Mouans-Sartoux, a city located on the French Riviera, created its first integrated food policies in response to an environmental health crisis in the late 1990s. At the time, a outbreak of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, also known as mad cow disease, led to a political commitment to guarantee access to safe, sustainable food for all. The municipal government prioritized actions around school canteens and set a goal to serve 100% organic and local food to children. Urbanization had challenged this goal, with development encroaching onto agricultural land surrounding the city. With their new focus on food, health, and the environment, the municipality enacted policies to protect farmland and connect organic producers to school canteens. Though Mouans-Sartoux’s food policy started with school canteens, it has since grown into a system-wide plan to encourage sustainable production and consumption in the city. Today, Mouans-Sartoux has become a global leader on sharing how other cities can successfully change their local food systems.

ENABlers

SETTING NEW STANDARDS FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Mouans-Sartoux realized early on that its goal to serve sustainable school meals did not align with national school meal standards. In France, public catering recommendations were found to contradict climate and nutritional goals. However, federal recommendations are not legally binding (Mouans-Sartoux set their own school meal standards). Meals provided to children must be nutritious, fresh, seasonal, local, organic, and cooked on-site using high-quality plant and animal proteins. Remarkably, these standards significantly improved the health and sustainability profile of meals consumed inside and outside schools. Through surveys, the municipality discovered that the policy led 87% of families to change their eating habits in favor of organic and local food.

Mouans-Sartoux also reinstated by legislating and managing an urban farm, publicly owned and protected farmland. This pioneering agri-city connection was successful through open dialogue among the municipal government, farmers, schools, and parents. Children were involved through farm visits and in school debates. At the European and international levels, Mouans-Sartoux’s sustainability goals. Secondly, there is a dearth of national data to accurately evaluate food policies, especially data related to climate and environmental impacts. While the municipality works with the National Agency for Energy and the Environment to quantify the climate impact of their school meal policy, the national data provided was not precise enough to yield useful results. For example, there were no comparisons in the database between organic versus conventional food. However, the database will soon be updated to allow for more detailed analysis.

Mouans-Sartoux, a city of around 13,000 residents, has set and met ambitious public procurement goals. While this success may be attributed to the City’s smaller population size, Mouans-Sartoux is committed to sharing its good practices regionally and internationally, and motivating other cities to follow suit. MEAD disseminates knowledge and actions through various means, including meetings, workshops, exhibitions, and scientific debates. At the European and international levels, Mouans-Sartoux participates in several networks, including the EU’s agri-city project, URHACT, aimed at capacity building and knowledge sharing with cities across the continent. While Mouans-Sartoux’s food policy started in response to a food safety crisis in the 1990s, it has since flourished into an internationally recognized systems approach to sustainable production and consumption.

BARRIERS

LACKING NATIONAL SUPPORT AND POLICY

Misalignment

Mouans-Sartoux has innovated to set high standards for sustainable food policies, often despite misalignment or absent national food policies. Firstly, national public procurement recommendations are incompatible with Mouans-Sartoux’s sustainability goals. Secondly, there is a lack of national data to accurately evaluate food policies, especially data related to climate and environmental impacts. While the municipality works with the National Agency for Energy and the Environment to quantify the climate impact of their school meal policy, the national data provided was not precise enough to yield useful results. For example, there was no differentiation in the database between organic versus conventional food. However, the database will soon be updated to allow for more detailed analysis.

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An important critique we often receive is that we only achieve our goals because we’re a small city of only 13,000 people, but our policies are replicable and applied.

RESULTS OF MOUANS-SARTOUX’S FOOD POLICY

- School canteens serve 100% organic meals, mostly locally sourced.
- Food waste in school canteens was reduced by 80%, allowing the city’s shift toward organic procurement, to be cost neutral.
- 112 hectares of farmland around the city are protected from development, and the City provides resources and funding for organic production.
- The City created a new municipal department, La Maison d’Éducation à l’Alimentation Durable (MEAD), to strategize, evaluate impact, and disseminate learnings.

MICRO-REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

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