

CITIES AT THE HEART OF FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

As **young people**, we see the challenges in our food system. We have ideas to test solutions, but rarely are we able to have direct access to national policymakers to influence change. So, should we still engage in transforming food systems in our region? Absolutely! A great way to start is by getting involved in your city, by connecting with key actors, and initiating a transformative process.

That is where this booklet comes in. It is a tool to provide you with starting points and inspire you with some success stories. Of course, there is no single, magical formula for change. You are free to explore other resources, use **this booklet** as a starting guide, consult artificial intelligence, or get creative and discover your own pathway. What matters most is that you keep trying, and trust yourself with the process, that you can be the start of creating change!

“Strength in unity”: Multi-stakeholder Food System Platforms

WHY SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED TO TRANSFORM YOUR CITY’S FOOD SYSTEM?

Food security was defined in the 1996 World Food Summit as “*A situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*”, with the following four classic dimensions: availability, access, utilization, and stability ([SOFI report 2025](#)). The [HLPE](#) expanded this concept to include agency and sustainability, together with the four dimensions, emphasizing the **right to food**. This means not only do you have the right to eat, but you also have the right to decide on what you want to eat, but also which food system to be a part of.

Your city – whether large, small or peri-urban – is a great entry point for action. For instance, Switzerland, citizen participation is most visible at the city level. Cities therefore offer a direct entry point for engagement, especially for young people who may not necessarily have direct contact with national policymakers but can easily spark a movement or change locally.

Food systems are an excellent starting point for such action. A concrete initiative can begin small and grow through a **bottom-up approach**. In some cases, transformative processes may come from the **top down**, where a city or country’s national government initiates a multi-stakeholder platform, influencing laws, policies or their implementation, often as part of a political commitment to the right to food.

WHAT IS A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FOOD SYSTEM PLATFORM?

A great way to find support is to be part of a group. One type of group that is worth considering is a multi-stakeholder food systems platform. These can have various names and forms, but the basic idea is as follows:

A **multi-stakeholder food systems platform** provides a space for sustained collaboration where various actors (e.g., government, civil society, private sector, research institutions, communities, religious organizations, etc.) from multiple sectors (e.g., health, agriculture, education, urbanism, etc.) gather to tackle shared food system challenges. Anchored in agreed rules and structures, the platform aims to coordinate planning, share information, and pool expertise to address complex issues that no single actor alone, can solve. These platforms serve as forums for joint learning, advocacy, and decision support, helping to build a community voice, strengthen governance, and promote more equitable and resilient food systems.

WHAT CAN YOU DO THROUGH SUCH A PLATFORM?

Here are **some examples of what can be achieved** through a multi-stakeholder food system platform:

- Advocate for the right to food in your country and mobilize support for its formal recognition.
- Organize household food waste reduction courses to raise awareness and change practices.
- Request access to land from your municipality to establish community or family gardens.
- Engage with your local council to facilitate food card or voucher projects.
- Seek funding to support small food entrepreneurs and help them develop their activities.

How to become part of a multi-stakeholder's food systems platforms?

JOIN AN EXISTING ONE:

As these platforms bring together various stakeholders involved with the topic, try to attend local gatherings on food systems and ask around about any groups collaborating to solve local challenges. You could also contact organizations that facilitate the creation of such platforms. For instance, groups of young people who are members of a platform, structures that facilitate such platforms, or directly on an existing one. Sometimes the platform might focus on youth, sometimes on citizen participation, on food, or on another theme with a broader approach – but an interesting part of its activities might focus on food systems. Get in touch with the people involved and ask questions! In many contexts and across many themes, food is a key component!

Groups of young people who can be a platform's members:

- [YPARD](#)
- [RUAF Youth Working Group](#)
- [Global Shapers Hub](#)
- [Nutrition connect](#)

Structures facilitating these platforms or listing cities with an engagement toward food security:

- [Nutrition in City Ecosystems \(NICE\)](#)
- [Scaling Up Nutrition](#)
- [AfriFOODlinks](#)
- [Food Action Cities](#)
- [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact signatories](#)
- [FAO](#)
- [FAO and RUAF](#)
- [ICLEI](#)
- [One Planet Network](#)
- [GAIN](#)
- [Rikolto](#)
- [Fian international](#)
- [FOODPathS](#)
- [Glasgow Food and climate declaration signatories](#)
- [FoodSHIFT2030](#)
- [Cities2030](#)
- [Fusilli Project](#)
- [Fondazione Barilla](#)
- [Hivos](#)

Examples of existing platforms that might inspire you in your research:

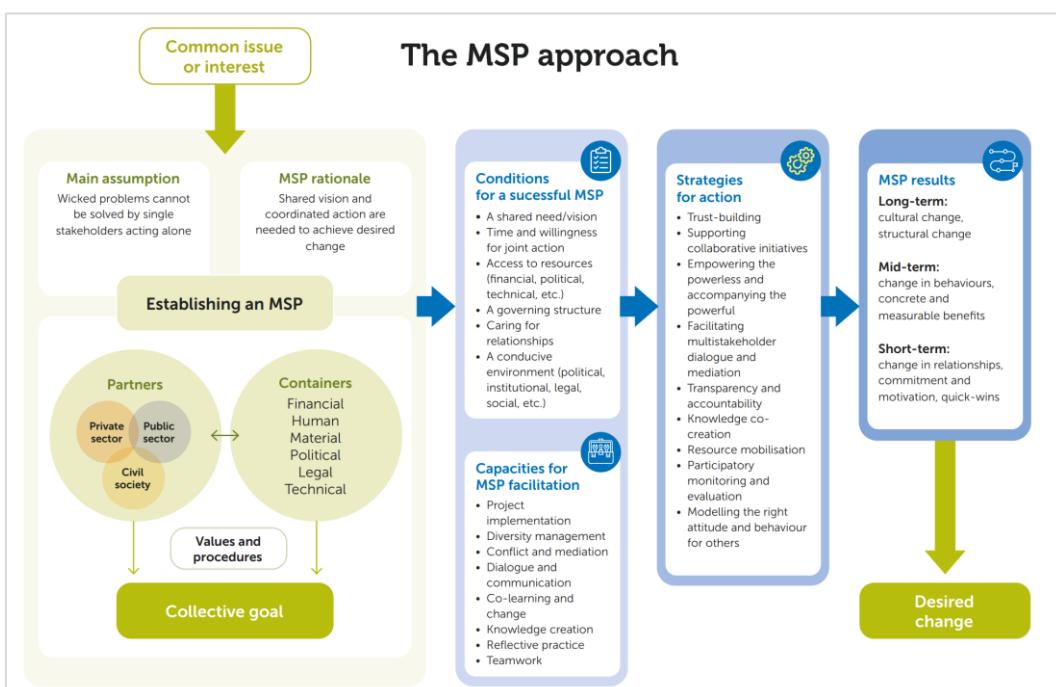
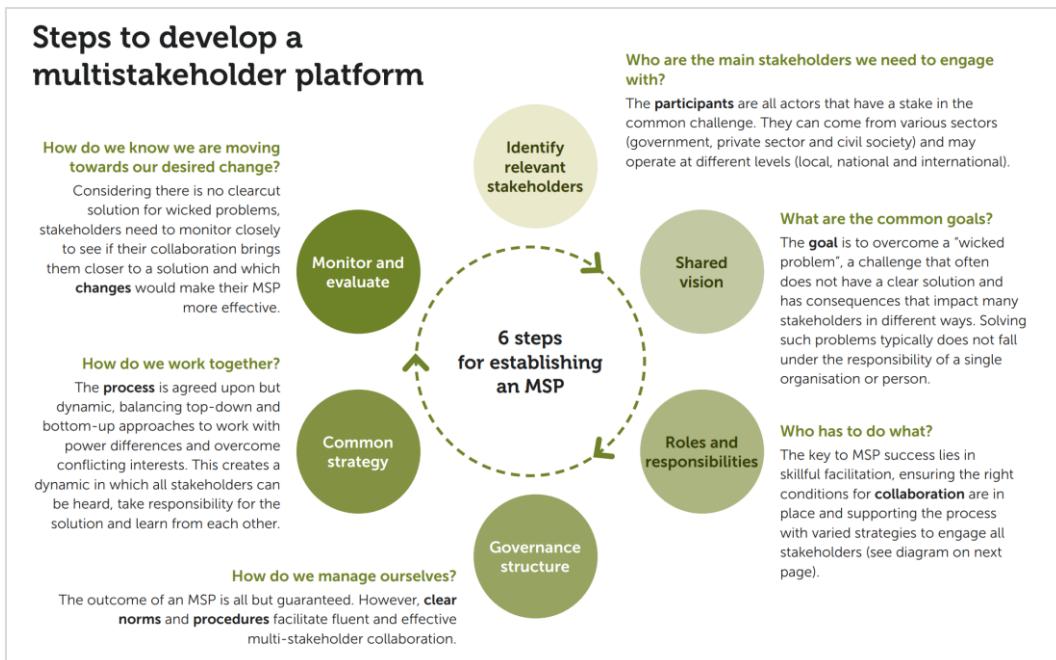
- Switzerland: [Capas Droit à l'alimentation Genève](#), [Droit à l'alimentation Vaud](#), [Ernährungsforum Zürich](#), [Yverdon en transition](#), [Ernährungsforum Basel](#), [Slow Food Youth](#), [AgroecologyWorks](#), [Landwirtschaft mit Zukunft](#), [Kleinbauer vereinigung](#), [Mouvement pour une agriculture paysanne et citoyenne](#), [Vision Landwirtschaft](#), [Platform für eine sozial nachhaltige landwirtschaft](#)
- Europe: [Organic Denmark](#), [Ghent en Garde Food Policy Council](#), [The Food Foundation](#), [Food Wave Project](#), [Europe](#)
- Africa: [Antananarivo Food Policy Council](#), [Zambian Food Change Lab](#), [Joint Action Development Forum-JADF](#), [The Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia \(NAFSAN\)](#)
- America: [Los Angeles Food Policy Council](#), [Quito Agri-Food Pact](#), [NY City Food Policy](#), [Toronto Youth Food Policy Council](#), [The Food Recovery Network](#), [Hawai'i Youth Food Council \(HYFC\)](#)
- Asia: [Chandigarh](#), [Indore](#), [Jabalpur](#), [Jammu](#), [Panaji](#), [Rajkot](#), [Rourkela](#), [Sagar](#), [Surat](#), [Tumakuru](#), [Ujjain](#), [City Level Multi-Sectoral Nutritional Coordination Committees \(CLMNCC\)](#), [Rangpur](#), [Asia Indigenous Youth Platform \(AIYP\)](#), [Digo Bikas Institute](#), [Nepal](#)

CREATE YOUR OWN:

If you can't find such a platform in your area, here is how you could proceed to start your own:

1. **Identify a key problem** in your region's food system.
2. **Build a diverse group** of people who also want to address this issue. Aim for inclusivity, by bringing together allies with complementary resources, perspectives, and influence.
3. **Set up the platform** together: agree on its structure, purpose, and practical aspects (e.g. how often to meet and how decisions are made).
4. **Explore potential solutions** to the identified problem. Discuss possible challenges, costs, and benefits openly.
5. **Document your project** in a clear and structured way, and share it with the relevant authority (e.g. your local government). Although food system issues often require action at national level, starting locally can create momentum and wider influence.
6. **Keep the platform active** by meeting regularly, remaining proactive in developing solutions, and by continuously working to ensure inclusivity and balance of power among members.

You might want to use this toolkit developed by Rikolto: [Multistakeholder process facilitation PDF](#)



Once you're part of a platform, how to be heard and make a difference?

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH YOUR PLATFORM

Some advice gathered from experience of young people involved in platforms:

1. **Have a clear objective.** The shape of the platform can evolve, but as long as you have a clear objective, you will find the right network and incentives to get actions done.
2. **Focus on building trust, respect and accountability** among the platform's members.
3. **Remember that audiences often only retain one key message.** Be clear about the *one thing* you want them to remember in order to communicate it clearly.
4. **Don't get lost in the details.** "Make it exist first, and you can make it perfect later."
5. **Don't limit yourself and be creative.** Document your ideas, including what you're asking for, the challenges you expect, and how you plan to address them.

Lessons learned for effective Food Systems Governance ([UNDP & SFP, 2020](#))

1. **Define the platform's scope:** Align roles with governance levels; base scope on a solid diagnostic.
2. **Map existing consultations:** Understand current mechanisms, inclusivity, and government backing.
3. **Evaluate performance:** Assess trust, transparency, and how feedback influences policy.
4. **Engage stakeholders early:** Identify key actors; build trust through shared understanding.
5. **Clarify roles and responsibilities:** Ensure alignment with mandates and clear reporting duties.
6. **Plan participation strategically:** Develop a recognized plan with long-term vision.
7. **Build technical capacity:** Train members; ensure government and committee readiness.
8. **Link with other initiatives:** Coordinate efforts; avoid duplication and amplify impact.
9. **Secure data and funding:** Ensure access to evidence and financial resources.
10. **Focus on the goal:** Keep sustainability, equity, and local-global coherence in sight.

Some resources that can be useful:

- [Rethinking our food systems: A guide for multi-stakeholder collaboration](#)
- [FAO guide](#)
- [Multi Stakeholder Platforms as System Change Agents A guide for assessing effectiveness](#)
- [Advocacy Toolkit People centred advocacy for a more sustainable food system](#)
- [Food Policy Councils - RUAf](#)
- [Youth in Food. Opportunities for education and employment - RUAf](#)
- [Cities, Poverty and Food - RUAf](#)
- [RUAf Youth Working Group connects global policy to local action: reflections on the CFS recommendations - RUAf](#)
- [RUAf Youth Working Group calls on food system stakeholders to support youth initiatives - RUAf](#)
- [Formation of the RUAf Youth Working Group - RUAf](#)

On multi-stakeholders' platforms:

- [The MSP Guide](#)
- [The MSP Tool Guide](#)
- [SUN Toolkit](#)
- [FAO Multistakeholder workshop](#)
- [IFAD Focus on Multi-Stakeholders Platforms](#)
- [Choosing modelling approaches for participatory food governance in city-regions. Comprehensive guidelines for a system-perspective selection](#)

On Food Systems transformation:

- [Food Systems Assessment and Planning Handbook](#)
- [Food & Cities](#)

On Youth Engagement:



YOU HAVE A PROJECT ALREADY, HERE IS A CANVA TO HELP ENSURING ITS SUCCESS:

 Main Goal What is the primary purpose? How will success be defined and assessed?	 Value proposition What values does it provide? How does it facilitate working towards a common goal? What forms of connection and support does it offer?	 Key Activities What are key activities?	 Target audience Who is your target audience? What are their characteristics and needs?	 Connection and Support Methods What interaction methods will be implemented to facilitate collaboration? How will mutual support and synergy be fostered?
 Key Partners What organizations, public and private institutions, universities, NGOs, companies or community groups could collaborate? How can you get in contact with them? How could they contribute?				
 Resources What financial, human, and technical resources are essential for the operation and growth? What alliances exist with institutions, foundations, or governments for support? What contributions are there in volunteer work, know-how, or infrastructure?	 Benefits What social benefits arise from the initiative? How does the connection improve sustainability? What positive impacts result from collective visibility and advocacy?			

Source: *adapted from the Business model Canva (Alexander Osterwalder)*

Success stories from multi-stakeholders' food systems platforms

SUCCESS STORY NR. 1 - CHOCÓ ANDINO FOOD SYSTEMS ROUNDTABLE

City, Country	Quito, Peru
Type of platform	The platform brings together over 20 organizations from local governments and community associations to youth networks and academia. Its formation renewed dialogue between rural and urban actors, helping overcome institutional fragmentation and giving young people a meaningful voice in food governance.
Objective(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based governance that includes the voice of youth effectively and collaboratively to promote the transition to agroecological, regenerative and territorially-identified agro-food systems • To increase flows of resources and opportunities for strengthening inclusive, agroecological, regenerative food systems, with territorial identity and contribute to public health. • People, especially young people in the city-region, influence the agri-food system in a co-responsible manner, incorporating healthier, regenerative and climate change-adapted practices.
How was the platform created	Urban Futures program worked with Imaymana Foundation, to create a new food systems governance space that integrates urban and rural stakeholders within the Chocó Andino Biosphere Reserve (under Ecuadorian law a reserve requires a special type of internal governance)
How did Diego Orellana join the platform	Diego joined the platform as a facilitator, in its role with Hivos. He is supporting youth to enable them to be independent in their initiatives.
We managed to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a collaboration between the Chocó Andino Youth Network and the urban collective <i>Quito Sin Minería</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Result: produced awareness campaigns and joint actions promoting agroecology and regenerative practices as viable alternatives to extractive activities • Maintaining coordination and shared ownership across actors with different mandates.
Advice for youth from Diego Orellana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep building bridges dialogue is essential to connect people with common values and align interests around a collective vision for change.
Link	Urban Futures - Chocó Andino

SUCCESS STORY NR. 2 - MANPANOR

City, Country	Manabí, Ecuador
Type of platform	Second-tier governance structure that connects four municipalities along the northern coast of Manabí Province to strengthen territorial collaboration.
Objective(s)	Through Urban Futures, the focus is on laying the groundwork by providing technical assistance for integrating food systems priorities into the territorial development plans (PDOTs) of three out of the four municipalities.
How was the platform created	In this process, the establishment of the platform was not the initial step. The approach began by bringing together a group of young leaders to collaboratively develop a draft law. Together with Hivos, this youth group then submitted the proposed legislation to the authorities. Building on the success of this initiative, the platform's activities are subsequently able to expand and evolve.
How did Diego Orellana join the platform	Diego joined the platform as a facilitator, in its role with Hivos. He is supporting youth to enable them to be independent in their initiatives.
We managed to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... reach municipal PDOTs laws approved in 3 out of 4 municipalities. ... mark the beginning of a shared narrative and vision for territorial food systems transformation. ... prepare the ground for strategic platforms such as the School of Governance which was included as an action in the PDOT, together with youth organizations and municipal leaders.
Link	Urban futures - Manpanor

SUCCESS STORY NR. 3 - RUBAVU DISTRICT FOOD SYSTEMS PLATFORM

City, Country	Rubavu, Western Province, Rwanda
Type of platform	Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs, the National Youth Council, NGOs working on related actions, representatives from the Private Sector Federation, the National Women Council, hospital-level nutrition officers, and District unit directors for agriculture, health, social, and business development, as well as cooperatives operating in the agricultural sector.
Objective(s)	The objective is to make food systems more sustainable in order to end malnutrition and guarantee food security for everyone through economic development.
How was the platform created	The platform was created within the framework of the project Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE), as part of one of the working packages.
How did Deo Ngoga join the platform	Deo became a member of the platform during his time as the National Youth Council (NYC) Coordinator. While volunteering in various community activities, especially those fighting malnutrition through mobilizing families to prepare healthy meals and building kitchen gardens for vulnerable households, he was invited to join the Food System Platform in Rubavu District. This allowed him to contribute to community empowerment and promote access to healthy food.
We managed to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... develop a shared stakeholders map and joint activity plan for the district to address nutrition and food systems in a holistic way. ... mobilize technical support and training (Good Food for Cities, regenerative practices) that reached many farmers, improving production and nutrition outcomes. ... strengthen coordination among agriculture, health and education actors for urban-regional food systems. ... enable collaboration among youth leaders, particularly youth coordinators at sector levels, to promote kitchen gardens and community nutrition education ... deliver poultry support to 12 youth cooperatives and two youth agribusiness groups, while vendors at the Nyakiriba vegetable market were provided with modern handwashing facilities. ... introduce a mentorship ('parrainage') program in which each malnourished child is supported by a nearby youth volunteer who monitors their progress daily until full recovery.
This is still a challenge...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite significant progress, there are still challenges related to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changing mindsets, particularly among some food traders and families who have not yet fully embraced food safety waste reduction balanced diets. Continued awareness campaigns, education, and coordination among stakeholders are essential to achieving lasting behavioral change.
Advice for youth from Deo Ngoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To start small but think big. To engage your community, lead by example, and use innovation to promote agroecology, nutrition, and sustainability. Collaboration is key no single actor can transform food systems alone, but together we can make a lasting impact.

SUCCESS STORY NR. 4 – ERNÄHRUNGSFORUM ZÜRICH

City, Country	Zürich, Switzerland
Type of Platform	Multi-stakeholder network, including around 200 members, 70% of which are companies and 30% private members. There are 12 member categories: production, transformation, retail, gastronomy, consumers, food save or recycling, interests groups, research, consulting, education/training, specialist media, foundations. There is one managing office, 6 to 7 board members. There is a general assembly once a year for all members, two network events per year, and a newsletter every month with information about the members activities (events, workshops, publications, etc.).
Objective(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to collect smaller voices and amplify them at the municipal level • to connect the right people together and act as a bridge, central info point • “People call us because we have expertise, but above all because we have the connections.”
How the platform was created	Following Zurich's signing of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact at EXPO Milano 2015, various initiatives promoting a more sustainable food system emerged in the city. Activities such as “Zürich isst” (2015) and the “Round Table on Food Transition” (2017) led to the establishment of the Zurich Food Forum in 2018. Since then, the Forum has contributed to the City of Zurich's Sustainable Food Strategy, with financial support from the Mercator Foundation Switzerland during its development phase (2015–2021).
The platform managed to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... establish a common voice in the city of Zürich. Politicians know the platform now. • ... set up pilot innovation projects in the collective catering (e.g. mensas), with the right people who are interested by innovation and committed to doing things differently. This highlights the importance of finding the right partners.
This is still a challenge...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an exhausting topic to fight for, especially when recession is coming. • ... to fight for resources. Now the platform works mostly project based and this is financed through foundations. • ... to engage with young people.
Link	Ernährungsforum Zürich

EXAMPLES OF MULTISTAKEHOLDER FSP BEYOND CITIES**SUCCESS STORY NR. 5 – TRUE COST OF FOOD CH PROJECT**

Country	Switzerland
Type of platform	The project brings together people and organizations from all parts of the Swiss food system who can influence or be impacted by its results. These include universities and research institutes, civil society groups, farmer and food worker organizations, as well as partners from business and government. Running from 2024 to 2027 and funded by SNSF-SINERGIA, the project involves participants through workshops, interviews, surveys, and a regular newsletter.
Objective(s)	To develop possible implementation pathways for True Cost Accounting for Food (TCAF) in Switzerland.
How was the platform created	The platform was created within the framework of the TRUECOST CH project, as part of one of the working packages.
We managed to...	<p>... establish a stable foundation for the platform, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders through systematic system and stakeholder mapping.</p> <p>... ensure balanced participation during engagement activities through deliberate design choices for the workshops. Stakeholder feedback showed that everyone had sufficient opportunities to contribute, felt comfortable doing so, and considered their views respected and incorporated into the outcomes.</p> <p>... organize two workshops with over 40 key actors in attendance.</p>
This is still a challenge...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain a high level of engagement throughout the four-year period. • To engage certain stakeholder groups remains difficult due to constraints such as lack of interest or limited time or financial resources. • To reach consensus among stakeholders can be challenging, as opinions and values vary widely. Discussions can become emotionally charged, making it essential for actors to understand each other's perspectives in order to reach compromises. • TRUECOST CH is project-based and funded until the end of 2027. While the MSP has been established, the future of the platform beyond this period remains uncertain, although follow-up projects have been suggested.
Advice for youth	When doing multistakeholder engagement, do it properly. Acknowledge diverse perspectives, ensure everyone can participate equally, and avoid cherry-picking or bias.
Link	TRUECOST CH Project

SUCCESS STORY NR. 6 – THE SWISS FOOD AND NUTRITION VALLEY

City, Country	Switzerland
Type of platform	Its structure brings together a wide range of actors from the food system, including governmental and cantonal bodies, startups, SMEs, large enterprises (e.g. Nestlé, ADM, Bühler, Givaudan, Firmenich), academic and research institutions (such as EPFL, ETH, and Swiss universities), as well as innovation enablers, investors, and international collaborators. Through its network of “Valley Partners,” SFNV connects these stakeholders to communicate, collaborate, and co-create innovation, organizing events, round tables, and supporting initiatives like living labs.
Objective(s)	To accelerate the transition to more sustainable, healthy, and resilient food systems by connecting Switzerland’s leading universities, startups, corporates, and public institutions to strengthen Switzerland as a food nation.
How was the platform created	The Swiss Food & Nutrition Valley (SFNV) was established in 2020 as a not-for-profit association, founded by the Canton of Vaud, EPFL, EHL (École hôtelière de Lausanne), and Nestlé to strengthen Switzerland’s position as a hub for sustainable food innovation.
We managed to...	<p>... establish six thematic Impact Platforms: Precision Nutrition, Sustainable Proteins, Food Systems 4.0, Sustainable Farming, Sustainable Packaging, and Food & Nutrition Security.</p> <p>... expand the network to include over 75 members from corporate, public, and academic institutions.</p> <p>... launched the ZFV Living Lab, enabling the prototyping and testing of food innovations in real-world hospitality and catering environments.</p> <p>... build strong public and institutional partnerships, including collaboration with the FAO on agrifood systems innovation.</p>
This is still a challenge...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support partners to transition to a healthier and more sustainable food system. • To keep up the dialogue about the importance of a climate smart food system. • To position “Food as preventive health” and convergence of agrifood actors. • To establish successful Public-private partnerships.
Link	The Swiss Food and Nutrition Valley