



## RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 07/2021

# Locally produced food as a strategy for transformation

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### Purpose of the research

In this study, we have looked into whether, and in what way, locally produced food can contribute to local transformation to a low-emission society. We have also sought to understand who is taking part in this transformation, and whether and how municipalities can promote, implement and follow up local strategies for food and related experiences. The project builds on previous work on the importance of locally sustainable circuits as a strategy for municipalities' work on climate change.

### Relevance of the study to Include

The study is relevant for knowledge-building on climate and environmental transformation for several reasons:

- Transformation to meet climate and environmental challenges requires a reduction in activity that contributes to environmental and climate problems. Attractive and strong local communities are a cornerstone of such a transformation and locally produced food is part of this.
- Knowledge about the success factors for local food initiatives and the municipality's role in the work on local food is important to stimulate further work in a sustainable direction.
- Knowledge about who local food is for and what is needed to make local food more accessible and attractive to broader groups is important in order to increase support for local food and thus strengthen the role local food can play in sustainability transformations.

The study is part of the research centre Include and particularly the centre's work on municipalities as change agents.

### What have we found out?

We have selected four local government regions as case studies (Hurdal Municipality, Vågå Municipality, Inderøy Municipality and Trøndelag County). They all have strategies associated with local food, but in different ways. Their local geographies are also different. We have conducted document studies and in-depth interviews with representatives from municipal and county



administration and elected politicians, the private sector, and the local population. In addition, participant observations in case municipalities have been part of the study.

The study shows that:

- Local food initiatives to a large extent are aimed at experience-based tourism and initiated to contribute to growth in the municipalities both in terms of population and the economy. This is prominent in all but one of the case studies.
- Our case municipalities differ when it comes to how they work with local food. Trøndelag and Inderøy are active facilitators of local food in interaction with private sector actors and see this as part of their role. Hurdal and Vågå municipalities do not take such an active role in local food initiatives.
- Where the focus on local food has been strong and institutionalised across the municipal organisations, businesses, and volunteers, this has led to local food becoming part of local identity and local community development. Here we see signs that local food works as a transformation strategy by helping to make the local area more attractive to the population, and that people make use of local food services in holidays and leisure. A culture of local cooperation strengthens the opportunities for success in scaling up local food initiatives.
- Local food is to a large extent perceived as expensive food for special occasions, and it is often not available in the places where people do their everyday grocery shopping. This limits the opportunity for many groups to make use of locally produced food. However, some local foods are described as everyday foods (such as local potatoes, eggs, apples, and dairy products). Local food also flows to the population through friends and networks (such as REKO-rings), and several people grow food for their own consumption.
- Local food initiatives have little connection to the case municipalities' climate strategies, with the exception of Trøndelag County. The idea that red meat production is harmful to the climate is questioned by our informants. The use of local grazing resources, less use of industrial feed and reduction in imported meat are perceived by most as a better strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, although emissions studies have shown that these measures are unlikely to reduce total emissions to a significant extent.
- The municipalities generally have few strategies for using local food in their own activities. Procuring local food for use by the municipal organisation encounters many barriers related to regulations for procurements, resources in the municipal organisation, distribution and security of supply. Canteen operations that are run with the exclusive goal of keeping costs low are also an obstacle.



## Implications

### **The municipality as facilitator**

In all our case studies, local food is driven by strong commitment from local populations and businesses. The municipalities' involvement is largely in a role as facilitator of local food initiatives in cooperation with the private and voluntary sector. An important factor for the municipalities to succeed as facilitators is that the work is strongly institutionalised in municipal activities. This means that the work is not only driven by a few enthusiasts, but is prioritised in the municipality's ordinary operations.

### **Everyday food**

Local food is mainly used for special occasions. In order for local food to play a role in transformation strategies, it is important to work to ensure that local food to a greater extent becomes everyday food and is available in local stores. To do this, municipalities can assess the need for new types of local food production, and work to make both information about local food and the food itself more accessible to the local population.

### **Procurement**

It is not easy for municipalities to support local food through their own procurements. This requires guidance on rules and regulations, more resources and expertise in local procurements, as well as greater openness and flexibility for local suppliers. A greater focus on how food served as part of municipal activities can become more climate and environmentally friendly is important in this context.

### **Climate**

Our study shows that the discussion about red meat and climate change is highly contentious. The results indicate that there is greater openness to discussing restrictions on the consumption of red meat when this is linked to imported meat and animal feed. Greater focus on how climate challenges and solutions in the food sector are discussed is important for legitimising climate initiatives. Food production and consumption should be considered as part of a larger local climate and environmental transformation related to community development and local identity.