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URBAN FOOD DYNAMICS TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE AND TERRITORIAL FOOD POLICY

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to thank the organizers of this conference for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to express my ideas and experiences about the role of food and agriculture in urban and peri-urban regions.

1 Introduction

Before I commence with my presentation, let me first briefly introduce myself. My name is Han Wiskerke and I'm 41 years old. I have been trained as an agronomist and obtained a PhD degree in Rural Sociology in 1997. In November 2004 I was appointed as Chair and Professor of Rural Sociology at Wageningen University.

My group is involved in scientific research and BSc, MSc and PhD education about rural and regional development. Our focus is on the dynamics, diversity and socio-economic impact of rural and regional development processes in Europe. The core research themes are:

- Agricultural and rural dynamics in metropolitan regions
- Dynamics and sustainability of territorial embedded food networks
- Rurality, identity and social cohesion

Most of our research activities are carried out as part of EU-funded research projects¹, in which we collaborate with other social scientists, but also economists, and a variety of technical scientists from different EU member states.

2 Changes in food governance

As probably well known, the original Common Agricultural Policy was based on the desire to guarantee self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs in response to post-war food shortages. This resulted in a productivist modernization approach, based upon a combination of market and price policies on the one hand and structural development policies on the other hand. Characteristic for the productivist version of the CAP, which continued until the late 1980s, was the dominant role of the state in food governance. The state not only attempted to shape the infrastructural conditions for modern agriculture but also the market for food products (figure 1).

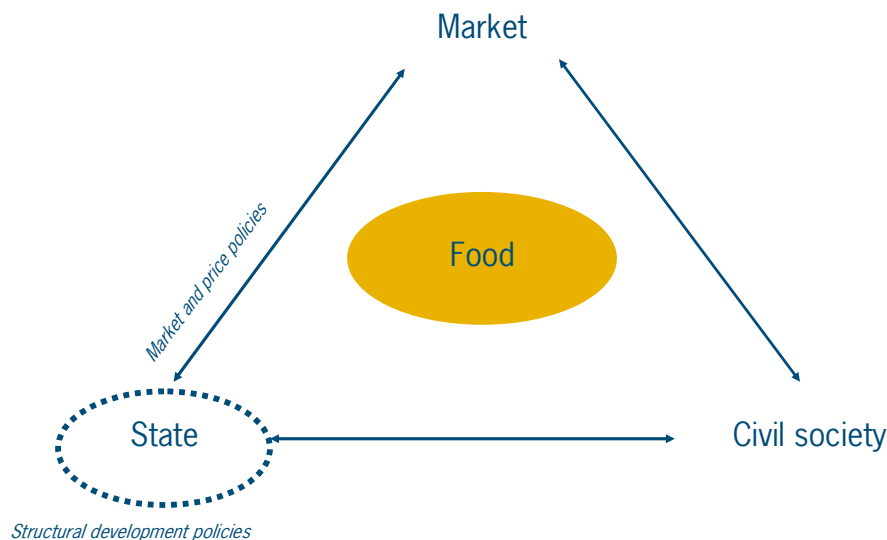


Figure 1. EU food governance in the era of agricultural modernization and productivism

¹ See <http://www.rural-impact.net/>, <http://www.multagri.net/>, <http://www.etuderd.eu/>, <http://www.sus-chain.org/>, <http://www.cofami.org/index.html>, <http://www.trust.unifi.it/>, <http://www.origin-food.org/2005/base.php?cat=20> and <http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone> for further information.

By the late 1980s the CAP had become a victim of its own success. As the primary objective of producing sufficient food was realized, negative side-effects came to the fore.

These were, amongst others:

1. Environmental degradation due to emission of nutrients to air, soil and groundwater, accumulation of pesticides in soil and groundwater, loss of biodiversity and destruction of nature and landscapes.
2. Loss of many traditional and artisan products and production and processing techniques.
3. Budgetary problems as a result of surplus production, and, related to that,
4. Trade distortions on the world market.

This called for a reorientation of the CAP, a reorientation that was reinforced by food and health scares in the 1990s such as BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease, classical Swine Fever and Avian Influenza.

These problems and challenges resulted in fundamental changes in food governance (see figure 2). First, we have witnessed a stepwise withdrawal of the state as food price and market regulator; food prices as well as food supply and demand were increasingly seen as being subject to and the result of the market logic and in order for the market to perform optimally trade distorting measures had to be removed. The recently proposed future CAP reforms also point to a continuation of this approach.

Second, this stepwise withdrawal of the state as price and market regulator did, however, not result in a complete disappearance of the state in food governance. Alongside its withdrawal the state's influence in food governance continued to exist through the development of additional policies and regulations such as agri-environmental policies, nature and landscape protection schemes, food quality policies and food safety regulations. Most of these policy goals have now been integrated into the second pillar of the CAP, i.e. the rural development policy.

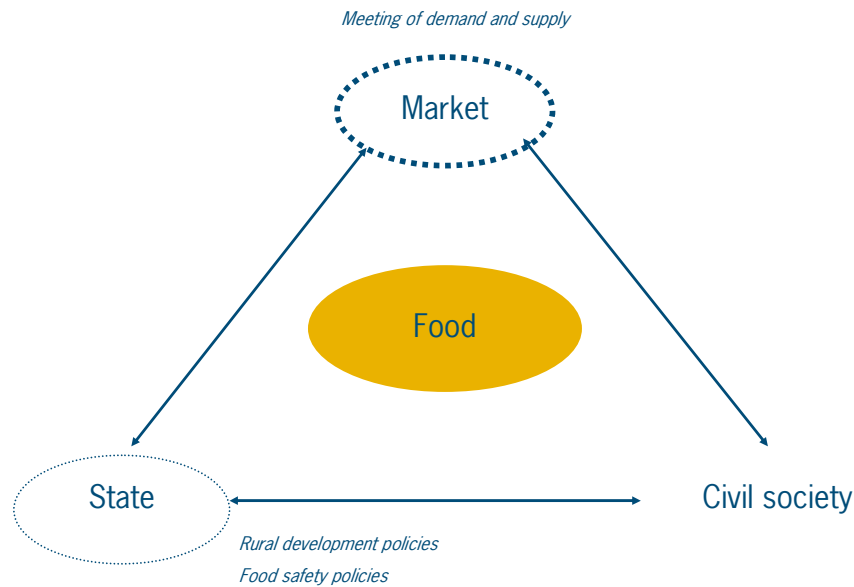


Figure 2. EU food governance after the successive CAP reforms

Does this revised mode of food governance, in other words, the reform of the CAP, mean that we now have a food and rural development policy at our disposal that enables us to deal with the challenges of contemporary society? My answer to that question would be 'NO'. I am of the opinion that another fundamental change is necessary to deal with today's and tomorrow's problems. I am speaking of a fundamental change because I foresee inevitable reforms in the mode of food governance, i.e. changes in the relations between 'the market', 'civil society' and 'the state' or 'the public sector'.

3 Driving forces of the food policy reform

This inevitable food policy reform will be driven by:

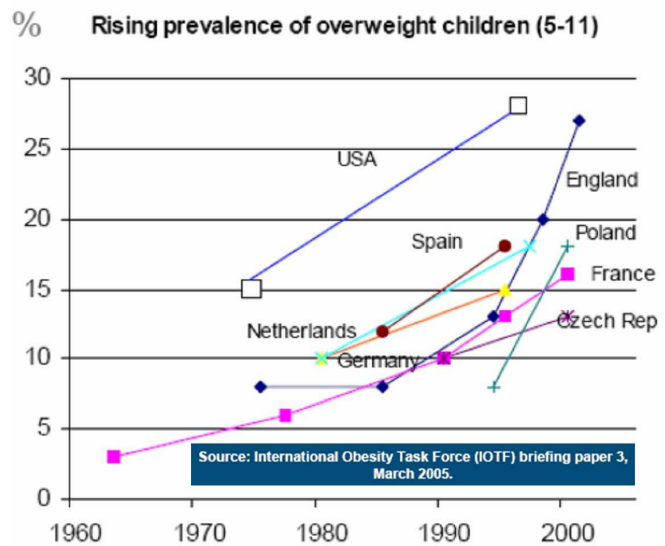
1. The rapid increase in urban and peri-urban food-related problems.
2. Grassroots developments reconnecting producers and consumers or farmers and citizens.
3. Changes in the place of food consumption.
4. The emergence of new food policy actors
5. The rise of public sector actors.

Let me briefly explain and illustrate each of these 5 aspects.

3.1 Urban food-related problems

As most of you will know, cities and metropolitan agglomerations in Europe are facing numerous social, economic and environmental problems. Some of these problems are directly or indirectly related to food. Let me mention a few.

First, as mentioned in the *European Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health of the World Health Organization*, "the growing obesity epidemic is one of the most worrying emerging health concerns in many European countries". Obesity rates in Europe range from 10% to 38% of the population. In particular the rapidly rising prevalence of overweight among children, as shown in the figure on the right, is alarming.



Obesity and overweight pose a major risk for diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, strokes and certain forms of cancer. On average obesity costs society 780 Euros per person per year and this amount is increasing annually. Main causes of obesity are changing dietary patterns and increasing levels of physical inactivity.

Second, and this seems paradoxical at first sight, malnutrition is also a growing health concern which, like obesity, is more prevalent among the poorer sections of the urban population. Surveys in the United States in the 1990s revealed that up to 80% of elderly people in homes were suffering from malnutrition, mainly due to the fact that institutional food budgets were too tight to provide three nutritious meals per day. Another cause of malnutrition is the increase in so-called 'food deserts', i.e. impoverished urban neighbourhoods that lack supermarkets and grocery stores, but boast dozens of fast food and snack shops. With supermarkets and grocery stores moving to the outskirts of

cities for logistical reasons, ownership of a car becomes more or less a prerequisite to have access to food for home preparation and consumption. If public transport facilities to these outskirts are lacking, then poor people are deprived of access, or at least easy access to nutritious foodstuffs.

Third, and this is partly related to the previous issue, cities are increasingly facing environmental problems linked to the provision and purchasing of food. Household and individual trips to food outlets contribute a significant portion to the urban transportation volume; in some cities up to 25% of all household and individual car trips are to food outlets. Furthermore, the provision of food sector establishments is a major cause of urban traffic congestions. In addition the food miles associated with the average urban meal are increasing. Low transport costs enable food processors and retailers to source globally, despite the fact that many food products can be sourced, albeit somewhat more expensive, locally. Finally, it is important to realize that food waste (incl. food packaging) is a significant portion (up to one third) of the household, commercial, and institutional wastebasket.

A fourth and final urban problem, which is more related to rurality than to food, is urban expansion or urban sprawl. In many European countries the urban population is growing. In order to accommodate this growing population the size of cities are expanding at the expense of rural areas at the city borders as well as at the expense of green spaces (e.g. parks, community gardens) within city borders.

Scientific research has convincingly shown that a green living environment is beneficial to the physical and psychological wellbeing of citizens and this may urge us to reconsider the spatial separation between urban and rural development.

3.2 Grassroots developments reconnecting people

Characteristic for the post-war development of the food system is that producers and consumers, or more in general, agriculture and society have become disconnected. Furthermore, the productive agricultural function of rural areas, i.e. the cheap mass production of food ingredients for the food processing industry, has prevailed over the other functions of agriculture and rural areas, such as the preservation of landscape,

biodiversity and cultural heritage and the provision of other products and activities as recreation and leisure. In recent years the number and diversity of grassroots developments, aimed at *reconnecting* producers and consumers or agriculture and society, at *re-embedding* food and other products in their socio-cultural, natural and territorial environment and at *intertwining* different products and activities at regional level has grown considerably. These developments are initiated by farmers, NGOs and/or critical consumers. Examples are:

- Associations for agrarian landscape preservation and nature conservation in the Netherlands
- Farmers' markets and similar food outlets in many European cities
- Consumer solidarity purchase groups in for instance Tuscany
- Care farms in the Netherlands

These and other examples, which are receiving political support through rural development policies and programmes, reveal an expanding social movement establishing new, or re-establishing old socio-cultural and economic links between city and countryside. This may create ample opportunities for agriculture in peri-urban or metropolitan regions. This is for instance supported by Dutch data. Between 1993 and 2003 the total number of agricultural enterprises in the Netherlands decreased from approximately 120,000 to 85,000. If we differentiate between rural and peri-urban areas (in the Dutch situation characterised by less respectively more than 1000 addresses per km²), we see a decrease in the number of farms in rural areas of 35% in 10 years time and a decrease of less than 3% in peri-urban areas in the same period of time. Characteristic for most 'peri-urban farms' is that they are much more multifunctional and are becoming more embedded in the regional economy than 'rural farms'. Thus, ongoing metropolitanization of rural regions is not negative for agriculture. On the contrary, I would argue.

3.3. Changing places of consumption

The third contemporary change in Europe's urban food system is the growing importance of out-of-home consumption. For instance, in the Netherlands, 15 out of 21 meals consumed by adults are now consumed at home, for the young generation this is 12 out of

21 and this is expected to decrease to 10 out of 21 for the next generation. In the UK the spending for out-of-home consumption has recently outgrown the spending for home consumption.

Home meals are partially replaced by meals consumed in hotels, restaurants and convenience shops but to a growing extent by the ‘public plate’, i.e. meals consumed in public and semi-public sector food establishments, such as schools, universities, hospitals and canteens of government buildings.

3.4 The emergence of new food policy actors

A fourth development that I want to mention briefly is the emergence of new food policy actors. For decades food policies have been the responsibility of the EU and the nation states. With the rapid increase in urban food-related problems, we are now witnessing the emergence of city governments and peri-urban regional governments as food policy-makers. The London Food Strategy is a clear example of that, and so are the Dogme project of Copenhagen and the Agenda Proeftuin of Amsterdam. Recently the city governments of Amsterdam, London, Ferrara, Rome, Rennes and Malmö and the peri-urban regional governments of Southwest England, East Ayrshire, Andalucia, the Basque Country and Lazio have decided to intensify collaboration by drafting an INTERREG programme aimed at improving their food strategies by exchanging experiences and defining best practices.

3.5 The rise of public sector actors as market parties

The fifth and final contemporary change in Europe’s food system is directly linked to the growing importance of the ‘public plate’ for the European consumer. It implies that public and semi-public institutions are not just policy bodies, designing and implementing rules and regulations, but also and increasingly important market parties through which a significant part of a country’s annual food expenditures are channelled. In the Netherlands, for instance, public sector meals account for 7.5% of the total food expenditures of out-of-home consumption. Whilst the share of the public plate in the

annual food intake of the European citizen is increasing, the composition, quality and sustainability of the public plate are very diverse. Let me illustrate this with two examples: one about meals in nursing homes in the Dutch province of Limburg and one about school meals in Rome.

3.5.1 Case 1: the North Limburg Care Group



A few years ago, the North Limburg Care Group (Zorggroep Noord-Limburg) was formed through a merger of 28 care homes and nursing homes, most of which had hitherto cooked for their residents in their own kitchens, and had relied on local food suppliers: The baker, the butcher, the greengrocer etc. When the North Limburg Care Group was set up, it was decided in the interests of demand-driven care and cost effectiveness to close the kitchens of all care and nursing homes and to establish satellite kitchens to cater for the 2,200 residents as well as for many of the 44,000 home care clients.

Because the North Limburg Care Group is a government-funded organization that buys more than 4 million Euros worth of food per year in order to cater for all its clients it is, according to European tender legislation, obliged to source its food supplies at European level.

This has put an end to the relationships between local food suppliers and the care institutions. The amounts of meat and bread required by the satellite kitchens far exceed the capacity of an individual butcher or baker. Only if they had clubbed together to submit a joint tender, would they have had any chance of succeeding, leaving aside the issue of the numerous organization and logistical problems they would have faced. However, at the time when the question of European sourcing came up, there was no sign of joint action by small to medium food suppliers in North Limburg. And where there was any kind of collective action, those involved were not able to submit correct competitive tenders. And so the satellite kitchens of North Limburg Care Group were supplied from the start by food suppliers who operated at national and international level and who were very well-acquainted with European tender regulations. This has resulted in a significant increase in the food miles of the North Limburg Care Group meals.

For the many locally operating food suppliers, this meant the loss of the care and nursing homes as customers, and a drop in income and turnover. In the worst case scenario, it also meant a drop in turnover to the tune of millions of Euros for the regional economy. However, this loss of added value and accompanying loss of jobs in the region is not the only negative effect of upscaling in the care sector.

Such upscaling also has an emotional effect on the quality of life in the care and nursing homes. The mainly elderly residents of these institutions are used to a particular butcher's sausages or a particular baker's pies. When ingredients for the meals are sourced elsewhere, the residents are suddenly confronted with meals that taste different, and which some of them find less tasty. This can have a negative impact of their psychosocial and physical wellbeing. Indeed, if the residents enjoy their food less, they may be inclined to leave it on their plates. Eating too little, or too selectively, is known to make people - and especially old people - more vulnerable to various illnesses and complaints, and to cause them to take longer to recover from illnesses. This could lead to any savings made by changing the catering system being cancelled out by higher health care costs.

This example of the North Limburg Care Group is a typical example of conflicting policy objectives: the aim to enhance competition on the internal EU market runs against other public objectives, such as improving regional economic development, reducing foodmiles, enhancing the quality of life for all citizens and the creation of an affordable health care system. This example, however, does not automatically imply that the EU tender legislation by definition conflicts with other policy objectives.

3.5.2 Case 2: the School Food Revolution in Rome

The case of the school food revolution in Rome shows that EU tender legislation can very well be combined with other policy objectives, as long as one is creative in defining the tender criteria.

My brief account of the school food revolution in Rome is based upon research carried out by my colleagues Dr. Roberta Sonnino and Prof. Kevin Morgan of the School of City and Regional Planning of Cardiff University in the UK. They presented the results of their research on the 24th of April 2008 at a research seminar about 'Territorial strategies for sustainable food policies', organised by the Mansholt Graduate School of Social Sciences and the Rural Sociology Group of Wageningen University. I have copied bits and pieces of their presentation in this one.

The Italian Finance Law no. 488, issued in 1999, encourages public institutions that manage school and hospital canteens to "provide in the daily diet the use of organic, typical and traditional products as well as those from denominated areas". At that time the organic market was not ready to meet Rome's massive demand: 150.000 school meals per day amounting to 27 million school meals per year. Rome began its quality revolution in 2001. Contracts for school food catering were primarily awarded on the basis of the economically most advantageous tender; however, in the procurement approach several additional award criteria were included.

For the 2001-2004 bidding process this meant that GM-foods and most frozen vegetables were banned and that meals were nutritionally balanced and based on seasonal and organic fruits and vegetables. In addition catering companies were rewarded for:

- environmental certifications
- environmental friendliness of their transportation system
- initiatives to reduce noise in the school canteens
- capacity to supply additional organic products

For the next tendering period, 2004 to 2007, the award criteria were expanded further. The table below shows that price is still the dominant award criterion, counting for 51%,

but that a whole set of other sustainability, quality and ethical award criteria have been included.

	2004-2007 AWARD CRITERIA	Points
A	Price	51
B	Improving and restoring canteens, kitchens and furniture	17
C	PDO and PGI products (meat and cured meats) offered in addition to those required by the tender	9
D	Organization of training courses and informational campaigns	8
E	Organizational features of the service	4
F	Use exclusively of products from "bio-dedicated" food chains	4
G	Organic products offered in addition to those required by the tender	4
H	Fair Trade products	2

Source: Kevin Morgan & Roberta Sonnino (2008). Public Food and the Challenge of Sustainable Development: The School Food Revolution in London and Rome, slide presented at the research seminar "Territorial strategies for sustainable food policies", Wageningen University, 24 April 2008.

For the current tendering period, 2007 - 2012, a next set of criteria, focusing on social inclusion and environmental sustainability, have been developed. Regarding social inclusion catering companies are expected to provide ethnic menus, to deliver leftovers to charity associations and animal shelters and to source products from social cooperatives. Regarding environmental sustainability new award criteria include the use of low-impact detergents and bio-degradable plates, recycling of food packaging, and reduction of food miles.

Rome's public procurement approach has resulted in a situation whereby 85% of the school meals are organic, whereby the majority of the products are locally or regionally produced and whereby imported food stuffs are certified fair trade. This has been realized through a procurement approach that is:

1. inclusive in the sense that producers and consumers (including the parents) are both actively involved in the qualification process

2. dynamic as the notion of quality is constantly re-negotiated and progressively revised, and
3. integrated as different quality conventions are reconciled.

In addition it is of the utmost importance to realize that the Rome school food programme is about more than the sustainability and the nutritional and organoleptic quality of school meals. It also involves the food education of children as they learn how food is produced, processed and prepared.

4 Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen,

Earlier in my presentation I stated that food policy reforms are inevitable, mainly due to contemporary changes in the urban food system: the increase in urban food-related problems, the rapid growth of new grassroots initiatives reconnecting city and countryside, the growing importance of out-of-home consumption and in particular of the public plate, the emergence of city and peri-urban regional governments as food policy actors and, finally, the rise of public and semi-public sector actors as important market parties through their public food procurement approaches.

I have attempted to summarize the impact of these changes for European food governance figure 3. The central assumption underlying this food governance model is that food is to be understood as an integrative as well as a territorial policy domain. It is integrative as the urban food system affects the quality of life in cities and peri-urban regions, the environment, public health, social inclusion and exclusion and the quality of neighborhoods. It is territorial as food sector establishments (restaurants, supermarkets, specialty food stores, and food wholesaling) are an important part of any city's economy and as many city residents are employed in the food sector. Furthermore it is territorial because food related problems and the associated strategies to overcome these problems differ from city to city and from peri-urban region to peri-urban region.

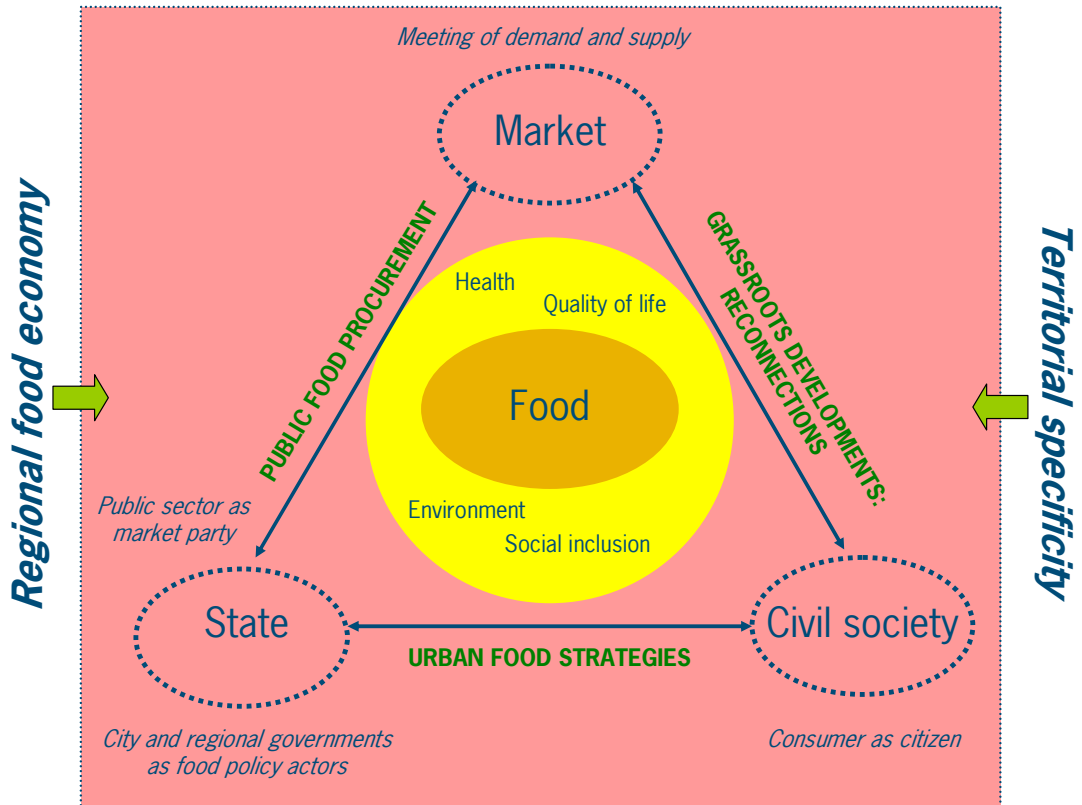


Figure 3. An integrative and territorial mode of food governance

Food as an integrative and territorial policy domain means that city and regional governments as well as local public bodies will increasingly fulfill an important and crucial role in the design, development and implementation of sustainable food policies; a role that should and can not be neglected in current debates about CAP reforms.

I thank you for your attention.