, institutional buyers, extension agents, and researchers;
1.5 Coordination, through OFSP partners, of relevant research projects in LSFS, among LSFS, and with the global network;
1.6 Linkage to innovative technologies through the OFSP, which support ecological regenerative agriculture, sustainable processing with care, product quality assurance, and/or information sharing;
1.7 Development of a communications platform to educate the public, facilitate information exchange and learning, aggregate data, and compile a reference library of case examples.
1.8 Monitoring & Evaluation of the OFSP:
   1.8.1 Detailing of data collection metrics/indicators by global coordinators;
   1.8.2 Data collection protocol for global OFSP and for LSFS;
   1.8.3 Measurement and evaluation of performance against expected outcomes and impacts;
   1.8.4 Reporting to experts, policy makers, and institutions;
   1.8.5 Plan for ongoing improvements.

2. National Contacts
The OFSP identifies National Contacts to be the contact point with the global OFSP, liaise with national authorities and give support to local initiatives and with the following main tasks:

2.1 Be the National contact point for the local initiatives
2.2 Liaise with regional authorities in relation to the OFSP
2.3 Agreeing on the structure and organizational dynamics for each Local Sustainable Food Society and Learning Center
2.4 Coordinate actors and identify/establish Local Sustainable Food Society and Learning Centers, with associated engagement of local stakeholders.
2.5 Coordinate and expand a network of scientists, researchers, and public and private institutions to study production systems and consumption patterns,
improve techniques, and develop innovative technologies towards more sustainable and resilient localized food systems;

Annex 1 – Competence and scientific references/bibliography

Annex 2 – Set of proposed key data and indicative activities for transforming food systems – Establishing Local Sustainable Food Societies and Learning Centers

The following represents an indicative (not prescriptive) set of information and activities for helping establishing a Local Sustainable Food Society and Learning Center.

1. General description

| Name of the LSFS | Address of the LSFS coordinating entity | Key features of your LSFS |

2. Actors in the LSFS (please list all known entities for the categories below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Input companies (eg seed, other farming inputs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wholesalers, traders, shops and other distribution channels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional purchasers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumers organisation/group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local authorities (government &amp; public agencies)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers/research institutions, education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension services and farmers training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers/Schools</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Media</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (please specify)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Specific features/knowledge/competence that you would like to share in the Learning Network

4. Specific features/knowledge/competence where you need help from the Learning Network

Learning Centers, Rural Area/ Urban Area

1. General description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Learning Center</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homepage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact persons(s), email, telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key features/further description of the Learning Center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Specific features/knowledge/competence that you would like to share in the Learning Network

3. Specific features/knowledge/competence where you need help from the Learning Network
Indicative activities

3.1 A stakeholder engagement and communications plan, including engaging the enterprises across the value chain – farmers, processors, and traders – to develop coordinated, interdependent business arrangements for production and consumption.

3.2 Conducting a baseline study, including: policies and strategies at local level; producers and production capacities; consumption patterns; description of the local food chain; SWOT for implementing organic diets.

3.3 Promoting sustainable and healthy diets and setting them into practice. Such dietary concepts can be for example the “Diet for a Green Planet” (http://beras.eu/what-we-do/diet-for-a-green-planet/) as a public education message to be acted on. It popularizes tasty and nutritious, organic, local foods according to season, with good balance in the diet between meat, fish, vegetables, wholegrain, and reduced food waste. Model dietary concepts such as the Mediterranean Diet, New Nordic Diet, and other culturally rich models will be used or transformed according to local conditions, and other new models may also be developed.

3.4 Organizing technical extension and transfer of appropriate technologies to farmers, to improve their performance based on ecological intensification. This includes appropriate genetic selection and breeding; better field techniques, tools, and production inputs; and greater efficiency in nutrient cycling and energy use.

3.5 A closer look at relevant initiatives within the public meal sector (kindergarten, school meals, canteens and public procurement) for the purpose of selecting Local Sustainable Food Societies and Learning Centers.

3.6 Enlisting enterprises to participate within the OFSP framework, incentivized by the sustainability benefits promised by their participation in the Model Region.

3.7 Engaging policy makers to reform policy to identify and preferentially reward best practice.

3.8 Coordinated improvement of practices for processing with care, storage and distribution of food towards sustainability, including minimization and recycling of waste;

3.9 Revising market incentives and accompanying guarantee systems to enable and encourage conversion to sustainable food systems through ecological regenerative agriculture, careful processing, catering, cooking, etc., as well as from an economic standpoint. This includes developing new ways to ensure greater market access and transparent integrity of products, as described in Organic 3.0 (see Annex 2).

3.10 Coordinating research with the national contact and global OFSP to show the beneficial impacts of organic regenerative practices and organic diets on sustainability and health, focusing on key indicators of performance and improvement;